

A Model or Not, China Follows Its Own Course

2010-03-11 Xinhua Web Editor: Zhang Xu

CRIENGLISH.com

<http://english.cri.cn/6909/2010/03/11/2021s555719.htm>

by Xinhua writer Wang Yaguang

As China outshines amid the enormous financial crisis, the worst since the 1930's Great Depression, its development path, summarized as China's model, is becoming one of the most fascinating topics for economists and scholars.

WHAT IS THE CHINA MODEL?

The phrase, originated from a book entitled "Beijing Consensus", is used to summarize the miracle rise of China over the past few decades. Joshua Cooper Ramo, a U.S.-born scholar, believes China had a development route that suited the conditions of the nation and the needs of society, as it sought fairness and growth of quality.

His "Beijing Consensus" explanation said what is happening in China at the moment is not only a model for China, but has begun to remake the whole landscape of international development, economics, society and, by extension, politics.

Ramo gave three outstanding features of the "China model", or the Beijing Consensus, -- a ruthless willingness to innovate and experiment, a lively defense of national borders and interests, and the increasingly thoughtful accumulation of tools of asymmetric power projection.

Many economists attributed China's economic success to a combination of the unconventional development approach -- a combination of mixed ownership, government intervention and experimental spirit.

Zhang Yu, professor at the School of Economics of Renmin University of China, said the term "China model" covered the basic systems and policies China has taken during the reform and opening up drive in the past three decades, including economic reform, development, opening up and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

A CHINA MODEL?

In the dictionary, the word "model" is defined as "a standard or example for imitation or comparison." Can China's development path be called a model?

Since China began its reform and opening up in 1978, the country has remained determined to plough a route of its own in a method called "crossing the river by

groping the stones." The essence of the idiom is to free people's minds, reform and become innovative.

Following this ideology, China was transformed from a closed and semi-closed society to one that fully embraces the world, from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy and from a planned economy to a market economy. Further, during this process China did build its own path, said Zhou Ruijin, former deputy chief editor of the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of China.

Over the three decades, China's economy has been growing at a rate of around 10 percent annually. In 2008, it leapfrogged Germany to become the world's third largest economy following the United States and Japan. In 2009, it overtook Germany to become the world's largest exporter.

In addition to its economic rise, China witnessed more than 30 million workers being laid off and reemployed, 50 million farmers being urbanized, and 120 million rural workers lingering between cities and countryside. However, "China managed to maintain stability during the process without significant turbulence, reflecting the miracle in its development model", Zhou said.

However, Zhao Qizheng, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and spokesman for the ongoing annual session of the CPPCC National Committee, disagreed on the term "China Model". "China Case is a better phrase as the word model means something that can be sampled and copied," Zhao said. "However, China never meant to be an example for anyone."

Li Junru, former vice president of the Party School of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, echoed Zhao's view, saying "China is still in the process of further reform and development, and its system has not been finalized or perfected."

"It is contra-factual and dangerous to set a China model under such circumstance," said Li, also a CPPCC member.

CONTINUING THE REFORM

Despite the heated debates within academic circles, the Chinese government keeps a low profile on the issue.

Such debates -- a model or not and exportable or not -- will not affect China's determination to develop and follow its own course, analysts said.

Martin Jacques, the author of "When China Rules the World", said the consciousness of future hardships in China was "quite impressive".

"I think China has been extraordinarily self-disciplined, self-restrained and cautious about the way it conducted itself, especially since the late 1970s, the beginning of the reform period," he said.

The psychology would help China's long-term development as the country was still a developing country with various challenges and uncertainties, he said.

Although China secured its recovery, the financial crisis also revealed some deep-rooted problems in the economy, making it a pressing task for the government to restructure the economy to be more domestic-demand driven.

"China will further deepen reforms in key sectors and strive to make new breakthroughs," Premier Wen Jiabao said in the report of government work delivered to the National People's Congress, the country's top legislature.

"The reforms we are undertaking are comprehensive, including reforms in economic and political systems as well as that in all other sectors," Wen said.

The Premier expects 2010 to be "a crucial but complicated year" as the country continues tackling the financial crisis while transforming economic development patterns.