

# Historical Basis, Theoretical Implication, and Practical Significance: A Three-Dimensional Analysis of Marx's Thoughts on Clean Government

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**Abstract:** Marx scientifically summarized the experience and lessons of the Paris Commune, deeply exposed the root causes of bourgeois corruption, and emphasized the purity and advancement of the construction of proletarian political parties and political power. The dictatorship of the proletariat puts forward the ideas of cheap government that eradicate corruption, realizes that the people are the masters of the country, implements democratic supervision of elections, simplifies the construction of institutions, lowers governance costs, and achieves higher efficiency. A deep understanding of the theoretical characteristics of Marx's thoughts on integrity, democracy, and honor, and a profound clarification of the practical significance of Marx's ideology on clean governance, combined with practical practice, will help promote the construction of a new system of anti-corruption and incorruption in our country, and will benefit our contemporary services. The construction of a type-oriented government system is conducive to deepening the construction of China's national legal system.

**Keywords:** Marx; Thoughts on clean government; Historical basis; Theoretical implications; Significance

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## 1. Historical basis for the emergence of Marx's thought on integrity

### 1.1. Marx profoundly analyzed the root causes of corruption and exposed the corrupt nature of the bourgeois regime

Marx and Engels believed that "Private ownership of the means of production is the general root cause of corruption, and class society is the breeding ground on which corruption depends" <sup>[1]</sup>. In the primitive society, social division of labor gave rise to the emergence of private ownership, which in turn provided a powerful impetus for the development of the division of labor. Division of labor and private ownership jointly contributed

to the contradiction in the development of capitalist society. Meanwhile, in a capitalist society, due to the wide scope and diverse content of the division of labor, it separates material labor from spiritual labor. People unite to form different groups for their own different interests, leading to the emergence and opposition of classes. The initial stage of human beings' entry into class society was the slave society. Due to the division of labor, the slave-owning class and the slave class were divided, and exploitation and being exploited began to emerge. The further development of the division of labor accelerated the replacement of social forms, making the slave society develop into the feudal society and giving rise to the group of the civil class. When a minority of the bourgeoisie possesses considerable capital, the internal contradictions within the bourgeoisie will deepen step by step, thereby giving rise to the emergence of the capitalist class. The contradictions among citizens triggered class opposition and caused intense class struggle. After the class struggle pushed the society into irreconcilable contradictions, in order to alleviate the fierce conflicts of class struggle and prevent the disappearance of classes in the struggle, the form of the state as an "illusory community" began to emerge. Since the state has a class nature from the very beginning, its emergence cannot completely curb class struggle. Compulsory division of labor will lead to people's labor always being oppressed, enslaved, and distorted. In the long run, the labor production carried out by people will form an opposition and confrontation with people themselves, that is, it will cause the alienation of people's labor. Therefore, if the state is to perish and class opposition is to disappear, it is necessary to eliminate spontaneous social division of labor and achieve harmonious unity between special interests and common interests. Only by eliminating private ownership and the alienation of labor can human intelligence, physical strength, and working ability achieve free and all-round development. Therefore, Marx analyzed the root that the corruption phenomenon produced by the bourgeoisie as being due to the private ownership brought about by the division of labor.

## **1.2. Marx scientifically summarized the experience of the Paris Commune and put forward the important idea of building a "cheap government"**

Marx and Engels profoundly analyzed and summarized the reasons for the failure of the Paris Commune, clearly understood the profit-seeking nature of the bourgeoisie, and proposed the idea of establishing a proletarian government to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus in order to build a "cheap government." Marx believed that the essence of a "cheap government" is to generate more efficient work performance with lower political input costs. The key to practicing integrity must be "to prevent the officials within the party-one's own servants, from becoming bureaucrats who act wantonly within the party" <sup>[2]</sup>. The distinct features of a cheap government are mainly manifested in the rationality of the national system and institutions, the continuous improvement of people's livelihood standards, the integrity and efficiency of government officials, the complete disappearance of the hierarchical system, the people's sovereignty over the country, the sustained and stable development of the economy, the harmonious and stable operation of society, the streamlining and diligence of institutions and personnel, the eradication of social corruption and waste, the implementation of democratic supervision and election, the realization of the transformation of government functions, and the principle of "public servant." In terms of solidifying the concept of "position" and enhancing the administrative efficiency of public officials, etc. Marx and Engels put forward that "Only by clearly understanding and correctly treating the state, accurately grasping the essence of the state, and on this basis analyzing and grasping the essence of the bourgeois state, can a proletarian state be truly established and the ultimate goal of the victory of the proletarian revolution be achieved" <sup>[3]</sup>. Marx deeply realized that only by "smashing" the bourgeois state apparatus could the proletariat establish its own state and determine its new ideology. Only by establishing a democratic regime

