The ‘Living Wisdom’
A Theorisation of China’s Development

Deng Zhenglai
ABSTRACT

This chapter offers a framework for understanding and analysing China’s growth and development experience. In doing so, the chapter helps us understand better not only growth experiences, but also the intellectual efforts to “model” growth experiences. The living wisdom can be seen as a Hayekian tacit knowledge that encompasses two representations, one being the “acquaintance-oriented trade” in economic behaviour, while the other referring to the “strategic action” that is both guaranteed by the guanxi community in a matrix of political interrelations and supported by a developmentalism-based system of performance evaluation of administrative services. This “living wisdom” is both economically and politically significant as it elucidates the inability of economic concepts such as ‘transaction cost’ to explain variations of action in China’s growth experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DENG Zhenglai is a distinguished professor of Fudan University, Dean of Fudan’s Institute of Advanced Studies.
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I. Introduction: Rediscovering China

In recent years, particularly since the global financial crisis in 2008, the social sciences circle here in China has been abundant with such discourses as of ‘the end of the West’, ‘China saving capitalism’, and ‘China ruling the world’. Indisputably, recent changes in the World and China has, indeed, brought about new challenges and opportunities for China’s social sciences, on which issue I have argued in details under the subject of ‘knowledge transition’ in China’s social sciences in the past few years. It is mainly consisted of three parts:

First of all, from within globalisation there is no singular process of homogenisation; nor is it a historical process of objectivity. On the contrary, it is a process of contestation that is open to (re)construction through human cognition, interest and traditions, behind which are hidden such issues as ‘competition for discursive representation’ and ‘clashes of civilisations’. In the light of this statement, we are involved in as much a so-called objective ‘historical process’ as a globalised ‘competition for discursive representation’. From our own perspectives, this is in fact an issue of ‘discursive construct’ that is centred upon competition for discursive representation. For China, the crux of this competition lies in subjectivity and the proposition of an ‘ideal
picture’ capable of influencing the future direction of globalisation (Deng Zhenglai 2009a: Ch.4).

Secondly, China’s entry into the world structure led to a domination over China based on the latter’s promises, the changes of which have actually opened up unprecedented opportunities for China and China’s social sciences. As I argued before, ‘China was included into the process of globalisation through its accession to such international organisations as the WTO, which contains structural inequality that I term as “world structure”’, the domination of which ‘becomes effective as soon as it secures the acceptance of rules and institutions from China that has been arranged into this game’. In other words, ‘this domination of the world structure can be concluded as structural and compulsory, which was dependent not on force, but China’s promises to abide by its rules and institutions, regardless of China’s collusion. 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 on not collusion but promises’ (Deng Zhenglai 2009b: 5). This compulsory domination brings as many challenges as opportunities, as it enables China to revise the rules for this world structure. This capability of rule-making for the world structure, nonetheless, depends upon one premise that ‘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’ (Deng Zhenglai 2009b: 6). Otherwise, this candidacy is at most formal, other than substantial (Deng Zhenglai 2006: 9-23).

Thirdly, from sociology of knowledge, social scientific knowledge is in nature a discourse on power and ‘rightness-giving’ (zhengdangxing fuyu), which means that social scientific knowledge is neither as reflective and descriptive as it is held to be by objective positivism, nor technically regulatory, but rather constructive and solidifying. By permeating and embedding various kinds of regulatory techniques into human body via institutionalisation, knowledge has become the ‘ideal picture’ taken for granted in shaping and constructing social order and institutions in China (Deng Zhenglai 2006: 266-267). Therefore, as
far as we have seen this power of ‘rightness-giving’ by social scientific knowledge and restored its critical character, we can equally construct a social scientific theory on the future world order that is inspired by the outstanding philosophical and cultural traditions of China, and based upon Chinese imaginary on ‘ideal picture of the world’, in order that this theory may ‘walk towards the world’ (zouxiang shijie).

On the basis of the abovementioned theoretical insights, I argue that China’s social sciences will need to move from its past phases of ‘introduction’, ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration with the world’ towards a new phase of ‘knowledge transition’ (Deng Zhenglai 2009b: 10-12), namely walking towards the world and engaging the world in substantial dialogue. Obviously, this ‘knowledge transition’ is a necessity required of the subjectivity in China’s social sciences, which essentially requires that China’s social sciences should break free from the shackles of western thoughts and proactively engage in the competition for discursive representation.

However, the abovementioned arguments have only suggested the possibility and necessity for ‘knowledge transition’ in China’s social sciences, which depends upon our efforts to rediscover China and make deeper theoretical explorations on China. In my conception of ‘rediscovering China’, ‘re-’ is not a negation of all current China studies, but a suggestion that we should take new responsibility, problem-oriented awareness and theoretical insights to further explore the cultural and intellectual resources in China. Also, in this conception, ‘-discovering’ does not presuppose an essentialist ‘China’, but an ethical body of civilisation awaiting our recognition and construction. Finally, ‘China’ as in this conception is not to exclusively focus on the ‘Contemporary China’ with excellent performance in economic development, but rather a historical China that is deeply embedded in the world structure with its own traditions. As far as I can see, these suggestions should contain the following aspects that are closely connected: (1) a theoretical explanation of China’s experience or the China Model in connection with Chinese cultural traditions; (2) a theoretical construct of globalised discourse based on Chinese perspectives; (3) an exploration and reconstruction of the universalistic
resources available in Chinese culture and philosophies, resources that can accommodate modernity; (4) a theoretical explanation of the Chinese living wisdom.

