



RESEARCH PAPER**Evolution of Poverty Reduction Policies in China 1947-2020****Dr. Qu Qiumei**

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ABSTRACT

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, a series of economic changes have taken place, and anti-poverty has achieved remarkable results, during which poverty alleviation policies have been evolving in line with the state of economic development at different times. This study focuses on China's poverty alleviation policies from 1947 to 2020. This article adopts a combination of historical analysis and literature reading to systematically sort out policy documents and government reports from different historical periods. It also refers to journals and books on anti-poverty policies, with the aim of providing reference and information for the formulation of future anti-poverty policies. The study finds that China's poverty alleviation policies have achieved remarkable results at different historical stages. However, the policy implementation process also faces challenges such as unbalanced regional development and lack of flexibility in policy implementation.

KEYWORDS

Economic Changes, Anti-poverty Policies, Policy Implementation

Introduction

The historical evolution of China's anti-poverty efforts is an epic saga, documenting the magnificent journey of an ancient nation from poverty and backwardness to prosperity and strength. Since 1949, the Communist Party of China has consistently made the eradication of poverty and the achievement of common prosperity its governing philosophy and lofty goal, continuously advancing the deepening development of national poverty alleviation efforts. Over the past seventy years, the vicissitudes of time have witnessed the arduous efforts and splendid achievements of hundreds of millions of people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China in striving for comprehensive poverty alleviation (Li, 2018).

During the periods of socialist revolution and construction, the Communist Party of China led the people in overthrowing the rule of imperialism, institutional foundation for poverty eradication. After the reform and opening up (1978), China embarked on a new historical chapter, greatly promoting the economic and social development of impoverished areas through the implementation of a series of poverty alleviation policies and measures, creating favorable conditions for poverty alleviation and prosperity for the impoverished population (Zhang, 2013). Entering a new era, China's poverty alleviation work has entered a new stage of precision poverty alleviation. The Chinese government adheres to the development ideology centered on the people, innovates poverty alleviation concepts and methods, and achieves precise assistance to the impoverished population through precise identification, precise policies, and precise poverty alleviation. At the same time, the Chinese government actively promotes diversified poverty alleviation methods such as industrial poverty alleviation, educational poverty alleviation, and health poverty

alleviation, providing strong support for sustainable development in impoverished areas (Wang, 2017).

Through the concerted efforts of the government, the entire nation, and people of all ethnic groups, by the end of 2020, China had successfully completed the goal of poverty alleviation in the new era as scheduled. Under the current standards, all rural impoverished population had been lifted out of poverty, all poverty-stricken counties had removed their hats of poverty, and absolute poverty and regional overall poverty had been eradicated, achieving a great feat that attracted worldwide attention. This great achievement not only demonstrates the remarkable advantages of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics but also provides valuable experience and enlightenment for the global poverty reduction cause (Zhang, 2018). Despite all these successes, China continues to consolidate and expand the achievements of poverty alleviation, promote the comprehensive revitalization of rural areas, and unremittingly strive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Zhang, 2018). Next we turn to look at evolution in terms of the timeline.

Literature Review

Zaidi (2005) builds upon his earlier work by offering updated analyses and expanding the scope of the discussion to reflect recent economic developments. The review appreciates Zaidi's comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted issues affecting Pakistan's economy, including economic policy, institutional challenges, and socio-economic inequalities. The strength of the book lies in Zaidi's success in synthesizing complex economic topics into a coherent narrative. Zaidi has made a detailed study of the structure and performance of Pakistan's economy and he has mainly concentrated on the evolution of economic policies and the impact of financial institutions as well as political changes on economic policies. The author's in-depth analyses have provided the general reader with an in-depth understanding and a clearer picture of the state of Pakistan's economy and its development situation (Zaidi, 2005). Alauddin(1975) argued that the status quo of poverty had existed in Pakistan since the inception of the country and had been a persistent problem for the country. He emphasises that this poverty in Pakistan is not only reflected in economic development, but also in social and political factors, which can be said to be very widespread and deep in Pakistan. The author also argues that unequal distribution of resources, poor pro-poor policies, and deficiencies in the health care system and the education system can lead to poverty and are also structural in nature. The existence of these problems constrains the development of the society and economic upliftment. In this regard, Alauddin also proposes to improve the healthcare system, improve the education system, focus on the implementation of fair and equitable pro-poor policies, as well as to strengthen social assistance and mutual support among different regions. Constructing a strong safety net (Alauddin, 1975). Alavi(1976) in his article analysed the significant role played by the rural elite in the agricultural development sector and argued that the power and resources possessed by the rural elite themselves influence the structure of the agricultural sector and the progress of the agricultural sector, and the author had his own insights in his article on the issue of equity in rural socio-economic development (Alavi, 1976).

