

WEN TIEJUN

Deconstructing Modernization

Abstract: This article is a reflection on and deconstruction of modernization based on extensive research. While analyzing the concept of modernization, the article also explores the path, approach, and objective of modernization in China. Through the examination of the historical development of Western European countries, the author points out that modernization in the West was in fact a process of capital formation and expansion by way of colonization. Under the current international political and economic circumstances, this path of development cannot be replicated. By examining the reality of developing countries, the author discovers that the "modernization" path of development represented by a high national income and a fast rate of urbanization cannot solve the widespread problem of "the three big disparities" (between incomes, urban and rural areas, and regions). The author points out that the vulgar (cufangshi) economic growth caused by the capitalization of resources is not the only objective we strive to achieve. Modernization in China should instead ground itself in the basic situation of a country with a large population and a severe shortage of resources, and it should adopt a scientific approach in striving to realize "the five overall considerations" (tongchou).

I am not a scholar of the study or the library, but a traveling research worker whose research mainly yields perceptual knowledge (*ganxing renshi*). It may be true that such knowledge lacks theoretical depth, so it may be difficult to translate it into policy recommendations, and even more difficult to raise it to the level of so-called theory; at least, to do so would require the accumulation of large amounts of research. The reason we cannot stop at the phenomenal level of perceptual knowledge, however, is that, in contrast with those who hastily propose panaceas adopted indiscriminately from theories in books, we find it necessary to undertake serious reflection based on extensive research.

Reflection is actually a rather painful process. Especially when, after years of research and practice, we find we must rethink the established and widely accepted concepts in the existing literature. This process is even more difficult than when we learned those concepts in the first place. I, for example, was also a radical advocate of the market reforms in the 1980s. At that time, radical marketists like me insisted that past problems lay mainly in the system's flaws, that economic growth would be promoted as long as marketization reforms could be carried out quickly, and that China's problems could be easily solved and modernization easily achieved as long as new distributable wealth could be produced. By the 1990s, however, these problems no longer looked so simple.

This article is a result of my reflections on and deconstruction of modernization based on research I have conducted over the years. I must point out that the term "deconstruction" is not a simplistic negation. Here I want to indicate that, when we use the concept of modernization, we must first make sure we understand how this concept took shape and what it actually means in relation to the history and current situation of China.

Historical Observation

Colonization and the Modernization of Western Countries

Contrary to explanations proffered by certain theories and ideologies from the developed world, the backward state of developing countries is not due to their cultures, systems, or even races. History taught us long ago that the West's modernization was actually the result of over three hundred years of colonization. On the one hand, the transfer of Europeans to the colonies alleviated tensions between population and resources

in Europe and provided an appropriate environment for the primitive accumulation of capital. On the other hand, the appropriation of abundant resources in the colonies allowed Western countries to rapidly complete the primitive accumulation of capital by converting this appropriated wealth into capital. The West's modernization, therefore, was actually a process of capital formation and expansion achieved by way of colonization.

Let us first examine the demographic transformation. In Latin American academia, it is commonly understood that there were about a hundred million indigenous people living in North America over three hundred years ago. When the European colonists arrived, they found the native inhabitants of North America unsuitable for slave labor. Since these tribes were in essence a nation living in harmony with nature, their subsistence philosophy for thousands of years had been to take only what they needed from nature, to hunt only those animals they needed to eat. This nation, therefore, was sustainable. Capitalist industrialization, however, required primitive accumulation, so it inevitably came into conflict with the sustainable philosophy of these indigenous people. When the Europeans arrived in the New World and forced the natives to work, the latter naturally fought for freedom and "sustainable livelihood," a concept that modern people are only now beginning to appreciate, although the Native Americans had known it all along. When they refused to work in the colonists' mines, according to capitalist logic this meant that they were lazy and had to be controlled by force, and as a result, much of the native population died in revolt. Today, Native Americans can hardly be said to constitute a nation. According to statistics provided by the first Bush administration, only 420,000 Native Americans lived in the United States in 1992. The colonists badly needed labor power for the extraction of resources, so they had to transfer labor power from colonial Africa to North and South America. During this process, the native population of North and South America combined fell by a hundred million, and of a hundred million people captured in Africa, a third were killed in the act of capture and another third died in the course of transfer; only about one third made it to the Americas.

