

Academic Inquiries into the “Chinese Success Story”

Introduction to *Series on Developing China* *Vol. 1: China’s Economy: Rural Reform and* *Agricultural Development*

Deng Zhenglai*

Since the 1980s, the end of ideological warfare characterized by the Cold War and the Iron Curtain has enabled globalization to manifest itself in two dimensions. Firstly, the transformation to market economy in post-socialist countries accelerated global economic interdependency. Globality as encapsulated in such international organizations as the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF, together with the emergence of global issues and common crises, has an enhanced capacity to weaken national sovereignty. As Robert Reich pointed out, “[T]he transformation we are experiencing now will reshuffle politics and economy in the new age, which will render a series of traditional concepts obsolete, such as national product, technology, company, industry or economy. Within national boundaries will only be left the people that form the country ... The centrifugal force of global economy has been trying to weaken the bond that traditionally holds a nation together”.¹ As a matter of fact, billions of people, in almost every nation

*Distinguished Professor of Fudan University and Dean of Fudan Institute for Advanced Study in Social Sciences, Shanghai, P.R. China. Areas of interests: social theory, jurisprudence and political philosophy.

¹Reich (1994, p. 1). It should be pointed out that Reich’s analysis of globalization is far from simplistic than this quote suggests at a glance. My quote of his opinion is only in its descriptive sense.

taken the world over, have their daily life affected to a certain degree by the globalization that has been unprecedentedly omnipotent and ubiquitous.

The second dimension came from the increasing popularity of globalization among academic researchers in all disciplines. A research report on global issues was published by the Club of Rome in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Meadows *et al.*, 2000; Mesarovic and Pestel, 1987). Since then, “globalization”² has become one of the most frequently used terms in international social science circle. As one of the new perspectives to examine contemporary issues, it contextualizes current intellectual life. As M. Waters has pointed out, “As much as postmodernism was a concept that belonged to the 1980s, globalization is a concept of the 1990s, a key concept for us to understand the transformation of human society towards the third millennium”.³ It needs to be pointed out immediately that globalization is also by definition one of the most controversial terms. “The variety of vantage points notwithstanding, globalization invariably concerns a dominant theory, in that the past two centuries that were characterized by using geographical boundaries to define social fields have fostered and encouraged imaginations, be it scientific or socio-political. Now this age has come to an end. Global capitalism carries with it a globalization of culture and politics, resulting in the breakdown of the socialization of national boundaries and the institutional principles of cultural knowledge, upon which the self-image and world picture familiar to all were based” (Beck, 2000a, p. 14).

On the other hand, globalization has become a leading topic in every social science field internationally. Any issue of significance, be it economic, political, social, legal or cultural, will be invariably related to it. Besides, its appearance in academic journals has an extensive coverage of different areas of humanities and social sciences, such as global governance, globalization of economy, cultural globalization, global common

²For Giddens, “Globalization may not be a term that is especially attractive or glorifying ... However, even in the late 1980s, this term was commonly used in academia and daily life, as it was already ubiquitous by then”. He pointed out that in today’s world, “every man that seeks to understand our future should not ignore it” (Giddens, 2001, p. 2).

³Waters (1995, p. 1). Sklair also pointed out that “even though conceptually globalization is far from perfected, as a research question and subject, it has already been indisputably consolidated in social science” (Sklair, 1993).

interest, global justice, global politics and globalization of law (Held *et al.*, 2001, pp. 3–14).

Obviously, for China and Chinese social science alike, globalization has presented the following issues to be answered. How should globalization be understood? Is it a process of objective inevitability, or subjective variability? Is it a fact or a discourse? For such less developed countries as China, what kind of challenges and opportunities can be identified? For Chinese social science, what does globalization entail? What does it mean for the “Chinese Success Story” that has attracted attention worldwide?

