

# Analysis of the Position and Function of Methodology in Political Science Research

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**Abstract:** *Methodology is the general method for people to understand and transform the world, which plays an important role in the development and progress of any discipline. The methodology of political science is the basic principle and method of political science research, the sum of the guiding ideology and scientific method of political science research, and the foundation of political science theory and practice. Starting from the relationship between methodology and political science methodology, this paper reviews the development history of Chinese political science methodology since the reform and opening up, systematically analyzes the position and role of methodology in political science research, explores the future development characteristics and direction of Chinese political science methodology, and enriches the research on Chinese political science methodology system. It is conducive to the construction of a new era political science subject system, academic system and discourse system with Chinese characteristics with Marxism as the guiding ideology.*

**Keywords:** *Methodology; Marxism; Political Science; Chinese Political Science Methodology System*

## 1. Introduction

Methodology is a theory about the way people understand and transform the world, which plays an important role in the development of political science research. Political science methodology is the basic principle and method of political science research, the basis of political science theory and practice, and it reflects the sum of the guiding ideology and scientific method of political science research. "The methodology of political science directly determines whether the political science system is perfect and whether the function of political science to solve practical problems can be brought into play."<sup>[1]</sup> Since the reform and opening up, the study of political science in China has made great progress, but most researchers pay attention to the methodology of western political science and apply the existing methodology of Western political science to study political science. However, there are few researches on political science methodology based on China's socialist national conditions and combined with the characteristics of our times. It is urgent to develop China's own research on political science methodology, adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxism, constantly enrich and improve the methodology system of Chinese political science, and further build the disciplinary system, academic system and discourse system of political science with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

## 2. Methodology and Political Science Methodology

The rules and means that people follow and use in the study of humanities and social sciences are called methods, and methodology can be regarded as the systematic and theoretical study of these methods. Methodology plays a vital role in the development and progress of any discipline. The same methodology will get different results in different disciplines, and different methodologies will get different results in the same discipline. Political science methodology is a summary of the methods and experiences of countless political science scholars and experts who study the formation of political problems from different perspectives in different periods, and it is the specific manifestation of methodology in political science research.

### 2.1. Methodology

When we study the status and function of methodology, we must first clarify the meaning of methodology. What is methodology? Methodology in the general sense is the theorization and systematization of means, tools, ways and other methods used to achieve a certain goal. Methodology in

the philosophical sense refers to the fundamental method for people to understand and transform the world under the guidance of a certain world view. In the research process of humanities and social sciences, the laws and means that people follow and use in the actual research process are called methods, and methodology can be regarded as the systematic and theoretical study of these methods.

## **2.2. Political Science Methodology**

"Political science is the study of the form and operation of public power."<sup>[2]</sup> Political science has two aspects: normative and scientific, corresponding to political philosophy and political science. The normalization of political science answers the question of whether politics is right or wrong, while the science of political science answers the question of whether politics conforms to the facts. Scientific research in political science means that social problems should be studied with the logic of natural science. To what extent is politics a science? I think political science, like other social sciences, can never be fully scientific. But parts of the study of politics could be more scientific. At least in the study of political science, researchers should respect facts and use scientific research methods and logic to study problems.

In the process of the development of political science, countless scholars and experts studied political issues from different perspectives in different periods and formed various methodologies. Political science methodology includes: Marxist political science methodology (historical materialism, class analysis, institutionalism) and Western political science methodology (behaviorism, rational choice, new institutionalism, structure-function theory, interest group theory, etc.). Historical experience has proved that Marxist political science methodology is a political science methodology that conforms to the basic national conditions and production practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and it is a political science methodology that we should grasp well in the study of political issues in the new era.

## **3. The Development Process of Political Science Methodology**

Since the 1980s, the study of political science in China has carried out "remedial lessons" and reconstruction, and has made great progress in all aspects. However, compared with the western developed countries, there is still a big gap, and China's political science research is still in a backward position in the international field. Especially in the aspect of methodology research, Chinese political science researchers pay more attention to the methodology of western political science research, and like to use the "doctrine of taking" to apply the existing western methodology to study problems. On the contrary, it neglects to combine dialectical materialism and historical materialism with the production practice since China's reform and opening up, and develop its own methodology of Marxist political science. In fact, only on the basis of Marxist methodology principle, the development of our political science methodology can make the development of our political science more prosperous. Throughout the development process of political science, we can study the development of political science methodology from the following perspectives.

