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## Xiaokang — the Chinese Model of Development

The beginning of the reform and opening up policy, which began in the 1980s, brought into the Chinese political lexicon a word made up of two simple characters, like “小康” (xiaokang). In this word, the character “小” (xiao) means “little” and “康” (kang) means “goodness, tranquility”. In foreign literature, this combination is translated as “low prosperity”, “average prosperity”, “small tranquility”, but the commonly accepted translation used in official Chinese documents is “moderately prosperous”. In Chinese political discourse, “Xiaokang” is related to such notions as social development, social policy, and people’s well-being. To date, achieving the level of “Xiaokang” and the comprehensive construction of “Xiaokang society” is the main practical activity of China’s modernization carried out by the Communist Party of China over the past 40 years of reform and opening up. This article examines the use of the concept of “xiaokang” (moderately prosperous) in the process of China’s modernization and socio-economic development during the reform period. Using historical and philosophical analysis, it traces the trend of transformation of the concept “Xiaokang” from antiquity to the present day. The expected achievement of the goal of “comprehensive Xiaokang society” and China’s proclamation of complete eradication of poverty by the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (2021) is a topic of great relevance for the study.

*Keywords:* China, modernization, reforms, concept of “xiaokang”, policy, social development, Confucianism, poverty alleviation, Communist Party of China, goal.

### Introduction

The significant successes achieved as a result of modernization in all spheres of social life allowed China to become one of the most important poles of the system of international relations. Having reached the level of average developed states and noticeably increased the level of well-being of its citizens, the Chinese leadership has practically fulfilled the task of building a “moderately prosperous society” (“xiaokang shehui”), which it set for itself at the end of the last century. The relevance of the study lies in the historical and philosophical analysis of the role of the concept “xiaokang” in the modernization and development of China. The concept of “xiaokang” in the history of socialism with Chinese specificity today holds a strong position and became the main goal towards which all the efforts of the so-called “socialist” modernization of the country are directed — to build a “rich socialism”. As our country on the modern stage also stands on a way of performance of a task of economic and political modernization, studying of experience of the Chinese model of modernization and a problem of mastering of the Chinese experience for Kazakhstan are rather actual.

The purpose of this article is to explore the centuries-long evolution of the ancient Chinese concept of Xiaokang and its modern interpretation; to identify the role of this concept in the process of socialist modernization in China; and to analyze the level of implementation of the program of building a “comprehensive Xiaokang society” as of today. After all, in 2021 China plans to achieve the goal of building a Xiaokang society by eliminating absolute poverty in the country.

The concept of “Xiaokang” is widely and deeply researched in China itself. In the study of this topic, researchers rely primarily on such primary sources as the Confucian treatises, “Shijing” and “Liji”, and on the collection of the works of Deng Xiaoping published in 1994. In most of the Chinese articles, the authors considered the concept of “xiaokang” as part of the historical changes in the development of the model of socialism in China. A more detailed and comprehensive study of the concept “xiaokang” has been made in the Russian academic community. Doctor of Economics, Professor of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies A.V. Ostrovsky in his numerous works considers the concept of “Xiaokang” as the main component of eco-

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conomic reforms in China. In the article “The 13th five-year plan: how to build a “xiaokang” society in China by 2020” (2016), Ostrovsky expressed his positive assessment of China’s economic development and did not rule out that the country would be able to realize its goal of building the Xiaokang within the planned time frame. Many academics agree that the formation of xiaokang as a key Communist Party’s concept carries with it the discursive, practical, and theoretical foundations that the Party uses to dialogue with domestic audiences [1].

There are few studies in domestic Chinese studies devoted directly to the concept of “xiaokang”. Basically, “xiaokang” is more considered in linguistic and cultural aspects in the study of the canons of Confucianism. As part of the study of the foundations of China’s modernization, the concept was briefly discussed in the collective monograph “Modernization of China and Kazakhstan” (2014), led by Professor N.A. Aldabek. Renown Professor Mukametkhanuly N., in the article “On the Future Goals and Tasks of China’s Development (Based on the XVIII Congress of the CCP)” (2014), gave his understanding of the role of the concept “Xiaokang” in Chinese political life. However, in the domestic literature there are no works based on a systematic analysis of the concept from different aspects. This fact increases the relevance of the work in domestic Chinese studies.

