ORIGINAL ARTICLE

"China as a Method" for Chinese Political Science Research

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Abstract

Since the reinstatement of political science as an academic discipline in 1980, the Chinese political science scholarship has as much studied China-related issues as adopted from the West a large number of scholarly findings, research methodology, and theories including the modernization theory in the 1980s, the democratic transition theory from the 1990s onwards, and the governance theory in the twenty-first century. Through the academic dialogue between China and the West, the political science research community in China has, by the same token, formulated its own theories on democracy and governance that are derived from China's experiences. Furthermore, along with the unprecedented transformations throughout the whole society, Chinese political science has equally undergone major changes, of which a case in point can be the calling in this article for a political science research using "China as a method" (For this notion of "China as a Method", although it comes from Yuzo Mizoguchi, a Japanese scholar on China studies, it is also a product of the mutual learning across civilizations and also benefits from the inspiration of "taking the reform as the methodology". The so-called "China as the methodology" not only focuses on "China as the center", basing one's research on China, answering questions about China, and putting forward China-based propositions; it also means that the ontology, epistemology, and methodological knowledge generated by "China as the center" or "China as a method" can become a theoretical orientation and methodological framework for Chinese political research in the world.). The best way to understand China is to study its political history, as Chinese history is mainly a political one, demonstrating a high degree of historical continuity. For this very reason, we have proposed a historical political science as a method for studying China—an approach that is different from historical sociology. The historical political science is, indeed, not Chinese-centered or -focused, where a comparative historical analysis will be ushered in as well.

Keywords Chinese political science · Democratic transition · Governance · Historical political science · China as method

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1 Introduction

Political science, as a discipline that focuses on communal goods, is a product of the times. Different times have different political sciences. In the history of political science, various theories are referred to as the "new political science" or the "new political discipline" have consistently emerged, which are actually attempts to answer major political and social issues of the times. How do we respond to such issues of the times? Political science also has the feature of studying ideas. Whether it be a political practitioner or a writer, he/she is not a "natural man"; on the contrary, particular ideas have already taken shape in their minds. Therefore, political science in its respective time is never short of the struggle of ideas, or for that matter, debates in political theories. We must keep in mind that political science in its respective time and pertaining to the struggle of ideas, seeks to address the problem of "localness", in the final analysis. This is actually the "subjective" identity of political science, which is inseparable from the local social conditions of the country when forming policy programs or constructing political theories. This has been a consistent tradition in political science since Aristotle. Any deviation from this tradition brings to the fore some political disasters, the examples of which are too numerous in the history of world politics. Political science is, first of all, a theory of state governance based on the standpoint of "focusing on one's homeland". This perspective means that local experiences not only generate local knowledge, but also a politico-scientific methodology based on local experiences. This is the general principle of the growth of political science as well as the entire gamut of social sciences.

For the Chinese, political science as an academic discipline was established during the reform and opening-up period. In the past 40 years, its disciplinary institutionalization and research themes have demonstrated a quality of keeping abreast with the times, manifesting the distinctive characteristics of the times. In the 1980s, when it had just been restored, it could be described as a "study of political system reforms." The twin goals were modernization and democracy. The keywords were the separation of the party and government, institutional reforms, and the abolition of lifelong appointments. During this period, a large number of modernization studies were introduced to China. In the 1990s, political science embarked upon a journey of institutionalization, with disciplinary diversification. One direction was the study of political philosophy based on the history of Western political thoughts, where western liberal democratic theory was systematically brought into China. The other direction was to study political transformations, from a focus on macro issues to grassroots-level political investigations, where a "central China school" (huazhong xuepai) gradually emerged. In the first 10 years of the twenty-first century, the themes of political studies were democratic forms such as inner-party democracy and deliberative democracy. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the focus of research was on the modernization of national governance. The development process of Chinese political science has been systematically studied, and for this reason I will not repeat it in this article (cf. Wang 1987, 1998; Lin 2008; Yang 2018a).

What this article focuses on is the direction of development of Chinese political science. As a part of the reform and opening up strategy, political science has gone through fierce struggles pertaining to political ideas during the mutual learning across diverse civilizations. Nevertheless, it is still able to stand firm and gradually develop and grow, establishing an autonomous and innovative system of political theories and discourses. Although political science as a discipline has only a few decades of history, its research objects are not limited to issues of the times. Rooted in Chinese history and realities, it is enriched by unparalleled knowledge resources and sources of wisdom. This paves the ground for the formation of Chinese political science based on "China as a Method."

2 A Political Science Emerging Out of Cross-Civilizational Mutual Learning: Constructing a System of Democratic Discourse

The reform and opening-up strategy has facilitated not only learning and innovation in the administrative system, but also mutual learning across civilizations in terms of ideas and culture. For a long period of time before the reform and opening-up era, there existed only political ideologies in China and no empirical social science research. For this very reason, when China opened itself up, there was a sudden influx of social science theories from overseas. In terms of political theory, if arguably in the 1980s, the dissemination of the theory of modernization was the main theme, then in the 1990s, the liberal democratic theory of the West was translated and introduced *en masse* into China. In the twenty-first century, the democracy-based theory of governance gained momentum. There has always been a gap of a decade between the West and China when a particular theory becomes popular in the politico-scientific research community. In the context of Western political theory, the research on modernization and political development that was popular in the 1950s and 1970s had been the theory of state-building, namely the state-building model in developed countries and the question of how the state might be built in countries that joined in later. In the 1980s, the theory of political development began to decline and gave way to the theory of democratization. In fact, this was a simplification of the theory of state-building, which meant that democratization was regarded as the whole of state-building. In the 1990s, with the advancement of democratization research, governance theories emphasizing individual rights became popular. One can argue that democratic theory and governance theory are, above all, extensions of the theory of modernization.

These successive waves of theories with fresh concepts overwhelmed the Chinese public for a while, and it was difficult to ascertain the authenticity of all claims. This was particularly the case in the 1980s and 1990s, where, due to a long period of void experienced by the Chinese social sciences community, Chinese scholars most of the time did nothing but compile and disseminate what was popular in political development and democracy in Western theoretical circles, rarely with any independent or autonomous research. But in the twenty-first century, Chinese scholars with systematic training in social sciences began to engage in dialogues with new concepts and theories. They thus began establishing an autonomous discourse system related to

democratic theories during their critical research. This could mainly be seen in the reflection on and construction of a "family of concepts" in democratic theories, such as democracy, governance, and legitimacy. The popularity of the family of democratic concepts has, in fact, become a way of thinking and an evaluation standard, and it is for this reason that the concept of autonomy is very important.

Democratic theory: democracy has been a centennial pursuit for the Chinese people. The lessons of the decade-long "Cultural Revolution" made everyone in China realize the importance and urgency of democracy. However, what kind of democracy do we want? How do we build democracy? And what are the social conditions for democracy? At that time, Chinese political science did not have answers to these fundamental questions concerning the future and destiny of the country. The pursuit of answers to these questions emerged during the third wave of democratization, when the Soviet Union capsized. The claim of the "End of History" received applause from many, and liberal democracy was regarded as the ultimate and best form of political system for humanity. The translation of the representative works of classical liberalism was more or less completed in the 1980s. The translation and introduction of neoliberal works was the mainstream in the 1990s, and many scholars' views on democracy were profoundly influenced and even reshaped by these translated works. To be more specific, the democratic works of Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, and Sartori, the founders of liberal democracy, have been systematically translated, quoted, and used without hesitation by Chinese scholars. According to statistics from the China CNKI Academic Journals Database, from 1990 to 2015, there were 8,305 papers citing Schumpeter's views (including citations in economics), 1279 papers citing Robert Dahl, and 3104 papers citing Sartori.[1] Indeed, these authors were quoted mainly in the study of democratic issues. During the same period, on the basis of themes of the papers, there were 13,312 articles on "Democratization", 5900 articles on "Civil Society", 1960 articles on "Liberal Democracy", 1195 articles on "Electoral Democracy", 567 articles on "Democratic Transitions", and 151 articles on "Democratic Consolidation".[2] This shows the extent of influence of these authors among Chinese politico-scientific scholars, and the latter's enthusiasm for studying democratization in terms of liberal democracy.