1. World Structure and China as the Subject: A Chinese Perspective on Globalization

How should we seek to interpret globalization, as well as the challenges and opportunities it thus entails? As far as I can see, only through clarification of the following few issues will it be possible to offer answers that are marginally close to “satisfactory”. First, how have we been dragged into globalization? How can we understand the nature of globalization? For China, what is the difference between the current age of globalization and the times preceding it? What is China’s position in the world structure in the current age of globalization? Is the discourse on globalization and its theorization sufficient to warrant solutions for the problems facing China today? In recent studies, I have used such concepts as “world structure” or “global structure” to respond to the issues brought afore by globalization. Hereby these concepts shall be briefly outlined.

My thesis can be summarized in the following few themes (cf. Deng, 2006, pp. 2–23; 2009, Pt. 1):

Firstly, China was included into the process of globalization through its accession to such international organizations as the WTO, which contains structural inequality that I term as “world structure”. With the advent of globalization and the opening up of China to the outside world, especially after China’s entry into such international organizations as the WTO, China is no longer geographically isolated, in which replacement she becomes a

country that is deeply embedded in the world structure. For China, this was the greatest transformation since time immemorial. Before this, China as an independent sovereign power was external to world structure despite the extensive international cooperation or conflicts — which means that China, although part of the world, used to be an outsider to the world game. The reason for me to signify world structure as a world game lies in the distinction between center and periphery that contains a domination of developed countries over developing ones. As Robert W. McChesney (2000, p. 7) pointed out, “The reason for market globalization is that the government of developed countries, especially the US, has superimposed trade agreements and treaties upon the whole world, enabling commercial magnates and the rich to easily dominate other national economies without shouldering relevant responsibilities”.

For me, this domination by the developed countries over their developing counterparts is not only manifested in economy as McChesney pointed out, in that it allows peripheralization of China that has become increasingly dependent upon the West through market mechanisms and the optimal allocation of the means of production globally, but also in institutions and cultures. Institutionally, the legal rules or institutions as recognized by China in the world structure are in fact local knowledge based on Western experiences, through which the transplantation of certain values has assumed a unquestionable gesture of unipolarity and inevitability, as captured in the dominator-dominated relationship. On the other hand, culturally, the demise of ideology has engendered a high level of integration both in culture and in the development of science, where the Western countries as dominators export not only technology but also their culture and ideology, which in turn compresses, suppresses and depresses the development of culture in developing countries, including China.

Secondly, different from the previous modernization period, the Western domination over China has changed in nature, which was based on not collusion but promises. The most important element of the so-called “modernization paradigm” in the world structure that was most often neglected by Chinese scholars, lies in the Chinese intellectuals’ collusion to the dominator during this process of domination. Such collusion is manifested in the uncritical or unreflective acceptance of the Western modernization

paradigm. Obviously, in order for the world structure to be effective in dominating China, the collusion from China is indispensable. By this, the domination is not structural or coercive — the Western modernization paradigm remains external to China, in that without China’s collusion its dominant influence over China will cease to work, together with its ability to superimpose its rules and imaginations upon which China’s ideal picture is based.

However, in the post-Cold War period, the domination of the world structure becomes effective as soon as it secures the acceptance of rules and institutions from China that has been arranged into this game. It is precisely in the light of this statement that this domination of the world structure can be concluded as structural and coercive, which was dependent not on force, but China’s promises to abide by its rules and institutions, regardless of China’s collusion or otherwise. From this it can be seen that the world structure that China joined has to a great extent a binding domination over China that is based not on collusion but promises.

Thirdly, the principle of sovereign equality as vouched by international law cannot possibly rescue China, while a “China as the sovereignty” needs to be substituted by a “China as the subject”. To point out this structural inequality in the world structure is of great importance for less developed countries, as it showcases the tension between this factual inequality-based domination and the propaganda of sovereign equality as claimed by Western powers since the 16th century. The aforementioned domination has shown that the contemporary world is at the beginning of a new empire. Certainly, this new empire is dependent not upon war and blood, but information, knowledge, capital and market. More importantly, the purpose of this new empire or the dominators has been not only for extension and protection of their national interests in the world, but to propagate their values or ideal pictures that are clothed as “universally applicable” to other nations, through which to further superimpose their social or political orders. Therefore, in the current world order, apart from its justifiability to defend border integrity, national security, human rights and economic development, the so-called “sovereign equality” (or China as the sovereignty) is not only insufficient, but also limited to a great extent. China as in the world structure is not a peculiarity or departure from the Western polity, but a subject in terms of ideology, with its core on a Chinese *weltanschauung* and value (or a unified China perspective in the world structure).