Material and Methods

This article adopts a combination of historical analysis and literature reading to systematically sort out policy documents and government reports from different historical periods. It also refers to journals and books on anti-poverty policies, with the aim of providing reference and information for the formulation of future anti-poverty policies.

This article adopts a combination of historical analysis and literature reading to systematically sort out policy documents, government reports and related secondary literature of different historical periods, for example, core journals related to anti-poverty and books with international authority in the field of poverty alleviation, but of course, it is obviously not enough to rely on these resources to figure out the problem of poverty, and then collects newspapers, news and webpages related to poverty alleviation, so as to analyse in depth the effects of the implementation of various policies and their effectiveness. We have also collected newspapers, news and web pages on poverty reduction, so as to be able to analyse in depth the effects of the implementation of poverty reduction policies in different periods of time and to explore the problems that exist in them. This will provide a direction for future policy formulation to achieve comprehensive poverty eradication and common prosperity.

Evolution of Poverty Reduction, 1978-1985

Before the reform and opening up in 1978, the government initiated efforts to enhance rural development and social welfare by implementing changes in land management in 1976 (Ding, 2003). The transformation from a collective land management system to a family responsibility system proved significant as it granted farmers land contract rights, safeguarding their labour interests (Ding, 2003). This shift led to notable improvements in agricultural production and a substantial increase in farmers' income which we will discuss more in detail in Chapter 4.324 Additionally, the government's liberalization of agricultural trade played a vital role in fostering the development of market system. During the period from 1978 to 1985, China witnessed a 14 percent rise in per capita grain production in rural areas, accompanied by an increase in per capita income from 133.6 Yuan to 397.6 Yuan. Furthermore, the poverty-stricken population was reduced from 250 million to 125 million, resulting in a poverty eradication rate of 9 percent, and the rural poverty rate decreased from 30.7 percent to 14.8 percent.

Evolution of Poverty Reduction, 1986-1993

This section looks at the evolution of poverty reduction from 1986 to 1993. As we have noted in the previous section that since the initiation of economic reforms in 1978, significant advancements have been achieved in rural economic development. However, noticeable disparities in economic growth persisted between the central and western regions compared to the coastal rural areas. As a response to this, the Chinese government took decisive action in the 1980s by establishing The State Conciliating Group for Poverty Alleviation and Development to effectively address poverty-related issues. Moreover, local governments at various levels set up specialized poverty alleviation agencies, which were responsible for allocating specific funds and implementing targeted welfare policies to combat poverty. Subsequently, the market economy system continued to evolve, resulting in a decline in the number of individuals living in poverty from 125 million to 80 million, at an average annual rate of 5.12 percent. The efforts of both national and local governments in poverty reduction have proven highly successful (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Evolution of Poverty Reduction, 1994-2000

To address the issue of poverty in rural areas of China, the government introduced the National 1987 Poverty Reduction Plan. This initiative successfully provided 80 million impoverished individuals with essential necessities like food and clothing from 1997 to 1999. Subsequently, targeted poverty reduction programs were persistently carried out, leading to a substantial decline in the number of people living in poverty. In 1994, the

poverty rate was 66.17%, and in 2000, it was 24.3%. Between 1994 and 2000, the poverty rate decreased by an average of 24.3% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2008).

Evolution of Poverty Reduction, 2001-2010

In 2001, the Chinese government introduced the Poverty Alleviation Program for China's Rural Development (2001-2010). The main objective was to shift the focus of poverty alleviation from the county level to the village level, taking into account the production and living standards of each village, as well as the health and education conditions of farmers. This alleviated rural poverty pressure as it shifted the focus of poverty alleviation from the county level to the village level, the government paid closer attention to the actual situation of each village, and formulated targeted poverty alleviation measures that helped alleviate rural poverty more effectively.

Considering the production and living standards of each village, the government implemented more precise measures to assist farmers in increasing output and improving their living standards, thereby enhanced the overall development level of the entire rural community.

Taking into account the health and education conditions of farmers, the government improved farmers' medical conditions and educational resources through corresponding policies and measures, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life (Wang, 2019).