This article will study the fourth issue, with an attempt to link it with the first issue. As an exploratory research, I will focus my attention on explaining the concept of ‘living wisdom’, and constructing a ‘development model of living wisdom’ by linking it with the developmental experiences of China. The ‘living wisdom’ is a concept as much controversial as easy to be neglected. To avoid the absence of a deeper research due to the preconditioning ‘position’ as a result of cultural or ethical bias, I will suspend the normative judgement of the ‘development model of living wisdom’, and in its stead, focus my attention on its theoretical analysis and explanation. For this very reason, this article will take the following steps. First, I will discuss the ‘living wisdom’ in a general theoretical perspective, which is a necessary step to further arguments. I hope that through this article it will be possible to guide Chinese scholars to pay real attention to issues arising from the developmental practices in China (while not only the issues artificially constructed with institutionalising factors that are easily recognisable), or even to explore the philosophy that dominates China’s development and is closely related to China’s own cultural traditions. The reason for me to emphasise ‘philosophy’ is founded on the following argument: not only an absolutely value-neutral social scientific study is non-existent, but also, a social scientific study, as long as it aspires to be thoughtful, will have to resort to certain philosophical promises. Wallerstein suggested that scientists are deeply embedded in their natural and living environments, of which every conceptualisation will have to be based on certain philosophical promises (Wallerstein 1997: 81). Secondly, I will critically examine the major theses on the China Model, pointing out their knowledge-oriented and institution-oriented characteristics. Finally, based on past researches, I will propose a theorisation of the ‘development model of living wisdom’. As a preliminary theoretical outline, it requires further empirical evaluation and improvement, as well as critical reviews from readers.
II. Several General Prepositions of the ‘Living Wisdom’

The ‘living wisdom’ is a concept I coined to further researches on China’s experiences or the China Model. My arguments on the living wisdom are consisted of the following seven propositions.

Proposition 1 *The discussions both in China and in the international circle are not wisdom- but knowledge-oriented, which as an approach presupposes that human society and nature are constructed by knowledge, thereby explainable and understandable through knowledge. This presupposition, nevertheless, gravely overlooks or disregards the living intuitions in human society/nature and the living wisdom therein.*

My concept of *wisdom* as distinguished from *knowledge* was mainly inspired by the suggestion of *tacit knowledge* or practical knowledge by Michael Polanyi, Hayek and Oakeshott, whose arguments can provide us with the following insights: (1) human knowledge can be divided into two types: technical knowledge (explicit knowledge or theoretical knowledge) and practical knowledge (or tacit knowledge), the former characterised by its ability to be accurately defined, albeit through specific technique and insights, while the latter cannot be codified or shared through dogmatic means. Rather, its normal representation is through customary or traditional ways of ‘doing’, or to put it short, in practical ways (Oakeshott 2004: 8-10). (2) Rooted in a pursuit of certainty, a set of technical knowledge was born that accommodated rationalism in modernity. For Oakeshott, rationalism has been too absorbed in certainty that it is inescapably intertwined with techniques. The certainty of knowledge does not need to be found external to the knowledge *per se*, but contained *within* (Oakeshott 2004: 11). (3) However, mentality is rather a social and cultural construct, where there is a close connection between the order to be sensed by everyone (i.e. the Hayekian ‘sensory order’) and the inexplicable knowledge (i.e. ‘tacit knowledge’). In other words, tacit knowledge is superior to other kinds of knowledge. Tacit knowledge enables organic beings to ‘exist continuously’, born out of and closely related to human senses of responding to events that will influence the way of being (Hayek 1952: 82).
However, as for this tacit knowledge, I would rather call it ‘tacit wisdom’. My conception of ‘living wisdom’ is the wisdom acquired through every day practices in responding to all kinds of challenges in the living world. Clearly, the living wisdom will negate knowledge-oriented researches, and open up opportunities for ‘wisdom-oriented’ studies.

Proposition 2 As knowledge-oriented studies have a preset value judgement or an ideological promise, be it a normative study or the so-called scientific empirical study, they are defective in being unable to attend to, let alone examine, the living wisdom that is behind the operation of human society and nature, a wisdom with non-logical philosophy. Neither are they able to examine or analyse the living wisdom that is free from the confines of value judgement or ideologies.

As is well-known, Logos is a central concept to western philosophies (or even the whole field of western science). Out of logos was born such epistemology as of rhetoric, logics, natural science and rationalism. For western philosophies, especially since the rise of natural science from Galileo during the Enlightenment, Logos in its Heraclites’ sense has undergone unprecedented changes. For Heraclites, Logos as wisdom is interchangeable with science, intended to be universal knowledge about the whole world (including the human world). This is also rational knowledge, duly distinguished from popular ‘opinions’. The ascendance of Galileo-led natural science in modern age developed this Logos spirit into physics-underlined rationalism, by which western philosophies changed from its Logos-led traditions to quantitatively-based, natural science-dominated qualities (Zhang Tingguo 2004). Therefore, social scientific studies in modern times, be it normative or empirical studies, have been imprinted with scientism, rationalism or ‘logos-centrism’. From a critical point of view, this logos-centrism has preset value judgements or ideological promises, as it has built the western metaphysical traditions on binary oppositions, such as soul/body, nature/culture, man/woman, and truth/fallacy, using the former to negate the latter. Derrida argued that this binary opposition is not based on equal footing, where one word dominates the other. From Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Hussel, western philosophies
preset good as primary to evil, affirmation to negation, purity to impurity, and simplicity to complexity (Derrida 1977: 236). Obviously, this logos-centrism is not only ideologically preconditioned or biased, but also unable to explore the living wisdom that sustains human world/nature, as well as the non-logical philosophy behind this type of wisdom, especially the Dao-centred, instead of Logos-centred, philosophy in China (cf. Zhang Longxi 2006; Zhang Tingguo 2004). My de-ideologicalised conception of the living wisdom will attempt to explore the living world and the non-logical philosophy therein.

Proposition 3 Knowledge-oriented researches are inherently in the pursuit of ‘knowledge accumulation’, for which they are invariably conceptual or logical games within the framework of knowledge. They will become meaningless once leaving this framework of knowledge. For this very reason, we have up so far been unable to formulate a critical and reflective account of this framework of knowledge since modernity.

Out of my past researches, I have suggested that knowledge-oriented researches will follow what I have termed as ‘the Iron Law of Knowledge’ (zhishi tielü), that is to say, an iron law governing knowledge increment and traditions. All our knowledge has come from our academic traditions, without which there will exist no such question as of whether knowledge has incremented or not. Therefore, academic tradition is the only criterion to assess the ‘creativity’ of a particular research. Without this tradition that has the accumulation of efforts from generations after generations of scholars, there is no possibility for us to assess knowledge increment – lest our researches have already been carried out, done or explained by our predecessors. Nevertheless, this academic tradition is no more than an academic framework made up of various kinds of knowledge, for which, without this framework, any knowledge-oriented research will not make any sense. From the perspective of the philosophy of science or the sociology of knowledge, the conceptualisation of living wisdom underlines that it will

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1 At other places I suggested that there is a necessity to ‘return to the classics’ from this ‘Iron Law of Knowledge’. See Deng Zhenglai 2003.
challenge this iron law governing academic traditions and knowledge increment, fundamentally reflect upon and critique the logics of knowledge and knowledge production, and further challenge the assumptions in knowledge-oriented researches, especially those assumptions of scientism.