This shall pave the way for a proactive approach on the part of China to participate in restructuring the world order. In the contemporary world structure, an emphasis on substituting “China as the subject” for “China as the sovereignty” serves the fundamental purpose of breaking through the limits set by sovereignty, towards an inter-subject, inter-culturality and inter-civilization at the level of the world structure. This has to a greater degree suggested a legitimation or rule-making of the world structure not by a minority of sovereign powers only, but through inter-subject negotiations and interactions.

Fourthly, whether from the perspective of globalization per se or from the nature of Western domination over China in the age of globalization, challenges as brought about in this process also carry with them unprecedented opportunities for China, insofar as an “ideal picture” based on Chinese perspectives can be formulated, which will then enable the transformation of a candidacy of participating in the world order into a capacity of revising these very orders. Through this, it will be possible to shape the dynamics and dimension of the development of world order according to Chinese experiences and perspectives. Globalization extends far beyond the economic globalization as vouched by economists. More importantly, it is a social transformation that is both dependent upon and transcendent to nation-state. Likewise, globalization of law is not a unification of national laws towards “non-national laws”, but a shift towards a diversification of national and non-national laws. Globalization is thus not a process of homogenization, but a coexistence of oneness and diversification, internationalization and localization, integration and fragmentation, aggregation and disaggregation. Globalization is no longer an objective inevitability, but rather a product of globalism, and an issue of counter-hegemony through different perspectives.

In other words, in nature globalization is an open process that can be (re)shaped through cultural and political demands and national interests of China. Once this open notion of globalization is appreciated, the subject position of China can be assumed to restructure globalization and its orientation through the epistemological premises of “Chinese ideal picture” or “world ideal picture”. The fundamental significance for China to access the world structure lies in her gaining of candidacy to voice her own concerns over such topics as the justifiability of world structure as well as the

so-called universally-applicable values, to the accompaniment of China’s promises to abide by these rules and institutions upon entry. However, a candidacy to voice concerns cannot be equated with the capacity to do so. Formal candidacy alone will not warrant a unique contribution by China to revising the rules for the future. On the contrary, it will entail either an acceptance of these existing Western rules, or a retreat into the safe harbor to concentrate on the millennia-long Chinese civilization. This is due to the fact that there lacks such idealizations as of identity, a life of good, desirability and a suitable *modus operandi* of globalization. Obviously, without these idealizations our capacity to revise or participate in revising future rules of the world order shall be severely restricted. For this very reason, endeavors should be made to offer idealizations that are based on Chinese perspectives, before China is actively involved in revising the rules of world structure, as well as in influencing the dynamics and dimension of the future world order.

2. Counter-Hegemony and Internationalization: A Knowledge Reform for Chinese Social Science

Globalization entails challenges and opportunities for China and Chinese social science alike, which can be summarized in the following two aspects:

Firstly, construction of and competition in the globalization discourse have provided ample opportunities for Chinese social science to shape the discourse in accordance with Chinese national interests and cultural-political demands. As previously mentioned, globalization is as much a fact as a construction of and competition in discourse, which, as far as I can see, have provided opportunities for Chinese social science that is to be shouldered with the task of seeking a globalized platform to express Chinese national interests and cultural-political demands. This judgment is based on two observations of globalization and Chinese social science: first being the interaction between globalization, globalism and the openness of globalism, while the other a Foucauldian notion of social science as “discourse”.

First of all, Ulrich Beck proposed an analytical framework to encompass globality, globalism and globalization, through which it can be found

that globalization as an objective inevitability was in fact a product of subjective globalism.⁴ Through this prism, globalism is not only genetically based on neoliberalism, but also a reflective version to critique globalism itself.

