

The Diachronic Evolution of the Discourse on the People-Centered Orientation: A Review of CNKI Literature (1982–2026)

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Abstract

People-centered orientation is the core category of Marxism and the theoretical discourse system of adapting Marxism to the Chinese context. Since 1982, the academic community has continued to study the discourse of people-centered orientation in the Party and government documents, but the review is mostly confined to a single discipline and a single topic. This study takes the relevant literature of China Knowledge Network from 2017 to 2026 as a direct sample, and examines the evolution of research in this field from 1982 to 2026 with the early stage of connecting Party and government documents and retrospective reviews such as Party Congress reports since 1982. This study finds that this field presents an overall pattern of “policy-driven and academic subordination”. It has evolved through deepening and expanding under the context of restoration and reaffirmation, interest response in the context of market economy, governance shift, and systematic construction to Chinese modernization. The focus of research gradually expands from the field of literature to political discourse, governance practice and civilizational narrative, and the research is concentrated in the two major plates of literature, art and political science; The academic community has reached a consensus on the historical continuation of the discourse of people-centered orientation, but disagreements concerning its conceptual boundaries have persisted throughout the period. Their terms are shared but the caliber is different, the generalization of concepts is obvious, and there are far more normative discussions than empirical studies. Accordingly, there are still gaps in the overall historiographical review and corpus-based analysis. This study aims to identify this gap and provide a reference framework for subsequent empirical research and discourse research.

Keywords

people-centered orientation, discourse, diachronic evolution

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

people-centered orientation is the essential attribute and distinctive feature of Marxism, which plays an important role in the political discourse system of the Communist Party of China. Its ideological source can be traced back to the discussion on the people in the Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy. From revolution, construction to reform, until the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, people-centered

orientation has always been closely related to the Party's theory and practice. Since the reform and opening up, with the continuous updating of the Party and government documents such as the report of the Party Congress, the resolution of the Plenary Session and various policies, the discourse of the people-centered orientation and its focus have also undergone corresponding changes. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, propositions such as "the people-centered approach" and "whole-process people's democracy" have been put forward one after another. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has further included "developing whole-process people's democracy", "enriching the spiritual world of the people" and "realizing the common prosperity of all people" into the category of the meaning of Chinese modernization. The political status of the discourse of the people-centered orientation has been highlighted, and the academic thinking about it has become more and more active.

1.2 Literature Review

According to the research path, the existing results can be roughly divided into three categories: first, theoretical interpretation research, second, field application research, and third, historiographical review research. The three types of research have their own emphasis on problem awareness, material source and discipline attribution, and complement each other. They will be commented separately below.

First, the theoretical explanation section mainly focuses on the field of Marxist theory and political science, focusing on the theoretical source, core connotation and ideological function of people-centered orientation. For example, Luo Xianyu and Lin Yuzhen discussed from the four perspectives of philosophical foundation, cultural context, historical inheritance and practical dimensions, put forward the generative logic of people-centered orientation in Xi Jinping's cultural thought, and believed that its core meaning lies in "adhering to the people's position, grasping the people's aspirations, respecting the people's creation, and concentrating the people's wisdom" [1]; Based on the five dimensions of "everything for the people, relying on the people, the people-centered approach, judged by the people, and people-first", Jiang Huiyong and Tan Peiwen analyzed the practical value of Xi Jinping's cultural thought and its function in the construction of a culturally powerful country.

Second, the field application section is distributed in journalism, literature and art and other disciplines, paying attention to the specific presentation of people-centered orientation in literary and artistic creation, public evaluation and film expression. For example, Li Yangquan's research on the new popular literature and art in the digital media era pointed out that the development of digital intelligence media has certainly made media more important, but more importantly, it contains the requirements of people [3]; Zheng Huan Zhao discussed the value construction of public evaluation in the new mass literature and art. He believed that while strengthening its people-centered orientation of public evaluation, it also brought the risk of public weakening caused by "node aggregation", "circle differentiation" and emotional dissemination [4]. This kind of research reveals that this study focuses on the functional differences of people-centered orientation discourse in different fields, but its analysis objects are mostly specific literary and artistic phenomena, not the evolution of the Party and government documents over time.