Proposition 4 Knowledge-oriented researches are in nature constructivist, logical, principle-based and even ideological, for which they have an inherent generalisation orientation. The living wisdom differs from these researches in that it is not only traditional, but also contemporary and even futuristic, being a tacit knowledge that is inherent to the Chinese cultural traditions. I would rather call it a complexity of tacit knowledge that combines the traditional, the present and the future.

As aforementioned, the living wisdom is a tacit knowledge, tacit in the sense that it is ‘unspeakable’, with its emphasis on know-how instead of know-that. As Hayek has pointed out, know-how is deeply embedded in behavioural conducts by rules, the compliance of which does not depend upon the ability to formulate these rules per se (Hayek 1967: 44, fn.4). Tacit knowledge has two main features, one being closely related to cultural traditions, while the other lies in the highly individualised knowledge. On the one hand, tacit knowledge provides consistent guidance for behaviours in various situations. It is provided not by rationality, but through learning by doing, especially through such institutions as family, cultural traditions and home education. In other words, this know-how tacit knowledge is not stored or communicated through formal institutions, but hidden in informal institutional networks, at the centre of which lies the general social code of conducts people abide by without being aware of its consequences. On the other hand, this tacit knowledge, though hidden within, is not determined by cultural traditions, as it is highly individualised and dependent upon individual experiences of the knower. Therefore, it is communicable to a limited extent². As for the living wisdom, it is inherent in the Chinese tradition and highly individualised. For

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² Hayek’s argument on tacit knowledge is very complicated. As for the relevant explanations, see Deng Zhenglai 2009c: 64-112.
this very reason, the living wisdom explores not the technical knowledge that is characterised with certainty and universality as in classic knowledge-oriented researches, but tacit or practical knowledge with the characteristics of uncertainty and individualisticness.

Proposition 5 The living wisdom is a wisdom that, though internal to the framework of knowledge, is closely related to and interactive with knowledge. The living wisdom does not pay much attention to principles, but it has its own principles (‘the living principles’). It does not attend to universal value or morals, but abide by particular value or moral. It is free from value judgement or de-ideologised, while at the same time, it is disguised or clothed in knowledge and ideology.

The living wisdom has its own ethical or moral principles, with its main theoretical foundation derived from the Weberian notion of ethic of responsibility. For Weber, based on the value of behaviour and the foreseeable consequence of behaviour, ethic of conviction is duly distinguished from ethic of responsibility. Weber suggested that there is a deep antithesis between ethic of conviction and ethic of responsibility, entailing consequences in stark contrast with each other (Weber 2004: 261). For one starting from ethic of conviction, he would feel that responsibility comes from ensuring the lasting influence of pure conviction (Gesinnung), such as voicing discontent against injustice inherent in social institutions (Weber 2004: 262). By comparison, ethic of responsibility emphasises responsibility for ‘foreseeable’ consequences of behaviour (Weber 2004: 260, fn.84). Therefore, ethic of conviction follows universal moral principles while ethic of responsibility emphasises consequence-led particular moral principles.

As for China, in the field of ideology there has for long existed a structure that I termed as the ‘true-false structure’ (zhenjia jiegou)³, by which the living

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³ My proposal of an ideological ‘true-false structure’ aims at examining the complexity of ideologies in China. Generally speaking, I believe that in contemporary China, ideologies not only include those recognized as official ideologies that are enshrined in classical works of Marx and Lenin, among others, or policy documents, but also consist of another set of ideology in practice – these two types of ideologies in their
wisdom is disguised or clothed in certain valid official ideology. Therefore, those kinds of knowledge (including technical knowledge) that are valid ideologically will enter into interaction with, or directly inform the substance of the living wisdom, insofar as they satisfy the principles of ethic of responsibility (or the living principles).

From this it can be seen that the living wisdom contains such basic structures as the knowledge-wisdom matrix, ethic of conviction in relation to ethic of responsibility in the Weberian sense, and the ideological ‘true-false structure’. It represents the complexity of interactions within the supreme principle of ‘living’ in the human world.

**Proposition 6** Based on aforementioned propositions, the living wisdom is local in nature, albeit in stark contrast with the Geertzian local knowledge. It is living, valid, flexible, imitable and communicable. It is the result of family education and socialisation, rather than of school education, academic discipline or scientific paradigm. It varies according to time, space, and character, thus acquiring a particularistic quality and validity that are temporally bound. It does not recognise any ideological promise for any individual, thus open to explanation and conducts.

This fundamentally means that the living wisdom is a highly particularised local knowledge in terms of being and ways of communication.

**Proposition 7** Noticeably any knowledge of social study is in nature anthropocentric and delimited by national, social or international boundaries. Fundamentally it has excluded nature, regarding nature as an object. Even the attention paid to nature comes from a view to regard nature as an externality. Nonetheless, the living wisdom is essentially ecological, paying attention to both human and nature that are regarded as one. It is not delimited by national, social or international boundaries.

High level of interactions have constituted a ‘true-false structure’. Moreover, the official ideology is equivocal in its intension and extension, which in and of itself will generate different kinds of highly interactive ‘true-false structure’ under different circumstances. This ‘true-false structure’ will be discussed in details in other articles.
This fundamentally means that living wisdom is in accordance with Nomos of certain country and nation, and in harmony with external nature and internal nature.

III. An Examination of the Existing Theses on the ‘China Model’

The reason for me to propose the concept of ‘living wisdom’ lies in not only to guiding Chinese scholars towards the ‘wisdom-oriented’ studies, but also to explaining the development experiences of China. To all our knowledge, since Joshua Cooper Ramo, senior consultant at Goldman Sachs and senior editor at the Time Magazine, coined the concept of ‘Beijing Consensus’, using the ‘China Model’ to capture the studies of China’s development experiences has gained tremendous popularity within the Chinese social sciences academia recently. Therefore, to explain the Chinese development experiences will have to, first of all, examine the theses on ‘China Model’.