Fundamentally, globalism in its genetic sense appeared first in developed capitalist world, into which China was dragged by means of accession into such international organizations as the WTO. This globalization coexists with knowledge, privilege, resources and interests of the Western power, which was exported as the neoliberalist glorification of “objective truth”⁵ to non-Western countries (China included), thus instituting a subjection to the West. As Dahrendorf has pointed out, apart from technology, neoliberalism (relaxation of control, privatization and liberalization) as universally practised since the 1980s paved the way for globalization. “New technological capacity was first realized in an atmosphere of relaxed controls ... [which] permeated first in such powers as the US and the UK and later extended into other countries”.⁶ Therefore, globalization is not a purely objective economic process, but an international capitalist push through neoliberalist globalism, which is reinforced through globalization. In this institutional arrangement, the neoliberalist Utopian movement of crafting a pure and perfect market has been pursued with political strategies of all sorts, after it is being created through a cohort of stakeholders from major financial institutions and enterprises, with senior government officials, politicians

⁴For Beck, globalization in its broad sense is neither an objective fact, nor a subjective construct, but rather an interaction between the objective and the subjective, of which these three levels are differentiated as globality, globalism and globalization (Beck, 2000b, as quoted in Zhang, 2000).

⁵It should be pointed out that neoliberalism as in the genetic sense of globalism carries with it a necessary feature of ideology, by instituting a public notion of the “inescapable pressure of market”, through which to disable counteractions as well as to discourage political intervention of maintaining status quo. It is in this sense that neoliberalism is ideologue (Habermas, 2002). It was also pointed out that “the interconnectedness of global economy was not a natural consequence but rather the product of such policies as consciously in pursuit of set targets” (Martin, 1998, p. 11). For Smith, “globalization is an ideological construct, declaring a fundamentalist version of capitalism that has yet to come” (Smith, 2001, p. 96).

⁶Dahrendorf (1998) as quoted in Zhang (2000). It should be noted that relaxation of controls, privatization and liberalization have become strategic tools by the Western Europe and the US and further advocated as “state ideologies” by neoliberalism (Martin, 1998, p. 150; cf. Scholte, 2003, pp. 39–41).

and economists who are seeking to justify their actions. However, it was from the subordinate classes in the West as well as the peoples from other societies that the tension between globalization and globalism has been escalated. On the one hand, globalization widens the gap in living standard between the great majority of the world population and the minority that have been better-off when incorporated into globalized production and financial networks.

On the other hand, this gap, together with other traditional contradictions, has enabled a critical, reflective globalism to challenge globalization and globalism in its genetic sense. An ethical issue was raised: are the rich that have consumed the majority of world resources and caused pollution *en masse* capable of fulfilling the aspirations of the poor in seeking development and an improvement of their living conditions (Cox, 2002, p. 20)? In other words, is this ideology and institutional arrangement capable of constructing a desirable and justifiable world order? As far as I can see, it is precisely this latter sense of globalism that provides possible theorizations for Chinese social science to shape the discourse on globalization through Chinese perspectives.

Furthermore, for me, social science knowledge is fundamentally a matter of power and legitimation, which means that it is neither reflective and descriptive as claimed by positivists, nor technically regulatory, but more constructive and consolidating, in that these knowledge is capable, by means of institutionalization, of shaping, constructing and embedding into public awareness and regulatory frameworks such an “ideal picture” of social orders (Deng, 2006, pp. 266–267). Prior to this, due to the lack of critical reflection upon neoliberalism that has been lurking beneath globalization, the discourse on globalization and social order thus formulated by Chinese social scientists was essentially an idealization based on Western experiences. For this, as far as this legitimation of social science knowledge is acknowledged, with its critical power restored, it will be possible to shape a new form of global discourse based on the legitimacy of social order, national interests and cultural-political demands in China.