### **3.1. From Comprehensive study to Professional study**

Throughout the development of political science, the study of political science has experienced a change from comprehensive to professional. That is, the shift from "big disciplines", which refers to all sciences including natural and social sciences, to "small disciplines", which refers to political science. At the beginning, political science was not a separate discipline, and the research of political science was mixed with other social sciences. With the passage of time, the role of political science in people's life has been increasing, and it has gradually separated into an independent discipline. The research content of political science has become more and more clear, and on this basis, cross-research has gradually emerged. At the same time, the methodology of political science is also constantly developing, from the study of logical speculation to the study of empirical demonstration, from the system analysis to the process analysis, from the comprehensive analysis of the system to the concrete events, concrete people and so on.

### **3.2. From Political Philosophy to Political Science**

At the beginning, most political science studies were speculative studies in the field of political philosophy. Later, with the development of computer and Internet information technology, research methods in the field of natural science were more and more applied to the field of social science. Methodological research in political science was rising day by day, and research methods such as

qualitative research, quantitative research and big data analysis were constantly developed. However, "the research methodology of political philosophy, while retaining the original tradition of text interpretation and logical deduction, has also realized the innovation of the research methodology with The Times."<sup>[3]</sup>

### ***3.3. From Macro Research to Middle Research and Micro Research***

The development of political science in China and abroad has experienced the transformation from macro research to middle research and micro research. At the beginning, political science tends to study macro issues, such as the basic issues of human political life, what kind of political life is the political life that people aspire to? To the middle point, the choice and design of political institutions. With the deepening of research, scholars began to turn to micro research, such as the study of the attitude, behavior and psychology of individuals or groups who assume political roles, voting behavior in elections, and so on.

Of course, the above methodological changes only refer to the chronological order of the emergence of research priorities, not to say that later ones replace the previous ones. It is not to say that later, scholars only talk about "professional" but not "comprehensive", only study "political science" but not "political philosophy", only pay attention to "micro" issues, do not pay attention to "middle view" and "macro" issues, they often exist at the same time, but the later research appeared later. In fact, there are many people who focus on macro problems, such as Samuel Huntington, Fukuyama and others. In fact, after the emergence of a new research focus, some scholars will propose a return to the previous research focus.

## **4. The Position and Function of Methodology in Political Science Research**

Methodology plays a vital role in the development and progress of political science. The methodology of political science is the basic principle and method of political science research, the sum of the guiding ideology and scientific method of political science research, and the foundation of political science theory and practice. The methodology of political science directly determines whether the political science system is perfect and whether political science can solve practical problems. It can be said that methodology is a powerful tool in the hands of political researchers to analyze political issues. The development of methodology not only makes political science closer to science, but also brings more possibilities for the subject innovation of political science.

### ***4.1. A Sharp Weapon in the Hands of Researchers***

If a worker wants to do a good job, he must first sharpen his tools. Methodology is essential to the development of any discipline. For political science researchers, political science methodology is a weapon in their hands. In the face of political problems, the first thing to choose the right methodology, appropriate methodology can make the problem solved, inappropriate methodology will only make the research bogged down, can not get the desired results. Wrong methodology can even lead to wrong results, such as metaphysical methodology, which treats problems in isolation and one-sided. History and experience prove that "human social practice and historical development have repeatedly proved that Marxist dialectical materialism and historical materialism are the scientific guide for mankind to understand and transform the world."<sup>[4]</sup> We should adhere to the Marxist political science methodology and adhere to the view of historical materialism. It can be said that methodology is a weapon in the hands of researchers.

### ***4.2. Political Philosophy Becomes Political Science***

Has politics long been a science? To what extent is politics a science? Has been the focus of discussion. The author believes that the early political science research focused on the field of speculative political philosophy and was far from scientific. In a broad sense, science is to conform to facts, and whether political philosophy conforms to facts can only be tested by practice. In the narrow sense, science requires more use of the logic of natural science to study social problems. With the development of methodology, more natural science research methods such as quantitative research and big data analysis have been applied to political science research, and people can study political science issues just like natural science research. It can be said that the development of methodology makes political science closer to science.

