

# The Elitist Theory and its Four Chinese Reverberations: A Discussion based on China's National Governance Theory

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**Abstract:** The development of western elitism theory has experienced three stages: moral elitism theory, meritocracy theory and meritocracy theory. The four echoes of meritocracy, lottery democracy, governance theory and national capacity theory in China respectively respond to the basic question of elite theory as the form of elite characteristics, selection methods, governance models and ruling resources. Where do the elites come from? How do elites govern? On what does the elite run the country?" It can be divided typologically according to two dimensions: the attitude towards elitism and the dimension of power relations. These four kinds of Chinese echoes all have their own strengths and weaknesses, which shows the double-peak confrontation between democratic theory and elitism as the basic proposition of political science. This suggests that the governance of our country needs to constantly explore the delicate balance between liberal democracy and elite authority, effective governance and popular participation.

**Keywords:** Elitism, National Governance, Democratic Theory.

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## 1. Introduction

Elitism is not only an important theoretical school in the history of western political thought, but also an important perspective of political science research. As a theoretical model, the development of elitism has a strong western color. However, in the process of studying national governance, Chinese scholars have gradually developed a theory of dialogue with elitism. Although these theories themselves are not directly aimed at Western elitism, their theoretical connotation has formed a substantial response and debate with Western elite theories. Then, how on earth did the native theory of the Chinese school and the Western elitist theory complete the ideological collision in time and space? This is the question that this paper is interested in.

This paper will first briefly review the theoretical origins of Western elitism, then sort out the four kinds of Chinese echoes by typology according to the two dimensions of the attitude towards elitism and the power relations of its theories, and then analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the four kinds of Chinese echoes. Finally, it will propose that national governance must return to the axioms of political science. From the perspective of democracy and elite balance, this paper discusses the Chinese way of elite governance theory.

## 2. The Western Origins of Elitism

### 2.1. Moral Elitism

Since Socrates, the core of Western political thought has been permeated with the idea of elitism. From Socrates to Mill, the governing elites they admired were models of morality and the embodiment of knowledge. Socrates' famous statement that "virtue is knowledge" suggests that he saw politics as a specialized art, and that only those who possessed both virtue and knowledge could become rulers of the city. He was very dissatisfied with the democratic way of drawing lots in the city-states at that time, and his thought of magi

politics had an important influence on Plato.

Plato lived in democratic Athens, and his teacher Socrates was sentenced to death for blasphemy in a democratic trial, which changed his attitude toward Athenian democracy. In *The Republic*, he created the rule mode of "philosopher king". In a just city-state, everyone plays their own role, and the philosopher king is the most wise and moral person. Under the protection of brave guards, the philosopher king rules the city-state and promotes the well-being of the city-state, and the social division of labor is orderly.

Later Aristotle did not agree with Plato's idea of a philosophic king, but he hated merchants and craftsmen who were actively involved in politics, implying that a country needed only a few intelligent people to govern it. After Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero, Aquinas and Machiavelli all advocated the idea of mixed polity. The basic content of mixed polity thought is that the polity needs to balance among the three elements of monarch, nobility and people to maintain the ruling order of the country. Among them, aristocracy is the most important link in the political system, because it is difficult for the monarch to fully control the country, and the people are often regarded as MOBS or fools by western ancient thinkers, and the aristocracy becomes the wisdom and moral symbol of political discussion. This respect for moral elites did not cool down until Rousseau's concept of "general will" was put forward in the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers questioned the rule of moral elites, arguing for innate human rights, social contracts, popular sovereignty, and checks and balances.

But Mill, in the 19th century, still advocated the rule of a moral elite. In "Representative Government," he wrote, "All governments throughout history that have distinguished themselves by sustained intelligence and courage in the administration of their affairs have generally been aristocrats," and "the only aristocrats that have demonstrated through many generations a high aptitude for governing, and acted according to definite policy principles, are those of

Rome and Venice." Mill believed that the intellectual elite was always a minority, but they played a role in promoting social development. Concerned by what Tocqueville called the "tyranny of the majority," he invented the double-vote system, which gave multiple votes to the intellectual elite. The proposal of representative government is obviously to limit the direct participation of the people in decision-making and enable the elite with virtue and wisdom to enter parliament smoothly, form the government, and play the intellectual, moral and positive values of the aristocracy. These thoughts have laid the foundation for the emergence of the theory of elite democracy.