### *Experimental*

This research is based on a desk review, the works of Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders of the Party and state, materials from CPC congresses and plenums, and works of Chinese, Russian, and Western economists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, and cultural scientists form the theoretical and methodological basis of the paper. Because of the nature of our subject, the documents of the Communist Party of China were crucial, as they examined several important aspects of building “xiaokang” society. The methodological basis of the article was based on such methods of cognition as the dialectical method used to understand the dichotomy “traditional — modern” as a kind of unity. The main method is the method of historicism, which considers historical phenomena in their formation, development and interdependence, inextricable connection with the past. The comparative-historical method made it possible to trace the formation of xiaokang concepts in its historical development. This approach provided an overview of the transformation of the very notion of building a xiaokang society in historical context by analyzing the idea of xiaokang in depth in ancient China and at the present stage. Also, the study on the trend of development of the concept “Xiaokang” provides historical and philosophical analysis, which shows well the continuity of history with the present. In addition, the article used a combination of literary and realist methods. The study of relevant domestic and foreign theoretical literature allowed us to summarize experiences and lessons learned while studying China’s way of building a Xiaokang society.

### *Discussion*

The “xiaokang” concept is not only a program for the comprehensive development of all Chinese society, but also the basis of the long-term development strategy as the “Chinese dream”, proclaimed by Xi Jinping, President of the PRC. “The Chinese people have pursued the “xiaokang” dream since ancient times”, said Wang Gonglong, a professor at the Shanghai Party Institute of the Communist Party of China. “Its meaning has evolved with the modernization of the country under the leadership of the CCP” [2]. According to PRC political media content, the Chinese dream, as the embodiment of the Chinese people’s national idea, began to take shape long before the establishment of CCP power in China. More than 2,000 years ago, it was embodied in the “Book of Songs” (Shijing) in the form of the “small welfare society” (“xiaokang”). It is likely that the “Book of Songs” was created by Confucius, so he is also sometimes attributed the authorship of the concept of the “Xiaokang”. The principle of “xiaokang”, a philosophical category of Confucianism, partly reflects issues of equitable government. Confucius himself interpreted this definition as follows: “Xiaokang is a society in which duty (yi) and ritual (li) are decisive in appointing positions in government, in choosing the mode of government, in family and economic matters”. “The Chinese Dream” is also sometimes referred to as an outgrowth of ancient social dreams of a just society where everyone finds their happiness [3; 395]. Although the term was historically vague, since the late 1970s the concept has gradually evolved and become clearer as an important step in the country’s development. Over time, the concept became more concrete and practical. Deng Xiaoping, as applied to modern China, presented a term “xiaokang” as a “middle-income society”. What prompted the great “architect” of Chinese reforms to turn to antiquity? As Alexander Lomanov, doctor of historical sciences, professor of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, puts it: “Xiaokang has become a foun-

dition of China's reform policy, because it was based on ancient culture. At the same time, it was secular and rationalistic, although it was colored by Confucian moral philosophy" [2].

By 1956 China had largely completed its socialist transformation and was entering the initial stage of socialism. Before the reforms that began in 1978, China was in a constant state of poverty. At that time the country was 90 % agrarian and for a long time, it could not find a solution to the problem of food and clothing for the people. The country was in need of modernization. When Deng Xiaoping served as a paramount leader of China, he began to implement the "four modernizations" that had been set in motion by Zhou Enlai during Mao's reign. This course included radical changes in four areas — agriculture, industry, military, science and technology. At the initial stage of the proclamation of "modernization", specific goals had not yet been formulated. China was far from the level of developed countries, which were the benchmark for modernization, and the country could not achieve this level in the short term. If Chinese leaders took a long period to achieve the goal, it would deprive the people's motivation in the struggle for development. Under the prevailing historical conditions, the second generation of China's leadership, represented by Deng Xiaoping decided to develop a special way of development, which would correspond to the Chinese mentality.

"Modernization in Chinese way", as Deng Xiaoping called it, was not supposed to be a second "Great leap forward" and had a specific social and economic goal. The initial task was to solve the problem of motivating workers and peasants, who are the backbone of the country's economy, to consolidate their forces to achieve the goals of modernization. Here it was necessary to act carefully, because the "Great leap" and the "Cultural revolution" significantly undermined the level of trust of the people in the leaders of the country. Only tradition and the cult of antiquity could help the country get back on its feet. After all, as China's history shows, the country has more than once turned to antiquity for its new rise in times of decline. As the researchers point out, an important feature of the Chinese mentality was a relatively high level of historical consciousness. During his political repression, Deng Xiaoping began to study the experience of Singapore, whose government was able to turn a country without any natural resources into a strong economic power. Lee Kuan Yew played a special role in this process, drawing on Confucian principles in his reforms in the country. Deng Xiaoping also studied the social and economic program of Taiwan, the drafting of which was greatly influenced by the Confucian Chen Lifu. The "Xiaokang", or "Poverty Elimination Program in Taiwan Province" promulgated by members of the Kuomintang in November 1972, whose main provisions were aimed at the social and economic development of the island, was something of a sign for the "father of reform" in turning to Confucianism [4; 23]. This undoubtedly had an impact on Deng Xiaoping's subsequent views and his adoption of a development program for mainland China. Realizing that blindly following tradition would not lead to the country's development, but that abandoning tradition would not produce results either, Deng Xiaoping planned to build a "Confucian socialism", where modernity and antiquity would lead the country to progress. The main focus of economic reform was to create a "middle level of prosperity (xiaokang)" as a Chinese response to the Western theory of national economic construction.