Therefore, globalization is a game-playing process to be (re)constructed through cognizance, tradition and interests. It is to a certain extent a process of contingency, reversibility and uncertainty. For this, Chinese

social scientists should not be contented with describing globalization, or uncritically accepting the dominance of neoliberalist globalism during this very process of globalization. On the contrary, it should be realized to that degree of sophistication that globalization is an open and changeable construct, for which an active strategy to proactively reconstruct or reshape the dynamics and dimension of globalization should be adopted by Chinese social science.

Secondly, the advent of globalization has provided historical opportunities for the internationalization and a knowledge reform for Chinese social science. I firmly believe that globalization has brought ample opportunities for Chinese social science to construct a global discourse based on Chinese experiences, which informs a fundamentally critical juncture of knowledge reform for Chinese social science. By this, Chinese social science will not only be internationalized but actively engage the world in substantial discourse and dialogue.

From historical perspectives, the centennial development of Chinese social science can be periodized into three stages: (1) “the introduction of Western knowledge into China,” where a modern discipline-based social science system was established by translating the theories, methodologies, disciplinary system and institutional set-up from the West; (2) “the assimilation of Western social science theoretical framework”, from the 1990s forward, by means of applying Western social science knowledge and methodology to Chinese issues and copying the Western paradigm on theoretical innovations, especially in the areas of economics; and (3) “the integration into the world”, i.e. adopting international academic norms, standards, disciplinary system and institutional set-up, particularly through academic standardization movement from the late 1990s. With these three stages of development, not only has the theoretical paradigm from the Western social science been introduced into China *en masse*, but also a comprehensive discipline-based system was set up. So was the case with the reinvigoration of the academic tradition of Chinese social sciences, which went hand in hand with “copying” the Western paradigm on theoretical innovations and assimilating with international academic standards. Undeniably the past three decades has witnessed a substantial development of Chinese social science, which has laid down a solid foundation for its further advancement.

In the new millennium, with a deeper understanding of globalization and development for Chinese social science, Chinese government has grabbed this serendipitous opportunity to propose a “walk out” strategy for Chinese social science, which may in all probability signify a new age of internationalization.

During introduction, assimilation and integration, Chinese social science has replaced an autonomous judgment with a West-centric perspective, under which criterion the research findings thus obtained not only ignore China, but find it difficult to engage the world in substantial discourse and dialogue. On the other hand, the reason for the economic miracle in the past three decades has been China’s courage to travel a path that is free from the confinements of Western and traditional models. By comparison, Chinese social science is still deeply entrapped within the ideological circumscription of the USSR and the West, thus incapable of interpreting China’s own experiences. At many times, Chinese scholars were helping Western philosophers to wage a war against Chinese sages. However, “we” as an entity in waging the war are non-existent. Due to the lack of interests in theorizing contemporary Chinese experiences, “we” in fact are either a photocopier or gramophone of Western scholars. In other words, Chinese scholars have gravely ignored an in-depth study and theorization of China’s own issues.

I can see that this new age of internationalization is far from a natural continuity of the previous three periods, but has placed higher demand on Chinese social science in establishing a “made in China” academic assessment scheme, through which to develop theories and in-depth studies of China and to engage the Western academia in substantial dialogue, by using a language understandable to the latter (Deng, 2008).

For Chinese social science, at least two aspects can be internationalized: (1) Chinese perspectives on globalization, and reconstruction and understanding of world order; and (2) in-depth study of contemporary China (certainly, if humanities are considered as well, the philosophical tradition of China should equally be an aspect for internationalization).

As aforementioned, reconstruction of globalization and world order is not only a historical mission, but an important field for Chinese social science to contribute to the world. If the spread of neoliberalism in the post-Cold War period and its subjection to a series of recent challenges can be

regarded as unavoidable limits of Western culture in shaping globalization and world order, then the global discourse, with its historicity rooted in Chinese civilization and its contemporaneity in China's current cultural-political demands, can become an important theoretical resource to shape globalization and influence its future development.