What is liberal democracy? To put it simply, Schumpeter replaced people's democracy with "electoral democracy," and democracy changed from a substantive democracy of people's sovereignty to a procedural democracy centered on elections. Following the "Schumpeterian proposition of democracy", Sartori rigorously demonstrated electoral democracy in terms of semantics based on the philosophical view of dualism. He believed that only when there were competitive elections could the state be called a real democracy; otherwise, it would not be a democracy. For Dahl, freedom and election were two major elements, and he put forward seven standards

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[1] This search has been conducted on a database of Chinese scholarship (http://kns.cnki.net), performing a search of references published during the period from January 1, 1990 to December 31, 2015. Access date: June 5, 2017.

[2] This search has been conducted on a database of Chinese scholarship (http://kns.cnki.net), performing a search of themed articles in the collection of social sciences I and II, published during the period from January 1, 1990 to December 31, 2015. Access date: June 5, 2017.

of liberal democracy. Several generations of democratic theorists had laid down the theoretical foundation of "electoral democracy," in which democracy equaled elections and only elections were regarded as real democracy. On this basis, non-governmental organizations such as the "Freedom House" simply established the "Freedom House Index" to measure the quality of a particular country based on the two standards of individual freedom and competitive elections.

Before the 1990s, the Chinese were able to think critically about bourgeoisie democracy. Needless to say, when the bourgeoisie democracy was transformed into liberal democracy, the Chinese almost lost their ability to critique. The liberal democratic theory based on "electoral democracy" as its only criterion quickly become a prominent academic topic in China. The traditional view of substantive democracy was transformed into the simplistic proceduralist view of democracy, or even worse, became a standard for valuing and judging, and even a moral standard. In this hyper-moralized political context, it was difficult to make a critical analysis of "electoral democracy", let alone to oppose its institutional propositions. However, as a group of scholars returned from studying in the United States in the mid to late 1990s, this situation gradually changed. These scholars were well aware of the status and role of democracy in the development of Western countries, as well as the role of democracy in the development of comparative politics. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the political science community began from criticizing "electoral democracy", and promoted another change of the popular notion of democracy, namely a transition from procedural democracy to substantive democracy, and from electoral democracy to "governance democracy."

In the twenty-first century, there have been scholars who have offered profound reflections and criticisms on "electoral democracy". The criticism of "the blind faith in democracy" was quite path-breaking at the time. Some scholars pointed out that democracy is a product of social conditions, and is an institutional arrangement of class politics and interest group politics. Since the very beginning, Chinese politics has been a "propriety"-oriented politics of meritocracy, and based on the Singaporean political system model. It is due to these aspects that these scholars have proposed a concept of "a consultative legal system" (zixunxing fazhi)" (Pan 2002). The claim of "the blind faith in democracy" caused an uproar in academia at that time, which was understandable in an era when everyone believed that "democracy is everything". However, the truth could not be hidden. The unexpected consequences of Russia's transformation prompted overseas Chinese scholars to re-interpret Western democracy in a comprehensive and systematic manner, and to reflect on and be critical of Western democracy in the systematic introduction of the history of Western democracy (Wang 2014a). They pointedly remarked that "electoral democracy" is actually a politics of "choosing leaders" (Wang 2014b). This movement completely changed the Chinese people's knowledge and understanding of Western-style democracy. A greater in-depth understanding of liberal democracy is that popular democracy is a product of the socialist movement, and democracy has socialist attributes (Yang 2009). The Western democratic theory uses liberalism to frame democracy, for the purpose of cleansing the influence of "socialism" (Zhang 2015a). More importantly, for countries in transition, it should be borne in mind that even if Western-style

democracy is accepted, social conditions are more important than democratic forms. For this reason, some scholars proposed the "homogeneous conditions of democracy", namely national identity, beliefs, and social equality. Without these social conditions, the failure of democracy is almost the norm, and its success the exception (Yang 2014). This kind of understanding was based on world political reality that was taking place simultaneously. It generated corresponding political influences, which helped to strengthen the theoretical confidence in adhering to the development path of socialist democracy and socialist politics. Based on the social conditions of democracy, there have been some studies of the democratic model that put forth a distinction between the value model and the practice model of democracy. The practice model (e.g., competitive elections or deliberative democracy) can be effective only when it corresponds to a matching value model (e.g., liberalism or other civilizational systems, (see Yang 2015). The value-practice model, together with the "homogeneous conditions of democracy", answers the fundamental cause of the predicament of universalizing Western-style democracy in practice. Theoretically, this model is different from the all-encompassing model of democracy proposed by Western scholars (e.g., Lijphart 2006; Held 2008), which suggests that there is only one mode of practice (partisanship-based democracy) that is feasible for the whole world.

Our discussion of democracy has to involve the theory of political regime, for democracy in and by itself is in the dimension of the political regime. It has been pointed out that the strength of the West lies in its "regime-mentality" (zhengti siwei), namely the determining role that is played by the political regime, while the strength of China lies in its "ways of doing politics" (zhengdao), namely, how to govern the state. In the light of this statement, the *dao* (ways of doing politics) is the foundation, while the *regime* the use (Wang 2012). This distinction has its merits, but it is basically an affirmation of the Western theory of political regime. The theory of political regime is the central axis of Western political science. For a long time, Chinese academic circles mainly studied the Western theories of the political regime from the perspective of political philosophy, focusing on the regime study of individual-oriented political thoughts. This was no more than a book review style summary, with no potential of contributing to major theoretical breakthroughs. In recent years, young scholars in China have discovered, starting from the pedigree of political science methodology, that the dualistic outlook of the political regime has been a product of behaviorist political science during the Cold War. Classical political science, comparative political economy research after the wave of behaviorism, and historical institutionalism— all of these occupy positions adjacent to each other on the spectrum of value judgment on political regimes. They are different from the dualistic view of regimes in Cold War politics (Zeng 2015). This kind of research helps us to demystify the myth of the popular dualistic view of political regimes.

Breaking the existing path implies paving the way for establishing a new alternative. This is the challenge confronting Chinese political science and even the entire gamut of Chinese social sciences. Only by "breaking" current paths will it be possible to "establish" new ones. In comparison, Western social science has witnessed a process of continuously "establishing" new paths. In light of this, how would it be possible to "establish" a new path?

It has to be acknowledged that "establishing" a new path for Chinese political science has also benefited from the quantitative methodology training in Western political science. Western-style democracy is a procedural democracy. It is dualistic thinking that equates democracy to elections. So what does the Chinese view of democracy look like? The Asian Barometer Survey Project led by Professor Zhu Yunhan of the National Taiwan University provided a Chinese people's view of democracy with data that has been widely used in academia. Based on this, the conclusion was that the Chinese people certainly want democracy, but the democracy they want is actually more in line with the people-oriented (minben) philosophy of Confucius and Mencius, rather than the electoral democracy in the Western sense. Chinese people use the word "democracy", primarily to express the demands related to their "livelihood" (minsheng) or describe their ideals; they evaluate the government based on pluralistic standards, and this evaluation cannot be limited to elections alone (Shi and Ma 2009). The results of the Asian Barometer Survey conducted in 2015 on the mainland of China demonstrated that the Chinese people's view of democracy was founded on a complex basis, whose main appeal was governance.

Based on the Chinese people's view of democracy with governance as its focus, it has been proposed that China has a representative democracy different from Western representational democracy (Wang 2014c). Representational democracy focuses on democratic forms and procedures, while its representative counterpart more on substantive democracy, such as whether the government is representative, whether the policy reflects the demands of the people, whether the political system bears such substantial results as social justice, good governance, welfare, and a government "for the people" (minxiang), among other things. In case of representative democracy in China, the "represented" are the people (the issue of who is represented) and cadres at all levels represent the people (who represents), to realize various substantive long-term interests (why to represent) and adopt a mass line approach in the interests of the people (how to represent). The "mass line" approach (qunzhong luxian) is also referred to as a kind of "reverse participation" (nixiang canyu). Political participation is an activity directed towards government decision-making in order to realize one's own interests. However, the distribution of power among political participants is uneven. The socially unfavored may be less able to speak up for their own interests through political participation. In light of this, "reverse participation" can make up for this lacuna in institutional arrangement. The theory of representative democracy is the political-theoretical expression of people's democracy (renmin minzhu), which has contributed to the theory of people's democracy advancing immensely. One must be aware however, that the theory of representative democracy needs to pay more attention to the sense of political participation by the people.

