

An Analysis of Innovative Contributions to the Important Discourse on the Development of New Quality Productivity

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Abstract: The discourse on developing high-quality productivity marks a significant theoretical innovation, which is conducive to the modernization and sinicization of Marxism. It refines our understanding of “new quality productivity,” defining it as an advanced form driven by innovation, embodying “high technology, efficiency, and quality,” with the aim of comprehensively enhancing productivity. It elucidates the necessity of cultivating such forces, asserting that they are crucial for achieving high-quality development, securing a leading position in global technology, and fulfilling the aspirations for a better life. Moreover, it outlines a new implementation route, emphasizing strategies such as fostering technological autonomy, nurturing emerging industries, integrating education and talent in technology, adopting a “build through challenges” approach, adjusting solutions locally, and providing categorized guidance, all of which are based on the ongoing comprehensive reforms.

Keywords: New quality productivity; Basic connotation; Important discourse; Realistic approach; Innovative contributions

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1. Introduction

Marxism posits that productive forces are the foundation of social life and the primary driving force for progress. The core task of socialism is to unleash and advance these forces. Since 2012, China’s economic development has entered a new phase, and the introduction of the concept of “new quality productivity” in 2023 has deepened the sinicization and modernization of the application of Marxist theory. This concept is an indispensable component of contemporary Chinese socialism and holds immense theoretical and practical value for China’s pursuit of high-quality modernization. Academic work has begun to explore the origins, framework, significance, and implementation of new quality productivity, yielding early insights. However, more thorough research into the pioneering contributions of this discourse remains a gap in the current studies.

2. The understanding of “what is new quality productivity” has reached a new height

Based on the theory of productive forces in Marxism and the perspective on productive forces by the Communist Party of China, the concept of “new quality productivity” has been proposed in conjunction with the contemporary national conditions of China. It signifies a form of progressive productive forces that are innovation-led, distinct from traditional growth models, characterized by high technology, efficiency, and quality, and aligned with a new development paradigm. It is rooted in the technological revolution, the allocation of innovative factors, and industrial upgrading, with a focus on enhancing the capabilities, methods, and objects of labor and their synergistic effects, taking total factor productivity as the core indicator. Its characteristics are innovation, emphasis on quality, and the embodiment of advanced productive forces ^[1]. In short, “new quality productivity” integrates novelty, quality, and productivity, representing a complex development model that pursues innovation-driven, high-performance, and optimized enhancement of productive forces.

2.1. “New”: Led by the concept of innovative development

Innovation is the distinguishing feature of new quality productivity, and since 2012, China has positioned innovation as the cornerstone of national development. It is recognized as key to building a modern economy and is considered a multifaceted social endeavor. The pivotal role of scientific and technological innovation in opening up new pathways and advantages for global competition is emphasized. As an indispensable part of China’s modernization efforts, the new productive forces are inherently dependent on innovation, particularly technologically driven progress, thereby enhancing productivity and national strength. They align with the five major principles of development: innovation, coordination, green, openness, and sharing, forming a coherent and efficient development strategy. These principles guide high-quality development where innovation drives progress, coordination ensures balance, green practices guide sustainable development, openness fosters a conducive environment, and sharing is the ultimate goal. Together, they collectively support the modern economic system, embodying the essence of new quality productive forces in action.

2.2. “Quality”: Key to high technology, efficiency, and quality

The essence of new quality productive forces lies in the “three highs”: high technology, high efficiency, and high quality. This model stands in sharp contrast to traditional approaches, emphasizing technology-driven innovation, the efficient use of resources, and green development ^[2]. It involves shifting from a resource-intensive strategy to smarter, environmentally friendly methods, leveraging advancements such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and blockchain to achieve explosive technological growth and improved efficiency.

High technology serves as the pillar, enabling high production efficiency, which in turn collectively enhances product quality and transforms the socio-economic structure. This integrated approach ensures sustainable progress, where each “high” reinforces the others, laying the foundation for the pursuit of high-quality productive forces.

2.3. “Productivity”: To achieve overall optimization and leap in productivity level

The new quality of productive forces is an evolution of traditional concepts, based on Marxist theory, reflecting the advancement of technology and the enhancement of social productive forces. It involves the optimized combination of workers, tools of labor, objects of labor, and technology, which are further enhanced by progress in science, management, and culture. This leads to an improvement in the quality of the workforce, advanced tools, a broad range of production objectives, and strengthened collaboration among the elements, reflected in the leap of productivity driven by high technology.

The new quality of productive forces emphasizes the optimization of elements and overall transformation, striving for an improvement in total factor productivity that goes beyond incremental enhancements. It necessitates structural adjustments and methodological changes to elevate the level of social productive forces, adhering to the principle that production relations must adapt to the productive forces. Cultivating new production relations is crucial for promoting the coordinated development of productive forces and relations, guiding the adaptation and formation of the new normal of China's economy.