On the other hand, an in-depth study of contemporary China, especially theorizing the "Chinese success story", can be the field for Chinese social science to contribute to the world. It is well-known that the recent 30 years of development has told a remarkable "Chinese success story", beneath which lie the "Chinese experiences" in achieving development without following the Western models. In spite of the existing problems in human rights, democracy and environment due to a single-minded developmentalist impetus, indisputably China is now a country of significance, in terms of tradition, history, civilization, population and modernization. The winding path of development was first built upon the ex-USSR model and later redirected to market economy. The market reform has brought 30 years of sustained growth, which is in itself a remarkable achievement.⁷ Of these experiences, there exists not only an institutional *modus operandi* with Chinese characteristics, but also a Chinese living wisdom that can be explained not through imported Western theories but by Chinese perspectives.

3. Rural Reform as the Starting Point for Academic Inquiries into the "Chinese Success Story"

It is based on the aforementioned recognition of globalization and the opportunities for Chinese social science thus entailed that came along this translated *Series on Developing China*, which, by means of careful

⁷Economists have already pegged their attention to decoding the economic miracle in China. Lin Yifu, for instance, suggested a "backward advantage". For him, "for developing countries, in general capital is scarce and unaffordable, while labor abundant and cheap, which is conclusive on the mode labor-intensive industrialization" (Lin, 2002). Qin Hui offered an explanation from the perspective of transaction cost. "The second wave of reform since 1992 has two features. On the one hand, there was no more of Pareto reformism while on the other, the transaction cost of institutional transformation has been collectively lowered through marketization, which is the main reason for the so-called miracle" (Qin, 2008).

selection, is an introduction to the world social science circle of the Chinese scholarship on the two areas of (1) globalization, world order and international relations, and (2) academic inquiries into the “Chinese success story”.

The theme for the first volume is set as “China’s Economy: Rural Reform and Agricultural Development” that contains 10 quality chapters. The *raison d’être* for choosing this theme lies in the importance of countryside, agriculture and peasants in the Chinese reform. As is known, Chinese revolution traveled a path of “encircling the cities from the rural areas”. Likewise the Chinese reform was started in promoting the household contract responsibility system in the rural areas. Moreover, the fact that the majority of the population was living in the countryside has made rural China the core of the reform. Such structural issues that readjustment of interests entailed as urban-rural divide and poor-rich gap are closely related to the rural reform. For this, a rural study centred on the three rural issues (agriculture, rural areas and peasants) or peasantography is actually an academic “gold mine”, which, as far as I can see, contains the richest possibilities for Chinese social science to contribute to the world. I agree with Philip C.C. Huang who asserted that the study of rural China shall become the center of rural studies worldwide. “The recent decade has witnessed a decline in attracting new talents to rural studies in the Western academia, partly due to the high level of urbanization and scarcity of rural areas in the industrialized West. Recent tides in academic studies are no longer so attentive to grassroots society as they used to be two or three decades ago. However, in China, in spite of the reproduction crisis facing many of the outstanding research units specializing in agricultural and economic history, there are still a large pool of researchers available. New contributions manifest themselves in such areas as social history, cultural history and historical geography. Apart from these history-related areas, new talents, together with new tides, have emerged in sociology, economics, law and anthropology. I believe that the future development of rural studies and research will have to derive its dynamic power from China. The rural area is as much the fundamental of China as the habitat for the majority of her people. The study of rural China will lead the world in the near future” (Huang, 2003, p. 1). Moreover, as far as I am concerned, rural issues not only characterize the Chinese path of development, but also define the areas that will most possibly challenge classical Western models, especially the development

theory. A good example can be seen in the theoretical breakthrough in economics.⁸

Gender Inequality in the Land Tenure System of Rural China, by Zhu Ling, examines gender discrimination during land distribution in China. With reference to the statistical analysis of the sample survey conducted in the rural areas of Shanxi Province of China in 1996, this chapter attempts to demonstrate the gender issue in the land tenure system. The author proves that although the legislative framework and economic institutions enshrine the principle of gender equality in land distribution, there are still loopholes in the institutional arrangements that lead to the insecurity of women's land rights. Divorced women, for instance, can be underprivileged in seeking the protection of their land rights. Moreover, women upon emigration due to marriage and their children who have missed the opportunities of land redistribution in their villages are barred from obtaining land tenure. Although these phenomena have not yet significantly affected the rural women's bargaining position within household, they do tend to bring the landless women into poverty. Finally, Zhu calls for amending current laws and regulations with regard to gender equality in land tenure.