Third, there are relatively few achievements in the historiographical review section, and the existing reviews are mostly limited to a certain discipline or a certain period of time. For example, the comments of Fang Li and Cao Yuying only revolve around the "Chinese-style modern people", and the period is from January 2021 to July 2024 [5]; The summary of Yin Yuyan's conference is limited to the study of people's expression in Chinese films [6]. They provide the basis for follow-up research, but they have not yet involved the continuous evolution of the discourse of people-centered orientation in the Party and government documents since 1982, nor have they systematically made interdisciplinary comparisons from the dimensions of concepts, fields, functions and methods.

1.3 Research Gaps

However, most of the existing research focuses on conceptual interpretation or single-discipline literature review. The long-term and academic history of the investigation results of the discourse of the party and government are still insufficient, and it is less refined from multiple dimensions to logic.

1.4 Research Questions

This study takes the relevant academic literature on the discourse research of people-centered orientation in the past ten years included in CNKI as the research object, and takes the reports of major conferences since the reform and opening up as the policy reference for the evolution of discourse. Since the directly related academic literature has only formed a stable scale in the past ten years, this study takes 2017-2026 as the sample window, and the early stage of 1982-2016 is connected with the help of discourse nodes and retrospective reviews. On this basis, this study tries to answer two questions: First, what core issues have been formed in the study of the discourse of the people-centered orientation at different stages since 1982? Second, what are the research shortcomings on these issues? Where will the follow-up research go?

1.5 Research Significance

Theoretically, on the basis of timeline staging, this study strives to present the knowledge spectrum and topic distribution of “people’s” discourse research, and at the same time reveals the key gaps in academic history research in this field and puts forward feasible suggestions; In practice, it tries to provide a reference system and literature basis for the subsequent empirical research of the “people’s” discourse and the study of the Party’s political discourse system.

1.6 Notes on the Sample and Time Frame

The period under review of this study is from 1982 to 2026, and the sample literature included in the systematic analysis is mainly from 2017 to 2026. The two do not coincide. This design is mainly based on double consideration. First, from the perspective of the search criteria, taking CNKI as the data source, unified search according to “people-centered orientation, discourse” and related keywords, the highly relevant achievements directly on the topic of “the discourse of the people-centered orientation” are concentrated in the past ten years, and the achievements before 2017 are scattered and mostly embedded in broader topics such as literary theory and party history, which is difficult to form a comparative sample; Second, from the perspective of the reliability of evidence, in order to avoid supporting the early stage with incomplete literature, the investigation of the stages from 1982 to 2016 in this study is not based on study-by-study measurement, but on the systematic combing of the retrospective review literature of the history of discourse during the revolution, construction and reform periods, which constitutes the basic source of materials for the early stage of narrative. In other words, this study deliberately distinguishes between the “sample window” and the “period under review”: from 2017 to 2026, it is directly supported by quantifiable literature, and from 1982 to 2016, it is presented by discourse nodes and retrospective reviews, which not only ensures the consistency of the sample caliber, but also maintains the integrity of the long-term period.

2. Overall Landscape: Data, Disciplines, and Research Hotspots

The following uses the research papers on people-centered orientation retrieved in CNKI (a total of 54 studies; all years of this study are the publication time of the study, and the statistical deadline: August 2026), gives an overview of the research in this field from 2017 to 2026 from the three aspects of publication trend, discipline distribution and keyword hotspots.

2.1 Publication Trends and Major Policy Milestones

In terms of the volume of studies published, the volume of studies fluctuated between 1 and 6 studies from 2017 to 2022, with an average of about 3.8 studies per year, of which only 2 studies were published in 2021; the volume of studies in 2023 and 2024 was 11 studies, with a total of 22 studies in two years, accounting for 40.74% of the total number of studies published in ten years; the volume of studies published in 2025 was 5 studies, and the volume of studies published in 2026 was 3 studies as of August. There has been no year-by-year increase or steady decrease in the past decade, and there was a relatively intensive peak period of publication in 2023-2024.