During three hundred years of colonization, a fourth of the European population moved out. Great Britain, known as "the empire where the sun never sets," occupied the most colonial territory and had the most people transferred out at about a third of its population. In Scotland, which was the most impoverished and most skilled in fighting, half of

its population moved out. As a result, Europeans occupied four other continents, tensions between population and resources were thoroughly ameliorated, and Europe's resource environment became unprecedentedly comfortable and flexible.

Another thing that is well known and yet easily forgotten is: What would Europe's population be today if we included the descendents of all the people transferred to colonies in Africa, Australia, and the Americas? The total would be about one billion. If we also included the offspring of marriages between Europeans and indigenous people of the colonized lands, the number would exceed the current population of China. If all these people had remained part of the same capitalist Europe that advocated the full development of individuality and the maximization of individual interests, the tensions between resources and population would probably have resulted in conflicts more devastating than the two world wars combined, and modernization would have remained a distant dream.

This colonization process, therefore, was really the result of a primitive accumulation of capital at the expense of tens of millions of indigenous American and African lives, as well as large-scale environmental destruction. Of course this process went hand in hand with a set of experiences in the formation and expansion of capital, and the theory derived from these experiences is the social science of the "modernization" that we take for granted today.

In fact, the European models of socialism and the welfare state that many are talking about today are also related to this background. Europe's establishment of colonies in the other four continents and the expansion of industrial capital brought about the need for the development of socialized mass production, the massive migration of populations, and a shortage in the supply of labor (especially at a time when there was as yet no mechanized mass production). This gave laborers the leeway to negotiate in a labor market where supply fell short of demand, and soon there emerged the workers' movement, socialist parties, and eventually the proposal of state welfare policies, welfare socialism, and welfare states. The history of the workers' movement at that time could also be traced back to colonization. In his *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels analyzed that the reason why English workers did not launch a violent revolt was that there were huge amounts of capital transferred from the English colonies back to the native land for the people there to share.

Let us suppose that the three hundred years of colonization were necessary for the West's modernization, and that, objectively, this was also the empirical process of which "modernization" consisted in the Western discursive environment. Then, when we discuss development in China, we cannot simply transplant this discourse without carefully considering how it was formed. We must ask: Is this "modernization" a scientific concept?

From the perspective of methodology, modern social science cannot be called scientific because social science cannot be tested. Strictly speaking, only results that can be duplicated by others under given conditions and through given techniques can be called "scientific."

If we adopt "modernization" as a scientific concept, then we must regard the West's three hundred years of colonization as a process that can be tested. Can this process be duplicated by other countries? If not, how can this concept be directly adopted by developing countries that are trying to catch up with those industrialized countries?

Reexamining the history of Western countries' modernization, and considering the essence of modernization and whether it is scientific or not, we discover that we must rethink some widely accepted and established ideas and that we cannot simply adopt this discourse as our guiding ideology. The "modernization" that has been discussed in so many books and conferences, and the empirical process of which it consisted, cannot, in fact, be duplicated.

Looking back from today's vantage point, there were indeed several pioneers among Asian countries that attempted to modernize according to the Western model. Japan, for example, was the first to propose "shedding Asia and joining Europe" (*tuo ya ru ou*), but when it tried to retrace the Western steps of colonial expansion, the Western states fiercely taught it a lesson. The Japanese may have felt wronged because of this; they still have not admitted their guilt, and they feel uneasy and indignant: "How come you Westerners were able to achieve modernization through colonization and we may not? What you did in the Americas and Africa was much crueller. All we did was occupy Korea, Taiwan, Northeastern China, and Mongolia. We have almost no resources in our own land, so what's wrong with colonization according to Western precedents?" Japan wanted to shed Asia and join Europe, but its teacher beat it back and taught it its proper place in the world order, and many Japanese progressives feel that Japan is still a semicolonial land under American military occupation.