As long as there is democracy, there must exist some form of bottom-up political participation, which constitutes the realization of political rights. One must bear in mind that democracy in the dimension of political regime is inseparable from the role of the "state", namely the government, which is a process of interaction between officials and citizens. This is common-sense both in theory and in our everyday life. However, Western-style democracy only talks about the rights of individuals and groups and does not talk about the role of the state, which runs entirely contrary to

our political common sense. On this basis, some scholars have put forward a "governable democracy" (kezhili minzhu) that is the opposite of the ineffective democratic model of partisanship, with the former consisting of "political participation, an autonomous state, and effective governance (responsible politics)". There are various forms of political participation with unequal power. The state will need a certain degree of autonomy to selectively respond to participation demands and actively absorb public opinion, and finally achieve responsible and effective governance in the interaction between officials and people (Yang 2011a, 2013). Among them, the consensus reached based on consultations is the main way of interaction between officials and the people, and this can be called "consultative, consensus-oriented democracy", which is embodied in the political decision-making process at all levels (Yang 2018b, pp. 368–409). As a mode of practice, China's comparative advantage is deliberative democracy, as it is rooted in China's people-oriented traditions. The value model of Chinese democracy can be described as a "people-oriented democracy" (minben zhuyi minzhu, see Yang 2018b, pp. 410–56).

If the value model and practice model of Western-style democracy are liberal democracy and partisan democracy, respectively, then one can argue that the value model and practice model of Chinese democracy are the people-oriented democracy and the consultative, consensus-oriented democracy, respectively. Since "deliberative democracy" (shenyi minzhu) has been adopted as "consultative democracy" (xieshang minzhu) in China, research on the theory and practice of consultative democracy has yielded remarkable results. Some leading studies point out that consultative politics has been an inherent element of political traditions in China. It is for this reason that consultative politics can easily be transformed into consultative democracy in the era of popular democracy, not to forget that China has a political organization such as the Political Consultative Conference (Lin 2007, 2014, 2015). There are also scholars who observe the operation and practice of consultative democracy in China's grassroots politics as an experiment (He 2015; He and Zhang 2017). In Chinese politics, political consensus reached through consultation has been a tradition for Chinese Communists. It has been infused with richer connotations in the new era and is committed to establishing a comprehensive and multi-level consultative democracy. It should be said that the flower of "consultative/deliberative democracy" blooms in Western politics, while its fruit can be seen in Chinese politics. It is due to the tradition of consultation inherent in Chinese politics and the consultation mechanism endogenous in its political establishment that this democracy, both as a theory and a form, has been widely embraced in Chinese politics.

Confronted by the hegemonic Western-style democratic discourse, Chinese political scientists trained in social sciences gradually gained the ability to engage in dialogue, and initially contributed an autonomous democratic discourse during this dialogue. Nevertheless, one has to admit that Chinese political science has not yet produced "monumental works" with high quality and rigorous argumentation, and this leaves some room for the growth of Chinese political science.

Governance theory In the past 40 years, the two keywords in international social sciences have been democracy and governance. Governance theory is a by-product of political democratization and economic neoliberalism. If political democracy is to

strengthen individual rights and get rid of the government, and economic freedom is to get rid of the state by emphasizing privatization and marketization, then the governance theory is an institutionalized arrangement that strengthens individual rights at the expense of the role of the government. Here we can see the three pillars of liberal political thoughts, namely political democratization, economic liberalization, and the socialization of governance.

Governance theory comes from the policy plan of World Bank experts for countries in the south of sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s. They believed that the general failure of these countries was rooted in the powerless government, and the alternative was to strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations, various social organizations, and even individuals. The World Bank even used "investing in people" as its theme, emphasizing the alternative role of individuals and society. With the drumming of the "Washington Consensus" as a neoliberal manifesto in 1990, the theory of governance that emphasized the role of society at the expense of government quickly became popular all over the world. A "governance without government" (Rosenau 2001) became the new conviction for scholars of governance studies. It was widely believed that governance without government could achieve fairness and transparency, with a strong political legitimacy.

Objectively speaking, it is commonplace for people to complain about the government. Therefore, it has been a populist thrust to advocate governance without government and promote the role of the individual. Governance theory undoubtedly caters to this populist demand. The problem is that in many non-Western countries, especially developing countries, the state-society relationship has been either a "praetorian society" (Huntington 2008, p. 162) or a "weak state with a strong society" (Migdal 1988, pp. 33–41). The state has been embedded in various social networks without adequate autonomy. In this circumstance, if one further advocates the effort to weaken the state and strengthen the power (rights) of society, will not the state-society relationship suffer more? Fukuyama, who once vigorously advocated the theory of governance, offered some keen reflections in this aspect (Fukuyama 2013, pp. 347–368). One should also bear in mind that the priority on the agenda of state-building for many developing countries is still "to get organized".

These are some basic conclusions we can arrive at from the comparative research on political development. People's cognitive abilities are closely related to the level of development of social sciences. In the absence of any basic knowledge of comparative politics, it is inevitable that various concepts and theories incongruent with the national conditions of developing countries may become popular, and even become a kind of "moral" standard. Now, people have finally come to terms with the fact that governance theories advocating social rights have failed to provide a feasible guideline for good governance in many developing countries. For example, southern sub-Saharan countries have not had "good governance" in spite of the scholarly works of governance theories, and the majority of the developing countries have not benefited in any noticeable manner from such works in terms of an improvement in their governance. Why is this so? In addition to the fact that they still are far from finishing the task of "state-building", namely to "organize the whole country", another reason is that the social organizations entrusted with the mission of governance are far from a real "civil society" on which governance theory relies (Yang and Li 2014). Due to

the difference in "national circumstances" (minqing), the social organizations that are collectively referred to as "civil society" have actually evolved into a complex of interest groups in the United States, and a "praetorian society" in South America, a "caste society" in India, and a strong society in Africa. In spite of the difference in names, the common denominator is inequality, whereas the assumption of the civil society theory is a public spirit of political participation on the basis of social equality (Yang 2019a).

In the dialogue with the powerful discourse of governance theory, Chinese political scholars gradually built up a governance theory with "Chineseness", namely the theory of state governance. Obviously, the difference between "state governance" and "governance theory" lies in the role of the "state". The Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China formally put forward the proposition of "modernizing the national governance system and governance capabilities", which received enthusiastic responses from all walks of life. Undoubtedly, this kind of social-scientific expression in Chinese politics was based on the accumulation of past academic research. Many scholars had begun to use the term "state governance", consciously or otherwise before the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, although the governance theory had gained enormous momentum. This was simply because the Chinese would naturally advocate the theory of state governance.[3]

Therefore, when Western governance theories became popular, research that advocated "state governance" also began to gain momentum. Some scholars suggested the "state governance paradigm" as a research paradigm, arguing that state governance included political value, political identification, public policy, and social governance (Xu 2010, 2011). When the "modernization of state governance" became official parlance, state governance was clearly distinguished from Western governance theories. It was believed that state governance in a socialist country included essentially both 'governance' as in political rule and the 'administration' as in public administration, as well as an organic combination of these two elements. Therefore, in the discourse system of Marxist state theory, 'governance' is an organic combination of political rule and public administration in a socialist country. Furthermore, our attention was towards avoiding two kinds of misunderstandings: the simplistic use of the Western concept of "governance" to understand the goal of China's comprehensive deepening of reforms, and a naïve belief that the concept of "governance" was exclusively used in Western contemporary political and administrative theories (Wang 2014).

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[3] As early as the eighth century BCE and the seventh century BCE, Guan Zhong governed the state of Qi by relying on political-economic thoughts in a quite modern sense, which was described by later generations of scholars as "policy determinism." The bureaucratic system initially established by the pre-Qin states and the system of prefectures and counties to deal with the relationship between the central and local governments were the earliest political systems in a modern sense. The twenty-four histories of China had been basically a record of state governance, containing rich ideas on state governance. Therefore, there had been one "high time" after another in Chinese history, as well as a five-millennia-long Chinese civilization and community.

