

# The Essential Characteristics of Human Rights and the Development of Human Rights Cause

Wei Wang<sup>1,\*</sup>, Xiaolan Lu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Northwest University of Political Science and Law, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China

<sup>2</sup>Logistics University of People's Armed Police Force, Tianjin, China

\*Corresponding Author

**Abstract:** In accordance with the requirements of the nature and characteristics of human rights, some countries have made great progress in this field and has formed its own human rights theory in practice. The tremendous progress and theoretical innovation of the human rights cause have made important contributions to the world's human rights cause from both theoretical and practical aspects. This article aims to delve into unique way of protecting human rights, examining its historical background, development strategies, and achievements. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond simple legal frameworks and combines perspectives on socio-economic development and culture.

**Keywords:** Essential Characteristics of Human Rights; Human Rights Theory; Human Rights Protection Cause; Innovation in Human Rights Theory

## 1. Introduction

Human rights are the rights that people enjoy and should enjoy according to their nature. The emergence, development, and resort to social practice of human rights concepts have played an important role in promoting human civilization and development progress. Human rights protection has always been a focus of international research, including legal studies, social sciences, and political science. In recent years, in addition to the legal framework, the focus has shifted towards understanding the cultural [1] and socio-economic factors[2,3] that affect human rights. In addition, comparative studies between different countries provide valuable insights into the different methods and challenges of human rights protection. This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, combining qualitative and quantitative

approaches. We use historical data, policy documents, and case studies to trace the evolution of human rights protection work. In addition, interviews and surveys provide first-hand insights from experts and the public, enriching our understanding of this topic. The innovation of this study lies in its overall understanding of the human rights situation in our country. While acknowledging the criticism and challenges we face, our goal is to emphasize the achievements and progress made, and provide a balanced perspective that is often lacking in international discourse.

The main contributions of this article are twofold. Firstly, it provides a detailed understanding of our country's human rights protection work by integrating legal, socio-economic, and cultural perspectives. Secondly, it aims to promote more constructive dialogue by proposing a balanced perspective that acknowledges both achievements and challenges, thereby promoting more informed and comprehensive global discussions on human rights issues.

## 2. The Essential Characteristics of Human Rights and the Development of Our Country's Human Rights Cause

As a practical activity for understanding and transforming society, the cause of human rights protection can only achieve the desired results by following the inherent laws and requirements of the essential characteristics of human rights. Accordingly, China has actively promoted the development of human rights protection in leading the Chinese revolution, construction and reform, and has made great achievements recognized by the world. The process of from standing up to becoming rich and strong is the continuous development, progress, and enhancement of the cause of human rights. It is necessary to review and summarize this process in order to more consciously promote the cause

of human rights protection.

## 2.1 Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism

The unity of the sociality and historicity of human rights requires that the cause of human rights must adhere to the basic viewpoints of Dialectical materialism and Historical materialism.

Human rights are a historical and developmental concept, a product of social development, and a historical category. This is also the scientific conclusion drawn from the perspective of Dialectical materialism and Historical materialism to observe and analyze the historical process of the emergence and development of international human rights thoughts. Based on this understanding, our country has always opposed Historical nihilism, metaphysically cutting off the links between history, and insisted on the unity of nature, human society and thinking on the issue of human rights; Believing that the development of anything goes through a process of quantitative and qualitative change, negation and negation, recognizing that the development of things, including ideas, has stages, continuity, and inheritance. Therefore, the development of human rights ideology is a process of inheritance and development, which sublates rather than abandons the relevant ideological concepts that have emerged in history. It is a development based on inheritance rather than a water without a source or a tree without roots.

China insists on treating human rights issues with Dialectical materialism and Historical materialism, not only theoretically affirming the progressive significance of democracy and human rights ideas advocated by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, but also by the European Enlightenment and Renaissance since the Middle Ages; At the same time, as the initiator, organizer and leader of the Chinese proletariat and revolution, the vanguard of Chinese people has always believed in and adhered to the principles of historical materialism. The ideology of historical materialism critically absorbs and inherits the reasonable elements of bourgeois human rights thought, utopian thought on rights, and idealistic concepts of rights. It closely links human rights cause with proletarian revolution and the movement for societal progress, revealing the historicity and social context of human rights, as

well as their class nature in class society. It points out that with the social development, class extinction, and the realization of world harmony (an ideal society), human rights will ultimately achieve the highest level of human comprehensive and free development. Under the guidance of this ideology, the Chinese people waged a long and arduous struggle against imperialism and feudalism, putting an end to a century of national humiliation, and the Chinese people have stood up ever since.