There is a certain degree of time proximity between the change in the volume of studies and some official discourse nodes. First, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022 will include “developing whole-process people’s democracy” and “realizing the common prosperity of all people” into the

essential requirements of Chinese modernization, further highlighting the political status of the “people” discourse. Correspondingly, the number of studies will rise to 6 in 2022 and double to 11 in 2023. Second, the National Propaganda, Ideology and Culture Work Conference held in 2023 proposed that “whole-process people’s democracy” and people-centered orientation became research hotspots. The number of studies continued to rise from 2023 to 2024, and during this period, there were more keywords such as “system construction”, “discourse system” and “governance practice”, and began to explore the development from connotation to system construction. Third, although the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017 and the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China in 2021 and the 11th National Congress of the China Federation of Literary Arts are equally important, the volume of studies in that year did not increase synchronously (4 studies in 2017 and only 2 studies in 2021), which shows that the policy node and academic production are not synchronized immediately, and there are factors such as time lag and journal cycle. The resonance relationship between policy and research needs to be further verified in combination with a longer sequence.

2.2 Disciplinary Distribution

According to the statistics of the number of studies classified by CNKI disciplines (each literature only includes one major discipline, N=54), 14 studies of Chinese literature (25.92%), 11 studies of literary theory (20.37%), 11 studies of Chinese politics and international politics (20.37%), and 2 studies of Marxism (3.7%), 4 studies of the Communist Party of China (7.4%), 2 studies of ideological and political education (3.7%), 2 studies of sociology and statistics (3.7%), in addition, 5 studies of news and communication (9.26%), 2 studies of culture and economy (3.7%), and 1 study of music and dance (1.85%). Among them, Chinese literature and literary theory together account for 46.29%, which can be classified as the literature and art research section; Chinese politics and international politics, Marxism and the Communist Party of China together account for 31.47%, which can be classified as political science and Marxist theory. This classification is based on the kinship between disciplines.

The above distribution shows that the relevant research mainly focuses on the two aspects of literature and art and political science, accounting for about 80%; there are also some researches in journalism, sociology, culture and economics and other disciplines, but the overall is small. In terms of disciplines, there is the most research in literature and art, which shows that research is rooted in the tradition of literature and art. “People-centered orientation of literature and art” is the earliest and most stable academic growth point; research in political science and Marxist theory is the main force, reflecting the conceptual attribute of political discourse of people-centered orientation; Journalism, sociology, cultural economy and other disciplines constitute the marginal growth zone of the research map, echoing the multidisciplinary and multi-field characteristics mentioned in the introduction.

2.3 Shifts in Keyword-Based Research Hotspots

Judging from the annual high-frequency keywords, the research hotspots have moved from “conceptual interpretation and historical tracing” to “discourse turn and theoretical construction”, and then to “systematic construction and new era issues” in the past ten years.

The period from 2017 to 2019 takes keywords such as “people-centered orientation of literature”, “people-centered orientation of literature and art” and “people-centered orientation thought” as the core, supplemented by historical themes such as the War of Resistance, July School, and “Speech at the Yan’an Literary Symposium”. The research focuses on the literary interpretation of the concept of people-centered orientation and the historical traceability of the revolutionary literary tradition. The method is mainly based on the interpretation of “realistic meaning”, “realistic revelation”, “value orientation” and other meanings.

Between 2020 and 2022, the keywords turned to “ideological discourse”, “critical discourse”, “unity of party and people”, “journalism with Chinese characteristics”, “literary and artistic system”, “discourse system”, etc., people-centered orientation has moved from conceptual expression to discourse analysis, “discourse system” and “discourse innovation” have appeared intensively, and the topic has expanded from the field of literature and art to journalism and political discourse. In addition, there have been case studies of theorists represented by Lin Mohan, Belinsky, etc. and constructive discussions on the discourse system of literary

discourse. What cannot be ignored is that while the volume of studies in 2021 was at a low point, words such as “unity of party and people” and “generative logic” also foreshadowed the trend of deepening discourse.