It should be mentioned here that the modernization of state governance as official political parlance includes but is not limited to the following main points: first, the goal of state governance modernization is the modernization of the state or government-led system of state governance. At the institutional level, the state governance system includes state governance, government governance, local governance, and social governance. One must bear in mind that the formulation of social governance has been a critical reworking of governance theory, shifting from social administration to social governance. In the governance field, the state governance system includes political governance, economic governance, cultural governance, military governance, and ecological governance. Whether it be at the system level or in the governance field, the governing body is the state or government. This inevitably includes governance and administration, albeit not excluding the role to be played by the society. The establishment of a governing body has been the fundamental aspect to distinguish this Chinese state governance from Western governance theories. Nevertheless, the former has also benefited from the scholarly fruits of the latter, for instance, the theory of social governance. As one scholar put it, "The concept of state governance emphasizes the importance of the leading role of the state in a transitioning society, and also takes into account the social demands emphasized by the governance concept. It is a more balanced and objective theoretical perspective." (Xu 2014). Some scholars, in a review of governance literature from both inside and outside China, concluded that governance "referred to the methods, ways, approaches, and capabilities of public administration (including state governance), rather than the methods, ways, and approaches in any particular public administration (state governance)." It does not refer to marketization or privatization, nor to "governance without government", or "more governance, less rule" (Wang 2018). The Western governance theory is only a normative declaration of neoliberalism, and it is an "empty signifier", which does not solve any problems in practice.

Second, the core of the modernization of state governance is the issue of state governance capabilities. Why does performance vary so much from country to country even if they have adopted the same system? The key lies in the difference in governance capabilities. It is not uncommon for political theories to discuss ruling capability and governance capabilities. Still, they are mainly regarded as political phenomena and rarely elevated to a theoretical level that can be used to analyze political phenomena. Traditional theories of state capacity include legitimization and fiscal extraction, among other things, albeit with a somewhat limited analytical and explanatory power. The capability of legitimization can be described as all-encompassing and devoid of analytical power, while the capability of fiscal extraction is too minuscule. Moreover, countries with a powerful fiscal extraction capability do not necessarily have strong legitimacy. At times, the real situation is even the other way around, as testified in abundant historical experiences. In contrast, Chinese scholars regard national governance capability as a research paradigm, to be distinguished from the Western political science tradition that takes the political regime as its paradigm. To be more specific, state governance must first and foremost deal with the relationship between the state and society, where the society is composed of ordinary people, intellectuals, and business professionals. The inclusiveness of the whole "system" (tizhi xinali) has different connotations for

different classes. Furthermore, state governance is about the relationship between systems, agencies, and departments in terms of their coordination and integration. It is for this reason that the national governance capability is included in the degree of "institutional integration" (zhidu zhengheli). A final aspect is that national governance is related to policy formulation and effective implementation, and the national governance capability is in fact concerned with "policy implementation" (zhengce zhixingli). The national governance capability composed of the above mentioned three elements (i.e., system inclusiveness, institutional integration, and policy implementation) has, in fact, become an analytical concept, which can be used to compare and analyze the governance capabilities and performance at different levels and across different countries. This analytical theory is systematic, but asymmetric and non-ideological in nature. Its role in improving a given country's governance capabilities is quite self-evident (Yang 2017).

Third, the modernization theory of national governance answers the core and fundamental question of how to guarantee the capacity of national governance. The political characteristics of a super-large-scale country include not only the diversity brought about by differences in geography, ethnicity, and culture, but also the hierarchy constituted by a multi-level system. The diversity and hierarchy constitute the asymmetry of power. In a pluralistic, multi-layered, and asymmetrical system, it is very difficult to improve the country's governance capabilities. The democratic centralism regime ensures the coordination and integration of the whole system. In this aspect, Chinese scholars have elevated the democratic centralism regime to the same level of political theory as the representative regime (Yang and Qiao 2015).

The concept of legitimacy: it will be possible to clarify the source of the theory of legitimacy crisis only with an autonomous theory of democracy and governance. It was quite popular to borrow value standards from Western theories on democracy and governance for evaluating Chinese politics. As a result, it was widely believed that China, as the largest developing country with a huge population and the best governance record, had a "crisis of legitimacy." In an analysis of more than 120 papers on the legitimacy of Chinese politics from 2008 to 2013, most scholars in the mainland of China believed that there was a legitimacy crisis in Chinese politics, while international scholars did not believe that China had a legitimacy crisis or they regarded this legitimacy crisis as not serious. The reason was that Chinese scholars had one-sidedly adopted the concept of legitimacy in Western political philosophy to analyze China, while international scholars more often than not used traditional Chinese philosophy to examine China (Zeng 2014). Considering that 2008 was a turning point in world politics, there was an accelerated decline of Western countries due to the financial crisis, and China made strides in its international standing with the hosting of the Olympic Games. This contrast in research and reality was even more beyond our imagination. Such political research that ran against our common sense must have some problem with its evaluation criteria.

Some scholars have summarized the "trilogy" of American democratic theory in the post-war West. Firstly, Schumpeter transformed people's sovereignty into electoral democracy. Secondly, Robert Dahl and others framed electoral democracy within the scope of liberalism, so as to formulate a concept of pluralist democracy or liberal democracy. Then, Lipset overhauled the concept of legitimacy. According

to Max Weber, the politics of legitimacy refers to the legality of a government and its de facto effectiveness. On the basis of the "Schumpeterian democracy," Lipset replaced legality with competitive elections. The politics of legitimacy is equal to competitive elections plus effectiveness (Yang 2016). Since then, "legitimacy only through a conferring of power by elections" has become the golden rule for the liberal democratic theory. In the era when procedural democracy prevailed, many people used this criterion to evaluate the legitimacy of Chinese politics, for which reason a well-governed country like China was regarded as a country with a legitimacy crisis. Contrarily, those countries whose governance was ineffective or even failed were regarded as having no such thing as a legitimacy crisis, simply because they had competitive elections.

Based on this, some scholars have "restated" the concept of legitimacy in the context of historical sociology. Since the arrival of the reformed concept of legitimacy, competitive elections have not been able to solve the problem of national governance, it could even become the root cause of political turmoil and national failure. For this very reason, Huntington proposed that only a government with the ability to govern was considered legitimate, and representative democracy could not solve the problem of effective governance. Rawls starts from social conditions and propounds completely different legitimacy standards between Western and non-Western politics. In the holistic context of Western political science, legitimacy has been a conceptual system that includes legality, effectiveness, people's sovereignty, and justice. Such a legitimacy standard indicates that there is no so-called legitimacy crisis in Chinese politics (Yang 2016). This research has produced a corresponding political influence, and indeed, it has caused a controversy in public opinion circles, as the concept of legitimacy used here is entirely different from that in the public mind (Zhao 2017, p. 17, n.1).

Due to the lack of clarity in the standards of legitimacy politics, it is easy for people to regard social conflicts as a sign of a legitimacy crisis. In response to the prevailing notions in reality, such as an "imminent collapse", "the trap of transitioning", and "legitimacy crisis", some scholars pointed out that this was a "crisis during transitioning" (zhuanxing weiji) rather than a legitimacy crisis. The so-called "crisis during transitioning" refers to a "crisis arising from various conflicts of interest and the lagging behind of governance capabilities during the socio-economic transitioning, which is an inevitable phenomenon of structural transformation in a particular historical background" (Xu 2010). In this sense, the "crisis during transitioning" is actually a common feature in national governance during social transformation.

Ideas lead to policies, and wrong ideas will inevitably lead to wrong policies. As far as national governance is concerned, it is not uncommon in history to commit hideous strategic mistakes due to the lack of one's own ideas. In the struggle of ideas and the mutual learning of civilizations, Chinese political science has carried out a defensive construction on some critical vocabularies related to the state. It has formed, in a preliminary manner, an autonomous political discourse system, which provides a theoretical basis for its self-confidence in its development path and institutional arrangement. At the same time, Chinese political science has also made achievements worthy of recognition in the research on the most fundamental issues of political science, such as China's state-building. This is indeed, attributable to the

fact that Chinese political science is rooted in the fertile ground of the mainland of China.

