

A Systematic Review about the Theories of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Michel Foucault Based on the Political Practice in China and U.S.

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Abstract. Historically, every thinker's theory on the national political development is topical and pertinent. As time goes by, many scholars have become more and more concerned with the applicability of these ideas to current political situation. This paper will use China and the United States (the U.S.) as examples to analyze the applicability of the theories of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Michel Foucault. Based on comparing and summarizing the famous works of the three thinkers, relevant academic papers and reports etc., this article makes a detailed analysis of the applicability of the above thinkers' theories and finally draws conclusions. In terms of Weber, he put forward the idea of distinguishing officials and politicians separately, which is applicable in the U.S. but cannot be applied in China. The main reason for this theory is that officials and politicians are two completely separate systems in the U.S., while China thinks officials is politicians. As for Carl Schmitt, he talks about the distinction between friend and enemy in political relations, and points out the inescapable relationship between politics and war, denying the possibility of peace. This theory perfectly conforms to the current political situation of the U.S., but it has some limitations when it is used to analyze the situation in China due to its unique cultural background as well. For Michel Foucault, the difference between him and the above-mentioned two theorists is that his theory more concerns the people and those in power. However, similar to them, Foucault's theory is also very significant and can be substituted into the modern society of China and the U.S. In conclusion, the theories of Weber, Schmitt, and Foucault are more like a cultural hedge between the old and the new, bringing clear attention to the different political systems in the world.

Keywords: Max Weber; Carl Schmitt; Michel Foucault; China; The United States.

1. Introduction

Changes in each country, particularly policies' influence, play a significant role from ancient to now. In reality, political issues are not idealistic, it actually does not contain personal emotions. Every country has its own unique method of political governance and any decision will affect the current situation in the country. Due to what is behind politics is the political system and institutional arrangements, whether the solution proposed by the state can become a public policy is also determined by the politics behind the policy. Political decisions not only indicate the direction of a country's development, but also social development, economic development, and international relations are closely related to it. Not only these, but politics is also the key element to the rise and fall of nations. This article will take the theories of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Michel Foucault as an entry point, leading more people to understand more comprehensively through using the examples of China and the U.S.

There is no doubt that a theory always needs constant change and development to become a good one. With the passage of time, the adaptability of theories from Weber, Schmitt and Foucault have become limited to some extent. For instance, it is obvious that with the rise of Asian countries in recent years, some parts of these theories can no longer be fully applied to the different political backgrounds of today's eastern and western politics, that is to say, many political views of those

thinkers have been different from the actual political situation. This is mainly due to the time limitations, differences in cultural backgrounds, differences in political systems, and so on. Therefore, the following essay is going to take the two representative regimes of China and the U.S. as examples to analyze and demonstrate the deeper message behind them. What theories still apply to these two very different countries? Why do some theories apply to both countries while others do not?

In order to fully understand the above questions and make a relatively rigorous answer, this article further understands the political views of Weber, Schmidt, and Foucault by reading and referring to a large number of relevant and specific literatures. And cite other scholars' opinions and specific facts and cases for a deeper critical analysis of their thinking. In addition, this article will focus on China and the U.S. from an objective, fair, and academic standpoint, and expound and discuss the commonalities and characteristics of Weber, Schmidt, and Foucault's ideas in the political practice of these two countries. Finally, this paper provides a reliable reference for those who want to study the views of the three thinkers in the future or those who want to study the political practice of China and the U.S., and enriches the literature and materials in related fields.

2. The application of Weber's theory in political practice

2.1 Weber's theory

Max Weber's writings and thoughts on politics are very concerned with the practical issues of conflict and struggle, checks and balances of power. In his view, the two roles of politicians and officials are full of struggles and conflicts, and also reflect the checks and balances of power. Therefore, he believes that politicians who are full of mission and responsibility and officials who rely on professional skills are two completely opposite roles [1]. Officials enter the bureaucracy through examinations, often with a high degree of expertise and a wealth of vocational skills, and without tenure requirements. Moreover, officials are not responsible for formulating policies and controlling the direction of the country, so their responsibilities are limited. They do not need to be responsible for the consequences of their actions, but only for their own work. On the other hand, politicians are elected by the people and are responsible for formulating policies, ensuring the interests of voters, and determining the fate and direction of the entire country. The politician himself and the voters who support him focus on the pursuit of substantive effects and interests, so politicians should be responsible for their own actions and consequences. In general, the responsibility of politicians is universal and historic. There is no doubt that the nature of the two makes Weber cut them apart.

