Chinese Civil Society Research in Recent Years: A Critical Review

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Abstract

This article provides a critical review of Chinese literature on civil society research in China since 2006. Western and Chinese researchers in the early 1990s offered certain theoretical perspectives for Chinese civil society research. However, research conducted over recent years has developed some new theories out of these horizons, providing new theoretical perspectives on the structural relationship between Chinese civil society and the state, the developmental route of civil society, and theoretical interpretations of new developments, such as multigovernance and network public opinion. This research helps to enhance scholars’ understanding of China’s political and social changes and facilitate Chinese civil society research. However, Chinese civil society research still needs to strengthen its theoretical foundation and enhance understanding of ongoing changes in order to overcome various hurdles in Chinese civil society studies, such as a lack of theory-oriented research, insufficient micro-level research, and limited explanatory power.

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