3 Politics Rooted in the Mainland of China: Answering the Proposition of "Chineseness"

The discourse system centering on "democracy, governance, and legitimacy" gradually took shape in the form of political dialogues and the struggle of ideologies, and its vitality ultimately depended on the quality of social science research on social structure. This was because the highest standard for measuring the achievements of social sciences was that the research community had made substantive discoveries about the social structure in which they lived and to which their conducts were subjected. The research on the truth of social structure is an academic activity that explores "the world of being", and it is only from this that we can clarify concepts and theories in "the world of becoming". With respect to the study of state-building in Chinese political science, the biggest and most fundamental "existential" problem has been the "Chineseness" issue, which I first mentioned in 2017 (Yang 2017), or a stateness issue of why China is such and such. Irrespective of the controversy around dividing historical phases, the "Chineseness" in both ancient China and contemporary China will need to be answered. Otherwise, a de facto undisputed China may evolve into a major academic issue in theory, such as the challenge of the so-called "New Qing History". However, once one understands the research findings of "Chineseness" in Chinese political science, one can conclude that the "New Qing History" is not at all a challenge.

The following few questions at least will need to be answered regarding the stateness of ancient China: How did China come about? What are the core values that we mean when we claim that China is such and such? How is China organized?

How did China come about? The latest answer to the origin of the state can be Michael Mann's historical sociology, namely that state power is the result of the interaction between and among various forces in economic, ideological, military, and political arenas. This combination of different variables breaks through Charles Tilly's explanation of the state's capability to wage military warfare and its financial competence. It is also in starker contrast with the single-factor explanations of the past, such as "economic determinism" or "cultural determinism." Mann's theory of the state can be used to explain the formation of the pre-Qin state, and the case study of China can greatly enrich Man's theory. In terms of specific methods, Zhao Dingxin attempted to test the correlation between the strength of the nobility and the overthrow of the monarchy, as well as network analysis of the hegemony based on the distance of the army's march. The previous generations of sociologists such as Mann and Tilly were not good at these social-scientific methods (Zhao 2006).

Compared with the divergent views on the origin of the state, the research findings on China's stateness are more worthy of mention here. China is the only unified civilization in the world that has gone through 5000 years without intrusion. This achievement in the history of human civilization has attracted the curiosity and admiration of many talented scholars around the world, who attempted to uncover

its inner mystery. Among research works, the one that best explains the continuity of Chinese history is the famous Japanese scholar Yuzo Mizoguchi's "Chinese Substance Theory" (zhongguo jiti lun). For Mizoguchi, "China has its own *sui generis* historical reality and development, which is reflected in the slow changes of long-lasting phenomena in different eras. For this very reason, China's modernity should be comprehended from the relationship between contemporary times, modern times, and pre-modern times." (Mizoguchi 2011, p. 111). In other words, Chinese history has a consistent continuity. However, what does this continuity depend on? Or what factors have caused this uninterrupted continuity? Based on the "Chinese Substance Theory", some scholars put forward the "Substance Theory of Chinese Civilization" (zhonghua wenming jiti lun), namely a community composed of the genes of historical civilization, thus forming a genetic community. Apart from such factors as national subjectivity, language, and geography, in terms of politics, culture, and society, this genetic community includes, amongst other things, a unification of the whole country and the people-oriented philosophy of governance; a bureaucracy at the government level (including the system of prefectures and counties, and the imperial examination system); cultural tolerance and the doctrine of the mean; freedom and autonomy of social life; and the priority of family ethics, among other things. These "genes" have been passed on from one generation to another and internalized in the blood of the Chinese nation living in a fixed, bounded territory, resulting in a community of Chinese civilization that has stretched for thousands of years (Yang 2016).

This "civilizational substance" (wenming jiti) has been interpreted by some scholars as a "Confucian-Legalist state" (rufa guojia), which is seemingly similar to a commonplace suggestion of "Confucianism on the surface and Legalism beneath" (rubiao lifa), albeit with different connotations. The significance of the "Confucian-Legalist state" lies first in its historical continuity, namely China as the only state in the world that has lasted for 2000 years. China has the most significant tradition of a strong state among several major civilizations. It was among the first to establish officialdom, where the armed forces had been led by civil officials. China was able to assimilate nomadic and semi-nomadic kingdoms without having to conquer them like other civilizations. Unlike Europe, Chinese cities, even if highly commercialized, did not have the power to be independent of the state. This is the first time that Chinese history has been examined in a social-scientific manner, and has had a major academic impact in the English-speaking world.[4]

The most challenging question is why China as a country could last for thousands of years. Some scholars attribute this to China's tradition of "one literary culture,

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[4] See Zhao (2015). *American Journal of Sociology* dedicated a special issue to the discussions of the Confucian-Legalist State by Zhao (2015). This was the first time that a leading American historical sociology journal focused on Chinese history. Previously, China studies in Europe and the United States were either concentrated in East Asian departments and history departments without any social-scientific influence; or in political science departments, albeit with a focus on contemporary China and a short period of several recent decades. For this very reason, China could only be the subject of verification for modernization theories. The social-scientific research on Chinese history internationally can provide resources and amendments to such theories as modernization, capitalism, and state-building.

multiple religions" (yige wenjiao, duozhong zongjiao, see Yao 2013, 2014). Confucianism has never been a religion, but a kind of culture and education, that is, Confucian cultivation. The tradition of culture and education internalizes Confucianism in the spiritual world of the Chinese people. Confucianism occupies a special place in the spiritual life of the Chinese people and creates a universal common value. The fusion of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism does not mean just a coexistence of multiple religions. On the contrary, various folk beliefs and religions have spread widely and penetrated into the minds of local communities, and they have also propagated Confucian values. Therefore, Chineseness can be described as "one literary culture, multiple religions".

This discovery of "Chineseness" is very important. By extending this logic, China can also be summarized as "one literary culture, multiple ethnicities" (yige wenjiao, duozhong minzu), in that as long as the cultural and educational tradition is recognized, no matter what ethnicity one is, no matter which ethnicity the ruler comes from, it will be an organic part of China. From the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States to the Jin and the Southern and Northern Dynasties, China has always been a multi-ethnic country, albeit with a literary culture to warrant its Chineseness. In this way, the "New Qing History" proposes a pseudo-question.[5] Historians in China will need to pay more attention to the research of "Chineseness", as without this, a pseudo-question may turn into a real challenge.

So, how is this "civilizational substance" organized? The political theory of organizing the state is called "the theory of political regime" in the West. This is a classical theory that originated in city-states. However, with the expansion of the size of the country, the theory of regime on "who rules" is faced with unprecedented challenges. For example, the central-local governments' relations, the governance of non-governmental organizations, and the power of large corporations that have emerged in the current major countries are beyond the reach of the traditional theory of political regime. China has always been a large-scale civilization from the beginning, with incomparable complexity, and this necessitated interpretations from the relevant organizational theories. The theory has been that of a "governance system" (zhiti lilun) that scholars have proposed from the history of Chinese political thoughts in recent years, namely a state theory that includes governance, law, and rulership. This theory suggests that China, as a super-large-scale civilization and political community, has formed its own tradition of state structure in the course of 5000 years of evolution. From Jia Yi's discussion on how to overcome

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[5] The core proposition of "New Qing History" is "ethnic sovereignty." The so-called ethnic group, as long as it has sovereignty, will not be affected by culture. The rulers of the Qing Dynasty were the Manchus, and the Chineseness of the Manchus had become a problem. The first emperor of the Manchu Qing Dynasty, Shunzhi Emperor, required all his officials to read the *Imperial Guide to Governance* (yuzhi zizheng yaolan), which demonstrated the role of literary culture and education. The Manchu rulers were going through a process of self-Confucianism and constructing "Chineseness". By the same token, the United States did not cease to be the United States because the former President Obama is black, as what President Obama recognized and enforced was the value of the United States. The United States in and of itself is a multi-ethnic country. Deconstructing the stateness of other countries with the concept of ethnic sovereignty will ultimately have a reverse impact on the stateness of the United States. In the light of this, the "crisis of stateness" in the United States is not accidental.

the disadvantages of the Qin Dynasty and achieve long-term stability in the Han Dynasty, to the late Qing Dynasty, when *Collection of Qing Dynasty Writings on Statecraft* (jing shi wen bian) took "governance system" as its program—all of these provided key theoretical resources for understanding the traditional order and mechanism of a unified state structure consisting of prefectures and counties.