In addition the government implemented several key reforms to alleviate the burden on rural populations (Wang, Chaudhuri, et.al., 2007). In 2001, government departments implemented a tax and fee subsidy reform for rural areas in order to reduce the pressure on the livelihood of Chinese farmers and reform agricultural development. The benefits of this policy to farmers lie in the direct alleviation of their economic pressure. Improve the living standard of farmers. Enabling them to devote more energy to production and marketing and other lifestyles (Wang Y.F., 2020). The benefit of tax reform for farmers is that it not only reduces the burden of farmers' livelihood, the policy also serves as an incentive to encourage farmers to actively engage in rural economic life and production. This will consolidate the construction of rural infrastructure, increase farmers' income, improve the technical level of agricultural development, shorten the gap between urban and rural areas, and promote social equity (Wang, 2021). The increase in farmers' income and the improvement of material living standards will pay more attention to the enrichment of the spiritual dimension and the improvement of education, as well as health care and other basic survival needs, and ultimately not only achieve material satisfaction but also enrich the spiritual world of the people, so that both the material and the spiritual can achieve poverty alleviation (Li, 2019).

In 2003, the Chinese government began to reform rural health care, a measure that was meant to prevent farmers from falling into poverty because they could not afford to go to the doctor or the hospital, and in 2006, the agricultural tax was completely abolished in China. The significance of the abolition of the agricultural tax is to focus on the development of the farmers' economy and life, to reduce their financial burden, to make the farmers more active in the development of production, and to make the rural areas retain people instead of increasing the burden of the cities by more influxes. With the abolition of the agricultural tax, farmers invest their money in replacing farm equipment with more labour-efficient tools and equipment or in other aspects of sustaining their livelihoods. The elimination of agricultural taxes keeps the pressure on farmers to survive from becoming too great, and the purchase of other commodities stimulates the local

economy and promotes the development of service industries such as transport, wholesale and health care.

Reforming agricultural taxes and fees so that farmers no longer bear an excessive economic burden in the case of increasing the income of farmers, which may be more incentivised to invest in agricultural production, farmers are more motivated to produce, and farmers will pay more attention to food safety (Liu, 2021).

The benefits of tax reform for agriculture also lie in the fact that farmers will have more income to spend on infrastructure development; 'to be rich, we must first build roads', and more money will be available to build roads, so that more children from rural families will have access to schools and books, and so that farmers will no longer have to give up on medical treatment because they cannot afford to see a doctor. They can no longer give up treatment because they can't afford to stay in hospital. Once the standard of living in rural areas is improved, this in turn will promote overall rural development and reduce the incidence of poverty.

By reducing the number of impoverished individuals, the quality of life of the people improved, enhancing the country's social stability and sustainable development capabilities (Liu, 2019).

Evolution of Poverty Reduction, 2011-2020

In 2011, the Chinese government launched the new Poverty Alleviation Program for China's Rural Areas with Targeted Development (2011-2020). The program identified 14 areas where poverty was particularly acute, becoming the primary focuses of poverty alleviation efforts in the new era. Its main objective was to ensure that these areas received adequate supply of food, clothing, medicines, and housing facilities necessary for compulsory education. Following the national poverty line set at 2,300 Yuan in 2010, the number of people living in poverty decreased significantly from 165.67 million in 2010 to 70 million in 2014, representing a significant achievement.

In 2015, China achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with 55 million people still living in poverty. The ongoing reduction of poverty in China is expected to have a significant impact on the global goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. The Chinese government's 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) has set ambitious goals for poverty reduction, focusing on various areas conducive to poverty alleviation, including early childhood development, universal health care, quality education, cash transfers, rural infrastructure development, and progressive taxation (Zhang, 2020).

After 2020, there are four primary avenues of poverty alleviation. First is Revitalizing Agriculture through Live Streaming. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, offline sales of agricultural products faced substantial challenges. Live streaming has emerged as a novel channel for selling these products, Live broadcasts offer real-time, contactless, and efficient product sales, sparking consumer interest. This approach has transformed some farmers into online celebrities, generating opportunities to promote various agricultural goods and expand their market reach. It has also led to the emergence of online influencers who assist in poverty alleviation.

Second is Promoting Tourism and Cultural Heritage. Poverty-stricken areas in China often possess stunning natural landscapes and cultural treasures. However, these areas may suffer from information barriers and underutilization of their unique resources. Through live video content, these areas can overcome these barriers, showcasing their

beauty and cultural heritage. This approach has proven effective in driving tourism to these regions and promoting cultural tourism, which, in turn, aids poverty alleviation.

Third is Raising Awareness and Fostering Support. Short video content and live broadcasts bring the living conditions of impoverished individuals to a wider audience. This increased visibility can lead to external assistance for those in need. An example of this is Ding Zhen, who became an online sensation and helped raise awareness of a previously impoverished region.