2.2 The Political Practice of Weber's Theory in The U.S.

Max Weber's pioneering research and analysis of bureaucracy has had a profound impact in this field, and even today, most political practice still draws on and follows Weber's theoretical framework [2]. Take the U.S. as an example, the clear distinction between officials and politicians in the U.S. reflects the application of Max Weber's political views in actual political life. More specifically, the relationship between officials and politicians in the U.S. is not harmonious. On the contrary, there is a relationship of checks and balances between the two, and there are frequent struggles and verbal conflicts. Regarding the group of politicians, Weber took the opposite attitude to other scholars of his time. Weber did not despise politicians and defended them, because he felt that politicians could use their power to check government officials [3]. The fact that American politicians use power to restrain officials is obviously in line with Weber's point of view. The corruption and inaction of government officials is an inevitable topic of the bureaucracy, and it is also the core and focus of ordinary people and politicians' daily concerns. Politicians control and restrain officials through budgets, legislation, public opinion, and interest groups. If officials do not fulfill their relevant obligations, politicians can go through relevant legal procedures to require officials to step down. In addition, politicians, through their own interest groups and the public who support them, put pressure on officials not to neglect

their duties and use their power for personal gain. From the above we can see that Weber's ideas have been concretely implemented in the U.S.

2.3 The Political Practice of Weber's Theory in China

Weber's strict distinction between politicians and officials also has some negative effects and limitations. Firstly, due to the checks and balances between politicians and officials, they both withhold information from each other, which leads to a sharp decline in the completeness and timeliness of information obtained by both sides. Secondly, government officials are afraid of being caught by politicians when they make mistakes in their work, so they always act in accordance with relevant provisions and laws and regulations, lacking breakthrough and innovative spirit. Once there is a situation not covered by provisions, they cannot deal with it. Finally, distrust between the two leads to low administrative efficiency. In order to avoid this situation, China combines the roles of politicians and officials into one. Weber's bureaucracy proposes two cores, one of which is legal rationality [2]. The Chinese official agency starts from a rational spirit, concentrates all aspects of strength to ensure efficient work, and achieves overall coordination and unity in an orderly relationship between superiors and subordinates. This organizational form holds high the banner of legal rationality, avoids autocracy and mutual shirking of responsibilities, and combines power and obligations to clarify individual authority and responsibility. On the other hand, China has a unique historical background. According to early documents from 65 BC, people became officials through examinations, and then entered academies to accept the values and positions advocated by the government, and were required to undergo regular performance appraisals [4]. Therefore, China has a very long history of combining the two roles of officials and politicians into one. Moreover, Weber himself admits that he does not know enough about China's special national conditions, and his research on China is "with misgiving and reservations" [4]. In general, Weber's theory has been applied in the political practice of these two countries, reflecting the "commonality", but the specific practice methods are different, and it also reflects the "characteristics".

3. The application of Schmitt's theory in political practice

3.1 Carl Schmitt's Theory

In the book *The Concept of Politics*, Carl Schmitt gives his definition of politics and explains it from different angles. In his opinion, "the specific political distinction to which political actions and outdated can be reduced is that between friend and enemy", that is, in political relations there is only a division between friend and enemy [5]. This "enemy", he added, must be a public enemy, not a private one. Enemy in the political sense are possible only if a fighting group fights against a similar group, but enemies in the political sense are not necessarily hated by individuals [6]. On top of that, based on this division of friend and enemy, Schmitt pointed out the inescapable relationship between politics and war, saying that "a world in which the possibility of war is ruthless eliminated" is "a world without politics", which firmly denies the possibility of peace [7]. In addition, Schmitt said, political antagonism may be an extension of religious, moral, economic and other areas of opposition. When these non-political contradictions become serious enough to divide mankind into camps of friend and foe, these non-political contradictions become political ones [8].

As time goes, Schmitt's theories have had some limitations in some political entities. Based on the theories mentioned in his book *Concept of the Political*, the following paragraphs will analyze in detail their practical application and limitations in the two political entities of China and the U.S.