Governance, law, and rulership are the three core elements of this "governance system" thesis, where governance (zhidao) refers to the basic principles of order; law (zhifa) to systemic rules and institutions; and rulership (zhiren) to the political subject, including virtues, knowledge, and skills. They contain the basic aspects of the state structure, such as the relationship between politics and religion and that between politics and scholarship (both relations as the spiritual foundation). They also address the social and political governance model centered on rites and the law, the power structure that emphasizes interdependence as well as checks and balances, and the active role of those groups at the political center. The theory of governance system entered its mature phase in its classical sense during the Song Dynasty, focusing on the institutional building and changes of laws, regulations, and norms, highlighting a mentality oriented towards "ruling by the law". This tradition, since the late Qing Dynasty, was replaced by the Western theory of political regime. The value and dimension of the theory of governance system is more in line with the theoretical orientation of Chinese historical practice, when compared with the theory of political regime that focuses on the ruler where the highest power is located. These elements, such as the spiritual foundation of the political body, the governance model, the characteristics of the political system, and the cultivation of humanity, are all necessary components that a super-large-scale country needs to deal with, regardless of which era it is in (Ren 2019a).

It can be seen that "the way of governing" (zhengdao) and "the way of ruling" (zhidao) are both concepts subsumed under the theory of the governance system. An understanding of the theory of governance system can help us understand the reason why China has gone through dynasties without a decline in its civilization, in terms of the governance system's adaptability, resilience, and continuity, as a carrier of the civilization. The multi-dimensionality and multi-domain nature of the "national governance system" proposed by the Chinese could no longer be interpreted adequately by the theory of political regime. On the contrary, it could only be explained by the theory of the "governance system". It is not coincidental that the "national governance system" is also be referred to as a "governance system". Therefore, the "national governance system" can also be regarded as an endogenous evolvement of the theory and mentality of the governance system.

In the theory of civilizational substance that emphasizes historical continuity, contemporary China is a continuation and inheritance of ancient China, albeit with added variables of modernity. One of the missions of contemporary Chinese political science is to offer a conceptual explanation of how contemporary China came about and got organized. Political thoughts could be found in all ages. Nevertheless, as an academic discipline, political science in the scientific sense originated from the study of European state-building. Different studies on the courses of state-building in various countries generated a diversity of social-scientific theories. The mercantile class was the main force behind state-building in the United

Kingdom and the United States. The doctrine formulated therefrom focused on the natural rights or a social contract theory to defend individual rights, which in turn led to a society-centrism (shehui zhongxinzhuyi) in the context of social scientific research. Its key words included, but were not limited to, the hypothesis of "rational man", the social contract theory, natural rights, individualism, constitutionalism, where the core hypothesis is *rational man*. Compared with the United Kingdom, Germany, as a modern country, was a latecomer in its state-building, with a relatively weak mercantile force. The bureaucracy based on militarism organized the whole country, which gave rise to state-centrism (guojia zhongxinzhuyi) in the context of social scientific research. Its key words were bureaucracy, statism, and *raison d'etat*. In China, after the late Qing Dynasty, there was a general social crisis, where the country was torn apart, and the society in a state of disintegration. Who would organize such a "country"? The mercantile class was far too weak to take this responsibility, while the whole bureaucracy also disintegrated with the division of the country. The country was in desperate need of a new organization, specifically, a political party. The Kuomintang, with the political legacy of past warlordism, could not fulfill Sun Yat-sen's vision of "the party leading the army and state-building" (yidang lingjun, yidang jianguo). This great mission was finally accomplished by the Communist Party of China. Neither society-centrism nor state-centrism could explain this entirely different path of state-building, and party-centrism, formed in historical development was proposed——this was a centrism that corresponds to society-centrism and state-centrism. Research has found that although the "party" as a terminology is used in various contexts and countries, it may acquire completely different meanings. In Western countries, political parties are those that compete for power, while the Chinese Communist Party is the founding party that reorganized the whole country. Research has also found that although the Communist Party of China, the Russian Bolshevik Party in the former USSR, and the Indian National Congress Party—all of them have the characteristics of a "mission-oriented party", the Communist Party of China has a people-oriented mentality, while all the others have been mainly an apparatus for organizing power. This ontological difference has led to completely different end-points, such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the failure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Yang 2011b, pp. 182–243). The "stateness" of contemporary China at the political level has acquired modern qualities with the introduction of party politics. This also has become a new force to advance the genetic community of Chinese civilization.

The discovery of party-centrism has the following significance: firstly, it answers the question of party leadership from the perspective of comparative political development, thereby offering a social-scientific interpretation of the crucial political issue of party leadership. Secondly, it verifies the hypothesis of the complexity theory, namely a qualitative diversity, in that things with the same name may have ontologically qualitative differences. In other words, the Communist Party of China as the founding party is different from Western parties as interest groups in that it is also regarded as a mission-oriented party for the founding of the country. If we compare these mission-oriented parties, there are differences in terms of the genes of each historical civilization. Only by discovering this difference can we answer why the Communist Party of the Soviet Union failed and why the Communist Party of

China succeeded. We believe that these research findings on Chinese politics are not on par with China Studies done at Western institutions, where the study of Chinese politics in the West has never made its way into the mainstream comparative politics, let alone the family of social-scientific theories.

A major issue closely related to this is the study of stateness in contemporary China. To be more specific, it is the genetic community of Chinese civilization that has been inherited from its own cultural and educational traditions. In what way does it manifest itself in contemporary times? This is actually an answer to the "China Model" question. Many economists and sociologists simply do not admit that there is a China Model. They believe that the policies and economic systems implemented by China during the reform and opening-up era have all been derived from past human experiences without anything new in it, due to which there is no such thing as a model. Is this truly the case? Although many countries, especially developing ones, have implemented the same economic system and policies as China, with a greater degree of marketization and liberalization than China, why is it difficult for their governance performance to match that of China? The "new system" of the market economy is undoubtedly not a China Model. However, China's "change" resides in the "unchanged", and the incremental amount of "change" that is absorbed by the "unchanged" structure is the China Model.

Most Chinese political scientists, unlike their colleagues in economics and sociology, recognize the thesis of the China Model, albeit with differences in their understanding of this very model. A popularly held view is that the China Model is a melange of politics, economics, and society. In essence, this claim is not far from the truth, but now that it is called a "model", we must attempt a more general statement at the conceptual level, which should not only summarize the political development path of China in modern times, but also reflect *par excellence* the political system of contemporary China, as well as its *sui generis* advantages. In this sense, a rational interpretation of the China Model is the "democratic centralism regime", which is a representative counterpart to representational democracy (Yang 2018b, pp. 235–83). It has been found that democratic centralism as the principle of power organization was a time-honored practice. It has been carried forward through the revolutionary period, the first 30 years of the People's Republic, and the different phases during the reform and opening-up period. Moreover, this form of regime organization could fully adapt itself to different economic conditions. It has been proven that in the era of a socialist market economy, democratic centralism can be highly inclusive, and the principle of democratic centralism is embodied and practiced in crucial power relations. The unity of politics and the decentralization of economic power go hand in hand in the relationship between the central and local governments. The "developmental state" that reflects the will of the state marches forward with the market economy in the political and economic relationship. In the context of the state-society relationship, the "differential administration" of societal organizations consists of both supervision and liberalization, which is referred to as "state corporatism" in terms of state theories, thus manifesting a state-society relationship that is both centralized and vibrant (Yang 2018b, pp. 284–367).

Summarizing the China Model as a democratic centralism regime, or considering the latter as the core of the China Model, is one way to theorize the study of

the Chinese political system from the perspective of political science or social sciences. Re-elevating democratic centralism to the level of regime theory and comparing it with representative democracies can bring Chinese political research into the mainstream orbit of comparative politics, instead of falling into the category of "particularism" or "exceptionalism". To achieve this, studying key theories is not enough; on the contrary, it is also necessary to have a political methodology and epistemology based on Chinese history and culture. This is essential in order to better verify the authenticity of existing theories and to commit ourselves to developing new theories.

