

Change, Limitations and Transformation - Historical Development and the Impact of European Experience on China's Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Many historians argue that the main impetus for the last two hundred years of world history has come from the global political expansion and economic development, however, in this historical development, China and Europe have developed and changed in a reciprocal way. There is no complete opposition or fragmentation in the development of the world and the country, and an in-depth examination of China's transformation in the light of historical developments and the European experience. Consider the limitations of various aspects of the European experience in this process of change in order to think China's development more objectively and intellectually from the perspective of national transformation. An inquiry into the social transformation and future development of modern China can give historical research a contemporary value. In this paper, we analyze the impact of historical development and European experience on China's transformation from the perspective of change, limitation and transformation. Hoping it can give some inspirations and references for history researcher.

Keywords: *Development in China and Europe; Historical comparison; Experience and limitation*

1. Introduction

In the book <Transforming China: Historical Change and the Limits of the European Experience>, the Chinese-American scholar Wang Guobin made a comparative study of Chinese and European history from the Ming and Qing dynasties to modern time, and made a comparison with a more objective and fresh approach and perspective on the development of China and Europe. From this work, we recognize the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western societies in terms of economic, political, state and social struggles, as well as recognize the the European experience in the two hundred years of development of the modern world certainly has many advanced features, but its latent limitations also need our attention.

2. Implications of Historical Development and European Experience for the Study of China's Transformation

In the comparative study of China's historical development and the European experience, on the one hand, it can help us to understand the reasons for the different development trajectories of China and Europe on the two paths of capitalism and socialism objectively from a broader perspective, thus making China's transformation and development process insist more firmly on socialist path;

on the other hand, in a study of the limitations of the European experience and in a comparative study of a series of changes that China has experienced in its historical development, it can also help us to stand at a certain point in time and stage of history and analyze and grasp it with a forward-looking perspective. It is also possible to grasp the reasons behind the historical development and the results of transformation from the characteristics of chance and openness, and thus have a better understanding of contemporary China's transformation, development, but also more objective and scientific speculation and adjustment, the historical wisdom of the role of future development^[1]. The significance of the historical development and the European experience on China's transformation is not to use the European framework to examine China or the Chinese model to examine Europe, but rather to compare the differences in the way the two have solved historical problems under different social roots, and thus to gain a unique historical experience. It is the most crucial significance of this study to provide value for the development and reform changes in China today^[2].

3. Historical development and the impact of the European experience on China's transformation

An analysis of the historical changes and transformational development of China from the Ming and Qing dynasties to modern times and an empirical comparison with the European situation reveals that China and Europe have

certain similarities in historical change, and the shift to a certain time begins to diverge in staging and eventually leads to a China and European countries have embarked on different paths of socialism and capitalism respectively^[3]. In this long process of historical change, the analysis of China's transformation from an objective, "Eurocentric" point of view. It can be found that there are many influences of historical development and European experience on China, which are analyzed the impact of the European experience on China's transformation from three aspects: economic, political and social struggle, which will help us to understand more clearly the transformation of China and the role of the European experience and have a more comprehensive and in-depth view of the social transformation and development of China in history.

3.1. Impact on economic development

Looking back at history, China during the Ming and Qing dynasties and Europe in early modern were very similar in terms of population and resources, and both under the circumstances of unstable agricultural harvest and limited production of raw materials. Both China and Europe are experiencing a prolonged cycle of economic expansion and contraction which gradually accumulated and formed a larger economies under the influence of Smith's power. Up until the 19th century, China and Europe followed a similar

pattern of economic development, primarily through the expansion of trade markets, promoting market exchange, division of labour, and the development of more specialised production techniques, which in turn contribute to increased efficiency of production. Such an approach, with the development of trade market size as the root and source of socio-economic development, is all within the scope of the Smith-type dynamic economy^[4]. However, with the 1860s, the first industrial revolution in England and led to the industrialization of almost all of Europe , Europe gradually freed itself from the limitations between population and agricultural harvests, China and Europe diverged in their economic development, and Europe under the influence of the first time of the Industrial Revolution, the traditional handicraft industry, which used to be based on purely manual power, was gradually replaced by the mechanized factory industry. The socio-economic transition is beginning to take place in Europe, with savings and investment becoming the main theories of power growth, while changes in the economic environment are the important reasons for the sprouting of Chinese and Western capitalism^[5]. By comparing the sprouting of Chinese and Western capitalism in Table 1 below, we can see more clearly that, in the course of historical change and development, how China and Europe gradually diverged and moved towards different models of social systems, given the same economic conditions as before.