It is believed that Deng Xiaoping first mentioned the "xiaokang" in 1979 in a conversation with the Japanese prime minister. He called the "xiaokang" the dream of educated Chinese for more than a thousand years. On December 6, 1979, when Deng Xiaoping met with Japanese Prime Minister Masahiro Ohira, he first proposed an entirely new concept of "Four Chinese-style modernizations" — the "xiaokang family" (middle-income family) [5]. The "xiaokang family" concept was a major adjustment and modification of the country's modernization that Deng Xiaoping envisioned to be used to achieve global excellence by the end of the 20th century. According to Lomanoff, Deng Xiaoping's use of the term "Xiaokang" "was intended to help China to restore civilizational dialogue and understanding with more economically developed countries and territories of East Asia of that time" [2]. Deng Xiaoping later fleshed out the content of the concept of "xiaokang", indicating that the Chinese people would fundamentally change their country's backwardness and make it an advanced state in the world. To realize the goals of reform and opening up, Deng found an appropriate formulation that helped rally Chinese society around the objectives of economic development and modernization. Since then, he has repeatedly demonstrated in his practice the leading modernization of socialism with Chinese characteristics, gradually enriched and developed this idea, formed his theory of prosperous society and on this basis proposed a "three-stage" development strategy.

In April 1987, Deng Xiaoping linked "xiaokang" with the political goal of the country's development and presented the steps he had devised to achieve this strategic goal. The first step comprised doubling GNP of 1980 (\$200) by the year 1990. The second step involved doubling GNP of the 1990 year by the year 2000 (\$800) [6; 247]. Deng Xiaoping noted that the essence of socialism is general prosperity. "If we reach four thousand dollars per capita gross national product (GNP) (the third step), and general prosperity, it will best

show that the socialist system has an advantage over the capitalist system” [6, 248]. In October 1987, at the XIII Congress of the CPC, “Xiaokang” was officially formulated as the “second step” of the socialist modernization strategy [7]. Although the concept of the “xiaokang” is a social ideal, in contrast to traditional Confucian notions of the “xiaokang” and Kang Yuwei’s interpretation, in Deng Xiaoping’s theory it is based on the concrete realities of the country. In this sense, it reflects the general aspiration of the Chinese people and is related to the practice of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. He was able to unite Chinese society and motivate people to participate in the process of modernization. At the same time, the commitment to China’s socialist path of development was not lost. Deng Xiaoping began to implement real steps towards the practical implementation of this ideal [4; 24].

In 40 years since Deng Xiaoping set the goal of a “moderately prosperous society”, China has made a historic leap from poverty to a “wenbao” (food and clothing) and then to a welfare society. The great practice of building a higher level of “xiaokang society” that would benefit more than a billion people is now being comprehensively developed. To achieve this goal, the country’s leadership undertook a series of economic transformations and embarked on a market economy without departing from socialist ideals. Thus, in October 1992, the 14th Party Congress officially adopted a decision to establish a socialist market economy to achieve the goal of development and prosperity in the lives of the people throughout the country.

“Xiaokang” was often referred to as a central element of the development program of Chinese society and during the period of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao’s leadership. In 1997, at the 15th General Congress of the CPC, Xiaokang was called the new historical mission of the Party and has since been used in the political planning of the country’s development course.

In November 2000, the National Bureau of Statistics published the report “Comprehensive Analysis of China’s Xiaokang Achievement Process”, which indicated that 74.84 % of the country’s population had reached the middle-income level, 12.82 % were close to the xiaokang level, and 12.34 % were far from xiaokang. The level of well-being on which the analysis report was based included 5 aspects, such as economic level, material life, quality of population, spiritual life, and living environment, consisting of 16 indicators [2].