4 The Political Science of "China as Method": Historical Political Studies

The research findings of political science rooted in the mainland of China are actually the fruits of a perspective that "centers on China". However, for Chinese political science to achieve greater success and higher quality research that is recognized by the scholar community globally, political science must not only pay attention to the local, but also formulate a research paradigm and school of "China as Method". "China as Method" has at least two meanings. Not only will China be placed at the center, but the epistemology and methodological knowledge generated by China-centered research will also become a "benchmark" or "standard."

The political science of "China as Method", or even the entire social sciences research in China, was initially not problematic. However, social sciences in recent decades have accepted a "West-centrism" to such an extent that this issue has to be re-examined. The school of Chinese social sciences took shape during the Yan'an period of the Communist Party of China. A series of works emerged in that period, notable among them were "On Contradiction" (maodun lun) and "On Practice" (shijian lun), which represented an effort to systemize Chinese philosophical views, and to sinicize historical materialism and dialectical materialism. Articles such as "On Coalition Government" (lun lianhe zhengfu) and "On New Democratism" (xin minzhu zhuyi lun) discussed the question of what kind of state and regime should be established, and these represented the maturity of the concept of state and regime in Chinese political science. Works like "On the Protracted War" (lun chijiu zhan) presented the Chinese people's view of grand strategy and indicated how China achieved its final victory. These treatises signified the "political maturity" of the Chinese Communists and laid a strategic-theoretical foundation for the rapid seizure of power afterwards. Such political maturity that was embodied in philosophy, political science, and military strategy was deeply rooted in Mao Zedong's research methodology and epistemology of "placing China at the center". In "How to Study the History of the Communist Party of China" (ruhe yanjiu zhonggong dangshi), as Mao Zedong pointed out, "in the study of the history of the Communist Party of China, one should place China at the center and sit our butt on China. We must also study capitalism and socialism in the world, albeit with a clear understanding of its relationship with the study of the history of the Communist Party of China. It depends on which side your

butt sits. If you are sitting entirely on the side of a foreign country, then you are not studying the history of the Communist Party of China. When we study China, we must place China at the center, and we must sit in China, in order to study the world. Some of our comrades have a problem, namely to place foreign countries at the center of everything. They act like gramophones, mechanically relaying foreign things to China without studying the characteristics of China. Thus, without studying the characteristics of China, merely replicating foreign things will not solve China's problems." (Mao 1993, p. 407).

Paul A. Cohen, an American scholar, put forth "Discovering History in China" in the 1980s, and this had a powerful impact on "West-centrism." (Cohen 2002). Coincidentally, Yuzo Mizoguchi, a well-known Chinese research expert in Japan, directly proposed "China as Method." (Mizoguchi 2011). "China as Method" is not limited to merely placing China at the center. The discovering that centers on China is in and by itself a measurement standard, thus containing the significance of "taking China as the standard". In other words, from the United States to Japan, many scholars who study China-related issues have abandoned "West-centrism." Regrettably, this insightful methodology has not attracted enough attention in China. After the reform and opening up, because of the lagging of Chinese social sciences, the phenomenon of "placing foreign countries at the center of everything" was common. The liberal democratic politics that embodied the methodology of Western political science and was regarded as "universal value" faced a predicament, and there was a serious political crisis within the Western countries themselves as well as in the vast majority of non-Western countries. It was then that the opportunity emerged for us to abandon "West-centrism" in our quest for a new paradigm for political science research.

The methodological foundation of the political studies of liberal democracy has been based on individualism with the assumption of *rational man*. This *rational man* hypothesis could be traced back to Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and has a long history. It was not until the post-war period that it really became the basis of political science methodology in American politics. American political science transformed the traditional country-centered political studies in Europe into society-centrism. Based on this, a highly influential behaviorist school of political studies, a political science based on rational choice, and various quantitative models and research methods emerged. The hypothesis of *rational man* is not only academic, but also political in nature. Fukuyama used Hobbes' hypothesis of *rational man* to support his "end of history" thesis. Fukuyama discussed the dynamics of human progress with reference to Hegel's "recognition" theory, pointing out that the idea of "recognition" came from Hobbes's hypothesis of *rational man*. For Hobbes, the concepts of justice and fairness can both be derived from the rational pursuit of self-preservation (Fukuyama 2003, pp. 172–84).

In Habermas's view, Hobbes had fundamentally challenged the classical political science tradition since Aristotle. He had emphasized the contextuality and historicity and made an attempt to elevate the hypothesis of *rational man* as a political method or idea to solve human political dilemmas. For Habermas, a science-based social philosophy aims at specifying the conditions appropriate for law and order within a state and society. The effectiveness of its judgments shall vary with the

location, time, and circumstances. Moreover, it purports to establish a permanent community regardless of historical conditions (Habermas 2010, p. 33).

Objectively speaking, the hypothesis of "rational man" can be used within a certain range to analyze the economic behavior of markets at the micro-level. Political actions have always been group-based or collective in nature, and there is no congruence between individual rationality and its collective counterpart. It is for this reason that mankind has witnessed political disasters time and again (e.g., "McCarthyism" in the post-war United States and the racist policies in the former Trump administration). To summarize, the political crisis of liberal democracy is a crisis of political science with individualism as its methodology. This is why political science must find a new way out. Henceforth, where is the way out?

Even in the United States, the sociology-of-history studies by several generations of scholars headed by Barrington Moore since the 1960s represent the most important achievements of American social sciences. This can be seen from the contributions of eminent scholars such as Wallerstein, Charles Tilly, and Michael Mann. Since the 1980s, American political science research also took a "historical turn",[6] where historical institutionalism became a mainstream methodology. In fact, history-based political studies occupied a dominant position in the history of Western political thoughts for a long time. From Aristotelian politics in classical times to modern Marxist political science, all these represent historical research *par excellence*. This has been particularly the case with Germany with a relatively short history of the state, where there actually emerged a "German Historical School" (e.g., Humboldt and Weber). Afterwards, the influential Husserlian "phenomenology" which advocated a "return to the thing itself" also signified a return to history. This strong historical tradition inherent in Western social sciences has been inundated by the more ferocious wave of "rational man", which has a tendency to push political science and even the entire Western social sciences toward a dead end.

Quantitative model research based on the hypothesis of "rational man" also began to emerge in Chinese political science, but China's "stateness" holds ground so much that the historical path in political science cannot be replaced and instead, will inevitably be revived. China is the only civilization in the world that has lasted for 5,000 years without interruption. Some civilizations had their ancient peaks, albeit not in the present, such as ancient Greek and Egyptian civilizations, while other countries have had only a short history, and they are in greater number. As Finer mentions in his famous *The History of Government Series*, China is the only country that has run through ancient, modern, and contemporary times (Finer 2014a, b, c). Moreover, the uniqueness of Chinese history lies in its political history and a history of stateness, while the national history in other civilizations is mostly of culture, society, and religion. Qian Mu, an eminent scholar, offered an insightful statement pertaining to the understanding of the uniqueness of Chinese history: "Chinese history has its own special characteristics that are different from other nations and countries, but the most obvious one is in politics. It can also be said that Chinese

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[6] In *Comparative Political Studies*, Issue 8–9 of 2010, Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt suggested a historical turn of democratization studies. See Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010).

nationality is good at politics, for which reason it can take political activities as its strength. We can create a well-functioning political system to achieve a great unification of the whole country and can maintain this unification for thousands of years without fail. Up until this day, we have such a huge country with vast land and a great number of people, which is beyond compare all over the world. This has been the crystallization and the supreme achievement of Chinese history." (Qian 2005, p. 17) This uniqueness means that Chinese history contains rich politico-scientific principles, and the study of Chinese history is intertwined with a study of the history of political doctrines. Furthermore, China has a well-developed history of political systems and political thoughts. Based on this alone, it can be suggested that in the sense of research path or methodology, Chinese political science must be ahistorical political science.