From 2023 to 2026, the keywords focus on “system construction”, “ecological civilization discourse system”, “new people-centered orientation”, “governance practice”, “modern civilization of the Chinese nation”, “Chinese modernization”, “new mass literature and art” and “cultural consciousness”, which shows that systematic construction is the main tone. In addition to literature and news, it expands to ecological civilization, governance practice and civilization narrative, and there are many studies of ethnic epics, writers’ works and literary and artistic phenomena.

It is worth mentioning that from 2024, “the discourse of the people-centered orientation” has become an independent high-frequency word. From 2025 to 2026, words such as “the discourse of the people-centered orientation”, “new mass literature and art”, “Chinese modernization” and “cultural consciousness” have appeared one after another, indicating that the research has been deeply embedded in the overall narrative of cultural thought and Chinese modernization in the new era, and attention has begun to be paid to governance issues such as strengthening the network and comprehensively deepening reform.

3. Diachronic Evolution: Research Themes and Representative Studies Across Five Stages

This part is divided into five stages according to the time involved in the literature content, and examines the evolution of the research topic over time from multiple dimensions. The narrative in the early stage is mainly based on retrospective research. Each stage takes the common content as the basis for judgment, and then finds the differences and compare them, then sorts out the context of the study, and finally carries out the evaluation.

3.1 1982–1992: The Restoration and Reaffirmation of Research on the Discourse of the People-Centered Orientation

During the period of reform and rectification, the literary and artistic policy was also adjusted, from the traditional sense of “serving politics” to “serving the people and serving socialism”, which was the basic background of the study of people-centered orientation during this period. Regarding the restoration and reaffirmation of the research at this stage, some studies generally believe that “recovery” is continuous rather than new out of thin air. The difference lies in the continuation of the carrier: some scholars emphasize the text, take the text as the center, and put the continuation on the iconic establishment of “serving the people wholeheartedly” and the Yan’an discourse tradition [7, 8]; Others resort to practical coordination and tend to implement the continuation in the interaction of social, policy and academic discourses in the early stage of reform [9]. The root of this difference lies in the different types of materials: the former materials are the Party’s literature and the history of literary theory, which will naturally be traced back to time; The latter’s material is reform practice, so it will definitely go to the process investigation. The two directions have their own focus, but they both have a common blind spot, that is, their own theoretical arguments at this stage, such as “people-centered orientation, class nature, party nature relationship”, etc., which have never been positively examined, and the history of research has largely given way to the history of discourse. As far as this stage of research is concerned, at the conceptual level, it is generally neutral and objective. people-centered orientation is once again identified as the central category of Marxist literary theory, and its historical legitimacy is thus established; However, it should be noted that the relevant discussion largely relied on later review research and policy documents, and first-hand information was relatively scarce at that time; The achievements of the academic community are mostly concentrated in the source of literature and the interpretation of policy implications, and it is difficult to specifically reconstruct the real academic field situation at that time; To some extent, the historical process of “sorting out the mess” itself limits the scope of the topic, so the autonomous space for academic research is relatively narrow. Therefore, this stage is more about the continuing the process of reaffirmation; and the subsequent differentiation of interests immediately pushes the concept of “people” into a new problem area.

3.2 1992–2002: Research on the People-Centered Orientation in the Context of the Socialist Market Economy