Generally speaking, there are two antithetical arguments on the China Model in China:

There is either a critical reading of the China Model, or a point blank negation of the China Model, represented by Qin Hui, Deng Xiaomang and Janos Kornai a Hungarian economist. For Qin Hui, the China Model is characterised with ‘low human rights advantage’ in the context of globalisation, signalling an incomplete process of China’s merging with the international society (Qin Hui 2010). In his comment on the heatedly debated social issue of suicide at Foxconn, Deng Xiaomang argued that there is no such thing as an innovated China Model, which is at best a model after the 19th-century West with Chinese characteristics. Its existence is attributable to the power of Chinese working class being still weak and disunited (Deng Xiaomang, 2010: 92-93). Kornai argued that model as a concept refers to a true process made up of a series of historical events, a process of emulation for other countries. China is the most populated country in the world, with a distinct cultural tradition, for
which reason it is inimitable and thus, there is no such thing as the so-called ‘China Model’ (Kornai 2010).

On the other hand, another group of scholars, led by Pan Wei and Yao Yang, not only endorses the proposition of ‘China Model’, but also attempts to offer a preliminary explanation of the China Model through the institutionalist paradigm. For instance, Pan Wei asserted that the China Model represents a special and outstanding form of equalising interests, the success of which challenges the dichotomy of plan and market in economics, the dichotomy of democracy and authoritarianism in political science, and the dichotomy of state and society in sociology. He delineated three dimensions of the China Model, namely the sheji (state) social model with official-citizen-in-one, minben (people-based) political model with one single party representing all, and guomin (national citizen) economic model led by SOEs (Pan Wei 2009, 3-85).

However, for me, the abovementioned two schools of arguments, although superficially antithetical to each other, rather discuss issues at the same level, as the China Model in their discussions, be it against or for this Model, has a series of distinct institutional elements, such as national development strategies, institutional arrangement and decision-making that would differ from other models, especially the ex-USSR and western models. Generally speaking, the discourse was centred upon the following aspects: defence of one party rule vs. democratic transition in terms of politics, apology for state-led market economy vs. further market liberalisation in terms of economy, building a harmonious society with stability as supremacy vs. full protection of human rights in terms of society, and asserting independent, autonomous and peaceful foreign policy vs. suggestion of responsibility of being a power (Zheng Yongnian, 2010; Lin and Yao 2006) in terms of international relations.

Personally I believe that the abovementioned researches are not only knowledge-oriented as I have suggested in the preceding paragraphs, but also defective in the following few aspects:

Firstly, they emphasise institutional elements, assuming the consistency, autonomy and integrity of these elements in their top-down implementations.
Such consistency, autonomy and integrity, be it in western political theories, or the developmental experiences of China, are impossible. After the Second World War, western political theories, especially public policy theories have already recognised the importance of implementation for public policy-making. Generally speaking, policy implementation becomes an issue, mainly due to the following few reasons. There are certain technical difficulties during implementation of these policies, during which it may be not easy to solve these difficulties due to their complexity, abnormality or interdependency. Moreover, the plurality of issues to which policies have to respond may render implementation a difficult process. The larger, more plural scale of group policies are targeting, the more difficult it will become to influence the behaviour of the group in a foreseeable way. The degree that policies demand target groups to change also affects the difficulty in implementation. For instance, policy targeting a change in cultural traditions, such as eradication of racism and racial discrimination, may be difficult to implement (Howlett and Ramesh 2006: 268-269). For this very reason, it is not possible to argue validly that public policies will be implemented consistently and without compromise. As for China’s reform, there are two features of China’s social transition to which we need to pay special attention, one being the incompleteness and historicity of institutions, while the other is that reform is in and of itself a historical process of interest diversification and re-aggregation. China’s reform, especially since the 1990s, was carried out after bidding farewell to the ex-USSR planned economy and western mainstream development models. It was gradually shaped out of no set targets or reform paths. Therefore, such institutional elements as refined and analysed theoretically were born out of the pragmatist principle of ‘crossing the river by feeling the stones’ (mozhe shitou guohe). On the other hand, since reform, certain social resources that had originally been under direct control and manipulation by the state began to diversify or transfer, enabling not only an unprecedented transformation in social groups and their social status

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4 The changes in social structure could be seen in two main aspects. Firstly, there emerged out of the original institutional structures a new social class who had occupied an increased number of resources, such as the self-employed, freelancers,
also changes in central-local governments’ relations. This was particularly the case in 1994, when the separate taxation reform (fenshuizhi gaige) transformed local governments into legitimate unit of self-interest5. Therefore, apart from the central government representing overall interests, governments at all levels, provincial, municipal, county and town, started to acquire their own interests, on the basis of which to adopt the Habermasian ‘strategic action’6, referred to as ‘the higher-level [government] has policies, while the lower-level [government] has counter-policies’ (shang you zhengce, xia you duice). Therefore, the China Model is not a single piece. If it is defined merely from the state level, using such institutional elements as macro-level strategies, institutions, policies and laws, this perspective will overlook how these different interest units explain or distort these institutional elements. Otherwise, in practice there would not have been such variations as of the Sunan Model, the Wenzhou Model, and the Shandong Model etc. How is it possible for us to group all these apparently different (or even antithetical) local or regional ‘models’ into one singular China Model?

Secondly, scholars, for or against the China Model, resort to institutions for unearthing and discovering aspects that are different from the West. In this

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5 Although this separate taxation reform is still very controversial among Chinese scholars due to its main purpose of increasing the capability of the central government to siphon and control fiscal funds, through this separate taxation reform new transfer payment system and principles were established, based on the demarcation between central and local revenues, as well as separate taxation bodies at the central and local levels with different jurisdictions. This had further formalised the fiscal autonomy for local governments. See Wang Shaoguang 1997; Xiong Wenzhao 2005; Huang and Zheng 1997; Chen Huasheng 2010.