The fourth is to enrich the lives of farmers. 'Shake voice short video' to drive a lot of people employment, the emergence of a batch of "netroots" not only solved the unemployment problem of many people. Shooting short videos is low-cost and simple, and through the live broadcast of 'Netroots' to help farmers solve the problem of selling agricultural products, 'self-media' is spreading in a cultural way in China, and this novel way covers both material and spiritual elements, promotes employment, and reduces the social crisis caused by the gap between the rich and the poor crisis (Wang, 2017).

In short, China has continuously made adjustments to its poverty alleviation policies until 2020, when China has made great achievements in eradicating absolute poverty, and this series of positive measures to reduce poverty has enabled China to lead the world in the field of poverty alleviation and set an example, providing experience for poverty alleviation in other countries and making a significant contribution to socio-economic development.

The Causes of Poverty in China, 1947-2020

We analyse how distorted economic structures, social inequality, lack of education and natural disasters contribute to poverty in China.

The irrational economic structure until 1978

There are many reasons for poverty in China, among which the irrational economic structure is one of the most important factors. In China's long history of development, our development has long focused on agriculture, the countryside and farmers, and it was not until the reform and opening up that this scenario changed, as this period began to focus on the development of the service sector and modern industry. Obviously the lack of rationality in the focus of development has led to the emergence of the problem of poverty and even the phenomenon of furniture poverty. The deformed economic structure is not conducive to the development of agriculture in a healthy direction in the first place, this is because the development of agriculture is not conducive to increasing the income of farmers, farmers want to improve the standard of living but also to enrich the ways of obtaining income, farmers need to have enough wealth to invest in education and update the level of technology in a timely manner, in addition, deformed economic structure is not conducive to narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas, which is a major factor leading to the emergence of poverty in China's society (Wang, 2017). Even if we adjust the harmful effects of the deformed economic structure that focuses only on agricultural development, the traditional heavy industry and resource-based industries are also not conducive to poverty eradication, and we should also focus on the coordinated development of the service sector and high-tech industries in order to achieve poverty eradication in the true sense. Especially in rural areas, it is particularly important to enrich the mode of economic development, which can give low-skilled labourers more possible opportunities to choose their jobs, and appropriately raise the low-income groups, which helps to get rid of poverty (Zhang, 2019) The most important thing is that it is conducive

to the coordinated distribution of resources. Thus narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas. Resources tend to flow to a few regions and individuals, while impoverished areas and populations often do not receive the necessary resource support, worsening the poverty situation.

The irrational economic structure was a major reason for poverty in China until 1978.

Since 1978, China has implemented the policy of reform and opening-up, shifting towards a market economy. This transition has enabled China to gradually move from a closed, planned economy to a more open and flexible market economy. This included allowing the development of private enterprises, attracting foreign investment and technology and promoted foreign trade.

So after reform and opening up the problem of skewed economic structure was addressed. Hence economic structure was optimised, rural development and western China was paid more attention, and industrial upgradation was carried out to effectively reduce the number of people living in poverty and achieve the goal of building a moderately prosperous society (Wang, 2017).

Social inequality

Social inequality is one of the significant reasons for poverty, stemming from the unfair distribution of social resources and opportunities, as well as the economic, political, and social disparities among different groups. This inequality results in some individuals having more resources and opportunities, while others fall into poverty and hardship. Analysing specific data to determine how many people in China are impoverished due to social inequality is a complex issue. As poverty often results from multiple factors including but not limited to social inequality, economic development imbalances, and unequal distribution of education and health care resources. Even so, some data can indirectly confirm the existence of this problem.

One of the factors contributing to the unequal distribution of income is social inequality, and China's economy is characterised by a wide gap between urban and rural areas, as well as a serious gap between the rich and the poor in urban areas, which is conducive to the early elimination of poverty (Wang, 2017).

Poverty is also related to the low level of education and the imbalance in employment opportunities. In contrast to the level of education in urban China, where educational resources are abundant, teaching aids are varied, and teaching materials are innovative, in rural areas many schools have unused facilities but are limited or even closed, the number of students is low, students from rural areas are moving to urban areas, and there is a lack of teachers in rural areas, which increases the pressure on urban areas. Not only make the city's land resources are strained, but also increase the employment pressure of urban teachers. It is not favourable to their future career planning (Chen, 2020).

Poverty is caused by many factors, including inequality of social status and opportunities. China is a country with a large population, and some groups of rural migrant workers, some groups of ethnic minorities and some disabled persons are subjected to discrimination in employment; these groups lack a source of income and social security.