In 1992, the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China took “the establishment of a socialist market economy system” as the goal of reform for the first time. “Interest issues” began to officially replace “ideas” and became a new central topic for the study of people-centered orientation at this stage. As far as this stage of research is concerned, the existing results have recognized the “shift of the focus from concepts to interests”. The controversial point is the driving mechanism of the transition. A school can be traced back to the active adaptation process of the policy text. The formation of value judgments such as the expansion of the meaning of “people” and “three favorable” is an example [7]; Another explanation is that the imbalance and correction of the discourse structure lead to this situation, and it is based on the correction of policy overreach, social “vacancy” and “defending society” [9]. The difference between the two interpretations lies not only in the object (one is the policy text and the other is the discourse practice), but also in the different disciplinary positions. The former starts from the history of the Party and political discourse, while the latter has an obvious awareness of sociological issues. However, it is not so much an antagonistic relationship between the two, but rather the pattern of “policy-driven and academic subordination” exposed by the two. For the judgment of a certain thing, most of them are based on the supply of policies, and if there is an imbalance in speech, it mainly depends on policy correction. Although the academics speak out with “defending society”, it has not been transformed into a systematic conceptual reflection. The core theme of this stage is “interest response”: conceptually, “people” has expanded from the political category to the category of interests, and the connotation boundaries have loosened; Based on the policy text and discourse expression, there is a lack of experience research on laid-off workers, migrant workers and other groups; In terms of method, the explanation of the dominant empirical gap; in terms of context, the market-oriented transformation directly stipulates the topic, and the academic response lags behind the reform practice. Since entering the 21st century, with the proposal of “people-oriented development philosophy”, the discourse research of people-centered orientation has immediately begun to turn to governance.

3.3 2002–2012: The Transition from CLASS Discourse to Governance Discourse

The proposal of “people-oriented development philosophy” and the construction of a harmonious society have pushed the discourse of people-centered orientation from the context of revolution and reform to the context of governance, which constitutes the turning point of this stage. As far as this governance shift is concerned, existing studies generally admit that it is driven by policy nodes. The research path generally goes through the stages of discourse orientation, institutional change, expression history and so on. It is carried out and progressed layer by layer. This shift is interpreted as the establishment of the people’s principal status, the transformation of the governance pattern and the continuation of popular discourse [7, 9, 10]. The three explanations are based on norms, structure and communication. Although they have different calibers, they have the same presupposition: policy initiatives precede academic response. On the one hand, the presupposition ensures the coherence of the narrative, and on the other hand, the question of “how to maintain the boundaries of the concept after governance” has never been raised. In addition, the interdisciplinary intervention has accelerated the expansion of concepts while expanding the research map, and people-centered orientation has gradually become the common label of various governance discourses. Overall, the evolution trajectory of this period is: the shift of governance at the expense of conceptual inflation, and the boundary has been lost; at the same time, social construction and governance transformation provide a constantly updated external driving force, but also frame the policy dependence of the study. “People-oriented development philosophy and governance discourse” is the center of this stage, and the legacy of conceptual inflation is the beginning of the next stage of systematization.

3.4 2012–2022: The Systematization of Research on the People-Centered Approach and Its Scholarly Responses

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the political discourse of “people-centered” has risen as the core, and the relevant research has entered the stage of systematic construction. In terms of the systematization at this stage, existing studies generally point to the “three reconstructions of concept, history and practice”. The division of labor in the three ways is clear: the overview aims at the complete coverage of conceptual space, the evolution research aims at the establishment of historical

coordinates, and the reform research aims at the refinement of the essence of practice [7, 11, 12]; In addition, the three characteristics of the value position argument and ideological discourse of “party spirit in the people-centered orientation” are summarized and the framework is supplemented from both position and form [10, 13]. The completion of the division of labor makes the systematization present a “puzzle” completeness, but it is this problem that completely covers the boundary: Overview The all-in-one provides evidence for its self-introduction of “generalization of concepts, insufficient doctrine, and high repetition rate”. Finally, it is pointed out that the construction method of “coverage takes priority over discrimination” itself is its limit. The characteristics of this period can be summarized as “systematization and reflection coexist”. Its connotation is unprecedentedly rich, and the boundaries are becoming more and more blurred; The text is becoming more and more standardized, the policy discourse is more and more abundant, and the empirical materials are slightly lacking. Policy-driven and discipline competition coexist, which dilutes the originality of the theory while expanding the scale of research, but also provides a new framework and idea for the study of The narrative of Chinese modernization.