6 For Habermas, the success-oriented ‘strategic action’ is mainly opposite to the understanding-oriented communicative action. On the basis of distinguishing normatively regulated action and dramaturgical action, especially ‘teleological (strategic) action’, Habermas proposed this concept of ‘communicative action’. For him, teleological action refers to actor resorting to certain effective measures and appropriate approaches to realise certain purpose. Strategic action, usually considered utilitarian to a certain extent, is closely related to teleological action. See Habermas, 1984, 84-86.
process, Western institutional elements constitute their reference or assessment criteria, where scholars only differed in that those for the China Model attempted to identify institutional elements foreign to the Western standards\(^7\) (such as the one party rule, and the sheji social model of official-citizen-in-one), while those against the China Model directed their attention to the absence of certain institutional elements by Western standards (such as democracy, human rights institutions, and labour organisations, etc.). However, one of the features of China’s reform (especially after 1990) is that be it the state level, or the grassroots level, the Western standard had no say. On the contrary, since 1990, in practice there has been a trend of ‘bidding farewell to the West’, resorting to China’s own special socio-historical conditions to advance the process of reform\(^8\). Obviously, a perspective on the China Model

\(^7\) The reason for them to resort to Western standards is that these Western institutional elements as identified by the scholars for the China Model have not only adopted a Westernised discourse system (conceptual tools, analytical framework and theoretical paradigm), but also, consciously or otherwise, presupposed what I have termed as ‘the paradigm of modernisation’, the logic of which is similar to my previous critique on Su Li’s thesis on indigenous resources (bentu ziyuan lun). I have pointed out in my critique that the indigenous resources thesis, although having certain difference from or even conflict with the thesis of right as fundamental basis (quanli benwei lun) and legalism (fatiao zhuyi), is similar to the latter two theses in that it is dominated by the paradigm of modernisation. This way of domination is unique in the sense that on the one hand, it disables Su Li from contributing an ‘Ideal Picture of Chinese Law’ to the legal development in China. Moreover, it blinds him from detecting his ‘non-Chinese’ way of ‘scissoring’ or ‘mutilating’ the various kinds of Chinese problems through the dominant legal science view of ‘contributing for the sake of contribution only’ (wei gongxian er gongxian). On the other hand, it renders Su Li, under the influence of historical materialism and the related or compatible sociology of law, to ‘integrate and transform’ the traditional ‘folk law’ (minjian fa) through an approach of Western modernisation, as law is via, instead of being consequential to, such social structures as of politics, economy and society, structures that have determined the nature of law. I wish to emphasise here that the thesis of indigenous resources has been not only dominated by the paradigm of modernisation, but also influenced by historical materialism and the related or compatible sociology or economics of law, for which reason it has gone further, and also more precariously, down the path of deviating from contributing an ‘Ideal Picture of Chinese Law’ than the thesis of right as fundamental basis and legalism, as it has not only made no contribution in providing an ‘Ideal Picture of Chinese Law’, but also opposes any reflection upon this Ideal Picture. Also, this thesis negates the necessity of deliberation and research upon an ‘Ideal Picture of Chinese Law’ by the Chinese scholarship. See Deng Zhenglai 2006: 257-258.

\(^8\) As far as official ideology is concerned, this reform practice of ‘bidding farewell to the West’ was carried out in the name of ‘socialist market economy’. Cui Zhiyuan was
by the Western standards will overlook such practices as internal to experiences at the state and grassroots levels, as well as their complexity.

Thirdly, these scholars are invariably inclined to presuppose a rationalist view, as if the development path of China was carried out according to preset rational designs, which completely neglects the fact that the process of China’s development has been an intended result or a process of unintended expansion. Previously I have used three privately-owned bookstores in Beijing (Wansheng Bookstore, Fengrusong Bookstore and Guolinfeng Bookstore) as case studies to explain the process of unintended expansion of China’s privately-owned bookstores. My research indicates that although being part of the development of self-employed units (getihu) and private enterprises, privately-owned book stalls and bookstores have had their development confined within the circumstances and progress in reform. In its process of ‘natural maturation’, the economic reform targeting the fostering of market forces and structure provided conditions for the development of the private economy of general knowledge, thus generating necessary conditions for the emergence of civil society organisations. This renders privately-owned book stalls and bookstores part of civil society organisations, acquiring special ‘value addition’ and thus representing the complex interaction of state and civil society organisations in the field of knowledge production and

among the first scholars to notice this trend by offering theoretical explanations. In an article in 1994, he summarised this transition as ‘the second thought liberation’ (dierci sixiang jiefang). As he pointed out, the first ‘thought liberation’ movement started in 1978 mainly targeted correcting the wrongs of ‘two alls’ (liangge fanshi), thus making a significant historical contribution. Nevertheless, up so far reform was faced with another turning point, where the reform objective was not so clear as it had been in the very beginning. At this historical moment of confusion with dynamics and attraction, all traditional dichotomies, ‘private/state-owned’, ‘market/plan’, ‘China as the substance while West as the instrument/complete westernisation’, and ‘reform/conservatism’ – seemingly lost their ability to describe the reality while draft the future. For this very reason, a second thought liberation was needed, with its focus not on a simplistic negation of conservatism, but expanding the imaginary space for institutional innovations. It would not linger on the either-or dichotomies, but follow the guidance of economic and political democracy, in seeking of opportunities for institutional innovations (Cui 1994). 14 years later, facing the breakout of a global financial crisis, Gan Yang re-proposed this suggestion of ‘a second thought liberation’, explicitly asserting that this second thought liberation should be a break from the past superstition in the American Model (Gan Yang 2008).
communication. Furthermore, this interaction between state and civil society organisations has resulted in certain ‘unintended expansion’, progressively – instead of ‘revolutionarily’ – responding to new issues and challenges arising out of the state and its governance institutions, making the latter to adjust themselves and their laws, enabling economic interests to have unintended influence upon political consequences, and finally effectuating important changes in governance institutions and instruments in reform fields that were originally unintended by the state. I believe that it is not only privately-owned bookstores, but also the formation of social order that has followed this development path. In social ordering, every element occupies a place that may not be consciously arranged by an external or internal force, but rather generated out of its own actions. This order is not consciously constructed by any member of the order, but rather an ‘unintended result’ out of the actions and interactions between members of the society⁹.