China views human rights from the perspectives of Dialectical materialism and Historical materialism, and always adheres to the concept of people centered human rights. Taking the people as the center is the fundamental requirement of historical materialism. The great leader said, "The people, only the people, are the driving force behind creating world history" From this point of view, China has stipulated the fundamental purpose of the government and the people's army to serve the people wholeheartedly, and the state system of our country as a state under the People's democratic dictatorship and the government system that implements the Legislative system of China. It has stipulated the basic governance strategy and political principles of the government. In September 1954, China's first Constitution clearly stipulated that "all power in the China belongs to the people". Since then, the Constitution has been revised several times, and each modification has further enriched and improved the rights enjoyed by the people.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, generations of leaders of our country have taken the people's warmth and suffering to heart, and regarded the people's interests, desires, and requirements as the fundamental focus and destination of governing the country. We have used whether the people are satisfied, supported, or happy as the fundamental criteria to test our country's various policies. In order to make the country prosperous and the people happy, Chinese government has united and led the people of the whole country to make long-term hard and fruitful efforts, which has made great achievements in China's economy, science and technology, culture and other fields that have attracted worldwide attention and brought unprecedented benefits to the Chinese people.

In 2020, the Ashe Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation of the Harvard Kennedy School of Harvard University

published a research report on a long-term survey of Chinese public opinion. The data showed that Chinese citizens' satisfaction with their government rose from 86.1% in 2003 to 93.1% in 2016. In May 2020, when the epidemic was most serious, the data report of the University of California pointed out that 88% of Chinese people were satisfied with the government's performance. [4] The Chinese people are satisfied with China's development in political, economic, cultural and other fields over the years, as well as the progress of human rights protection, and the international community has also given full recognition.

## **2.2 Combining the Principle of Universality of Human Rights with the National Conditions of Various Countries**

The integration of universal and specific aspects of human rights necessitates that the promotion of these rights aligns with the unique circumstances of each nation. Human rights concepts, including its content, requirements, and development goals, have universal guiding significance for people living in diverse countries and regions globally. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two conventions on human rights, as well as a number of special conventions that have been issued since then, are consensus and instructive and normative documents formed by pooling and integrating the opinions and wisdom of East and West cultures, different social systems and national countries at varying stages of development. As an initiator, member, and permanent representative within the United Nations, China has signed and consistently implemented the responsibilities and obligations conferred by numerous documents and conventions such as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pay the United Nations membership dues on time, report to the United Nations Human Rights Council on time, and establish and improve the leading and research institutions at all levels of our country's human rights protection cause.

From 1991 to June 2020, the government published nearly a hundred specialized and comprehensive white papers on human rights, which truthfully and concretely reflect the development and progress made in various aspects of human rights cause during various periods. In the last four

decades of reform and opening up, 770 million rural individuals out of poverty, achieving the overall elimination of absolute poverty for the first time in the history. While vigorously promoting its own human rights protection cause, the nation also closely monitors global human rights developments. It maintains to an independent foreign policy of peace, holds high the banner of peace, development, cooperation, and mutual benefit, and actively participates in international peacekeeping operations. This nation has deployed the largest number of peacekeeping forces compared to the other four permanent members of the United Nations. For decades, as the engine and propeller of the global economy, it has contributed approximately 30% to the world economy annually. In response to global climate change and the elimination of various inequalities, it has also been playing an important role in actively promoting, promoting, leading, and demonstrating.

Adhering to the principle of universality of human rights does not deny or exclude the special requirements of human rights. Dialectical materialism tells us that the world is material, material is moving, movement is regular, and laws can be recognized. The identity of the world lies in its materiality, but various things in the world are vastly different. Without two identical leaves, people cannot step into the same river, which is the uniqueness of things. The same applies to human rights issues. Because whether the subject of human rights is an individual or a collective (including different groups, social organizations, nations, countries and other social entities), they always live in different regions, different social systems, different stages of historical development, and have different traditional cultural backgrounds. These differences or differences are objective facts that cannot be avoided or denied.

In terms of human rights issues, ignoring this particularity and using a ruler, a standard, and a model to measure and demand not only does nothing, but also causes serious consequences. Therefore, regarding the issue of human rights, our country has always emphasized the importance of addressing the relationship between the general and the individual, the

general and the individual, the general and the special, and insist on combining the principle of universality of human rights with the reality of national conditions and the cause of human rights protection, and taking the road of human rights with its own characteristics.