Even if we wanted to retrace the West's steps of colonial expansion, therefore, we lack the necessary conditions. Moreover, Japan already tried this and failed, so what should China do?

At the turn of the century, China already ranks high among world precedents in the output of major industrial products. It ranks first in the production of iron, steel, color TVs, coal, textiles, and cement, and in many industries it ranks second. This high ranking is possible because China enjoys a vast domestic market. Also, the formation and expansion of industries in China themselves form a process about which questions need to be asked.

Wherever you go, no matter whether it is in Asia, Africa, Latin America, or the developed countries, you hear people talking about the "China threat." Why is that? It is because China's demand is too great. In 2003, China's economy grew 9.4 percent and accounted for 10 percent of the total oil, 24.9 percent of the total iron and steel, and 50 percent of the cement consumed in the world that year. In the case of iron and steel, for example, China's purchase of iron ore accounted for over half of the iron ore exported from Australia. China's huge demand helped increase Australia's gross domestic product (GDP) as well as the exchange rate for the Australian dollar. If this trend continues, a considerable portion of the world's energy resources and raw material will soon be supplied to China. Would the world allow this to happen?

We should have already learned our lesson in this respect. From 1995 to 1996, for example, China imported thirty million tons of wheat for eighteen months in a row, resulting in an approximately 100 percent increase in international wheat prices. This led many developing countries to complain: "Now you Chinese have money so you can import everything, but we can't afford that. Do we deserve to go hungry?"

China, under the spell of marketist ideology, pays no heed to such warnings, but all other countries see problems in the way China does things. There are many theories about China's impending collapse and accounts of the "China threat." The former hold that China lacks sufficient resources to sustain its current model of growth and cannot continue consuming the world's resources like this forever, whereas the latter go on to predict that China will strip the world's resource markets bare.

Researchers at the Fairbanks Center at Harvard University once predicted that, just as the rise of Germany and Japan in the twentieth century triggered two world wars by attempting to transform the world's

economic-political order, so the rise of China in the twenty-first century will lead to conflicts that pose a challenge to the human race. In my opinion, however, China's so-called rapid growth poses a challenge first and foremost to China itself.

Realistic Observation

Modernization in Developing Countries

In order to comprehensively deconstruct modernization and explore its lessons vis-à-vis China's past and present, we should examine the experiences of modernization in developing countries.

In the past few years I have had the opportunity to visit a few developing countries under the auspices of international nongovernmental organizations.¹ These experiences were completely different from those I had when I visited Europe and the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I discovered that we Chinese were facing problems that many developing countries had already experienced and thought about. Communicating with intellectuals from developing countries would therefore yield completely different ideas. Especially in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and South America, I discovered that the problems they thought about were almost totally beyond our field of vision. In fact, many of the goals that China planned to achieve have probably already been achieved in these countries.

For example, by 2020, China is proposing to construct a society in which everyone is comfortably well-off (*xiaokang shehui*), the goal being to triple the current per capita GDP of US\$1,000. China's current urbanization level is about 36 percent. According to estimates by the National Development and Reform Commission, the urbanization level by 2020 will be about 55 percent. Apparently, the "three rural issues" will be settled if the above per capita income and urbanization objectives are achieved. However, by carefully examining the development processes of some developing countries, we find that these objectives have already been achieved there. But have the problems been solved at the same time? Based on my personal experience doing comparison and research in developing countries, I find that China is not alone in facing the issue of "three big disparities" under a market economy.

