

# Research Methods and Narrative Methods for the Construction of the Political Economy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore the logical path and methodology for constructing the system of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The research object of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics should have a profound historical perspective, covering economic laws and policy logics from ancient times to the present, especially providing a theoretical interpretation of the internal connection between the political gene of “great unification” and the contemporary governing idea of the Party exercising leadership over all work. Drawing on the principle of the unity of “research method” and “narrative method” in Marx’s *Das Kapital*, this paper advocates adhering to dialectical materialism and historical materialism, starting from the core category of labor, and scientifically constructing a theoretical framework covering labor, land, capital, the state and global governance according to their positions in social structure rather than historical sequence. The paper emphasizes that the construction of the theoretical system should achieve the unity of research logic and realistic movement, enhance the academic height by strengthening theoretical abstraction, and provide Chinese wisdom for building a community with a shared future for mankind.

**Keywords:** Political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics; *Das Kapital*; Logical system; Marxism

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## 1. Historical logic and expansion of research objects

Originating from the Spring and Autumn Annals Commentary by Gongyang, the political thought of great unification in the Qin Dynasty emphasized the concepts of “greatness” and “unification”, attaching importance to and advocating the cause and situation of unification. By implementing a system of centralization of power, adopting a system of prefectures and counties to govern local areas, and enforcing unified laws, weights and measures nationwide, the Qin Dynasty achieved unification in politics, economy, culture, science and technology, and military affairs. These measures not only initiated the history of Chinese feudal dynasties but also brought about many innovations and developments in various fields <sup>[1]</sup>. The political thought of the Qin Dynasty has influenced China to this day. Therefore, the research object of the political economy of socialism

with Chinese characteristics is not limited to contemporary social phenomena; it should include economic categories, economic laws, economic policies and economic strategies in China from ancient times to the present<sup>[2]</sup>. The Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people through years of struggle and achieved fruitful results, but the research progress on the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics lags behind practice. An important current issue is how to balance the unity of research methods and narrative methods in the process of system construction<sup>[3]</sup>. The research object of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics is not the same as that of *Das Kapital*. Therefore, we cannot completely imitate *Das Kapital* when studying the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics. We should adopt scientific methods to conduct an in-depth analysis of the economic reality of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and scientifically construct the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics by referring to Marx's research methods and the six-book narrative method<sup>[4]</sup>.

## **2. Philosophical foundation and methodological principles of system construction**

Dialectical materialism and historical materialism constitute the most fundamental worldview and methodology of Marxism. Taking practice as the logical starting point, they explore the dialectical relationship between thinking and existence, realize the deep integration of materialism and dialectics, and natural view and historical view, representing the highest form of materialist development. Dialectical materialism emphasizes that the material world evolves according to its inherent laws, and the unity of opposites within things is the fundamental driving force for their development<sup>[5]</sup>. Historical materialism reveals the objective laws of social development: social existence determines social consciousness, and social consciousness has a dynamic reaction; the contradictory movement of productive forces and production relations, economic base and superstructure constitutes the basic driving force for the replacement of social forms<sup>[6]</sup>. This scientific methodology system provides a core criterion for understanding and transforming the world.

The organic unity of research method and narrative method is the core criterion for the construction of Marxist political economy system. Marx refined this process into the famous "two paths", completing the logical leap from perceptual concreteness to scientific abstraction, and then from scientific abstraction to rational concreteness<sup>[7]</sup>. Although they are opposite in logical direction, they have a deep internal connection in system construction. As Marx said, although the narrative method is formally different from the research method, it must be premised on the thoroughness of the research method. When the vitality of materials is truly reflected in concepts, the theoretical system presents a rigorous logical whole like a "transcendental structure". The abstraction at the starting point of the theoretical system must be the abstraction of objective perceptual concreteness that has been systematically studied, and its abstract object is always the objective concrete economic reality. The "concreteness" in "from abstraction to concreteness" mainly refers to the internal connection of things, that is, exploring the internal connections between various essences abstracted from phenomena, clarifying the interaction mechanism and dominant factors of essences in different aspects. Its core is to depict the economic relations between people rather than the superficial connections between things, providing a rigorous and clear logical support and structural framework for the theoretical narrative system<sup>[8]</sup>. History and practice, logic and cognition are coupled, and there must be differences between narrative method and research method in form. Research work must fully possess various materials, systematically analyze their diverse development forms, and deeply explore the internal connections behind these forms. Marx clearly pointed out that when we talk about an economic category, we focus not on its historical sequence but on its