3.5 2022–2026: Deepening and Expansion of Research on the Discourse of the People-Centered Orientation in the Context of Chinese Modernization

Since the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the study of people-centered orientation has been placed under the overall framework of Chinese modernization and civilizational narrative, and has entered a period of deepening and expansion. In terms of the deepening and expansion of this stage, some studies tend to believe that people-centered orientation has become the constructive core of civilizational narratives. The way of construction is different: theoretically speaking, most of them take the discourse system and ideological text as the object, and establish people-centered orientation as the value background of the “narrative-communication” dual reconstruction structure, or take the “two combinations” as the entry point to explain its civilization roots [14][15][16]; From the perspective of specific practice, scholars’ research mainly sinks into literature and media, and implements people-centered orientation as a main leap of “from creating for the people to creating for the people” [3, 17], as well as a new field of international communication with the “community +” concept group and multilingual outs as the program [7, 14]. The objects and methods of these three main paths are different. Ideological texts, literary and artistic practices and external discourses have their own bases, and they are promoted separately without intermediaries. Among them, it is this structure that points out in the commentary inventory with “more should be, less in fact”, and there has not been a testable connection between the grandeur of theoretical positioning and the fragmentation of practical observation [5]. Xi Jinping’s cultural thought and Chinese modernization have provided an unprecedented discourse resource for the study of people-centered orientation discourse and strengthened the policy sensitivity of the research. It is worth mentioning that so far, the study of people-centered orientation discourse has achieved a preliminary leap forward and completed the rise from values to the essence of constructivity.

4. Research Gaps

Revisiting the facts sorted out in the above five stages, it is not difficult to see the dilemma of the research on the discourse of people-centered orientation. The early picture is mostly based on the reflection of scholars on the past, while the period itself did not carry out relevant theoretical arguments for direct observation, and the history of research was largely replaced by the history of discourse; At the same time, the boundaries of people-centered orientation continue to melt in the process of cross-border proliferation. Interdisciplinary terms are shared but the caliber is different. Scholars’ self-existence of “generalization of concepts and insufficient academic rationality” is the portrayal of this situation; In the stage of systematization and in-depthization, the research shows the characteristics of “policy promotion and academic dependence”. The theoretical construction and real observation are separate, and the criticism of “there should be more but actually less” is still applicable. There is no clear distinction between these three dilemmas, but different aspects under the same structure: research always takes a single linear discipline, a single linear topic or a single linear text as the boundary, and lacks an integrated framework that can integrate disciplines, penetrate the period, and connect theory and practice.

The comparison between the distribution of disciplines and the existing review can best reflect the category problem. Generally speaking, the achievements are piled up in the three fields of Chinese literature, Chinese politics and international politics, and literary and artistic theory, which are originally based on the same army;

while the existing comprehensive achievements, either focusing on the “people-centered” thought itself, or limited to the people-based nature of Chinese modernization, are all based on specific topics and each. As a result, the study of the discourse of the people-centered orientation, centered on the Party and government documents and spanning more than 40 years from 1982 to 2026, has always lacked a holistic academic history investigation; institutional issues such as the institutionalization of the study of whole-process people’s democracy, the effect of external communication and the empirical research on the internal subdivision of “people”, have also been squeezed out of the research horizon for a long time.

The issue at the evidence level is also direct. Some scholars bluntly say that the research is “multi-reliance on literature research method”, and some scholars criticize “insufficient response to practical problems”. The facts pointed out by these two sentences are the same, that is, most of the conclusions are based on the understanding of the text and the inference of norms. There is no large number of Party and government documents corpus as the basis for measurement and analysis, and there is no conceptual history, comparative political discourse and other methods to support it. Therefore, even if different studies can make similar judgments on the same problem, they cannot test each other because of the different evidence, and the results of “should” always stay on interpretation.

It can be seen that there are still shortcomings in the two dimensions of the scope and method of the existing research: first, in terms of scope, the review literature is divided into politics, according to the topic and discipline, while the overall historiographical review centered on the Party and government document is still lacking; Secondly, in terms of method, the assertion is mainly based on text analysis and normative reasoning, and lacks the support of corpus statistics and empirical research. This has become an entry point of this study: this study is divided into five stages according to the research process of people-centered orientation in the Party and government documents, and systematically sorts out the research topics and representative results, aiming to make up for the shortcomings of the overall academic history investigation in terms of scope, and in terms of method, it can be used for later empirical research and discourse. Language research provides an analytical framework for testability.