## 2.2. Meritocracy

In the development of the history of thought from Plato to Mill, although the thinkers actually praised "moral elite", they did not include the word "elite" in their ideological narrative. The systematic study of elites began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with three thinkers: Mosca and Pareto in Italy and Michels in Germany. The huge gap between the democratic idea and the social reality led them to fiercely criticize the democratic politics, of course, they opposed the mass democracy rather than the representative democracy after Mill's transformation. Different from the thinkers of the previous generation, they did a de-moralization of the elite, focusing only on the phenomenon of elite rule in the actual political operation and trying to prove its legitimacy.

In terms of definition, Pareto identified the first use of the word "elite" in 17th century France, which he called "elite" refers to the "most powerful dynamic, intelligent people." Lasswell, on the other hand, argues that the central question in the authoritative process of assigning value to political research is "who gets what?" When and how?" These values include respect, income and security. The people who get the most value are the elites; The rest are the masses. Politics is the study of the powerful, the elite. Simply put, meritocracy believes that elites are those who hold power. The meritocracy theory holds that the political elite (or ruling class) is not closed, and when the old elite is unable to maintain its power, the decline of the old elite and the rise of the new elite are inevitable.

According to Mosca, "the rulers and the ruled belong to two classes, the former always a minority, who exercise all political functions, monopolize power, and enjoy privileges; The latter, though numerically majority, are guided and controlled by the former in ways that are to varying degrees legal, or less coercive and violent, and this minority of the ruling class is dependent on the ruled class for its livelihood."

Unlike Mosca from the perspective of individual elites, Michels put forward the "iron law of oligarchy" from the perspective of organizational elites. Combining theories of social psychology and organization, he argued that the political apathetic and low organizational capacity of citizens made meritocracy almost inevitable, that they had unique interests and were superior in status to all ordinary members, and that oligarchy tended to emerge in any bureaucratic organization. "Organization means oligarchy everywhere!"

## 2.3. Theory of Democratic Elites

The biggest feature of the meritocracy theory is that it emphasizes the supremacy of power and regards the meritocracy as the product of opposition to democracy. After Schumpeter's transformation of the definition of democracy, the elite theory and the democratic theory can be combined

into elite democracy.

Before discussing Schumpeter's theory of elite democracy, we have to mention his direct ideological source - Max Weber. Weber divides legitimacy into three types: traditional, legalistic and Charisma. Among them, the legal-rational type corresponds to the rational bureaucratic structure, the so-called bureaucratic system refers to a kind of impersonal, rule-oriented technical rule, which is inevitable in modern society. Weber feared that rationalization would lead to the disappearance of nothingness and individuality, so he called for a Charisma type leader who could transcend bureaucracy to run a legal-based state machine. The leader of a modern democracy, however, can only be elected by popular vote on the basis of high prestige and credibility. It was Weber's combination of democratic process and Charismatic leadership that inspired Schumpeter.

Schumpeter first criticized the classical democratic theory, and he believed that the two presuppositions of the classical democratic theory, "public welfare" and "the will of the people", did not exist. It is impossible for different people to form a unified view out of different values. Impotent, governed by prejudice, lacking responsibility and a clear will, ignorant and lacking judgment, the electorate is doomed to be manipulated by parties of all kinds. The so-called rule of the people has never been realized since ancient times.

Schumpeter then redefined democracy (direct democracy) : "The democratic method is the institutional arrangement for the purpose of making political decisions, in which certain persons obtain the power to make decisions by seeking the votes of the people." In this definition, the people go from being rulers to those who choose them, and the rule of the people becomes a rule based on consent. Then the importance of "voters deciding political issues" has changed from the first objective in classical democracy to the second, and electing intelligent and politically competent elites and giving them legitimacy to ensure that voters' opinions are carried out has become the first task of the people in Schumpeter's theory of meritocratic democracy. The people are no longer directly involved in policy making and decision-making; the people's task is simply to produce the government. He likens the process to a market in which voters, like shoppers, buy goods (candidates) with their money (votes). Wang Shaoguang calls this process "choosing the Lord." Democracy was transformed by Schumpeter into an institutional process, in which the elites compete for power, the people choose the elites, and elections are the unity of these two social processes. In this sense, democracy removes the moral significance of innate human rights and merely becomes a competitive method for the regular transfer of power. Although Schumpeter's transformation has attracted criticism from scholars who have high expectations for the purity of democracy, there is no doubt that Schumpeter's theory of elite democracy makes meritocracy more open and responsive than meritocracy. "It is elitists who debunk the myth of democracy, and it is elitists who make democracy out of its embarrassment."