3. A new interpretation has been given on the understanding of “why we need to develop new quality productivity”

Liberation and development of social productive forces are the fundamental tasks and requirements of socialist construction. Starting from the true significance of the development of productive forces for the all-around development of human beings, Marx, Engels, and others have pointed out that production is the development of wealth inherent in human beings. Over the past century, the Communist Party of China has also formed a series of scientific understandings. The “three favors” standard and the policy of “two fundamental changes” and other scientific judgments have become valuable assets for the Party's governance^[3].

The “three favors” standard refers to the criteria that actions should be beneficial to the development of the socialist economy, the enhancement of comprehensive national power, and the improvement of the people's living standards. The “two fundamental changes” refer to the transformation of the economic structure and the mode of economic development. These principles have guided the Party's approach to governance and reform, aiming to align with the needs of the people and the advancement of socialist construction.

3.1. Requirements of the situation: Developing new quality productivity is an inherent requirement and an important focus for promoting high-quality development

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized that high-quality development, driven by new productive forces, is crucial to China's modernization. These forces embody the principles of innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing, propelling comprehensive progress that transcends traditional growth indicators by enhancing quality, sustainability, and equity. They have created an environment where economic, social, and environmental benefits flourish, transforming not only the quantity but also the essence of development.

The new high-quality productive forces have also broadened the horizons of development by adopting a multi-faceted approach that integrates the economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological domains, correcting the overemphasis on GDP. The goal of this systemic leap is to establish a more complex development structure, optimizing the elements crucial for enduring prosperity.

However, there are numerous constraints. To overcome these obstacles, it is essential to focus on cultivating high-quality new productive forces and to drive a productive forces revolution that enriches the breadth, depth, and composition of high-quality development. This necessitates continuous innovation and the nurturing of advanced productive forces to support China's ambitious modernization efforts.

3.2. General trend: Developing new quality productivity is the fundamental requirement and practical need to seize the opportunity of global technological competition

In the global technological and industrial revolution, China aspires to play a leading role, with the key being the cultivation of new high-quality productive forces, which is crucial for enhancing international competitiveness. As a rising technological power, China's innovation has driven socio-economic growth, but it also faces

challenges such as technological bottlenecks, dependency on foreign technologies, and lagging original innovation capabilities.

Facing technological blockades, particularly from the West and the United States, China strengthens global cooperation, opposes technological blockades, and supports inclusive growth.

The transformation of technological innovation into productive forces supports China's scientific advantages and self-sufficiency, promoting a mutually beneficial cycle that resists external pressures and seeks a position as a technological powerhouse, ensuring a future of shared prosperity.

3.3. Belonging to the people's hearts: Developing new quality productivity is an essential requirement and key measure to achieve the people's aspirations for a better life

Marx and Engels believed that social conditions are determined by the totality of productive forces, which has become a guiding principle of the work of the Communist Party of China. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the 19th National Congress identified the principal contradiction as the conflict between the people's ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development. This reflects a shift from material and cultural needs to an improvement in the quality of life, providing an environment and direction for the cultivation of high-quality productive forces.

From the perspective of the supply side, this assessment of the contradiction evaluates the social production model, where Chinese productive forces have made progress and the economy has shifted towards high-quality growth. Emphasizing balanced development through the "Five-in-One" and the "Four Comprehensives" lays the foundation for new productive forces.

Promoting the well-being of the nation, society, and the people depends on enhancing innovative productive forces. The pursuit of high-quality development in the new era and the cultivation of these forces reflect the people's aspirations, address the issue of unbalanced development, and reflect the Party's profound understanding of the socialist purpose, people-oriented values, the Party's basic mission, and its firm political consciousness and ideal pursuit.

4. A new solution for understanding "how to develop new quality productivity"

The important discourse on the development of high-quality new productive forces is grounded in reality and oriented toward the future. It accelerates the realization of high-level technological self-reliance and self-strengthening, leads the development of strategic emerging and future industries, facilitates a virtuous cycle of education, technology, and talent, adheres to the scientific approach of "establishing first and then breaking," adapting measures to local conditions, and categorized guidance, and continuously advances comprehensive deepening reforms. It profoundly elaborates on the practical path to accelerating the formation of a new type of high-quality productive forces. This not only clarifies the direction for the high-quality economic development of China but also provides practical solutions for the transformation and leapfrogging of traditional productive forces in human society, demonstrating strong ideological and practical power.

4.1. "New momentum": Accelerating the realization of high-level technological self-reliance and self-improvement

Technological innovation is the core of developing high-quality new productive forces, giving rise to new industries, models, and dynamics. History has shown that social productive forces have evolved from a reliance on human resources to a technology-driven digital society, where technological advancement is closely related to the enhancement of social productive forces. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen original and disruptive

technological innovations, promote independent and original innovation, and provide new momentum for new productive forces.