#### ***4.3. The Magic Weapon of Discipline Innovation***

The development of any discipline cannot be separated from innovation, and any major academic achievements cannot be separated from innovation. To become an excellent political researcher, we should learn from and absorb the predecessors' theoretical achievements, and then bring forth the old and find out our own innovation. There are no other than two kinds of innovation in the subject field: first, the innovation of research content. That is to say, you are studying areas and content that have not been covered or studied less before. Second, the innovation of research methods. That is to say, you adopt a new paradigm and a new research path to study the problem. After the long-term development of any discipline, people will study all aspects of the content involved in the discipline, and the unstudied content will only become less and less, so it is increasingly difficult to innovate in the research content. But methodology is different, and the development of methodology is endless. Applying a new methodology to a previously studied problem can lead to entirely new conclusions. In particular, China's innovation and development of Marxist methodology is still relatively lacking, and there is much room for improvement in the future. It can be said that the development of methodology is the magic weapon of discipline innovation.

#### **5. The Future Development of Political Science Methodology**

The development of political science in China started relatively late, and the research of political science methodology started even later. Our political science methodology must be based on our national conditions and serve our political science. In socialist China, we must adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxism and take dialectical materialism and historical materialism as the guide to action in the study of political practice and political science methodology. This requires that in the process of learning and learning from foreign political science methods and theories, we should not copy western political science theories, but learn to critically absorb, take its essence and discard its dross, and constantly enrich and improve the Chinese political science methodology system. Looking forward to the future development of Chinese political science methodology, we should strive to do the following aspects.

##### ***5.1. Adhere to the Combination of Comprehensiveness and Professionalism of Political Science Methodology***

To combine comprehensiveness and professionalism is to deal with the relationship between large and small disciplines. We must deal with the relationship between political science, social science and natural science. With the development of science and technology and Internet technology, a multidisciplinary approach can be adopted to enrich the connotation of political science research. Nowadays, research is more and more showing the trend of interdisciplinary research, using the characteristics of different disciplines to make up for the one-sidedness of single discipline research, and the previous way of isolated research in a certain field has gradually withdrawn from the historical stage. Drawing on the advanced ideas of other disciplines has injected new vitality into the study of political science.

##### ***5.2. Adhere to the Combination of Theory and Practice of Political Science Methodology***

Political science is a subject closely related to People's Daily life. A series of concepts, assumptions, and views in political science are derived from and serve life. In the process of studying political science methodology, we should not do research behind closed doors, and we should not separate theory from practice. In fact, political theory derives from our understanding of political phenomena in our lives, and ultimately guides our daily political practice. Practice is the criterion for testing truth and the criterion for testing political science research methods. We should be good at using the theoretical achievements of political science to guide our country's political practice, and test and improve it in practice.

##### ***5.3. Adhere to the Combination of the Local and International Nature of Political Science Methodology***

To engage in the research of political science methodology, we must first take root in the soil of socialism in China, adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxism, make good use of Marxist research methods, take the actual life of China as the research object, and solve the practical problems of China as the research purpose, and strive to improve the level of political science research in China, and

constantly enrich and improve the methodology system of Chinese political science. Secondly, China's political science research should be based on China and gradually go international. This requires us to have an international perspective, to keep abreast of the developments and achievements of foreign political science, to have eyes that are good at finding and learning from, and to draw on the wisdom of all mankind for our use.

## 6. Conclusions

Methodology plays a vital role in the development and progress of political science research. The methodology of political science is the basic principle and method of political science research, the sum of the guiding ideology and scientific method of political science research, and the foundation of political science theory and practice. The research of political science methodology in our country started late, based on our socialist conditions, combined with the characteristics of our times, the research of political science methodology has great potential. Looking forward to the future, the research of political science methodology in our country has great potential and will make great achievements.

The world has entered a new period of turbulence and change. Major changes unseen in a century are intertwined with the overall strategy for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The international situation is in flux, and both opportunities and challenges remain for China's development. In the process of China's continuous rise, more perfect political theory is needed to provide support and guidance. This requires us to improve the research level of our political science methodology on the basis of summarizing the law of our country's development. We must adhere to the guiding ideology of Marxism, constantly enrich and improve the methodology system of Chinese political science, and further build the disciplinary system, academic system and discourse system of political science with Chinese characteristics in the new era.

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