Let us take Mexico, for example. Mexico is far ahead of China in terms of degree of privatization, liberalization, democratization, and

marketization. Prior to the financial crisis, its per capita GDP was close to US\$6,000 and the urbanization level was almost 80 percent. In other words, Mexico long ago achieved the expected objectives that China is now setting for itself. However, with such a degree of privatization, liberalization, democratization, and marketization, Mexican society is still very much polarized with huge disparities between urban and rural areas. The problems in rural areas are still very complicated and at times conflicts can be very intense.² In fact, destitution in rural areas and impoverishment among peasants are not solved by privatization, marketization, liberalization, and globalization, nor do they disappear naturally with increases in GDP or the achievement of urbanization.

Take Brazil as another example. The size of the country is slightly smaller than that of China, but the population is just over 100 million. There are not so many deserts and mountains. A Chinese person who flies over Brazil will be very envious of the vast green underneath. Brazil also boasts a very high level of economic development with a national per capita income of US\$7,000 and an urbanization level as high as 82 percent. However, the nationwide "landless workers' movement" (MST) and various intense social conflicts still exist there.

Millions of people in Mexico live in the slums. In Brazil, there are also large areas of slums in major urban areas and a great number of marginalized people live there. Prostitution, gambling, and drug use run rampant in the slums and there is a severe problem with gang control. It is very difficult for the government to exercise regular governance.

India is also facing a very serious poverty problem in its northern areas. It is the kind of poverty that is almost too horrible to look at. Large numbers of peasants are without land and thatched sheds are everywhere to be seen. Being utterly destitute, the impoverished peasants often launch unimaginably violent revolts. In the judgment of the Indian intelligence department, a guerrilla corridor has been formed from Nepal to Bhutan and from northwestern India to Sri Lanka, with armed peasants controlling extensive rural areas.

Similar examples are too numerous to list. From Thailand to the Philippines, from Mexico to Brazil, all these developing countries enjoy relatively higher income and urbanization levels and better resource conditions than China. These countries are far ahead of China in terms of the systemic reform that China is striving to achieve at present: marketization, liberalization, democratization, and globalization. These phenomena set us pondering over the following questions: Why do such

phenomena still exist now that these developing countries have already achieved what we are striving for in economic terms? Why is it that they have progressed so far in systemic reform and have achieved better economic statistics than the ones we publicize, yet the three major categories of social disparity that are our focus have still not been fundamentally resolved there? Is it in fact not the case that social conflicts in these countries are now even more complicated and intense?

What Kind of Modernization Do We Want?

When I consider the actual experiences of the past in the West, I no longer discuss the problems using well-worn concepts. Instead, I contemplate the choice for China based on the objective state of affairs. At all those seminars and conferences that are held one after another, the speakers just earnestly and tirelessly present their opinions. However, after numerous rounds of discussion, there is still no definite understanding of the fundamental problem we currently face. Sometimes, the common doubts that people have arouse very charged emotions in me.

For example, some ask, "Is China really competent enough to achieve the objective of tripling its per capita GDP?" In my opinion, we should have enough confidence. Tripling GDP is not the problem. We might even quadruple or quintuple it. The precondition is that China should not open its currency market or capital market. Why is that?

First, we should note that the most important foundation for the issuance of currency is a stable political regime. Since the world gold standard was abandoned in 1944, economic growth has played an important, but not absolute, role in the issuance of currency. What is really absolute, or the only irreplaceable source of currency credit, is the powerful political credit of the government. Therefore, we can say that the single most important foundation for the issuance of currency is a powerful political regime.

We can demonstrate this using the examples of the United States and the Soviet Union. If it had not established global hegemony through its military power which is several times greater than that of other countries, the United States could not possibly maintain its dollar as the hard currency of the world. Although the Soviet Union actually had an enormous economic aggregate, the main reason for its eventual economic collapse was nothing other than the collapse of its currency system. The main reason for the collapse of the currency system was that political

reform started off before other reforms and the powerful political regime no longer existed. The absence of a powerful political regime led to an absence of the currency credit that was based on it. As a result, there was a drastic depreciation in the ruble and the wealth of the country and the general public also shrank considerably.