Table 1. Comparison of the infancy of capitalism in China and the West

		China in the Ming and Qing dynasties	Modern Europe
Common point		All emerged at the end of the feudal period, based on the development of the commodity economy, and all were standardized on the emergence of artisanal factories They were produced at roughly the same time, in the 14th-16th centuries.	
Point of difference	Background	In the context of an unprecedented strengthening of the feudal dictatorship	Autonomous cities from the Mediterranean coast
	Distribution	Occurs only in a few cities in the south of China, in a few industries, and does not penetrate the countryside.	It is present in the cities of many countries and has reached out to rural areas.
	Commercial capital	The germ of Chinese capitalism was only mainly within the handicraft workshop, in which commercial capital mostly played a minor role.	The sprouting of capitalism in Western Europe produced two paths, with commercial capital playing a huge role.
	Development environment	Obstructed by a corrupt feudal system and lack of support from multiple sources, including finance, technology, labour and	The opening of new voyages and the germination of capitalism under colonial plunder and mercantilist

		markets.	policies were promoted.
	Outcome	Chinese society has not been transformed and has not embarked on the capitalist path.	The budding and rapid development of capitalism and its contribution to the collapse of the feudal system, which gradually established the capitalist system

Through the above comparison, we can see that the dynamics of economic change in China and Europe are similar, but before the 19th century, due to the impact of the British Industrial Revolution, the economies of China and Europe have begun to part ways, Europe in the change and development has gradually stepped into the urban mechanized industrialization, while China still maintain the development of agricultural handicrafts.

With regard to the economic changes in China and Europe, scholars such as Huang Zongzhi have argued that population growth leads to resource scarcity and implosion. However, when analyzed in terms of the relationship between rural industrialization and demographic change, both Europe and China were in a phase of population growth before the 19th century, and factors such as population and resource allocation were not the main factors of motivation that led to the industrial expansion in Europe and China. At that time, Europe had limited resources, so systems such as primogeniture and separate marriages were adopted to ease population pressures, while in the process of rural industrialization, the resources available for survival through market exchange and division of labour increase, thus breaking the old reproductive system and leading to population growth^[6]. At the time, China was dominated by the extended family model, although marriage did not depend on separation

and unrestricted fertility led to the Malthusian potential for a crisis, but because of China's adoption of rural industrialization and an environment where subsistence resources are guaranteed, population growth remains being promoted. Europe outpacing China's development is largely as a result of the technological explosion brought by the discovery of the New World, the exploitation of fossil energy sources and the Industrial Revolution. And China attempted to maintain a social model based on a smallholder economy, which constrained the development of both rural crafts and industry.

3.2. Impact on the political path

On the political front, there are also significant differences between Chinese and European development. From the differences in politics and state formation between China and Europe, we can gain more insight into the transformation of nations. Table 2 below shows the contrast between the Chinese state and the European state. We can see the differences between nation-states and agricultural empires in political construction challenges, national capacity and commitment.

Table 2. Comparison of differences between Chinese and European countries

	Ancient China	Modern Europe
Political construction challenges	Effective control of minority order in and around the country	Threat of competition from internal political entities
National control capacity	As the social structure becomes more complex, civil officials gradually lose control over the distribution of land and the management of market affairs.	Building bureaucracies for the purpose of centralizing taxes, manpower and resources
Obligations undertaken	Maintaining the smallholder peasantry as an important social subject, with the general welfare as the dominant State policy in order to obtain the legitimate rights of the royal family.	The political structure and ideology, with the state and the aristocracy acting as checks and balances on each other and a greater affirmation of individual rights.