### **2.3 Starting from Reality and Adopt a Gradual and Orderly Approach**

The unity of hierarchy and advancement of human rights requires that the cause of human rights must start from reality and adopt a gradual and orderly approach.

Human rights encompass a hierarchical structure with specific contents and requirements. The United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969), the United Nations Civil and political rights (1976), the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981), The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). These documents illustrate a progressive enrichment and refinement of human rights provisions, reflecting the evolution of the so-called "three generations of human rights." As the first generation of human rights, civil and political rights, starting from the general, abstract, and universal human nature, explain and emphasize the legitimacy and rationality of civil liberties and the desire to overcome the restrictions imposed by feudal systems during capitalism's rise. As the second generation of human rights, social, economic, and cultural rights break through the limitations of individual liberalism, advocate for collaboration, and transform from an individual human rights perspective to an organizational human rights perspective; The recognition of irrational and utilitarian factors such as human instincts, emotions, culture, and psychology is also a factor and driving force of human rights, thereby expanding the social content and scope of human rights. The International Covenant on Civil and Freedoms and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, adopted by the 21st United Nations General Assembly in 1966, affirmed the content of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the form of legal obligations, enabling "second generation human rights" to be established

together with "first generation human rights" after struggle.

Collective rights, constituting the third generation, including the right to national self-determination, peace, and development. This generation focuses on the rights of nations, peoples, and ethnic groups within the international community. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted after World War II, did not have a clear concept of "collective human rights", but revealed the sprouting of this idea: "Everyone has the right to demand a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms enshrined in this Declaration can be fully realized." Through various international human rights instruments, "collective human rights" gradually emerged as a fundamental concept. It can be seen that the three generations of human rights have been proposed and formed with the deepening of social practice, the needs of human development and progress, and the deepening of understanding of human rights. This also illustrates the hierarchical nature of human rights from one side.

The hierarchical nature of human rights reflects the continuous pursuit of personal ideals and happiness by all individuals; thus, it is based on the hierarchical nature of human needs. Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, once put forward the theory of five levels of human needs, believing that human beings have five different levels of needs from the low to the high, which are in turn: physiological needs - security needs - social or emotional (friendship and belonging) needs - respect needs - self-realization. These five levels of needs include instincts or impulses that gradually weaken along the ascending direction of the biological lineage, as well as potential and needs that gradually emerge with biological evolution. The former is a low-level or physiological need, while the latter is a high-level need. The physiological needs here, including hunger, thirst, clothing, housing, transportation, and other aspects, are the most basic conditions and requirements for human survival, and also the strongest driving force for human action. The need for safety is a requirement and desire for human beings to ensure their own safety, which is closely related to life and survival. Without multifaceted safety, one cannot live and survive. Social needs, also known as emotional needs, include both friendship and belonging, and are

manifestations and demands of human sociality. Respect needs to include self-esteem and external evaluation, which is the recognition of an individual's social status, abilities, achievements, and the experience of their own life value at the psychological and spiritual levels. Self-actualization is the highest level requirement, which is to achieve personal ideals, aspirations, and maximize personal abilities to achieve one's goals, making oneself the person one expects.

Maslow believes that the development of human needs from lower to higher levels, and the gradual transformation of human needs from external satisfaction to internal satisfaction, is the overall trend of human needs development. The urgency of various needs expressed by people at different times varies, and the most urgent need is the main reason and motivation that motivates people to take action. This theory reveals the basic needs of humanity and their status and role, and has positive guiding significance for promoting and improving social education and governance.

While paying special attention to the right to survival and development as the primary basic human rights, China adheres to coordinating and promoting the rights of all people in development, and strives to promote comprehensive human development. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires all countries to "achieve universal and effective recognition and observance of these rights and freedoms among the people of member states and territories under their jurisdiction through national and international progressive measures." China regards the promotion of human freedom and comprehensive development as the highest value pursuit and ultimate goal of human rights, and insists on coordinating and promoting the economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental rights of all people in the pursuit of national development, continuously creating conditions for people to realize their potential. In 2017, China redefined its primary social contradictions as the gap between the population's growing desires for a better life and the challenges of uneven and insufficient development.. The people's needs for a better life are increasingly widespread, they have put forward higher requirements for Material culture life, as well as for democracy, rule of law, fairness, justice, security, and the environment. It clarified the

thought and basic strategy of with Chinese characteristics for the new era, proposed the task goal of building a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious, and beautiful modern power by mid-century. It emphasized that people's aspiration for a better life should guide our efforts. To ensure and improve livelihood, we must address the most immediate realistic interests of the people, systematically over time to meet their growing needs for a better life., This includes promoting social fairness and justice, form effective social governance and good social order, and make people's sense of gain, happiness, and security more substantial, secure, and sustainable. We have envisioned a bright future for human rights protection.