So far, the western elitism theory has completed the theoretical drift from the virtue master to the strength master to the elector master. Although the emphasis of elite selection in the three stages is different, they share the following characteristics: First, they all emphasize the rationality of elite rule; Second, they all have the color of conservatism, denying the desirability and feasibility of direct democracy; Third, their starting point is to maintain the ruling order.

### **3. Defense and Criticism: Four Chinese Echoes of Elitism**

#### **3.1. Four Theoretical Scans of Chinese Reverberations**

##### **3.1.1. Meritocracy: Who are the Elites?**

As the name suggests, meritocracy holds that politicians should be both virtuous and talented. Meritocracy is a theory of meritocracy in which "What are the qualities of elites?" The issue has echoes in China.

"Meritocrat" first appeared in the academic circles in the 1980s, but it has not been a hot topic of discussion for a long time. It is precisely because of the advocacy of the Western scholar Ben Tanning that "meritocrat" suddenly became "hot" and was launched by the "Literature, History and Philosophy" magazine as one of the "Top ten hot spots in Chinese humanities and academia in 2016". In 2016 and 2017, there were two debates about meritocracy.

The first debate took place after Ben Bell's 2016 book *Meritocracy: Why Meritocracy is Better for China than Electoral Democracy*. On the basis of criticizing the narrowness of Western liberal democracy and reviewing the Chinese tradition of respecting and maintaining the ability of the meritocracy, he put forward the concept of meritocracy, which, as a "vertical democratic system of promoting the ability of the people", is divided into three levels: grassroots democracy, upper level promoting the ability of the people, and middle political experiment. Huang Yushun and Liu Jingxi respectively published "Where will Meritocracy Go? -- Discussing with Professor Ben Tanning" and "Disenchantment of Meritocracy must be Removed to Construct Modern Political Ecology" to criticize the ideological path and discourse basis of their meritocracy.

The second debate occurred in 2016 when Tang Huangfeng published the *New Meritocracy: The Democratization and Modernization of China's Cadre Selection System*. On the basis of meritocracy, according to the cadre appointment mode of "selection and election" formed in the exploration of the Communist Party of China, a new meritocracy is proposed with the organizational line of "meritocracy" and the criteria of cadre selection and appointment of "both virtue and talent" as the core, and the fundamental goal is to train qualified successors and effectively fulfill the political mission of the party. Later, Tang Huangfeng and Zhao Ji published the article "Justifying and Defending the New Meritocracy", which continued to explore the dialectical relationship between meritocracy and democratic politics from the perspective of promoting the democratization of cadre selection to ensure the "selection of meritocracy". In 2017, Zhang Wenbo published "The Temptation and Undesire of Meritocracy - Discussing with Tang Huangfeng and Zhao Ji", which criticized the new meritocracy advocated by Tang from several aspects, such as ignoring citizen participation, solidifying the official standard system, and lacking feasibility.

It should be noted that although both debates were centered on meritocracy, Bei discussed the desirability of meritocracy from the perspective of political culture, while Tang discussed the reality and feasibility of meritocracy from the perspective of cadre selection in political science.

##### **3.1.2. Lottery Democracy: Where do the Elites Come From?**

The theory of lottery democracy put forward by Wang

Shaoguang believes that the most fair way of drawing lots should be adopted in the process of selecting elites, but it does not exclude the role of elites in the process of implementing government governance. The theory of lottery democracy is the Chinese echo of the question of "where do the elites come from" in elitism.

In December 2018, CITIC Publishing Group published Wang Shaoguang's monograph "Drawing Lots and Democracy and Republic: From Athens to Venice". The book reexamines the hidden history of lottery as a mainstream form of democracy from the sixth century BC until the end of the 18th century, and has attracted much scholarly attention.

Wang Shaoguang's theory of lottery democracy is based on his critique of Schumpeterian "representative democracy", which defines the criterion of democracy as "the existence of free and competitive multi-party elections". Since Schumpeter published *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* in 1942, this understanding of the form of democracy has become almost the only understanding of democracy. Wang Shaoguang made three criticisms of representative democracy: First, representative democracy is actually "choosing the Lord" rather than "democracy", and the people are only choosing the rulers rather than ruling the country. Second, the "Lord" elected by representative democracy is not elected by all the people, and the turnout rate in many countries is on the decline. Third, because the electoral system and the party system have serious internal problems, representative democracy is inevitably a kind of "unbalanced democracy" and "unequal democracy". He argued that republican democracy had for 2,000 years been associated with drawing lots rather than elections, and that the fact that elections were considered necessary for democracy was a result of Schumpeter's transformation.