Currently, there is fierce competition in the highlands of technological innovation, and key core technologies cannot be purchased or transferred. It is essential to achieve development from “0 to 1” and from “1 to infinity” through original breakthroughs and disruptive transformations. This requires top-level design and task implementation to ensure proactive development, achieve breakthroughs in key areas, drive high-quality growth, and provide a foundation and support for the new high-quality productive forces.

4.2. “New frontier”: Leading the development of strategic emerging industries and future industries

The core of new productive forces lies in innovation, with the main field being industry. Industry is a manifestation of a country’s innovation capabilities and production strength, and it serves as the vehicle for the development of new productive forces.

Specifically, the foundational areas of strategic emerging industries and future industries are clearly delineated. There is a focus on cultivating strategic emerging industries such as new energy, new materials, advanced manufacturing, and electronic information, while also opening new tracks for future industries like quantum science and life sciences. These sectors are characterized by high technological density, low resource consumption, and strong technological leadership, covering key areas of production and market competition.

Further proposals have been made to promote the integrated cluster development of strategic emerging industries and to advance the layout and construction of future industries. The aim is to build a modern industrial system, consolidate the industrial foundation of new productive forces, provide momentum for the iterative upgrading and integrated innovation of industrial development, point the direction for industrial development under new circumstances, and shape new competitive advantages for the modernization of China’s industry.

4.3. “New combination”: Smoothing the virtuous cycle of education, technology, and talent

During the collective study sessions of the Political Bureau in 2023 and 2024, the importance of the development of education, science, and talent was emphasized, considering it as the cornerstone for building a prosperous and technologically advanced nation and enriching human capital. The synchronization of educational reform with technological trends aims to cultivate key talents, promote innovation, and drive national development. Technological innovation highlights the pivotal role of talent, which is seen as crucial for innovation and global competitiveness.

To strengthen this system, we are refining mechanisms for talent cultivation, attraction, utilization, and circulation, with a focus on both local talent development and the introduction of international talent. The emphasis is on nurturing morally upright and purpose-driven individuals, creating an environment that encourages innovation and embraces challenges, and promoting development through a fair distribution mechanism of factor incomes. This strategy aims to achieve continuous improvement in education, technology, and talent, fostering sustainable development and innovation.

4.4. “New requirements”: Adhering to the scientific method of “first establishing and then breaking,” adapting to local conditions, and providing classification guidance

On March 5, 2024, during the second session of the 14th National People’s Congress, the Jiangsu delegation meeting highlighted the scientific development approach of “seeking truth from facts, establishing before breaking, adapting to local conditions, and categorized guidance.” This approach emphasizes that when

developing new industries, models, and drivers of growth, it is essential to base efforts on local resources, industrial foundations, and R&D capabilities, using technology to transform traditional industries and promote their development toward high-end, intelligent, and green directions.

“Establishing before breaking” implies that a solid foundation should be secured before venturing into new areas, balancing the development of emerging industries with that of traditional ones. “Adapting to local conditions” encourages regions to leverage their unique strengths; for example, Jiangsu can utilize its educational resources, while Hunan can develop innovative industries. “Categorized guidance” advocates for targeted policies to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, aiming to unleash the potential of new productive forces and promote high-quality growth of China’s economy.

4.5. “New measures”: Continuously promoting comprehensive and deepening reform

To promote high-quality development and modernization in China, reform must become the engine of strategic planning transformation. Firstly, reform in emerging industries should foster an innovative ecosystem and enhance strategic capabilities, including the establishment of innovation and value chain mechanisms, and the renewal of ways of thinking.

Secondly, reform of the economic and technological system should address new obstacles to the development of productive forces, ensuring that production relations are adapted to the development of productive forces, strengthening the socialist market economy, promoting the coordination between the market and the government, eliminating barriers to technological innovation, and reforming governance and talent evaluation systems to stimulate innovation vitality.

Lastly, we must adhere to a high level of openness, creating an international environment for new productive forces, deepening trade liberalization, promoting the flow of technology, cooperating with free trade zones, cultivating an open and innovative ecosystem, and promoting international cooperation for mutual benefit, jointly drawing a blueprint for development in the economic and scientific fields.

5. Conclusion

Global technological innovation is entering a highly active period, and traditional economic growth models are facing challenges. An innovation-driven internal economic development model has become the key to driving global economic vitality. China’s discourse on the formation of a new type of high-quality productive forces has added new content to the Marxist theory of productive forces, providing theoretical and practical guidance for national construction and rejuvenation. It also offers Chinese wisdom and solutions to global socio-economic development issues.

Looking to the future, this discourse, as an evolving scientific system, will continue to enrich with the deepening of practice, and its innovative contributions will gain broader recognition. On the journey of the new era, we must continue to be guided by the discourse of developing new quality productivity, deepening the related theories and practices, promoting high-quality development on the path of China’s modernization, and contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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