under the dictatorship of the proletariat could it achieve its own liberation, that is, to consolidate the proletariat's rule through a people's armed regime. Marx demanded that the government should become an institution that cuts spending, reduces the tax burden on the people, adheres to democratic supervision of elections, and eliminates corruption and waste, namely a "cheap government." A cheap government cannot be established in a bourgeois society because it is the emergence of bourgeois private ownership that breeds corruption and coexists with the ideology of the exploiting class. Therefore, only by overthrowing the bourgeois regime through the violent revolution of the proletariat, abolishing private ownership of the means of production and achieving public ownership of the means of production can the cancer of corruption be completely eradicated. After the proletariat comes to power, it will advocate the construction of a "cheap government" that serves the interests of the masses. Marx's interpretation of "cheap government": "That is, the commune realized the slogan of cheap government proposed by all bourgeois revolutions because it abolished the two largest expenditure items, namely the standing army and state officials" <sup>[4]</sup>. In this way, the state has been replaced by the false accountability system of the past and exists in the form of a true accountability system. The state existing in the form of a true accountability system shoulders the responsibility of eliminating corruption and waste, eliminating the hierarchical system, eliminating the idea of privileges for public officials, streamlining institutions, reducing office staff, implementing a low salary system for public officials, and enabling the people to truly enjoy national sovereignty. The significant mission of becoming the true master of the entire society.

### **1.3. Marx scientifically summarized the experience of the Paris Commune and emphasized the purity and advancement of the construction of the proletarian party and regime**

The organizational discipline of the ruling party is the political guarantee for the proletarian party to prevent corruption and eradicate corruption. In "The Civil War in France," Marx put forward the proposition of establishing a proletarian party to achieve clean governance of the government. This proposition has significant guiding significance for the establishment of the status of the proletarian party and maintaining its purity and advanced nature, providing a series of incisive judgments for the construction of anti-corruption and integrity for the proletarian party. The phenomenon of corruption will not disappear with the demise of the old state power. The society in power by the proletariat has not yet completely broken free from the shackles of the old system in terms of economy, morality, and spirit. The newly established state still has to face the arduous task of anti-corruption. Marx said in a letter to Engels: "We must now absolutely maintain the Party's discipline; otherwise, nothing will be accomplished" <sup>[5]</sup>. Marx attached great importance to maintaining the purity and advanced nature of the proletarian party in terms of economy, politics, culture, and morality. The conception of realizing the purity of the regime first requires clarifying the purpose of the proletarian party, secondly, establishing the proletarian democratic system, and finally abolishing the high salary system for public officials and the hierarchical system. Lay the economic and political foundation for the establishment of the proletarian state and the implementation of clean governance. The proletarian party is a ruling party that has no special interests of its own except for the interests of the people <sup>[6]</sup>. The advanced nature of the proletarian party is mainly reflected in taking the broad masses of the people and the working class with advanced consciousness as the foundation for building the team, taking scientific theoretical methods as the ideological basis for guiding the revolution, taking promoting social productive forces and liberating and developing social productive forces as the practical path, and taking achieving the liberation and free and all-round development of all mankind as the core purpose. The construction of the Party's advanced nature is the most prominent advantage of a

Marxist ruling party compared with other political parties. Maintaining the Party's purity and advanced nature construction is the fundamental guarantee for maintaining the Party's vigorous vitality, consolidating the Party's long-term governance foundation, and safeguarding the Party's integrity in governance. Fully realizing the Party's efficient leadership function and integrity in governance function is the value orientation of Marx's clean governance construction.