3.2 The Political Practice of Carl Schmitt's Theory in The U.S.

As a typical representative of western countries, the political situation of the U.S. is undoubtedly highly consistent with Carl Schmitt's political theory. First of all, in today's international situation, the U.S. knows very well who its friends and enemies are, and has a clear division. Western countries, such as the countries in European Union, and countries like Japan and South Korea, they all

collaborate together frequently with the U.S. in different fields, therefore they are friends of the U.S. On the contrary, Russia, China, Iran and other countries have frequently broken out different conflicts in various fields with the U.S., which is undoubtedly clearly classified by the country as enemies. Simultaneously, it is clear that the U.S. has in its mind the idea that war is an inevitable tool in politics. The U.S. frequently participates in creating conflicts around the world to maintain its hegemony and eliminate all potential enemies. Whether it is Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, the U.S. has always used war and other violent means to destroy its enemies and strengthen its international standing. Currently, it is clear that the country's intention to lead the world has continued with the election of Joe Biden [9]. After entering the 21st century, the U.S. government's policy toward China was still tough, and the relationship between the two countries has changed from engagement to open conflict, and was still in a confrontation [10]. China and the U.S. are on a collision course in every area. Trade wars, technological conflicts over Huawei's 5G technology, these continuous escalation of conflicts in these non-political areas has finally made Sino-U.S. relations always in the framework of political conflict and confrontation, forming a very obvious political opposition between enemies and friends [11]. On the whole, it is clear that the political situation in the U.S. mentioned above fits well with Schmitt's theory of politics.

3.3 The political practice of Carl Schmitt's theory in China

In general, under the context of the Sino-U.S. game, China has taken severe countermeasures against us provocations and sanctions. The trade war started by the U.S. against China has lasted about 22 months. In order to defend its national interests, China has taken a principled position of resolute opposition, resolute countermeasures and resolute struggle, and has retaliated in self-defense against various sanctions and media attacks. Under the guidance of the government, the Chinese people are uniformly dissatisfied with the U.S., which shows that China also regards the U.S. as its enemy, and some conflicts in non-political areas have become political ones [12]. Although the characteristics mentioned above reflect the practice of Schmitt's theory in the U.S. and China, however, Schmitt's theory itself still has its limitations in China regarding the relationship between war and politics. In contrast to Schmitt's theory, China takes war and politics as less closely related, thinks that wars can actually be avoided, and insists on seeking common ground while reserving differences in diplomatic relations. This is mainly due to cultural differences. As a country with a long history, China's political ideas were greatly impacted by Confucianism since the Han Dynasty [13]. Therefore, the country attaches great importance to the opinion of "harmony is the most precious" in international relations and keep seeking the road of peaceful development [14]. These can also be seen from China's external attitude in recent years. As a big country with strong military power but repeatedly provoked by western countries and neighboring countries, China has always been committed to maintaining a peaceful environment around itself. Except for territorial incursions, such as the counterattacks against Vietnam and India, the country did not go beyond the scope of the use of military force. Today, contrary to Schmitt's theory, the country still wields considerable influence in the world, albeit without the use of military force, and has not retreated from international politics. All these reflect that war is not a necessary element in China's political concept, and reflect the limitations of Schmitt's theory in China's political practice.

4. The application of Foucault's theory in political practice

4.1 Foucault's theory

How public policies should deal with the protection of human rights in complicated circumstances is a controversial topic. Suppose the protection of human rights adjusts to change with social security and global development; this needs as many as possible solutions proposed. However, if ever a solution wants to be a country's and socially recognized public policy is a related political issue more than just a legal case. Since the determination of each approach is based on politics, it involves the political system and institutional arrangement. Can human society build a suitable mode of

development through governmental selection? The law is no longer the standard for human beings to set the bottom line in today's society, it is quite obvious that moral issues are not always in legal responsibility. Therefore, the ethical issue is also what everyone pays attention to in self-discipline. Power is not only based on the laws in Foucault's perspective. He expressed that "Power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" so which means the power of individuals or groups is dispersed and pervasive and not only constrained by government's dominance [15]. People do not need to look for the nature of the theory in practice too much, and can understand the theory through the existing social structure.

4.2 The Political Practice of Michel Foucault's Theory in U.S.

Social surveillance is the social pressure that people use to restrain their own behavior. According to Foucault, disciplinary oversight has become ubiquitous, and everyone lives in an age of self-correcting behavior. Therefore, the concept of self-discipline needs to be instilled in the citizens of each country. So does the U.S., which admires liberalism, have the idea of being strict with itself? It is a pity that in the U.S., the popularity of cameras violates the definition of human rights. When people always think about their actions, every day and even every second, people lose their freedom of being themselves. Everyone should have the freedom to be themselves. Accidents in many cities in the U.S. today require the presence of eyewitnesses. For example: a direct collision between a vehicle and a pedestrian requires the presence of eyewitnesses when both parties disagree (setting up crime cameras are not common on every street intersection). Take the city of Seattle in the U.S. as an example, according to the record of "Seattle Crime Cams", the scattered coordinates of the police station and the distance of the accident location generally are not usually within 1 km; In addition, not every street corner has cameras, so when there is no legal evidence, victims are often unable to defend themselves [16].