As a political selection method, the lottery is widely used, "can be applied to the primary links of the political process such as pre-election, runoff election, verification, grouping, ranking, etc., suitable for the selection of officials, the selection of representatives, the formation of executive, legislative, judicial bodies and various committees, the selection of jurors, the decision of life and death, the allocation of scarce resources and other political fields," It also applies to political levels such as villages, communities, cities, counties, provinces, states, central governments, international organizations, and political communities of different sizes such as small countries and large countries." "Casting lots would better ensure that everyone had the right to be elected ruler. The lottery is gradually getting rid of its marginal status and attracting the attention of more and more mainstream academics." The practice of drawing lots has also proliferated all over the world. The lottery as a way of selecting talent will be revived in the 21st century.

##### **3.1.3. Governance Theory: How do Elites Govern?**

Yu Keping believes that governance is the cooperative management of public affairs between the government and citizens, and "good governance" is "the process of social management that maximizes public interests". Governance theory is the elite theory of "How do elites govern the country?" The issue has echoes in China.

In the past two decades, the study of governance has become a hot topic in domestic political studies. The theory of governance was first heated in the West in response to the welfare crisis and market failure. In Yu Keping's introduction to the theory of governance, the direct ideological resource is the official reports published by the World Bank in 1989 and

1992. When the theory of governance was introduced to China in the 1990s, China was in a critical period of government transformation, and governance quickly became a key concept to interpret China's political changes.

The governance theory established by Yu Keping is based on the demarcation with the concept of "ruling". The essential difference between governance and government is that governance is polycentric and the subject includes NGOs, while the authority of government can only come from the government. Secondly, the level of power operation of governance is interactive up and down, that is, government and non-governmental politics, the state and civil society implement the management of public affairs through cooperation and consultation, while the level of power of government rule is always one-way and top-down. In contrast, the theory of good governance is based on the demarcation of the concept of "good governance". The scope of good governance is the same as the scope of government, and its standards include strict law, honest officials, efficient administration, and good service. "Good governance" is the process of maximizing public interests, its main body includes government organizations and non-governmental organizations, and its criteria include ten: first, legitimacy; Second, the rule of law; Third, transparency; Fourth, responsibility; Fifth, response; Sixth, effective; Seventh, participation; Eighth, stability; Ninth, honesty; Tenth, justice.

#### **3.1.4. State Capacity Theory: How do Elites Govern?**

Wang Shaoguang believes that "national capacity is the ability of a country to turn its will into action and into reality." The theory of state capacity is a part of elitism in which "What does the elite rely on to govern the country?" The issue has echoes in China.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the nationalist school began to systematically analyze the concept of state capacity. The focus of this paper is not to comment on the Western school of nationalism, but to focus on how Chinese scholars use the theory of state capacity to interact with elitism. Therefore, here we introduce the research achievements of Wang Shaoguang, the first scholar who introduced national capacity.

Wang Shaoguang, assistant professor of political science at Yale University in the United States, and Hu Angang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, put forward the concept of national capacity in a book. At that time, their aim was to curb the pattern of vassal fragmentation by strengthening the central government's leading role in the transformation of the market economy. In his recent article, Wang has expanded the dimensions of national capacity from four to eight: coercive capacity, assimilate capacity, national certification capacity, regulatory capacity, leadership capacity, redistribution capacity, and assimilate integration capacity. Without the building of basic national institutions and basic national capacity, there can be no national governance.