Although the concept of "political study of history" was recently proposed,[7] de facto research on the historical political science has been an inherent tradition in China, with a stunning record of scholarly findings. As aforementioned, the study of literary canons and history in imperial China was actually a study of Chinese politics. When political science was introduced into China as a discipline, Liang Qichao and Qian Mu were regarded as "the dual sources of the historical political science". For instance, Liang Qichao's "On National Ethos" (guofeng lun), Qian Mu's thesis of the rule of rituals as the rule of law, were political studies based on Chinese historical and cultural traditions (Ren 2019b). Liang Qichao first proposed the concept of "a people-oriented politics" (minben zhuyi) based on the long-standing people-oriented philosophical tradition (Liang, Qichao, 2016). This can be regarded as a research finding *par excellence* that adopts the "political study of history" approach. In recent years, Professor Xu Yong's kinship-based concepts of "rights by historical endowment" (zu fu renquan) and "the priority of family and household" (jiahu benwei) are typical political studies of history (Xu 2013, 2018). We believe that once the historical political science is proposed in the disciplinary sense, a strong academic community will gradually take shape. For one thing, the Chinese are almost born "historians", and history is the "primordial interest" (chuxin) of political scholars. It will be worthwhile to anticipate the research findings of the historical political science.

So, what exactly is the historical political science? First of all, like mature historical sociology, the historical political science is also a combination of epistemology and methodology, namely to study issues from the perspective of history, or to put issues in the context of history, to verify or falsify existing theoretical proposition, or to develop new theories (Yang 2019b). In a methodological sense, drawing upon some keywords from the methodology of historical institutionalism (analytical concepts such as path-dependency, temporal process, temporality, key nodes, and increasing returns), the political studies of history can be made more scientific, that

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[7] In 2013, Professor Yao Zhongqiu first proposed the concept of "political study of history". In 2015, Professor Zhang Guangsheng also used the concept of "political study of history". See Yao (2013b), Zhang (2015b).

is, one can identify the causal mechanism in a more focused manner, instead of the obscure causal relations in the traditional sense.

Secondly, what distinguishes the historical political science from historical sociology lies in its ontological significance. The "history" in the historical political science is no longer simply an idea, namely the so-called view of history (lishiguan), but an existence in the ontological sense, a kind of "what is". By the same token, the "political study" in this approach is a study of the trinity of political value, political system, and political behavior. Therefore, the relationship between historical reality and the trinity (of contemporary political values, political systems, and political behavior) is the historical political science in the ontological sense. In this sense, one can consider the historical political science almost as a doctrine tailored for Chinese political science. For one thing, the continuity and uninterrupted nature of Chinese history have created a kind of "constancy", which is not devoid of history, but a historical continuity. Previously, Western scholars were accustomed to seeing changes in their own society and regarding this continuity as stagnation (Wong 2016, p.86). This understanding is of great import for us to gain better knowledge of Chinese history. There is a fundamental difference between "no history" and "the continuity of history", as it involves the fundamental question of how to understand "history". From the perspective of "no history", China is not only unchanged, but also signifies backwardness. From the perspective of "historical continuity", Chinese history has been different from the West since the very beginning. This difference was a "premature" or earliest form of modernity. As Fukuyama remarked, the Qin dynasty was the earliest modern state (Fukuyama 2014, pp. 24–26). When did European modernity politics come about? According to Professor R. Bin Wong of the California School, in 1400 CE—by way of contrast with China, Europe was disorderly in terms of political organization, with numerous small and micro political units (e.g., city-states, ecclesiastic domains, principalities, and kingdoms) co-existing side by side. Back then, China was a vast empire, without nobility, religious institutions, and political traditions in a European sense (Wong 2016, p. 77). In other words, according to European standards, China had already been a "modern" society and acquired its "modernity". Now that it had acquired modernity, why would this state of modernity change in the later period of Chinese history? Based on the modernity standards put forward in the West, Leopold von Ranke, a founding member of the German historical school in the nineteenth century, suggested that by the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, Europe began to have some "modern" traits. By way of comparison, a series of modern features (e.g., nation-state, bureaucratic politics, the secularization of political affairs, and the army) (Potter 1999, p. 1) already existed in pre-Qin politics.

Thirdly, due to the fact that the historical political science has ontological attributes while historical sociology is mainly a view of history, what determines the academic significance of historical sociology lies primarily in the study of macro institutional changes, as can be seen from those historical sociological works with which we are familiar. By way of comparison, ontology is multi-layered, including macro, meso, and micro levels. Therefore, the historical political science should not only be used to examine the macro-institutional changes, but also used to investigate meso-level and even micro issues. Such meso-level issues may include how China's own

consultative political tradition could be transformed into consultative democracy, the relationship between human resources management and "good governance" (zhizhi) since ancient times, and the relationship between the Board of Civil Service (libu) in imperial China and the department of human resources and organization in the contemporary age. Micro issues can be some issues of cognitive psychology. For instance, how have family-prioritism and *guanxi*-oriented networks affected current political behavior and political values since ancient times?

A final distinction concerns the political function of the historical political science. Historical sociology claims that it does not subscribe to any particular value and has no role in legitimizing political discourses. However, the ontology of the historical political science requires that the historical political science has an unavoidable political role to play, as the existence of historical continuity for modern political values and political systems is already a legitimization of political discourse. It is justifiable that political doctrine has a political function to fulfill. On the contrary, without this very political function, a political doctrine shall lose existentialist value. The methodology of behaviorist science, such as the aforementioned "rational man" hypothesis and the rational choice theory proposed afterwards, is an individualism-based methodology, whose political function is to defend the rationality of the capitalist system. An inference from this will be that a methodology that defends one political system against another will be revolutionary in nature from the perspective of the latter. There is no need to contradict this essential nature of political theories, without which it will become hypocritical and veiled.

What is the use of this historical political science, and what is to be studied? Some scholars have pointed out that for Chinese political scholars, the historical political science has three major issues on its research agenda, namely a full description of the history of the evolution of the Chinese state, the construction of general theories about Chinese politics, and the study of world political history for the purpose of developing a typology of states and general politics (Yao 2019). There have been scholars who used historical sociology to study the relationship between the political forms in contemporary China and those in its imperial times, as well as the political continuity of Chinese politics before and after the reform and opening-up (Yang 2019c). As a matter of fact, the ontological nature of the historical political science leads us to a natural conclusion that the historical political science can be used to study many macro, meso-level, and micro issues. This does not mean that the historical political science can exhaust all research topics. The interpretative competence of any epistemic discipline is without a doubt limited, and it is for this reason that the historical political science does not exclude other methodologies.

5 Conclusion

"China as Method", the historical political science is an epistemic discipline that several generations of political scientists have arduously explored in mutual learning across Chinese and Western civilizations. It is not only a research paradigm and methodology, but also an academic discipline, due to its ontological attributes. As an epistemic category or academic discipline, its attribute of "Chineseness" is beyond

doubt, and this stands in stark contrast with the political theory of "Westernness" that is based on the assumption of "rational man". We can systematically construct an autonomous political discourse system in the mutual learning across civilizations only with the emergence of the historical political science as an academic discipline of subjective-methodological autonomy and self-confidence. This will help to address "Chineseness" in a more scholarly and in-depth manner. For that matter, any country with its own history and civilization needs to answer its own "stateness" questions. A political theory devoid of such fundamental propositions may result in a country making strategic and sweeping mistakes.

What needs to be pointed out is that the construction of an autonomous doctrine of "Chineseness" does not mean clinging to "particularism" and rejecting the so-called "universalism". In fact, in modern times, has China not been embracing and accepting "modernity" and "universality"? By way of comparison, how much of the "universality" from non-Western civilizations has been accepted by Western countries? We should look at the issue from another angle. Why do Western countries claim that their civilization is universally valid and even "universalist", while the Chinese could only consider themselves "particular", instead of using the same universal discourse? What's the further reason behind this apparent difference? No civilization is "universalist" in the sense of comparative civilizational studies. On the contrary, civilizations can only be multiple and diverse. The distinction between the universality and particularity of civilizations is a pseudo-question, while that of mutual learning across multiple civilizations is a true one. The reason why there is still a dispute between particularity and universality is that this is a historical imprint formed by China lagging the West, and it is a kind of "problematic trap" (wenti xianjing) into which China falls. If there does exist any "particularity" about China, it will be its continuous political history, in that China is the only political community in the world that has existed for millennia. This should be the "particularity" that is desirable and worthy of emulation for all civilizations around the world.

Declarations

Conflict of interest All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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