Fourthly, they neglect the influence of ideology, culture and their interactions upon the process of China’s reform, and further, they neglect the role to be played by the Chinese living wisdom in China’s development, which has a special feature in that the reform is practice-oriented, without any preset ‘ideal picture’ or ‘core value’ as the value basis for social mobilisation and solidarity, thus making the mainstream ideology as open and inclusive as imaginable. This openness and inclusiveness of ideology are important for China’s reform, or can even be regarded as a great invention of political practices in contemporary China (which is, of course, an unintended result). For one thing, the ideology in contemporary China combines different ideas and thoughts, such as Marxism that proposes a complete political economy criticism on capitalism, Maoism on popular democracy, the Deng Xiaoping Theory on

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⁹ See Hayek 2001: 117ff. What is noticeable is that in the history of political thoughts, this thesis on ‘unintended result’ was not exclusively suggested by the Mengle-Hayek School. There have been different propositions on how intended social actions can result in unintended results in the formation of human social order, including Durkheim on ‘causal analysis’ and ‘functional analysis’, Freud’s emphasis on subconsciousness, Merton on ‘actors intending and knowing certain consequence that is helpful to systematic adaptation or adjustment’ and ‘objective consequence neither intended by nor known to actors’.
‘Development Is of Overriding Importance’, and ‘minben (people-based) politics’, ‘ruling the country by virtue’ (yide zhiguo), or ‘building harmonious society’ (hexie shehui) out of Chinese cultural traditions. This combination not only preserves a wide imaginary space for China’s ideal picture, but also opens up opportunities for the survival and development of the Chinese living wisdom in combination with the Chinese tradition of ‘name-substance separation’ (minshi fenli). In March, 2010, Fudan Institute for Advanced Study in Social Sciences invited Chen Dingmo, former party secretary of Longgang Town, Wenzhou, Zhejiang, to give a speech on Seminars on In-Depth China Studies. As the mastermind behind the scheme of transforming a small town in Wenzhou in the mid-1980s into the ‘First Peasant City of China’ with a GDP of over 10 billion and a population of over 300,000, Chen Dingmo is a Chinese deeply versed in the living wisdom, especially through using the openness and inclusiveness of ideologies to protect local economic development. As early as in the mid-1980s, prior to introducing commodification of right to land use by the 1988 amendments to the Constitution, Chen Dingmo turned to the Marxian theory of ‘differential land rent’, creatively charging land usage fees in the name of ‘public infrastructure’, which not only solved the issue of capital shortage for constructing public infrastructure, but also easily stifled oppositions from both government and society. He had also used Marxian, Maoist and Deng Xiaoping theses to creatively provide ideological validation for institutional innovations in Longgang Town, such as ‘fund-raising without returns’, ‘fund-raising with returns’ and public-private partnership in education, greening and public entertainment. Undoubtedly, the openness and inclusiveness in China’s mainstream ideologies have enabled Chen Dingmo to creatively use his living wisdom in charting a successful development of Longgang Town.

Based on aforementioned analyses, I believe that a practice-oriented explanation of the China Model based on the keywords of ‘living wisdom’ or ‘unintended results’ can be a relatively feasible path to study the China Model. I personally feel that the living wisdom is in and of itself a practical wisdom, or the main drive of unintended results, for which reason introducing this
concept into our studies will enable us to not only understand the China Model in a more real, concrete and deeper manner, but also to reconstruct and represent the historical picture of China’s development as unintended results.

**IV. The Development Model of the ‘Living Wisdom’ as an Ideal Type**

This last section will be dedicated to using the Weberian ‘ideal type’ approach to preliminarily conceptualise the development model of ‘living wisdom’ as an ideal type.

According to my observations, there is a universal presence of living wisdom that has contributed in no small part to the development in China. For economic development, this can mainly be seen in the Able Person Phenomenon and Able Person Model in certain economically developed regions, enterprises and such social units as higher educational institutions and social corporate. One of the special features of economic development in China is that the economically developed regions or enterprises have for long been shaped by able persons, such as Wu Renbao for Huaxi Village, Wang Hongbin for Nanjie Village, Zhang Ruimin for Hai’er, Liu Chuanzhi for Lenovo and Chen Dingmo for Longgang Town. Theoretically, this Able Person Phenomenon is as much a concretisation of authoritarianism at the grassroots level, as a partial representation of the Weberian charismatic rule. Authoritarianism provides the grassroots Able Person Model with macro-institutional structures, as well as enriches the opportunities available to these charismatic leaders for deploying their living wisdom. These leaders need not only ‘passion’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘judgement’ as in the Weberian sense (Weber 2004, 252),

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10 The ‘ideal type’ is a central concept to the Weberian methodology, with two features: firstly, it is value-laden, containing value judgement that distinguishes it from logical positivism, while secondly, the purpose of ideal type is not to demonstrate the similarity between different cultural phenomena, but to ensure the differences are consistent with the same logic. On the other hand, ideal type maintains certain distance from empirical facts, as it is helpful for researchers to understand empirical objects of his own research interest. See Zheng Ge 2006: 59, 63.
but also the living wisdom. For one thing, within the boundaries of nation-state, the grassroots units not only face competition for survival from other units at the same level, but also carry out contestation with the central government. For instance, in the first period of reform and opening up, there was a strong force of ultra-left (jizuo), which confined the possibilities available to grassroots leaders facing complex and fierce political struggles. Under this circumstance, local leaders needed not only political leadership, but political wisdom or ‘living wisdom’. One typical example is Wu Renbao who created the miracle of development at Huaxi Village. Wu enjoyed unsurpassable authority in Huaxi Village, an authority derived not only from his personal ‘soft power’ (i.e. personal power based on his moral quality), but also the concrete political power he had won through living wisdom. It was because of a perfect combination of these two powers that Wu Renbao had been able to create miracles in Huaxi Village (Zhang Jingping 2003).

Here I would like to offer a preliminary theoretical proposal of the development model of living wisdom as an ideal type, based on the preceding analyses and researches.

First of all, as far as economic development is concerned, the being of ‘living wisdom’ pro forma has two parts that are interconnected, development of local economy as the target for ethic of responsibility, an individually-centred ‘guanxi community’ based on such networks as blood relationships (i.e. ‘blood relationships community’), geographical guanxi (i.e. ‘tongxiang circle’), entrepreneurial guanxi (i.e. ‘entrepreneurial guanxi community’) and ‘Chinese networked society’ (Hu Biliang 2005: 7-8), on the basis of which, by using all types of ‘strategic actions’, to carry out ‘acquaintance transactions’\(^\text{11}\) during economic exchange, to seek relatively reliable political patrons during political exchange, to secure ideological support from the developmentalism-informed

\(^{11}\) It should be pointed out that ‘acquaintance transaction’ (shuren jiaoyi) excludes economic corruption through low price and insiders’ deals. Instead, this concept refers to various kinds of strategic actions adopted by leaders of economic units to construct a unit-centred ‘guanxi community’ (economic interest community), as well as to use this community for economic exchange and promotion of economic development.
performance assessment system, and thus to form a danwei-delimited eco-political interest community.