In short, poverty is caused by many factors. The solution to this dilemma requires the concerted efforts of all sectors and industries on all fronts to ensure that everyone

enjoys the opportunity for a balanced distribution of resources and to promote fairness and justice. The first to get rich will drive the second to get rich, and the developed eastern region will drive the economic development of the remote western region.

Low level of education

Low educational attainment is one of the significant reasons for poverty in China. Education is closely linked to economic growth and social development, and the role of education is not only reflected in improved social status and increased income. However, in China, low educational attainment in certain regions and among specific demographic groups has exacerbated the issue of poverty.

According to the 2020 census, the average years of schooling in Tibet is about 6.9 years, compared to the national average of around 9 years. The poverty incidence in Tibet was around 7.9% in 2019, higher than the national average. Educational attainment is generally low in ethnic areas, and in the case of the Xinjiang region of China, the average number of years of schooling in Xinjiang is 7.5, based on the standard of nine years of compulsory education. This indicates that the proportion of people receiving primary and secondary education is not high. The incidence of poverty in Xinjiang is not low in national terms. Guangxi is located in a remote ethnic area in the south of China, and the proportion of students receiving nine years of compulsory education here is low compared with that in Han areas, but of course the incidence of poverty in Guangxi is not low either.

Poverty in some of China's ethnic minority areas is related to the low level of education and the low rate of access to education.

In contrast to the urban areas of China, where educational facilities are well equipped, teachers are highly qualified in terms of culture and professionalism, and teaching materials are innovative, the rural areas are lagging behind in terms of educational facilities and the lack of teaching staff; in many cases, maths teachers teach both maths and language subjects, and there is a lack of teachers in some areas for subjects such as music, art and physical education, which is very much related to the imbalance in the distribution of educational resources, as well as to the limitations in the accessibility of knowledge. The limited access to knowledge restricts the choice of employment, and income is strongly linked to employment, which in turn affects income and thus increases poverty.

Natural disasters and climate change

Climate change is also a cause of poverty, for example, in China's Yunnan Province, located in the south-western border ethnic minority areas, where there are many mountains and limited land available for agricultural arable land, coupled with the frequent occurrence of earthquakes, mudslides and other natural disasters, the development of this place compared to the interior of the higher incidence of poverty, the degree of poverty is deeper. This has a serious impact on the livelihood of the local population, and because the traffic is very closed, the people here have little contact with the outside world and cannot keep up with the development of the times, so they are unable to go out to the mountains for employment, and the limited area of arable land exacerbates the problem of poverty in the province.

Natural disasters not only affect the growth of crops and cause economic losses, but also frequent mudslides can block traffic and damage infrastructure, which can damage farmers' incomes and exacerbate their difficulties. In Yunnan Province, for

example, a mountainous province, frequent earthquakes have had a great impact on the lives of local people and have been detrimental to social development.

Provinces with weather extremes such as heavy rain, hail and high temperatures can reduce crop yields, affecting the livelihoods and incomes of rural farmers. It is not conducive to poverty eradication.

In China, a country dominated by agricultural development, farmers' incomes have a direct impact on economic change, and frequent natural disasters and climate instability affect farmers' incomes, which in turn affects China's social stability and reduces the incidence of poverty.

In order to prevent the frequent occurrence of natural disasters, government departments need to actively implement disaster prevention and mitigation efforts and improve disaster resilience and relief capacity, as well as to strengthen awareness-raising efforts to protect the environment, and to strengthen regulatory authorities to reduce greenhouse and industrial emissions. Actively respond to climate change and lay a solid environmental foundation for poor areas. Create conditions more favourable to economic development.

Conclusion

In the few decades between the founding of the State and the elimination of absolute poverty by 2020, China's poverty reduction policies have been constantly adjusted. From the initial agrarian revolution and collectivization movement to the reform and opening up in 1978, when the planned economy transitioned to a market economy, China's poverty alleviation policies have been continuously adjusted to become flexible and pragmatic.

Precise poverty alleviation measures include a series of initiatives such as improving infrastructure, upgrading education and healthcare, and relocating poor areas, coupled with the positive cooperation of the poor people with the work of grassroots leaders and cadres, until 2020, when full poverty alleviation was realised and absolute poverty was eliminated, China has succeeded in lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, and has made achievements that have attracted worldwide attention.

There is no doubt about China's great achievements over these decades, but it still faces new challenges, such as the urban-rural gap and unbalanced regional development. Therefore, in the future, how to consolidate the results of poverty alleviation and how to effectively link poverty alleviation and rural revitalisation to achieve sustainable development has become a top priority. Overall, China's poverty alleviation journey is not only a microcosm of economic development, but also a reflection of the country's governance capacity and social responsibility, which provides a useful reference for other countries.

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