Relatively speaking, China is the one country with the most stable political regime at present. No matter how much currency the country issues, credit comes from the government. Although the rate of nonperforming assets is pretty high among state-owned banks, the general public still makes deposits and no one ever doubts that these deposits will not depreciate. The reason for this is that the degree of credit of state-owned banks is not based on the rate of capital sufficiency in accordance with the regulations of the Basel Accords. It is dependent upon an enormous centralized government. In other words, China is a country with a unitary system and therefore China is not only powerful in its political regime, but also continues to deepen its self-reform. If such a stable and increasingly improving political regime can basically guarantee the stability of the country, then we should not be overanxious to open up the currency market. That way the government can print and issue currency that will increase the investment into GDP.

Why is it, then, that I suggest not opening up the capital market? In my opinion, the capital market is mainly a tool that produces added value through "capitalizing" resources and assets. The simple example below will suffice to explain this point:

In the past, China had a public housing distribution system. At that time homes were resources for living consumption instead of assets. Later in 1998, the government implemented reforms in the housing system and the public had no choice but to purchase housing. Homes thus became assets for the owners, not consumption resources that would have been obtained through distribution as in the past. If the real estate construction and operation enterprises go public, that means further capitalization of the real estate assets. If people want to purchase a home, they first of all need to acquire currency. For a home price of RMB100,000 (RMB1 = US\$0.12 at the time of writing), the government needs to issue another RMB100,000 in currency. If homes are transacted in the second-hand housing market and real estate enterprises go public, then the stockholders need more currency to participate in the transactions. If various "financial derivatives" are created, the government must issue still more currency. Therefore, when housing was distributed in the past,

although homes were actually consumed by the public, they were not reflected in the increase in GDP, whereas now the GDP doubles again and again whenever homes move from the distribution to the purchasing system, and again when they are converted into capital and enter the stock market.

This is why I have never doubted China's ability to have tripled its GDP in the past and triple it again by 2020. What is more, in a country like China, most of its prairies, forests, water, soil, and minerals are still natural resources. As long as these resources can enter the transaction market and become capitalized in the capital market, the GDP will be sure to skyrocket. An elevenfold increase will be possible, let alone tripling.

Therefore, the question is not whether the GDP can continue to double. The question is whether this is what we really want.

What do we want, in the end? When the GDP doubles ten times, we will have tens of trillions of renminbi and confront the virtual economy of the developed countries with our own virtual economy. China will be able to participate in the new round of competition against major countries with virtual capital. But is this what we really want?

If it is, then we should continue along this path, following mainstream development as at present. Can we go far along this path? Of course we can. But what are some of the conditions involved? These include the rapid development of science and technology so that sunshine can be turned into energy, seawater turned into raw material, and the resources of the earth and outer space infinitely developed. If we assume that such Western-oriented modernization can be realized, this means an infinite expansion of human capacities and an infinite appropriation of resources.

Some people feel that this path of development will not lead us anywhere and that we should, at least in our lifetime, consider the sustainable development of human beings, resources, and society. We need to reflect on the fact that China is a country where the population keeps expanding and resources are seriously lacking.

Let us suppose that China is able to achieve the objective of US\$3,000 per capita GDP by 2020, with 55 percent of the population living in cities. That means about 800 million people will live in cities, but there will still be 700 million people living in the countryside. Based on current statistics, the rural population is estimated to be 780 million. By 2020 the absolute number of the rural population would decrease by only by a few million. In other words, the highly tense relations between

people and land in the vast countryside will not be significantly changed. On the other hand, however, urbanization will inevitably require acquisition of more cultivated land. Based on the current urbanization rate, the area of cultivated land decreases by an average of 10 million *mu* (667,000 ha) every year. By 2020 there will be a decrease of more than 200 million *mu* (13 million ha) of cultivated land, so instead of improving, people-land relations in the countryside will be even worse.