#### **2.4 Adhering to the Principles of Social Fairness and Justice**

The unity of fairness and diversity in human rights requires that the cause of human rights must be sound in democracy and the rule of law, and adhere to the principles of social fairness and justice.

Fairness and justice are important symbols of human civilization progress, essential requirements of the social system that we pursue, and fundamental principles and important characteristics of human rights. The fairness of human rights refers to the fact that people at a certain historical stage and under established social conditions should receive the care of society fairly and fairly, and be treated in accordance with justice and humanity. There is not only moral recognition and maintenance, but also economic and legal protection and support. However, before the elimination of Private property and class and the entry of society into the highly developed world, due to the constraints of socio-economic, political and cultural development, and because people are not on the starting line due to their different economic and cultural environments, social conditions, individual endowments, and family conditions, the fairness of human rights is always linked with the differences of human rights, and fairness itself contains differences and differences.

In 1978, China implemented the reform and opening up policy, broke the egalitarianism, smashed the iron rice bowl, implemented the Household responsibility system in rural areas, expanded the autonomy of industrial enterprises,

implemented the contract management responsibility system, and participated in market competition as an independent commodity producer and operator. In this way, responsibilities, rights, and interests are integrated, and the principle of remuneration according to work and more for work distribution is implemented. This effectively stimulates the enthusiasm and creativity of workers, farmers, and enterprises, and effectively promotes the development of social productivity.

Of course, at this point, there are differences and inequalities that are related to the external conditions in which people live, as well as individual abilities, endowments, and specific family situations. However, these differences and inequalities arise in a new stage of development and to a higher extent, which is a historical progress. Therefore, social fairness and justice is also a historical category. We should use Dialectical materialism and Historical materialism to understand the nature and characteristics of the unity of fairness and difference of human rights. The evolution of history tells us that the degree of development of social economy, politics, and culture determines the degree of resolution and realization of fairness issues. It does not depend on human subjective will and wishes, but on the progress and development of society.

After a hundred years of struggle, China has gone from poverty to prosperity. Although the cause of human rights protection has made unprecedented progress, it is still in the initial stage of socio-economic development and will remain in it for a long time. The problem is particularly acute because of the large population, unbalanced economic development, and imperfect systems and mechanisms in all aspects. Especially during the critical period of China's reform, with economic transformation, market economy development, changes in social structure, and diversified interests, the issue of social inequality will become more prominent. For example, widening disparities between rich and poor, urban-rural and regional disparities, imbalanced and uncoordinated economic and social development, discrimination in employment and labor remuneration, unfair distribution of educational opportunities, educational resources, and public health resources, inequality in health and social security rights, and weakened distribution

functions of the financial system have led to differences in the provision of public goods between urban and rural areas and regions. The existence of these problems has its own inevitability, but they must not be ignored and allowed to exist and develop for a long time. The correct attitude is to actively create conditions and strive to promote their transformation towards a better direction.

Fairness and justice, as a value orientation and measurement of human social development and progress, are crucial for maintaining social stability and harmony, reducing social risks and turbulence. It is an important basis for institutional reform and construction in modern society, a basic criterion for coordinating the relationships between various social classes, and a source of stimulating and mobilizing the initiative and creativity of the people. Therefore, based on the people-centered governance concept and the country's goal requirements of building a harmonious society, our country made a decision in 2006 in response to the existing inequality issues in our country. It is clearly pointed out that "social fairness and justice are the basic conditions for social harmony, and the system is the fundamental guarantee for social fairness and justice." It is necessary to vigorously strengthen and improve the our country's democratic legal system, including the democratic rights protection system, legal system, judicial system mechanism, public finance system, income distribution system, social security system, etc.