The chapter by Zhang Shuguang and Zhao Nong, titled *The Allocation of Decision-Making Power and Changes in the Decision-Making Style: Systematic Thoughts on China's Rural Problems*, aims to theorize such rural issues as demarcation of and interaction between private and public policies, by an approach of historiography. The present state policies on rural issues are critically reviewed. For Zhang and Zhao, theory is devoid of meanings unless with a purpose to interpret real-life experiences. An appropriate theoretical framework can effectively inform the practice of policymaking. For this very reason, this paper articulates an analytical framework

⁸It was acknowledged internationally that developmental economics was first coined in *Agriculture and Industrialization*, the doctoral thesis of Peigang Zhang at Harvard University in 1945. Compared to *The Theory of Economic Growth* (1955) by William Arthur Lewis the Nobel laureate, Zhang's work was not only completed much earlier, but sufficiently considered the importance of agriculture. "By comparison, Lewis suggested a model of economic growth through sacrificing agriculture for industrialization, while Zhang argued that agriculture as part and parcel of production should not be sacrificed for industrialization, but rather developed in the same vein with industry. Afterwards Lewis reflected that he made a mistake in over-emphasizing industry and sacrificing agriculture for industrialization" (Zhao, 2004).

to investigate rural issues in China. This framework has a wider scope of theoretical application, with reference to property right as discussed in the paper.

The chapter by Tao Ran, Liu Mingxing and Zhang Qi, titled *Farmers' Tax Burden in Rural China: A Political Economy Analysis*, studies the current situation of taxation and fee in rural China, by using the national fixed-points survey (NFS) data of rural households in ten Chinese provinces from 1986 to 1999, as conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture. According to the research findings, the ratio of taxes and fees burden to rural household income did not increase as significantly as had been speculated. For the increasing severity of taxation and fee burden in rural China, the authors identify two reasons, namely the widening of rural income gap and the regressivity of rural tax levying rate. These facts are then incorporated into the authors' efforts to theorize the issue of rural taxes and fees burden, which in its turn has significant policy implications.

Li Shi's *Effects of Labor Out-Migration and Income Growth and Inequality in Rural China* analyzes the effect of the mobility of labor force upon rural income. This chapter estimates the scale of China's floating labor force from rural areas in recent years. Li uses relevant sample survey data to make an empirical analysis of the income distribution effect of the mobility of rural labor force, which, as he argues, not only raises the family income level of migrant workers, but also narrows the rural residents' income gap and plays a positive role in alleviating the widening of income gap between urban and rural residents.

Lu Feng's chapter, *Grain versus Food: A Hidden Issue in China's Food Policy Debate*, explores the issues of food trade, food policy and comparative advantage. First of all, the author refutes a popular misconception that China's food sector will evolve along the path of grain trade and its net import shall be significantly expanded. Centered on the phenomenon of exchanging food for food in China in the past two decades, the chapter finds that there has been an export expansion of certain food products, including vegetables, fruits and aquatic products. Through an issue-oriented approach, this chapter then seeks to explain this phenomenon by comparing the relative costs of alternative food productions in China. This economic rationale lays a solid foundation for the analytical framework as adopted in the chapter. Finally, the possibility of a revised food trade pattern is

discussed. The author conclusively argues that this new pattern shall have important implications for rural economy and food policy in China.