If we accept this reality of development, we will find out that, even though we hope to realize integrated and coordinated urban-rural development, the current pattern of the modern economic system in the cities is still not appropriate for the rural areas with their highly tense people-land relations and highly dispersed small-scale peasant economy. The modern legal system that legal scholars advocate may also be inappropriate for a rural society based on a small-scale peasant economy. The small-scale peasant economy is highly dispersed and nonspecialized, so it would be difficult to achieve so-called modernization with a superstructure built on such an economic foundation.

Looking into 2020 with the long-term objective as it is at present, we will find that, when our population reaches more than 1.5 billion, there will still be a system with an urban-rural dual structure and a large number of people will still live in the countryside. The complete system of modernized governance that people identify with now will not be fully applicable to the rural areas. As for government, governance based on the so-called modern legal system still may not occur. So long as the urban-rural dual structure exists, the gap in income and living standard between urban and rural residents will also exist. What about the gaps between the poor and the rich and among different regions? Those, I am afraid, will also continue to exist. This will probably be the situation that we will face.

Deeper and further reflection will lead us to discover that the existence of the urban-rural dual structure in China and the even distribution of land per farming head in the current farmland system are the very reasons why there are no large-scale slums like those in the major cities of other developing countries. If peasants really leave the countryside for good, then the piece of land that they have the right to use will be gone. It has been more than ten years since peasants were first allowed to work in cities, and more than 4 million migrant workers from the rural areas have been engaged in large-scale mobile employment since the food-coupon system was abandoned in 1992. After more than ten

years, however, mobile employment remains unchanged and very few migrant workers have settled down in the cities. If we want to expedite the urbanization rate and encourage these people to settle down, we should at least first take a look at how much of the urbanization level realized in other developing countries actually occurs in and applies to the slums. Is this over-urbanization really something we want? We aspire to realizing benevolent social governance and providing these people with social welfare, but China still lacks the financial resources for this in the foreseeable future.

In view of various complicated and entangled situations, we must further reflect whether the direction based on the established discourse of modernization is really the objective we want to achieve.

A Major Change in Strategy and a Scientific Approach to Development

As we all know, the major objective we hoped to achieve in the past was called the “four modernizations,” namely modernization in industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology. Proposed and set at the beginning of the reform and opening-up policy, realization of this objective was set for 2000. But 2000 passed by without much concern about whether modernization was actually achieved.

If we pay closer attention, however, we will notice that there have been changes in the way the phrase is used. From 1998 to 1999, the state leaders changed their manner of presentation from that of twenty years before. “Agricultural modernization” was then least likely to be realized in China’s current situation, so therefore the proposal became an “attempt to realize agricultural modernization first in well-developed coastal areas.” The Chinese language is interesting—people may interpret such a change in the proposal in different ways: (1) only developed areas may realize modernization in the future and other areas can be left alone for the time being; (2) even developed coastal areas cannot realize modernization without much-needed effort; and (3) modernization may be realized across the country, but with developed coastal areas taking the lead.

By 2002, for the first time in history, the “urban-rural dual structure” as a basic systemic conflict in China was set down in the political document of the Sixteenth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). At the same time this basic systemic conflict was mentioned, “urban-rural integrated and coordinated development” was also

proposed. This can be interpreted in this way: due to conditions now, it is hard to realize this integrated development between urban and rural areas. In addition, what deserves our particular attention in view of the increasingly serious three conflicts in China is that the document stressed that the major objective to be achieved by 2020 was "the construction of a society in which everyone is comfortably well-off." Thus, the proposal of the "four modernizations" not realized was actually significantly amended using a realistic approach.

During the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CCP Central Committee in 2003, the central government further stressed the "integrated approach to development" (*zonghe fazhan guan*). This can be understood to mean that "GDP will not be the only criterion" in the future. At the same time, the central government also stressed the importance of realizing the "five integrated developments," namely urban-rural, region-region, economic-social, human-nature, and domestic-international.