Since October 2014, national institutions have continuously done a lot of work in comprehensively promoting the rule of law, adhering to the legal system to ensure equal rights, equal opportunities, fair rules, equal efficiency, fair distribution, and fair social security for all members of society. Especially regarding the judiciary as the last line of defense for maintaining social fairness and justice, and adhering to the basic principle and requirements of equal rights for all citizens before the law, we have carried out comprehensive optimization and improvement of China's judicial system and mechanisms. From constantly improving the protection system of lawyers' right to practice, reforming the system of people's assessors and people's supervisors, to further promoting the legalization of litigation letters and visits, improving the national judicial assistance system, adhering to Procedural justice, preventing and

correcting unjust, false and wrong cases, implementing the system of no suspect, no wrong case must be corrected, and national compensation, our country's democracy and the rule of law have been further strengthened and improved.

National institutions unite and lead the entire country in the fight against poverty, achieving the total elimination of absolute poverty, which is a landmark event in the history of the development of the Chinese history and a significant milestone in global poverty reduction and human development. Since 1978, nearly 800 million people have been lifted out of poverty, realizing the millennium dream and century old wish of the Chinese people. The per capita disposable income of rural residents in poverty-stricken areas increased from 6079 yuan in 2013 to 12588 yuan in 2020, with an average annual growth rate of 11.6%. Living standards for this population have significantly improved. In 2020, the consolidation rate of nine-year compulsory education in impoverished counties reached 94.8%, with over 99.9% of the impoverished population enrolled in basic medical insurance. The access rate of tap water in poverty-stricken areas has increased to 83%. [5] The Chinese government will aim to bridge the development gap between rural and urban areas, promote high-quality growth, develop public services, reasonably regulate excessive income, ban illegal income, and encourage entrepreneurs to actively participate in and establish social welfare undertakings to repay society. China will gradually achieve the goal of common prosperity for all its people and better realize social fairness and justice.

### **2.5 The Cause of Human Rights must be Comprehensively Considered, Coordinated, and Put into Action as a Whole**

The unity of diversity, relevance, and systematicity of human rights requires that the cause of human rights must be comprehensively considered, coordinated, and put into action as a whole.

The content of human rights is diverse, including personal rights, personality rights, freedom rights, political rights, economic rights and cultural rights. Each aspect can be subdivided into multiple rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the AB Covenants on Human Rights provide specific explanations and requirements for the content of

human rights. Human rights in the United States scholar Charles Bates divided international human rights into five types of rights: 1) The first type of rights are related to freedom and personal security; 2) The second type of rights are in civil society; 3) The third type of rights are political rights; 4) The fourth type of rights are economic, social, and cultural rights; 5) The fifth type of rights are the rights of the 'people' (seen as a collective).[6]

The content of human rights is diverse, and the subjects of human rights are also diverse. The subjects of human rights include individuals and collectives, including groups, regions, ethnic groups, countries, etc. A country has national power internationally, including independence, autonomy, peace, and development.

The diverse human rights subjects and content are not isolated from each other, but have close connections. The political, economic, and cultural rights enjoyed by people are closely related, interact, and influence each other. As the subject of human rights, individuals cannot live alone without groups, societies, and nation states, and groups, societies, and states are always composed of individual individuals, which are an organic aggregation of individual individuals. In this way, a relationship between rights and obligations arises in human rights issues. The great philosopher pointed out that "there are no rights without obligations, nor are there obligations without rights." This means that as a subject of human rights, while enjoying established rights, it must fulfill its own obligations, such as complying with the rules and requirements of the group and nation state, and actively making its due contributions.

On the issue of rights and obligations, the West upholds individual liberalism, while the East, especially China, pursues collectivism. It believes that individual interests lie in collective interests. It is necessary to properly handle the relationship among individuals, collectives and the state. It is necessary to adhere to the principle of Democratic centralism in political power organizations, that is, to implement centralism on the basis of democracy and democracy under the guidance of centralism, as a result, "there is a political situation in which there is both centralism and democracy, discipline and freedom, unity of will, personal ease of mind and liveliness." These two different propositions and ideas, in the special period of COVID-19 wreaking havoc around the world in

2020, lead to two different situations in the East and the West in the fight against the epidemic. It also highlights the importance and necessity of correctly handling the relationship between rights and obligations in human rights issues.

### 3. Conclusion

The centennial struggle of China centered around the people, starting from China's national conditions, and based on the essential characteristics and requirements of human rights, has saved, developed, and strengthened China in the great practice of continuously advancing China's revolution, construction, and reform. This has continuously elevated human rights protection cause to new levels, greatly enriching and developing world human rights theory and practice. This is the human rights discourse contribution of China's centennial struggle, and also the essence of this discourse.

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