As is well-known, different from the individualism-based western society, China is a corporatism-based society, where it can be seen on the supreme importance attached to guanxi (Fei 1998: 24-30; Liang 1990: 93). Based on decade-long empirical studies on Chinese villages, Hu Biliang, among other scholars, pointed out that guanxi not only continues to play an important role as a special rule in daily routines, but also has contributed to local economic development and regional modernisation in no insignificant way (Hu Biliang 2005: 3). The Guanxi Community as in economic interactions in China can mainly be seen in the role played by the guanxi rule in attracting FDIs and promoting economic trade, a role traditionally played by market in resources allocation in western market economy. Since the reform and opening-up, although market rules have gradually paved their way into China, as well as with an increasingly important role of administrative adjustment and control, the guanxi rule continues to play an important alternative role in resources allocation. According to Chinese scholarship, this is mainly due to the low degree of market maturity, imperfect market rules and the high cost of using these rules (Chen and Hu 1996, 123-126). As far as I can see, this Guanxi Community’s influence is not only embodied in economic exchange, but also political exchange. The market economy in China has been led by the state, for which there is not pure economic activity as in the Western sense, but economic exchange that is closely related to and seeks protection from politics. This is the case for both entrepreneurs and grassroots leaders. Therefore, the agents of economic activities (particularly grassroots leaders) should not only understand market economy rules, but also acquire the living wisdom of politics. By living wisdom, one can be both an entrepreneur with a perfect understanding of market rules, but also a politician able to deploy administrative rules, guanxi rules and political wisdom. For political exchange, this living wisdom is mainly illustrated in the ability to expand one’s guanxi community to within the political system, seeking political patrons, as well as
to make the best of ideological openness and inclusiveness to provide political protection for economic development of his own unit.

Secondly, ethically, the living wisdom is in essence shown in the common interest or common good of particular living community (family, danwei, region or nation, etc.) transcending general interests of a larger community.

Since modernity, the primacy of right or good and their mutual relationship have always been a controversy in moral philosophy, which started from the Hegelian criticism on the Kantian moral universalism and later could be seen in the liberalism-communitarianism debate in recent decades. The primacy of right or good depends on not only personal position in moral philosophy, but also complexity in modern society. According to Habermas, to the accompaniment of value pluralism in postconventional society is a divorce of social expectation from the cultural mode of self-determination and self-realisation, that is to say, a separation of moral judgement and ethical recognition. The moral and the ethical become separate under the pressures of social diversification and contradictory plural expectations (Habermas 2001, 204). Theoretically, certain community adopting particular value is an embodiment of collective recognition, which is related to not only a self-understanding of right norms (as can be seen in the Kantian universal moral for the whole humanity), but also an imaginary of lifestyle shared by the members of the community (as can be seen in particularised ‘ethical’ recognition based on individual particularity and irreplaceability in the Hegelian sense). For individuals, this can be seen in the different requirements upon the individual by the moral and the ethical, the former concerned with interpersonal relationship and embodied in the requirement of socialising normativity and social harmony by socialised individuals, while the latter is about self-ego relation and embodied in the pursuit of irreplaceability and self-realisation by individuated self. It is noticeable that facing the fierce survival competition in modern society, individual choice of value and lifestyle is not only the main substance of self-realisation, but also the essence of individual liberty. This is also the case for a living community with common interest or common good. Insofar as its external living environment is not a cosmopolitan
society, it is to a certain extent right for certain living community to transcend the general interests of a larger community with its own common interest or common good. Therefore, from the perspective of moral philosophy, our interpretation of Deng Xiaoping’s suggestion that ‘Let certain segment of the population and certain regions to get rich first, so as to gradually reach common prosperity’ can be that on the way to reaching common prosperity, certain regions can transcend the general interest of the whole nation (i.e. ‘common prosperity’) with their particular ‘common interest’ or ‘common good’ (i.e. ‘getting rich first’).

As for economic ethic, we can perhaps find theoretical explanation from Joseph Alois Schumpeter’s das ‘Adam Smith-Problem’ (Smith Riddle, or Smith Paradox), which in economics means the question arising out of the differing assumptions about human nature as in The Wealth of Nations and A Moral Sentiment. It is thus a question of how to coordinate selfishness based on self-interest and altruism based on sympathy. Although the Smith Problem was interpreted by many as a logical contradiction, for me, this represents as much the plurality in human nature as the complexity in forming a good social order. Taking Smith’s arguments as a whole will lead us to a general proposition that Smith wishes to tell us, that market as an invisible hand is an effective mechanism to coordinate private interest and public benefit, availing an ‘unintended result’ of public good from the self-interested activities (Jiang 1997: 18-19). Discussing economic development in the context of China from the perspective of the living wisdom is to suggest that during economic exchange, the living wisdom of ‘differential love’ starting from the self interest of one unit can equally produce an ‘unintended result’ of increasing public well-being (such as China’s economic development as a whole). Moreover, in the development practices in China, in answering to the call of common prosperity as an ideology, different living communities, after reaching a certain level of economy, will proactively expand the boundary of the community, so as to practice universal morals on a wider scale, as can be seen in the practice
of expanding village boundary by Huaxi Village through ‘one unification, five separations’ (yitong wufen)\textsuperscript{12}.