The outlook from the central government also underwent major changes during the first years of the new century. At the turn of the century, the central government specifically stressed that the guiding principle of the tenth five-year plan was "people-centeredness" (*yi ren wei ben*). During the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CCP Central Committee, "people-centeredness" was once again stressed as the premise of the scientific approach to development. By December 2004, the central government specifically organized a workshop for senior leaders on the transformation of strategic thought from "integrated development" to "scientific approaches to development." Not only was "people-centeredness" stressed again as a major guiding principle in the "scientific approach to development," but also the concept of "sustainability" was introduced. Therefore, the new trend became "people-centeredness," integrated and coordinated development, and sustainable development.

During the National People's Congress in March 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao fully expounded the main contents of the significant strategic change in his government work report. From the Sixteenth National Congress of the CCP in 2002 to the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CCP Central Committee in 2003 and to the reports of this year's National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the strategic change has been basically specified and interpreted and has gradually become government policy.

For this reason, we highly praise the people-centered scientific ap-

proach to development put forward at the Third Plenary Session of the Sixteenth CCP Central Committee. The “new industrialization path” and “circular economy” emphasized in the 2004 government work report indicate that the central government is wary of vulgar economic growth: unreasonable consumption must be curtailed, unrestricted consumption must be avoided, and laissez-faire attitudes in the blind expansion of industrial capital should be stopped. In the government work report, the economic growth target for 2004 is set at 7 percent and other economic indexes for 2004 are also drastically lowered. For example, import-export growth in 2003 was 37 percent and the ratio for 2004 is set at 8 percent. Many people do not understand this: Why should we set the index so low at a stage of high growth? The fundamental reason for this is that the central government has realized that this vulgar growth is not sustainable.

We highly praise the guiding principles of “people-centeredness” and sustainable development put forward by the central government. What we would like to have are an effective economy and a circular economy instead of the blind advocacy of consumerism. Our reflections on the issues in modernization also tally with the policy considerations of the central government. Therefore, my deconstruction of modernization is not simply the personal perspective of an ordinary researcher, but also should be related to a series of discussions on policies.

Epilogue

Reflection as a Stepping Stone

The deconstruction of modernization that I explore in this article is the result of my own reflections over the past years. It contains my reconsiderations of many problems we face today based on my observation of the world from a wider perspective, based especially on my study tours and comparative study of developing countries. No doubt these thoughts may seem unilateral and simplistic. I am aware that my research is not thorough enough, but I will continue such research during my lifetime and deepen my own knowledge and perception. What I am doing here is to present some of this possibly disordered perceptual knowledge that I have accumulated over the years. I often feel ashamed and uneasy that my understanding of modernization at this moment is only at this early stage. However, even this perceptual knowledge leads me to doubt much of the established discourse.

It is my opinion that, as members of the generation growing up together with the country, we should provide a stepping stone for younger generations so that their progress can be steady and sure. What can we provide as stepping stones? We can provide our reflection, deconstruction, and serious rethinking of the established discourse. Young people absorb much knowledge from books and universities, but they may lack the necessary spirit of reflection. Once they have accumulated a certain amount of experience, what they perceive may be different from what they learned in books. Such being the case, why do we not present these young people with the results of our own experience and reflection? In this way, they can go ahead and begin their discussions before it is too late and too difficult to make changes.

Notes

1. Visiting these places always inspires me to do some serious reflection and discussion. Many of these discussions have been published in magazines such as *Zhongguo gaige* (China reform). For example, my reflections on Mexico were published as "Xianchang muji Moxige mengmian jun" (An eye-witness report on Mexico's masked army), *China Reform* 9 (2003); my reflections on India were published as "Wu di ze fan" (Revolt due to landlessness), *China Reform* 2 (2004), and "Dang zheng ze luan" (Chaos due to party struggle), *Gaige neican* (internal publication of the China Institute for Reform and Development); and in "Mengjiala zhushi" (Notes on Bangladesh) I attempted to interpret the phenomena I had observed there in 2003.

2. In 1994 there was a peasant uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas, and it has carried on for ten years now. It was an armed uprising launched by indigenous people in the mountains, and now they are gradually developing forms of local self-governance.