## **3.2. Typological Analysis of Four Kinds of Chinese Reverberations**

From the two dimensions of elitism attitude and power relationship, the four kinds of Chinese reverberations can be divided into the following types:

Judging from the attitude towards elitism, meritocracy and the theory of state capacity are both favorable resources to defend elitism. Meritocracy justifications, which appeal more to historical legitimacy and East Asian experience, can be called "back to basics" justifications. Betanning believes that

meritocracy is the theme of Chinese political and cultural history. How to select the elite is a question that ancient Chinese rulers and thinkers thought about, and the imperial examination is the path they explored to enlist the heroes of the world. The Confucian meritocracy political thought was realized in the moral education of loyalty and filial piety advocated by the imperial examination system. The Chinese traditional Confucian thought of "selecting the meritocracy" has become the classical resource of meritocracy politics. And Singapore's Asian values, with Confucianism as the core, became a practical example of meritocracy. Since then, meritocracy is to a large extent a spiritual resurrection of classical moral elitism. The combination of power and morality is the most important feature of meritocracy. However, the defense of elitism by the theory of state capacity appeals more to theoretical logic and practical needs. Call it a "fresh start" defense. Theoretically, a country's national capacity plays an important role in nation-building and nation-building. In reality, anarchy such as the Somalia problem stems from the "failure of the state" caused by the "weakening of the state capacity". Therefore, the development of national capacity is the top priority of a country's governance. And an important embodiment of national ability is the correctness and implementation of high-level elite strategic leadership.

The theory of lottery democracy and governance refutes elitism. By revealing the history of lottery democracy in the Western history of more than two thousand years, it points out that the concept of democracy being transformed into electors is the result of the transformation of Schumpeter and other thinkers, so as to refute the view that competitive elections are synonymous with democracy, and appeals to the history of western democratic theory. The lottery cannot be controlled by the elite, and the elite fraud in the election process is everywhere. The use of lottery to choose the ruler will inevitably change the source and structure of the elite. The theory of governance emphasizes pluralism and co-governance, which is more derived from the practical needs of the governance crisis of western governments, and the maximization of public interests brought by the cooperative governance of government elites and civil society has also become the source of performance legitimacy of the governance theory, thus refuting the pure meritocracy.

From the perspective of society-state power relations, both lottery democracy and meritocracy are one-dimensional. As a way of bottom-up selection of rulers, the role of lottery democracy is to randomly select a certain number of people from the society to form a government and implement governance, and it is a one-way behavior of the society to send talents to the country. Meritocracy, on the other hand, is a top-down selection method by the organization department that limits democracy to the grass-roots level of high-level talents. The selection is based on the morality and ability of cadres. Such cadres cannot be elected from the grass-roots level, but can only be selected in parallel among the elite group, and it is a one-way behavior in which the national elite draws human resources and checks talents from the social elite. "Political meritocracy is incompatible with competitive elections for top leaders, because competitive elections for top leaders would undermine the institutional advantage of selecting experienced, capable and virtuous leaders."

Governance theory and state capacity theory are theories from the perspective of state-society two-way interaction. Governance theory is more socially centered in state-society

relations, although Yu Keping emphasizes that governance "refers to the use of authority within a given scope to maintain order and meet the needs of the public." The subject of governance here is undoubtedly the government, but in his discussion, the cornerstone of governance theory is "civil society". He defined "civil society" as "the sum total of all civil organizations or relationships outside the state or government," including "non-governmental organizations (ngos), voluntary associations of citizens, associations, community organizations, interest groups, and spontaneously organized movements of citizens." Since governance is a cooperation, and civic organizations can promote cooperation between government and citizens, governments naturally need to limit their power and return it to civil society. The theory of state capacity is more state-centered in state-society relations. The basic state capacity of Wang Shaoguang draws on the classification of Michael Mann, who divides state capacity into state autocratic capacity and state basic capacity. The former refers to the power of national elites to act on their own without institutionalized consultation with civil society. The latter refers to the ability of the State to actually infiltrate civil society and implement decisions within the territory under its rule, and it is the power of the State to infiltrate and centrally coordinate the activities of civil society through its infrastructure. In fact, both types of State capacity are state-centred capacity to implement decisions on society, distinguished only by the institutionalization of consultation with civil society.

## **4. Merit and Doubt: An Analysis of Four Echoes of Elitism in China**

### **4.1. Meritocracy as a Form of Elite Trait**

Meritocracy, as a criterion for identifying elite qualities, is recognized both in the requirements of the imperial examination system in ancient China and in the appointment criteria of cadres by the Communist Party of China. Mr. Bei referred to a description by Li Yuanchao, then head of the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, of the characteristics of China's meritocracy promotion system: The selection of senior leaders needs to take more account of virtues such as caring for the masses, a pragmatic attitude, compassion for the disadvantaged, political experience, and past achievements. The quality of the ruling elite is the core element of the competitiveness of the national system for the governance of a super-large country like China, and also the basic guarantee for improving the performance of national governance and promoting the modernization of national governance. The purpose of any talent selection system is to select talented people to control the state power and promote the people's well-being under a fair and just institutional environment. The requirements of meritocracy for the ruling elite are exactly in line with the needs of national governance ability.