In 2002, the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of China set itself the grand goal of building a “comprehensive moderately prosperous society” by 2020. Jiang Zemin made a contribution to Deng Xiaoping’s theory and he divided the process of creating a “xiaokang” society into many stages that progressed in order. The content of “xiaokang society” took on a wider meaning in Jiang Zemin’s study than that of Deng Xiaoping. Jiang Zemin’s report to the 16th CPC Congress stated that “xiaokang” has so far been built only on a limited area of free economic zones, major cities and coastal provinces; in the next twenty years, the main task of the Chinese people will be to establish “xiaokang” in the entire mandated territory. In 2007, the 17th Party Congress put forward new demands on the goal of comprehensively building a “comprehensive moderately prosperous society”, giving new connotations to Deng Xiaoping’s theory of a prosperous society. It involves a continuum of political, social, and cultural-spiritual problems of building explicitly Chinese socialism, in addition to strictly economic characteristics. As a result, “xiaokang” society tends to be a stage in the realization of the CPC’s social ideal [8; 13].

Building a “comprehensive xiaokang society” is a step toward qualitative changes in such key areas as the economy, political culture, spiritual culture, science and education, the social sphere, and the environment. By 2020, the economy was supposed to increase GDP by several times, complete the process of industrialization, increase the level of urbanization, narrow the gap between regional, urban and rural areas, farmers and workers, and improve living standards, including income, employment, and social security. In the field of spiritual culture, science and education, the task was to create a complete health care system, an innovative culture, and a national education system that encompasses the entire population of China. The CCP sought to create a socialist spiritual civilization and achieve social harmony in the public sphere. In the field of ecology, the sustainable development of the environment and the achievement of harmony between man and nature are the main indicators of the creation of a comprehensive Xiaokang society.

According to Russian scholar Y.M. Berger, the grandiosity of Chinese long-term goals is adequate to China’s great history and culture. The dream of China’s revival has left no generation of the country’s leaders alone. As Berger writes, today the way to realize this goal in the short term is through the “comprehensive construction of the xiaokang society”. According to the scholar, the program of “building the Xiaokang society” is aimed not only at improving the standard of living and quality of life in all aspects, but also to strengthen the “power of the state”. China, from a regional power, is gradually increasing its influence on the world, thereby claiming the role of a global power [9; 4]. The idea of “xiaokang” is becoming a symbol of

the country's modernization reforms. It can be noted the fact and scale of "xiaokang's" integration into the China's ideological, social, and political life.

President Xi Jinping has made "comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society" the first of his "Four Comprehensives," a list of key political goals [10]. In 2017, at the 19th CPC Congress, Xi Jinping emphasized in his report the goals of realizing a "comprehensive moderately prosperous society" and ensuring the victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, indicating that China has entered the final phase on the road to achieving Xiaokang. In his lengthy speech at the opening of the Congress, Chairman Xi mentioned the term "Xiaokang shehui — moderately prosperous society" 18 times. From this we can conclude that the country's leaders use the term "Xiaokang society" as a synonym for the rise of China [1].

Despite the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country's economy hard, China still managed to maintain a positive level of development. Even during this difficult period, the country pursued the goal of "xiaokang" and fought hard against poverty. On November 3, 2020, the CPC released the party leadership's recommendations for the formulation of the country's 14th Five-Year Development Plan (2021–2025). The formation of a new development architectonics in which domestic and foreign markets stimulate mutual development, provided that the domestic market is given priority, is a strategic choice in favor of raising China's economic development to a new level. This, in turn, as Xi Jinping emphasized, will create new advantages for China in global economic cooperation and competition. Xi said it is "quite possible" for China to reach the current standards of high-income countries by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan period, and to double the total economy or average per capita income by 2035. Chairman also said that China will be able to achieve the goal of building a comprehensive "xiaokang" society on time. The comprehensive building of a moderately prosperous society for the benefit of over one billion people by the time the CPC celebrates its centennial anniversary is a solemn promise the Party makes to the people, Xi Jinping recalled. Xi Jinping also noted that in the first half of 2021, the CPC Central Committee will conduct a systematic evaluation and debriefing on comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society (Xiaokang shehui) before officially announcing the achievement of this goal [11].