## **2. The profound theoretical implications of Marx's thought on integrity**

### **2.1. People-oriented nature is the most brilliant theoretical trait of Marx's thought on integrity**

Marx's thought on integrity is the idea of adhering to the people's principal position. The people being supreme is the core purpose and value destination of integrity building. Adhering to the people's principal position is the driving force and guideline for Marxism to understand and transform the world. The proletariat shoulders the historical mission of breaking the class oppression of the old system and realizing the new system of people's happiness. The proletariat's resistance against the baseness of the old system is to play the decisive role of "the demands of the people." The concept of "the people" in Marxism gradually took shape on the basis of criticizing and absorbing various theoretical ideas. Marx paid great attention to humanism in ancient Greece and the Renaissance. The French movement advocating human rights and freedom became the enlightenment of Marx's people-oriented thought. Marx absorbed Feuerbach's materialist thought. It also developed the relationship between the state and citizens in the rational acceptance and reasonable sublation of Hegel's absolute spirit, and put forward the great thought that the people are the true subjects of the state. People-oriented nature is an important category of the Marxist theoretical system and the most distinctive theoretical character of Marx. Marx clearly stated his position of putting people first: "The movement of the proletariat is an independent and autonomous movement by which the vast majority seek the interests of the vast majority" <sup>[7]</sup>. Marx's "popular nature" went through the regrowth stage of the "popular nature" of free will during his middle school years, the budding stage of the return of reason to the "popular nature" during his tenure at the Rheiniszem, the development stage of the "abstract popular nature" during the publication of the German Ideology, the true formation stage of the "concrete popular nature," and finally the realization of human freedom during the publication of the Communist Manifesto and the highly mature stage of the all-round development of "people-oriented nature." The historical mission of the people-oriented nature of Marx's thought on integrity is to eliminate all privileges and realize the people's status as masters of the country. The people-oriented nature advocated by Marx, which is free and all-round development, is precisely the embodiment of the free and conscious activities of human beings who have escaped alienated labor, and it transcends the people-oriented nature of the pre-capitalist society of "human dependence" and the capitalist society of "material dependence." Marx closely linked the development of individuals with the progress of society, with fairness and justice as the value orientation. Achieving the free and all-round development of human beings is the logical starting point and value destination of Marx's "people-oriented" thought.

### **2.2. Democracy is the most distinctive political character of Marx's integrity building**

Marx proposed: "In democracy, the principle of form is also the principle of matter." Therefore, only democracy is the true unity of the universal and the specific <sup>[8]</sup>. Inspired by the direct democracy of the city-states in ancient Greece's Athens, Marx denied the heroic historical view that individuals determine history from a historical perspective, faced the relationship between the state and society from a dialectical perspective, and firmly



believed that the essence of the democratic system is the self-regulation of the people. Marx criticized Hegel's view of the state, arguing that elections in capitalist countries are merely tools for the people to elect class rule. He proposed that democracy is a form of state organization, a social governance model that determines public affairs, and an organizational form of decision-making mechanisms. The democracy of Marx carries the power and freedom of the people to participate in national politics and social governance, and represents the people's yearning for the spirit of freedom. Marx believed that the direct participation of the people, the fairness and integrity of the government, and the high degree of social autonomy are the basic manifestations of a country's democratic system. "The democratic politics of the proletariat is not only a political form of social liberation" <sup>[9]</sup>. Marx profoundly pointed out that the fundamental task of the proletarian party is to overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie, the ultimate goal is to establish a democratic form of proletarian dictatorship, eliminate exploitation and oppression, eradicate corruption and waste, and the lofty mission is to realize communism. To achieve the liberation and development of all mankind, Marxist democratic theory has laid an important theoretical foundation for improving socialist democratic politics. Realizing the liberation and all-round development of human beings is the theoretical destination of Marx's democratic thought.