China and Europe went through different processes in the formation of their states. There were differences in political organization between China and Europe before the formation of the state. Whereas China essentially did

not have religious institutions or aristocratic groups similar to the European aristocracy, the Chinese political tradition and political pattern was unified early, which ensured the establishment of China as a vast empire of harmony and

unity^[7]. This led to the fact that while the development of both China and the smaller European states was accomplished through territorial expansion, the two ended up differently, with Europe in the development gradually led to a multinational system, while China developed into a major unified state^[8].

Through the contents of the above table, we can recognize that China and Europe have faced different political environment and national formation environment. Material welfare, moral preaching and coercive means are the three ways of maintaining social order and consolidating the authority of the State, in which China and Europe began to differ. Under different political logics, two distinct processes of state formation emerged in China and Europe^[9].

3.3. Impact of social struggle

The forms of social struggle that China and Europe have faced in the development of historical change are similar, including food riots, anti-tax campaigns, and the Revolution. Through Table 3 below, we can see the differences in the comparison of social struggles in the development of historical change between China and Europe. These differences were also important influences in China's subsequent failure to embark on a capitalist society and to part ways with European social development.

Table 3. Comparison of social struggle in the development of historical changes in China and Europe

	Food riots	Tax protest	Revolutions
Chinese	Diversification of the agricultural economy formed into a commercial food trade, with national and local storage of food and fulfilment of food commitments to the population, but with a loss of national capacity to mobilize and organize resources and the risk of food riots	The anti-tax movement organized by the rural elite, clan organizations, local secret societies, etc., petitioning and campaigning were the main forms of resistance, but they did not form a force that could compete with the State	Peasants played an active role and multiple regimes emerged, but the people did not emphasize the spirit of "freedom, equality and fraternity", and the revolutionary ideology and culture lacked cohesion.
European	The social structure determines the free market circulation of food	The aristocratic elite, in their own self-interest, suppress the power of the state and form a representative system of political participation, with tax resistance directed at the central government.	Elites cooperate, farmers play a negative role

Through the above comparison, it can be concluded that there are many differences between China and Europe in the way, content, and main force of social struggle in their historical development, and that the key for modern China to achieve revolutionary success and development is to avoid government intervention, while Europe uses the organization and guidance of the government.

4. Reflections and insights on China's social transformation based on the European experience

In the study of The history of China and Europe, the academic circle of history has always maintained a very intense academic discussion on the modern transformation of its economy and society. For a long time, China has been used as a reference point for Europe and the West: on the one hand, academics believe that China is very

different from the Western world in many aspects of its development; on the other hand, many history scholars believe that China must undergo a historical process of change and development roughly similar to that of the West in order to achieve the modern transformation of its economy and society.

For a long time, the traditional view in the study of world history was that the process of transformation and development of modern European societies was the only scientific and The right path, China's modern economic and social transformation and development process, if not influenced and modeled by Europe and other Western societies, it will take a very long period of time. When the Californian School emerged, which was mainly concerned with the economic history of China, it placed China in the context of the changes of world history. It is only through research and analysis of China's economic and political ties with the outside world that we can be more objectively and scientifically highlights the importance of Chinese history in the changes of world history, and also makes use of the

bi-directional approach of space and time to make a comparison of the reciprocal development paths between China and the West^[10]. This comparative study can give us a deeper understanding of the differences between China and the West in their historical development, allowing us to have a more rational and scientific thinking on the path of "modernization". In today's economic and political developments and games in China and the West, we also need to pay more attention to economic changes, ideology, political culture and so on. Only through this way, can we more effectively maintain national stability and progress and place China on the current of world history.

5. Conclusion

In summary, from the perspective of history, in a series of historical changes, due to the many differences between the imagination of many people in China about Europe and the reality of Europe, we need to explore the characteristics of China's historical development from the perspective of objective comparison in order to learn from history and apply it to the development of China today.

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