As for political ethic, as aforementioned, the Weberian ethic of responsibility can provide politico-ethical support to grassroots leaders who are ‘wholeheartedly dedicated to development’ (yixin yiyi mou fazhan). Using ethic of responsibility to promote local economic development is the biggest politics for every economic unit. This ideology of ethic of responsibility is rooted in the developmentalist ideology of ‘development is the iron principle’ (fazhan jiu shi ying daoli). This means supporting every measure that is beneficial to economic development of the unit. Under this ideology, “economic development as defined by development, productive power and competitive edge constitute the primary targets for state consideration”, which “avoids conflicts in targets by means of making no promise of equality or social welfare”. At the same time, the government is not passively supporting market the invisible hand, but rather proactively leads economic development, especially through top-down rational planning and sector-specific policies’ (Yu Jianxing 2008). The legitimacy of this ethic of responsibility accords with the concept of minxiang (for the people), instead of minzhi (by the people), as in the Chinese cultural tradition. Be it the ‘Three Favourables’ (sange youliyu) by Deng Xiaoping, ‘Three Represents’ (sange daibiao) by Jiang Zemin, or ‘Three For the People’ (sange weimin) by Hu Jintao, the core idea is to practice the spirit of minxiang, encouraging communist cadres to truthfully represent ‘the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people’, or ‘increasing welfare for the people’ (weimin mouli) (Zhu Yunhan 2009: 624-625).

\textit{Thirdly, as aforementioned, ideologically, the living wisdom is attached to certain ideologically legitimate and valid discourse, such as economic}

\textsuperscript{12} For long, Huaxi Village had been adopting the institution of ‘one separation, five unifications’ as initiated by Wu Renbao, namely separation of village and enterprise, unified management of economy, unified deployment of cadres, unified arrangement of labour force under equal conditions, unified distribution of welfare, and unified planning of village infrastructure. Since 2002, Huaxi Village via ‘one unification, five separations’ merged with the neighbouring 16 villages into a Greater Huaxi Village, with its area expanding from 0.96 to 30 square kilometres and a population from 2000 to over 30,000. See Liu Yanxun 2010.
development and common prosperity, for which reason using the protection of this ideological discourse becomes the ‘true-false structure’ of ideology, or the crux of the living wisdom.

As aforementioned, the being of Chinese ideologies has a plurality that includes not only officially-endorsed ideologies, but also civil ideologies with normative or de facto validity. For official ideology, it has been open and inclusive to a certain extent. As for the substance of the ideological discourse, since reform and opening-up China has followed a winding path. As early as in the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping proposed ‘Adhere to the Four Cardinal Principles’ (jianchi sixiang jiben yuanze), stripping socialism of its Marxist content in the reform practices while legitimating Chinese politics on the symbolic ideological continuity from Marxism-Leninism to Mao Zedong’s Thoughts. In the era of Jiang Zemin, he attempted to re-fill the substance of this symbolic continuity by proposing the futuristic Three Represents’, albeit impossible to avoid the embarrassment and worry of a logically consistent ideological discourse system. It is in this era that China has formulated its own ‘trial and error’ institution in ideology, in seeking the best discursive combination for China’s political order while abandoning the efforts on logical self-consistence (Wang Chaohua 2010: 216-217). This is an exemplary illustration of how the Chinese Communist Party has successfully used the living wisdom (political wisdom), as a result of which the highly interactive ideological discourse has also paved the way for building a ‘true-false structure’, so as to further provide the grassroots operation of living wisdom with a legitimate structure. For contemporary China, such terms as developmentalism, scientific development, harmonious society, national revival (the rise of a great power, or daguo jueqi), people-based (yiren wei ben), eight honours and eight disgraces (barong bachi), or tribute system (chaogong tixi), all invariably have the discursive function of ideology (Wang Chaohua 2010: 217-222). In this ideological context, how to depend on certain valid ideological discourse for legitimating certain measures for economic development (political correctness) has become the main manifestation for the play of ‘living wisdom’ (political wisdom) on the part of grassroots leaders. Obviously, the resulting ‘separation of name and substance’
(mingshi fenli), especially the ‘doing the world’ (zuo shijie) practice of ‘saying one thing while doing another’ (shuo yitao, zuo yitao), or ‘doing without saying’ (zhizuo bushuo) has demonstrated the living wisdom of grassroots leaders, as well as their measures in responding to certain institutions and policies, which has henceforth played an important part in economic development.

Therefore, based on the preceding analyses, using the living wisdom to comprehend China’s economic development in the past three decades will lead us to the observation that the living wisdom, under the protection of the ideological ‘true-false structure’, refers to the historical process of ‘unintended results’, with the basic form of ‘acquaintance transaction’ during economic exchange and ‘strategic action’ during political exchange, the basis of ‘common interests’ or ‘common good’ for living communities at different levels, and the criterion of using the results of economic development as the supreme ethic of responsibility. The reason that it is an ‘unintended result’ lies in the very fact that it has not been rationally designed by any plan beforehand.

**Conclusion**

At the end of this article, I would also like to answer several possible critiques on ‘living wisdom’ or the ‘developmental model of living wisdom’.

First of all, we cannot negate the universality of the ‘development model of living wisdom’, in which stead we should carry out further research and analysis of this universality. For me, the ‘development model of living wisdom’ has certain universality, which I would like to refer to as ‘conditional universality’. This conditionality is mainly as follows: it places upon individual capabilities and personal qualities a higher demand, which first requires that individuals acquire basic ‘living wisdom’, as well as with the assistance from particular external environment and successful interaction between individual ‘living wisdom’ and external environment. Once these conditions are satisfied, it will acquire certain universality; if not, then the ‘success story’ will become irreplacible.
Secondly, we cannot simplistically critique the Chinese concept of ‘living wisdom’ through the prism of ‘transaction cost’ in western economics. For one thing, on the surface it might increase transaction costs (especially the cost of socialisation), which as a matter of fact is not the case in terms of the total benefit of transaction. In China, our experiences have suggested that there is a high transaction cost (especially the cost of socialisation) for Chinese enterprises, where for certain enterprises this might be as high as 50% of its annual revenue (Liu Gensheng 2008). When using this ‘transaction cost’ theory to criticise the Chinese living wisdom, we will have to ask ourselves the following questions: now that the cost of socialisation is so high, why would entrepreneurs, assumably *homo economicus* after the maximisation of their economic benefits, still willingly accept this cost? How is it possible for China to achieve its economic miracles despite this universally high cost of socialisation? Obviously, these questions are out of the range for this article. I even feel that these questions will remain inexplicable, unless and until another *The Wealth of Nations* with Chinese characteristics is deliberated, on the basis of reflecting upon the principles and mechanisms of Chinese experiences of wealth accumulation.
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