### *Conclusions*

The philosophical and ethical component of China's modernization plays the role of solidarizing social relations and is the basis in the state development program. Today, reaching the level of development of society up to xiaokang is not only the goal of the historical development of the Chinese people, but also the goal of the CCP's 100 years of activity, as well as the goal of one leader who intends to hold office for another term. Xiaokang is a point of convergence of Confucianism, Marxism and socialism ideas with Chinese specificity. The construction of Xiaokang society in China is included in the main provisions of the leading Party and state documents. The main source of legitimacy for the CCP is undoubtedly economic development. For decades, while the party controlled rapid economic growth and a massive fall in poverty, the Chinese people accepted severe restrictions on political freedom. Grandiose goals and campaigns, such as the achievement of the level xiaokang, were precisely the way the CCP communicated these developmental successes to the people. On the other hand, by linking its legitimacy to socio-economic development and the building of a "xiaokang" society, the party now has no choice but to find ways to improve the standard of living of the Chinese people and take the next step toward the already more grandiose goal called Datong.

According to the party's goal, the central government has set ambitious new long-term goals of "basically achieving socialist modernization" by 2035 and becoming a "great modern socialist nation" that will be prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful by 2050. How feasible this next goal of the Chinese government will only be shown by the result of the complete construction of the Xiaokang society. According to the country's leaders, this process should be completed as early as this year, 2021.

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### Сяокан — дамудың қытайлық үлгісі

XX ғасырдың 80-ші жылдарында басталған реформа мен ашық есік саясатының басталуы Қытайдың саяси сөздік қорына «小康» (Сяокан) сияқты екі қарапайым иероглифтен тұратын сөз енгізді. Бұл сөзде «小» (Сяо) иероглифі «кішкентай», ал «康» (кан) «байлық, өркендеу, тыныштық» дегенді білдіреді. Шетел әдебиетінде бұл тіркес «кішігірім гүлдену», «орташа табыс», «орта жетістік» деп аударылады. Қытайдың саяси дискурсында «Сяокан» әлеуметтік даму, әлеуметтік саясат, халықтың әл-ауқаты сияқты ұғымдармен байланыстырылады. Бүгінгі күні «сяокан» деңгейіне жету және «жан-жақты сяокан қоғамын» құру — бұл Қытай Коммунистік партиясының реформалар мен ашық есік саясатын жүргізу барысының соңғы 40 жылында жүзеге асырып отырған Қытайды модернизациялаудың негізгі практикалық қызметі болып табылады. Мақалада Қытай Халық Республикасын модернизациялау және реформалар кезеңіндегі әлеуметтік-экономикалық даму үрдісінде «сяокан» (орта жетістік) тұжырымдамасының қолданылуы талданған. Тарихи-философиялық талдауды қолдану арқылы ежелгі дәуірден бүгінгі күнге дейінгі «сяокан» ұғымының өзгеру тенденциясы қарастырылған. «Сяокан жан-жақты қоғамының» мақсатқа жетуі және Қытай Коммунистік партиясының құрылуының 100 жылдығына орай (2021 жыл) Қытайдың кедейлікті толық жоюды жариялауы зерттеу үшін өте өзекті тақырып болып табылады.

*Кілт сөздер:* Қытай, модернизация, реформалар, «сяокан» тұжырымдамасы, қоғамдық даму, конфуцийшілдік, саясат, кедейшілікпен күрес, Қытай коммунистік партиясы, мақсат.

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### Сяокан — китайская модель развития

Начало политики реформ и открытости, получившее свое развитие в 80-х гг. XX века, привнесло в политический лексикон Китая слово, состоящее из простых двух иероглифов, как “小康”(сяокан). В данном слове иероглиф “小” (сяо) имеет значение «маленький», а “康” (кан) — «достаток, благоденствие, спокойствие». В зарубежной литературе данное сочетание переводят как «малое благоденствие», «средний достаток», «средняя зажиточность». «Сяокан» в политическом дискурсе Китая соотносится с такими понятиями, как социальное развитие, социальная политика, народное благосостояние. На сегодняшний день достижение уровня «сяокан» и всестороннее построение общества «сяокан» — это основная практическая деятельность по модернизации Китая, проводимая Коммунистической партией Китая за последние 40 лет реформ и открытости. Настоящая статья посвящена рассмотрению использования концепта «сяокан» (средней зажиточности) в процессе модернизации Китайской Народной Республики и социально-экономического развития в период реформ. С помощью использования историко-философского анализа прослеживается тенденция трансформации концепта «сяокан» от древности до сегодняшнего дня. Ожидаемое достижение цели «всестороннего общества сяокан» и провозглашение Китаем полного искоренения бедности к 100-

летию основания Коммунистической партии Китая (2021 г.) представляют тему весьма актуальной для исследования.

*Ключевые слова:* Китай, модернизация, реформы, концепт «сяокан», общественное развитие, политика, конфуцианство, борьба с бедностью, Коммунистическая партия Китая, цель.

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