Meritocracy is criticized for its incompatibility with democratic politics. Although Tang Huangfeng believed that meritocracy focused on solving the basic qualifications and selection criteria of the holders of power on the basis of recognizing sovereignty in the democratic system of the people, it was complementary to the democratic system. However, the generalization of the standards of merit and ability inevitably leads to the rise of the trend of elite rule and the shading of democratic values. On the one hand, meritocracy, as a tradition of Chinese political culture, is

largely derived from the imagination of those who propose meritocracy. Not to mention that the imperial examination system was not the only way to select officials in imperial China, and in fact, the imperial examination system could not select those with governance ability and moral integrity, and most of the people selected by the imperial examination system were lacking in talent and moral integrity. Moreover, the imperial examination system in ancient China was more often to select loyal ministers, "loyal ministers must come from the door of filial sons", and meritocracy was naturally dwarfed as the only standard of "loyalty". In short, the so-called Chinese tradition does not naturally prove the desirability of meritocracy. On the other hand, modern society is a political community composed of free people under the assumption of social contract theory and popular sovereignty theory. Democracy, as a modern way of political life, has an undeniable value. Although some Western scholars have studied elitism, democratization, liberalization, rule of law and equality have always been the values of their polity. Meritocracy, because of its natural idolatry of moral elites, can neither solve the problem of the legitimacy of power, nor can it effectively supervise and check power, so as to prevent power from doing evil.

To sum up, meritocracy, as an elite trait, has undoubted requirements for both virtue and ability of governing talents. However, its hidden elite worship ideology tends to obscure the important value of democratic procedures and make elites fall into the trap of authoritarianism.

### **4.2. Lottery Democracy as a Way of Elite Selection**

As a way of elite selection, lottery suddenly fell silent after the demise of the Venetian Republic at the end of the 18th century, and then representative democracy became synonymous with democracy, and competitive elections between free multi-parties became the only criterion for judging the democracy of a political system in Western society. In fact, in recent decades, the in-depth study of the theory of lottery democracy and the political practice of lottery democracy are deepening step by step. One is "deliberative polling", the other is "citizens' assembly", both experiments have been spread across countries.

The advantages and disadvantages of drawing lots are obvious. From the perspective of elite selection, on the one hand, drawing lots is a pure luck process, which is difficult for the elites to manipulate, which can ensure the fairness and justice of the political process, reduce corruption and party rivalry, and provide more equal political opportunities. On the other hand, the rulers selected by drawing lots may have different levels of governance. It even leads to the situation of mediocre people running the country. What's more, the luck of the draw makes it easy for the winners to engage in "collective irresponsibility." The two theoretical assumptions of modern democratic representative theory are "empowerment theory" and "accountability theory". The former holds that voters authorize and give legitimacy to elected candidates through votes; the latter holds that once voters find that elected candidates do not meet their will, they can hold them accountable through the next election or democratic supervision. While Wang Shaoguang repeatedly criticizes representative democracy as having the disadvantage of electing a leader, lottery democracy is more like a "leader", that is, the winner often becomes the ruler because of his good fortune. By violating the axiom that "he

who produces power is accountable to whom power is accountable," the de facto consequence for the owners is that no one is accountable, and the elites cannot be constrained to continue to respond to citizens' preferences. In a representative democracy, the people at least have the possibility of punishing the ruling elite with their votes.

To sum up, as a random elite selection method, lottery democracy is more equal than election to some extent, but the "operator" nature of lottery can neither guarantee the supply quality of the ruling elite nor produce the politics of responsibility.

### 4.3. Governance Theory as an Elite Governance Model

The governance theory does not completely deny the existence of national elites. Different from the top-down rule of the government, governance is a process in which the government and civil society cooperate on public affairs to maximize public interests. It emphasizes that governance is cooperation, and it believes that the government is not the only source of legitimate power, but that civil society is also the source of legitimate power. Its advantage is that governance means that the elite can no longer rule from above, but must interact with civil society, adhere to the standards of good governance, and maximize the public interest. The theory of governance and good governance can also make up for the deficiencies of representative democracy. Different from the legitimacy of "consent" that democracy requires, good governance requires the government to have good political performance to meet the needs of the people for a better life. In this sense, good governance is a form of substantive legitimacy, and the government has the legitimacy to rule by satisfying the wishes of the people. Governance theory requires that national elites must continuously and effectively respond to the demands of the people in the process of governance.