### **2.3. Integrity is the most fundamental theoretical requirement of Marx's thought on clean governance**

Building a clean and honest political party is the core concept of Marx's thought on integrity, and putting people first is the political character of a proletarian state. The class nature of advanced civilization, strict and standardized political discipline, the concept of public servants closely connected with the people, the positive leading and exemplary role, the strict governance of corruption phenomena, the integrity and responsibility of cadres, the integrity and self-cultivation of the government, and the integrity and Party spirit in politics are the concrete manifestations of Marx's clean and honest political party. Distinct class consciousness, the lofty ideal of realizing communism, its own unique social attributes, safeguarding the basic rights and interests of the people, keeping pace with the times, the distinct imprint of the state, and the practical characteristics of science are the distinct features of Marx's clean politics. Marx believed that democracy is the self-management of the people. Loyalty to the people is the basic purpose of Marx's clean and honest party. Seeking truth and being pragmatic is the basic principle of Marx's clean and honest party. Being upright and honest is the fundamental image of Marx's clean and honest party. The realistic foundation for achieving integrity is to eradicate corruption. The key to integrity building is to practice strict and streamlined governance. Establishing a scientific integrity system to fundamentally punish corruption, deny the exploitation system, create a clean and honest atmosphere, and enable the people to have the sovereignty of the country. The Communist Party is the ruling party of the country, the people are the masters of the country, and the power of social public governance should be handed over to the broad masses of the people. Integrity in ideology, integrity in the use of power, and integrity in image constitute the three major elements of Marx's integrity type of ruling party. Marx's party emphasizes: "Power is granted by the people, used by the people and controlled by the people" <sup>[10]</sup>. Marx's clean political parties attach great importance to their own image. Marx's thought on integrity places great emphasis on the strict governance of the Party, especially on strengthening the construction of the cadre team and ensuring the integrity of the proletarian political party. Marx and Engels severely criticized the corruption of bourgeois political parties in practice. In a society ruled by the bourgeoisie, "Behind the superficial economic prosperity and wealth growth, what has developed to a greater extent are still corruption, fraud, and widespread theft" <sup>[11]</sup>. To ensure that the proletariat works for the interests of the vast majority, Marx and Engels attached

great importance to party discipline. To build a Marxist clean ruling party, it is first necessary to consolidate the firm ideals and beliefs within the Party, secondly to establish and improve the intra-party legal system, and finally to require the proletarian ruling party to create a healthy and positive political atmosphere of “taking integrity as honor and corruption as shame.” In the new era, applying the integrity-oriented theory of Marx’s thought on integrity to specific practices provides theoretical guidance for national development and economic construction, achieving a leap from the theoretical level to the institutional level. Integrity is the political essence of socialism and the primary task of building socialist political civilization. It is also an inevitable requirement for Marx’s ruling party to consolidate its own regime.

### **3. The contemporary significance of Marx’s thought on integrity**

#### **3.1. Promoting the scientific spirit, critical spirit, and practical spirit of Marx’s thought on integrity is beneficial to the construction of the new anti-corruption and integrity promotion system at present**

The scientific theory of Marx’s thought on integrity is the source of vitality for our Party to promote the construction of Party conduct and integrity in the new era, providing a basic direction for the construction of our Party’s integrity culture. Scientificity is the most fundamental value of Marx’s thought on integrity. Marx expounded on the phenomenon of corruption from its root, pointing out that the “democracy” and “rule of law” in the integrity building of the bourgeoisie are hypocrisy and deception under decadent rule, which is conducive to building a complete anti-corruption and integrity promotion system in the new era. Critical thinking is the most core value of Marx’s theory of integrity. Marx criticized the inversion of priorities between the state and society, pointing out that on the basis of private ownership, the state is merely a means for the bourgeoisie to rise to power and get rich, which is conducive to the formation of a powerful anti-corruption and integrity promotion field in the new era. Practicality is the most fundamental value of Marx’s theory of integrity. The Paris Commune regime put Marx’s thought on integrity into practice and took the interests of the proletariat as the core of building integrity, which was conducive to the innovative development of the thought on promoting integrity construction in the new era. First, we should promote Marx’s scientific spirit, guide Party members, cadres, and the masses to read classic original works, draw the ideological source of integrity and uprightness from theories, consolidate the foundation of faith, and strengthen the soul of ideals and beliefs. Second, practicing the critical spirit of Marx’s thought on integrity is beneficial to forming a powerful anti-corruption and integrity promotion cultural field throughout society, helping public officials establish the concept of integrity values and moral awareness of integrity, and extracting and shaping the political style of “integrity” and “honesty” into the values that guide their political careers. Enable it to form a correct view of serving the people, power, interests, and political achievements. Thirdly, implementing the practical spirit in Marx’s thought on integrity is beneficial to innovating ideas for anti-corruption and integrity promotion. Marx’s thought on integrity is rooted in the era he lived in, with a strong flavor of the times and a distinct practical character. By summarizing the practical experience of fighting against various corrupt phenomena in the process of human social development in the real society, critically absorbing the theories of predecessors, and at the same time conducting a comprehensive reflection and rational transcendence on practice itself, this inclusiveness still has profound guiding value today. In conclusion, integrating the scientific, practical, and critical nature of Marx’s thought on integrity with the current specific national conditions of our country to form a Marxist ideological system for integrity building with Chinese characteristics has new theoretical value and practical significance for the in-depth development of anti-corruption and integrity promotion work in our country.