Saving Behavior in a Transition Economy: An Empirical Case Study of Rural China, by Wan Guanghua, Shi Qinghua and Tang Shumei, studies the saving behavior of Chinese rural households. Using a large set of household survey data, this chapter explores the determinants of saving behavior in rural China. This model considers an extensive array of variables. It is found that (a) for the unusually high saving rate in China, positive contributors include liquidity constraints, precautionary motives and industrialization; (b) the cultural factor is an important explanatory variable in interpreting inter-regional differences in the saving rate; (c) the authors refute the life cycle hypothesis, in that a “U pattern”, rather than the commonly claimed “hump”, can be identified; and (d) the permanent income hypothesis is also rejected, for the very reason that there is a negative correlation between income and savings. With these analyses, the authors convincingly argue that the establishment of social welfare system in rural China is not only a matter of necessity, but of urgency.

In *Township Enterprises and Their Interest Distribution in Reform: A Three-player Game Model*, Ke Rongzhu attends to the development of the Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) — an important issue in the Chinese reform. The center of gravity in the chapter is on the inconsistency between the high performance of the TVEs under traditional ownership, and the present property right reform of the TVEs. Ke establishes a three-player game model to include government, entrepreneurs, and community and employees, of which its balance and dynamics are used to explain the reform. In this model, external factors such as technology and market risks play key parts in influencing the equilibrium. Nonetheless, in theoretical analyses, this three-player game model shows little progress from the two-player game model. The merits of Ke’s chapter lie in his standard analysis and empirical application of game and institutional theories.

Zhang Ping’s *Rural Interregional Inequality and Off-Farm Employment in China* seeks to explain the specific conditions for non-agricultural industry to play a key part in widening or narrowing regional gaps of rural household income across China. Based on an analysis of inter- and intra-regional inequality through using the calculation of inequality

decomposition by population subgroups, this article analyzes the influence of regional differences on income disparity. It argues that the economy and geographical conditions of a region can be decisive in determining the level of both agricultural and non-agricultural incomes. The method of inequality decomposition by factor components is used to analyze the factors influencing the changes in regional income difference. The process of industrialization and de-agriculturalization can affect the intra-region income inequality. More specifically, two factors can be identified: namely TVEs and the relevant employment opportunities for rural labor. TVEs, as argued by the author, can under certain circumstances play a positive role in narrowing the income gap in rural China.

Food Demand and Nutritional Elasticity in Poor Rural Areas of China, by Zhang Juwei and Cai Fang, examines the issue of nutrition in needy areas in China. The data of rural household consumption in needy areas in China show that food demand can be highly elastic, at an estimated rate of 0.74. By comparison, the demand for nutrition does not show a similar level of elasticity, at a rate of only 0.14. The difference between two rates suggests the growth in food consumption does not necessarily lead to an increase of nutritional intakes. Where the quality, texture and taste of food may be improved, the nutritional quality may show no sign of improvement at all. It can be concluded from these analyses that a proactive state intervention to raise the nutritional level in needy areas can be a matter of great significance for China.

In his chapter *Reform in China's Rural Areas: the Changes in the Relationship between the State and Land Ownership — A Retrospect on the Changes in Economic Institutions*, Zhou Qiren discusses the relevance of state behavior in the rural ownership system. Through analyzing the role that state played in the rural reform, Zhou emphasizes that state protection of property rights is indispensable to the long-term economic growth in China. This protection still awaits further refinement and is still in its early stages of implementation. For this very reason, the participation of all stakeholders will be necessary to ensure the maturation of this property rights scheme. In particular, it should be a process that seeks to engage farmers, state agencies, elites of rural communities and other parties. Zhou forcibly argues that it is possible to create a private property ownership system out of the original public ownership system in China.

As far as content is concerned, the above mentioned 10 chapters cover an extensive range of issues in rural reform and development in China, including property right, food trade structure, the TVEs, non-agricultural employment, the mobility of labor force, land distribution, taxation and saving behavior. The research approach ranges from macro- to micro-economics, while in terms of research methodology, property theory, game model and quantitative economics are used, in combination with historiography and empirical case studies.

Hopefully, these academic inquiries into the “Chinese success story” under the theme of rural reform and development with quality scholarly examination, approach, theory and methodology, shall open a new page of internationalization for Chinese social science.

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