Governance means that the government needs to reposition its role, requiring the government to increase power to citizens, empower the market and return power to society under the pattern of economic marketization, organizational socialization and interest diversification. Governance expresses people's desire to pursue common goals and achieve common interests without the coercive power of the state. However, the tendency of decentralization and denationalization of governance makes it impossible for governance to bypass the paradox of the state: if a country is too strong, it is easy to produce the arbitrary power of the elite, while if the country is too weak, it is difficult to continuously produce national performance and governing resources. Improper overall decentralization of power to the society will weaken the basic capacity of the state while reducing the functions of the state, leading to the emergence of incompetent states, failed states and even anarchy. Civil society theory, the cornerstone of governance theory, holds that ngos can remedy government failure and market failure and are partners that can be fully trusted by the government. However, researchers often ignore the political characteristics of ngos and place too high expectations on their organizational efficiency. Critics of civil society theory also cite the myths surrounding civil society in terms of its five characteristics.

In short, as an elite governance model, governance theory can promote the realization of public interests, but its strong postmodern color implies the danger of dissolving national

sovereignty and weakening the ability of elite governance.

### 4.4. National Capacity as a Resource of Elite Governance

As an elite ruling resource, the strength of national capacity is related to economic development and governance performance. Wang Shaoguang believes that the ability to coerce, assimilate and assimilate is the cornerstone of state construction and a sign of testing failed states. At the practical level, the economic success of China's reform and opening up has largely come from China's strong national capacity. Strong national capacity has laid a solid institutional guarantee, human capital, and infrastructure foundation for reform and opening up. Only with certain national capabilities can the ruling elite carry out authoritative allocation and redistribution of resources within the country fairly, avoid the intensification of social conflicts and political disturbances, and independently formulate their own foreign policies.

The theory of state capacity tends to emphasize the ability of the state to formulate and implement policies. The state has the autonomy to get rid of social constraints and transform state preferences into public policies, which implies the risk of triggering a crisis of state legitimacy. For emerging nation-states, attempts to govern and transform by improving state capacity may result in the loss of legitimacy as their performance diminishes. However, due to overconfidence in national capabilities, the ruling elite often ignores institutionalized consultation with the society in the process of policy formulation, and even regards the society as the enemy of national autonomy. As a result, the public will inevitably oppose the policy failure. In this regard, some scholars have democratized the concept of national capacity, "National capacity is first the ability to manage the fiduciary relationship of power, the government is entrusted with obtaining financial resources, administering according to law, protecting the sovereignty and independence of the state and the safety of people's lives and property, and maintaining social justice and order." This statement emphasizes the limitation of state capacity to an elite governing resource serving the people within the confines of the law.

## 5. Conclusion

The core of elitism is that national governance should be completed by elites. Whether defending elitism or criticizing elitism in China, it highlights the double-peak confrontation between democratic theory and elitism as the basic proposition of political science. Four Chinese echoes respond positively or negatively to four fundamental questions about elitism: Who are the elites? Where do the elites come from? By what does the elite run the country? How do elites govern? More of them still deserve further in-depth discussion. For example, in the elite selection process, can the two forms of lottery and election be combined, how should they be combined, and in what fields? How can meritocracy be both desirable and desirable? How can governance constrain the excesses of elites without tying their hands and feet? How do you empower elites to do good but not evil? These propositions are implicit in China's reverberations, but have not been fully answered and in-depth analysis.

National governance includes four processes: selection of leaders, political decision-making, political management and political supervision. As for how to govern, "democratic election, democratic consultation, democratic decision-

making, democratic management, democratic supervision" is an important channel to effectively protect the people's right to be the master of the country and promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity, but the other side of the problem is that the political elite in national governance is always an important factor in determining the quality of public decision-making and national governance. So how to combine the elite system with the democratic system and promote the good of the people and the country to the greatest extent has become an important proposition of national governance. At this level, the significance of the four kinds of Chinese reverberations is that they provide valuable ideological resources for deepening the topic of Chinese governance at both the academic and practical levels. They remind us that governance must never forget to explore the delicate balance between democratic ideals and how it works, between liberal democracy and elite authority, between effective governance and popular participation.

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