core position and practical role in a specific social structure <sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, the logical structure should not be arranged according to the historical order of emergence, but should be discussed on the premise of the current established subject. The narrative method of *Das Kapital* is essentially a scientific method to reproduce the concrete whole in thinking. According to this method, the internal connections between economic categories and economic laws, as well as their order in theoretical narration, should not be based on the historical sequence but reasonably arranged according to their positions and roles in a specific social structure.

### **3. Dialectical interaction between economic base categories and superstructure**

In the process of China's economic transformation and development, market mechanism and state intervention play a dual driving role. The essence of market economy is that the market plays a decisive role in resource allocation, and the law of value is its fundamental internal economic law. The system of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics must construct a dual unified analytical framework covering the relations of production of public ownership and non-public ownership. Throughout major historical changes such as reform and opening up, the strategic orientation of national policies has fully demonstrated the strong reaction of the superstructure to the economic base, but this does not mean that the "state" should be the logical starting category. As a comprehensive category covering various economic relations, the "state" should not be placed before the basic economic relations of the socialist market economy, but as a higher-level logical reproduction.

The first three volumes of Marx's six books are economic categories based on basic classes, and there are groups and classes behind the three volumes. Each category analyzes the duality, the unity of opposites between generality and particularity. It can be seen that Marx's classification principle is to study the categories corresponding to production, and then classify the social and economic structure in turn. According to the main way of income source, generality belongs to material means of production, and particularity is determined by their historical stage <sup>[10]</sup>. In the application of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to explain in what special way material means of production are presented in a special historical stage. Regarding the order of the three volumes, in a socialist country, labor occupies a dominant position and is the oldest category.

People's democracy is an important part of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics. To achieve the universal sharing of labor achievements and narrow the gap between rich and poor, there are policy adjustments such as targeted poverty alleviation, equalization of public services, and income distribution adjustment. The formulation and implementation of economic policies must extensively listen to the opinions of the people and protect their democratic rights. Moreover, regarding the particularity of labor, in the new era, labor is fundamentally different from that in the small-scale peasant economy, and its complexity has developed unprecedentedly. Labor appears in the form of wage labor in capitalist society, but in socialist society, its form is different <sup>[11]</sup>. For example, the labor of employees in private enterprises and state-owned enterprises is essentially very different. Thinking about this issue can lead to different discussions on ownership relations. The political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics does not deny the role of market economy, but emphasizes that market economy should serve the overall interests of society and avoid economic growth at the expense of workers' interests.

After analyzing labor, we discuss the orderly development of material means of production, land and capital. Land occupies a special position in the economic structure of socialism with Chinese characteristics <sup>[12]</sup>.

In ancient China, land became one of the main reasons for the change of dynasties and also existed as an important property. The completion of land reform completely destroyed the feudal land system that had existed in China for more than 2,000 years, and the landlord class was also eliminated. Later, land property right reform was carried out. The connection between rural land and urban land is changing. At present, it is debatable whether the utilization rate of China's land has reached a peak compared with other countries. Land issues are also directly related to rural agricultural development.

The third part is the orderly development of capital. Now in the primary stage of socialism, the fragments and remaining factors left over from capitalism still exist, but no longer occupy a dominant position. The generality of capital is material means of production, but in socialist countries, capital has particularity. As a means of production, it complements and integrates with socialism<sup>[10]</sup>. In socialist countries, all the people share the dividends of development, and the people here refer to the category of working people. Capital is profit-driven, fluid, risky and diverse. Setting "traffic lights" for the capital is the core governance logic for regulating and guiding its healthy, orderly and sustainable development. It should be clear that preventing the disorderly expansion of capital is not to exclude capital, but to guide the orderly evolution of capital through institutional constraints, so that it can be deeply embedded in the economic system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. After completing the logical deduction of economic base categories such as capital and land, we should further elaborate the corresponding relations of production and superstructure, and incorporate the connotations of the times such as new quality productivity, green innovation and sustainable development concept, so as to reveal the evolutionary law of dialectical interaction between economic base and superstructure.