### **3.2. Adhering to the people's principal position in Marx's thought on integrity is beneficial to the construction of a contemporary service-oriented government system**

Marx's democratic thought takes achieving social fairness and justice and meeting the people's demands for a better life as its core purpose. Promoting social harmony and development and maintaining social stability are the basic tasks of Marx's service-oriented government. Marx's people-centered thought has always served as the guiding ideology for the construction and development of the Party and the government, providing many important inspirations for the construction of a service-oriented government in our country. Marx critically absorbed Hegel's idealist view of history, denied the heroic view of history where individuals determine the trend of historical development, highly affirmed the promoting role of the masses in the process of historical development, and fully affirmed the subjective initiative of human beings. The masses are the realistic force that drives the entire society forward. The people have created abundant material and spiritual wealth through labor. In the process of building a service-oriented government, the government should give full play to its service-oriented functions, ensure the subjectivity of the people, take fairness and justice as the value orientation, give full play to the creative power of the people, and guarantee the people's principal position. A service-oriented government is the goal of administrative reform in the new era of our country. Nowadays, social construction in our country is increasingly perfect, but there are still problems such as unbalanced regional development and unreasonable resource allocation. While developing the economy, the Party and the government should adhere to the principle of common prosperity. How to narrow the regional development gap and take fairness and justice as the orientation, guarantee the rights of the people to actively participate in social governance, have equal access to development opportunities, and fair access to educational resources. Adhering to Marx's thought on the people's principal position demonstrates ethical concern for real people and is conducive to building our country into a service-oriented government that follows public opinion and benefits the people. On the premise of adhering to the Party's leadership, it is necessary to establish and improve the democratic decision-making mechanism, advocate government affairs transparency, improve the government assessment mechanism, standardize the government's service methods, and enhance the Party's governance credibility. Taking the realization, protection, and development of the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people as the starting point and ultimate goal of building a contemporary service-oriented government, we should build an efficient, clean, and transparent government agency, and consolidate the political foundation of being dedicated to governing for the people and serving the people wholeheartedly. Take relying on the people's participation in everything and doing everything for the people's interests as the main line and tone of building a service-oriented government, and promote the free and all-round development of people in the process of building a service-oriented government.

### **3.3. The democratic supervision system that practices Marx's thought on integrity is conducive to further promoting the construction of the national legal system**

The main feature of Marx's thought on democratic supervision is that the people hold national sovereignty and become the main body of state power. The democratic supervision system is the fundamental means for the people to participate in, discuss, and supervise politics, and it is the best way to realize the people's status as masters of the country. The legal system is an important cornerstone for safeguarding the democratic rights of the people. It is beneficial for preventing the alienation and abuse of government power and prompts public officials to consciously safeguard the interests of the people. There are mainly three means of democratic supervision. The first is that the state bureaucratic institutions implement open and transparent government affairs. The second is to expose corruption through the media and supervise corruption with public opinion. The