It is clear that the main purpose of Foucault raising and advocating this power is to prevent and warn of social security problems. But in a freedom-following country like the U.S., self-discipline is even more important. Discipline in the U.S. is more concerned with the pressure that society imposes on humans to restrain their own behavior, rather than the oppression under government surveillance.

4.3 The Political Practice of Michel Foucault's Theory in China

As a lot of people know that in China, the surveillance system is spread almost all over the country nowadays (especially an increasing tendency in recent years). The advantages and disadvantages are analyzed from the following two points. From the perspective of the above-mentioned "Seattle Crime Cams" exhibition, when we face ourselves and stand under surveillance, we often feel uncomfortable. This tendency to invade privacy makes everyone uncomfortable. Even so, what China firmly believes is that self-discipline cannot exist in any one citizen, so it seems that public surveillance is inevitable. The impact of public surveillance on the crime rate must exist [17]. The study found that when the camera was installed, garbage cans near the camera were cleaner. The results of this experiment also prove that within the scope of monitoring, people are more aware of the need for more restraint on their own behavior, so as to achieve self-regulation. Usually, suspects tend to find dead ends to commit crimes when committing crimes, and the popularity of cameras will make them feel invisible pressure. Therefore, there should be disciplinary power in the world, which will classify chaotic societies and groups of people. The extremely huge population of the People's Republic of China is so numerous that it is impossible to visualize everyone. No matter how small the probability of a crime happening in China, it will cause irreversible mistakes due to the huge population. The role of the cameras in this society reflects Foucault's theory that people discipline their behavior due to the fact that they live under surveillance. Therefore, it is normal because of the existence of cameras that are under surveillance and then self-discipline can solve many social security problems in China. In the final analysis, compared with the U.S., since China's huge population is difficult to manage, this disciplinary power in Foucault's speaking is more important and necessary.

Even though Foucault likens surveillance to a kind of power that is suppressed not by violence but by self-discipline under the social gaze. In fact, no matter in the U.S. or China, in the subjective perception of most people, they know that being monitored is a harmful action that violates human rights, independence and privacy. Whether the proliferation of cameras in all corners of the country is control of crimes or a violation of human rights has long been a contentious issue. As an influential theorist, Michel Foucault put forward a theory of surveillance. The thesis he expressed concludes that people are afraid of committing crimes because they are being watched by the society, and this analysis of criminal behavior has become a contribution to criminology [18].

5. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, on the basis of relevant research and the support of a series of resources and literature in related fields, this paper can draw a meaningful and enlightening conclusion, that is, Max Weber, Carl Schmidt and Michel Foucault's political theory and political views cannot be completely copied and applied in all political practice. Due to various reasons such as cultural background, political system and development of times, the theories of Max Weber, Carl Schmitt and Michel Foucault have been limited and influenced to varying degrees. This article takes China and the U.S., two very representative countries as reference and examples, and further analyzes and compares them. We can find that the ideas and propositions of the three thinkers have been applied to a certain extent in both countries, which reflects the fact that the "commonality" in the political practice of China and the U.S. Certainly, it also reflects that the theoretical methods of the three thinkers still have unique reference significance today. On the other hand, the U.S., as a typical western democratic country, will use the theories of the three thinkers more directly and deeply in its political practice. Unlike the U.S. China obviously has its own particularity and uniqueness. In order to better conform to China's national conditions, the Chinese government often adjusts and abandons the theories of the three thinkers to a certain extent, which also reflects the "characteristics" of the political practice of the two countries. In addition, the above findings are made by reading the theories and works of the three thinkers and combining the national conditions of China and the U.S., which are highly consistent with the theme of this paper. In the future, with the passage of time and the continuous change of the international situation, the theoretical knowledge of these three thinkers may be more and more divorced from the practical application and cannot meet the actual political situation, thus they will have more and more limitations. If the theory is too divorced from practical application, it may be eliminated. Therefore, as scholars of international relations, it is necessary to critically examine the theories of these thinkers and analyze their limitations. When applying theories to political practice, historical and cultural backgrounds of some countries must be fully taken into account. China and the U.S. are only two representative countries in nearly 200 countries in the world, but when comparing their political situations, they have already shown many differences, which undoubtedly reflects the limitations of the theories in political practice. In the future, it will be necessary for the scholars to continuously apply these theories to the actual political situation and think critically about them, so as to update these theories with the times and go further by standing on the shoulders of giants.

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