Through the connections between various forms and between vertical and horizontal economic categories, the past development is connected with the present. By discussing the connections between different categories and the connections of the same category in different historical stages, the completeness of categories can be obtained. To study the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics, we must study the historical development process of socialism, from utopian socialism to scientific socialism. Every category has generality and particularity. The primary stage of socialism is an important theoretical basis of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Next, we will discuss in detail different types and levels of economic systems in the primary stage of socialism, such as the basic economic system, market economic system, and distribution system. Looking back at history, there was first class revolution, which reacted on the economic base to form labor force adapted to the superstructure. Socialism will also go through this process, so political parties and the state belong to the superstructure. Starting from the superstructure, we can also study the economic base in turn, so we need to discuss the economic operation at the macro, meso and micro levels. The macro part is the national macro-control policy, the meso part involves regional economy, industrial economy, urban and rural issues, and the micro part involves micro subjects such as state-owned enterprises, private enterprises and residents. The superstructure reacts on the economic base and also shapes the economic structure.

#### **4. Theoretical mission and innovative path from a global perspective**

In addition to the domestic circulation, China actively complies with the trend of economic globalization, continuously expands opening up, and actively carries out economic and trade cooperation with countries around the world on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. Reform and opening up is an important strategy for China to achieve rapid economic development. The political economy of socialism with Chinese

characteristics recognizes the decisive role of market economy in resource allocation, but also emphasizes the macro-control role of the government. Through reform and opening up, China has liberated and developed productive forces. At the same time, through government regulation, it has solved the problem of market failure and ensured the stable and healthy development of the economy. Therefore, to a certain extent, the state is endogenous<sup>[13]</sup>. At present, China is actively participating in global economic governance and building a new system of open economy. Global economic governance is an important part of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The core of the new type of major-country relations and the new type of international relations is win-win cooperation. Through the “Belt and Road” initiative and participation in international organizations and multilateral mechanisms, China has promoted the establishment of a more fair and reasonable international economic order and contributed Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions to promoting the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction<sup>[14]</sup>. At the same time, building a higher-level new system of open economy is a strategic initiative for China to take the initiative to promote reform and development through opening up. The political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics emphasizes development in opening up and opening up in development. By optimizing the business environment, expanding opening up, attracting foreign investment, and participating in international competition and cooperation, mutual benefit and win-win results are achieved.

## **5. Conclusion**

We are now in a critical era of theoretical innovation. However, the construction of the system of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics lags behind practice. In research, critical research is widely used, while deliberative thinking is rarely used. Textbooks generally have a rough plate structure, poor logical rigor of category deduction, and lack of profound mastery of political economy research methods. The construction of a theoretical system cannot be accomplished in a single day. To improve the theoretical system of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics and form a systematic economic theory, we must comprehensively improve its theoretical and academic level, combine theoretical innovation with practical development on the philosophical basis of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, and fully draw on and scientifically apply Marxist research and narrative methods. Only by deeply grasping and flexibly applying the overall methodology can we accurately understand the research object and internal logical structure of the theoretical system, and continuously optimize the formal framework of the socialist economic theoretical system. At the same time, theoretical innovation cannot be separated from the support of high-level talents. We must strive to cultivate a large number of interdisciplinary academic talents with solid professional literacy in economics and profound knowledge of economic history and economic ideology history, adhere to emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts, constantly open up new realms of Marxist political economy, continuously optimize the construction path of the theoretical system of the political economy of socialism with Chinese characteristics, strengthen theoretical abstraction ability, and improve the theoretical level and academic height.

## **Disclosure statement**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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