third is to expose corrupt deeds through newspapers and periodicals to safeguard social fairness and justice, prevent officials from abusing their power, and prevent government officials from taking bribes and perverting justice. The institutional guarantee of Marx's thought on integrity is mainly composed of the rule of law and democracy. It fixes the national sovereignty of the broad masses of the people in the form of law and elevates from the rule of law to the rule of law. From a broad perspective, the rule of law is a comprehensive process that integrates legal governance with social values such as democracy, freedom, and justice<sup>[12]</sup>. Building a comprehensive and law-based anti-corruption restraint mechanism is conducive to strengthening national anti-corruption legislation, enhancing the construction of anti-corruption and integrity promotion regulations and systems within the Party, and forming a democratic and open anti-corruption supervision system. Form a legal guarantee that is not perishable. The Communist Party of China has fully absorbed the theoretical essence of Marx's thought on democratic supervision, adhered to comprehensively deepening reform, enhanced the Party's sense of concern, accelerated anti-corruption legislation, intensified anti-corruption efforts in accordance with laws and regulations, and formed a sound system with prevention of corruption as the main focus and crackdown on corruption as the secondary focus, making anti-corruption governance more systematic, legalized and standardized.

### **3.4. The integrity and diligence in governance that embody Marx's thought on integrity are conducive to providing rich theoretical guidance for advancing the fight against corruption in the new era**

Study Marxist theory, from which one can master the Marxist stance, viewpoints, and methods on anti-corruption, and deeply understand the relevant discussions in the classics on theoretical armament, the leadership of the Party, and the construction of specialized supervisory organs, providing a theoretical foundation, ideological guarantee, political principles, and specific measures for the continuous advancement of the anti-corruption struggle in the new era. Tracing the origin of theories, understanding the theoretical context, delving deeply into the ideological system, and grasping the essence of theories have profound theoretical and political significance for continuously improving political judgment, political comprehension, and political execution. The book *The Communist Manifesto* provides a solid theoretical foundation and action guide for the original aspiration and mission of the Communist Party of China, guiding the Chinese Communists to lead the revolution, construction, and reform to achieve brilliant accomplishments<sup>[13]</sup>. By integrating the ideas on integrity in his works with the specific national conditions of our country at present, a Marxist ideological system for integrity building with Chinese characteristics has been formed, as well as a broad social consensus on integrity, morality, and political ethics norms. Marx's thought on integrity provides rich theoretical guidance for promoting anti-corruption and the fight against corruption in the new era at the spiritual and cultural level. It is the source of vitality for the Communist Party of China to strengthen its Party conduct and integrity building, the spiritual core of the new era's integrity culture construction, and an indispensable spiritual family tree of the integrity genes of Communists. At the institutional and cultural level, it has provided a solid historical basis for the Party to formulate anti-corruption policies at different times, laid a solid practical foundation for its determination to fight corruption and embezzlement, and offered rich theoretical thinking and strategic guidance for "purifying the political ecology and advocating governance for the people." At the level of behavioral culture, it is necessary to ensure that the Communist Party of China maintains a clean and honest lifestyle even after taking power, adheres to anti-corruption and abstinence from extravagance, and achieves a state of integrity within the Party, a refined state of mind, a pure and clean state of mind, a peaceful and harmonious

state of mind, and a clear and upright spirit. Only when the political integrity within the Party is clear can the people's aspiration for a better life be realized<sup>[14]</sup>. At the level of work style construction, our Party has been constantly improving the long-term supervision mechanism for intra-Party work style and enhancing the Party's bottom-line thinking ability to resist corruption and prevent degeneration. When conducting academic sublimation and cognitive extension of Marx's thought on integrity, it is helpful for the country to improve the political philosophy orientation of integrity in the practical requirements of political development and democratic political construction, and enrich and perfect the specific measures such as administration, judiciary, and supervision for integrity construction. The basic contents of integrity are micronized from the dimensions of political pattern, political system, political norms, political strategies, political morality, and political ability. Marx regarded human ability, social relations, and individual development as the ideal measures for the all-round development of human beings<sup>[15]</sup>. The clean and honest society envisioned by Marx in contemporary China mainly presents a favorable social ecosystem where political parties are upright and honest, the government governs according to law, government affairs are open and transparent, and citizens are civilized and law-based. It provides a development guide for the clean and honest path in China in the new era and has significant practical significance for our goal of promoting the free, equal, and harmonious development of human beings in the new era.

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