5. Future Prospects

The gap in the two dimensions of scope and method pointed out above has set the direction for follow-up research. Looking forward to the future, it can mainly be developed along five paths.

First, reconstruct the semantic genealogy of people-centered orientation with the method of conceptual history. Existing studies have provided clues over time, but they are still at the staged description level, and there is no specific analysis of the semantic mechanism of the concept itself. We can try to learn from the method of conceptual history, systematically examine how the discourse of “people-centered orientation” itself changes from the discourse of revolution, the discourse of governance to the narrative of civilization, and clarify its relationship with related concepts such as party nature, people-oriented development philosophy, people’s livelihood, etc., which can not only positively respond to the problem of generalization of concepts, but also explain the five stages from the perspective of language to a certain extent.

Second, in terms of the comparison of Chinese and foreign political discourse. Scholars’ criticism of the paradigm of “retrieving the country” and the identification of Western discourse traps have laid the foundation for comparative research [14, 18]. Next, we should carry out a comparative analysis of the differences in generating conditions and functions between the concepts of key discourse such as “people, people-centered and capital-centered”, so as to break the dependence on the discourse of “bringing” and “the West is strong and I am weak”, and to provide a reference system that can be compared for the construction of China’s independent knowledge system.

Third, adopt the method of digital humanities and text measurement. With the help of large-scale Party and government documents corpus such as Party Congress reports and government work reports, word frequency statistics, theme modeling, semantic networks and time-based corpus means are used to transform judgments at the natural level into quantitative evidence that can be tested. This is not only a direct response to the “should be more, actually less”, but also provides a repeatable measurement tool for the evolution of the semantics of “people’s” discourse, making up for the lack of empirical research from the root cause.

Fourth, supplement the empirical research of the inner sub-groups of the “people”. In addition to the discourse level, field surveys and questionnaires are conducted in laid-off workers, migrant workers, new employment workers and other groups to examine the process of acceptance, recognition and transformation of “people’s” discourse in different groups, so that the study of “people’s” discourse can be supported by experience from the bottom of society, and avoid conceptual Suspended.

Fifth, test the actual effect of international communication. On the basis of the “community +” concept group and multilingual outbound, with the help of audience cognitive survey, media report analysis and international public opinion tracking, the reach rate, recognition and persuasiveness of external discourse are evaluated, so that international communication research can move from channel laying to effect evaluation, which provides an empirical basis for the construction of external discourse system.

The development of the above path depends on the intersection of multidisciplinary disciplines, including but not limited to the introduction of historical political science, institutional economics, anthropology, ethnology and other disciplinary resources, which will help break through the singularity of literature research methods, thus promoting people’s research from scale expansion to theoretical originality.

6. Conclusion

This study focuses on the Party and government documents, outlines the context of the study of “people’s” discourse from 1982 to 2026, and analyzes it from five stages. It believes that the study of “people’s” discourse has experienced the restoration and correct name, the response of interests in the context of the market economy, the shift of governance, the systematic construction, and the deepening and expansion in the context of Chinese modernization. The focus of the research is from literary and artistic to political discourse to governance practice and civilizational narrative. The conceptual connotation is also constantly adjusted with the context of the times. On the whole, under the promotion of policies and the conscious influence of disciplines, the research has continued to expand over the past 40 years: on the one hand, conceptual clarification, historical tracing and systematic construction constitute the basic academic support for understanding the Party’s theoretical innovation; On the other hand, the generalization of concepts, policy dependence, single methods, insufficient empirical evidence and other problems have not made the research jump out of the overall pattern of “more should be more and less”.

The significance of this study is to outline the phased context and topic distribution in the field from the perspective of academic history, and to mark the gaps in both categories and methods, providing an analytical framework for subsequent empirical research and discourse research. Looking to the future, if the discourse research of people-centered orientation can continue to be cultivated in the direction of conceptual history, comparative discourse, digital humanities, institutional interaction and the effect of international communication, and further improve its theoretical independence and methodological awareness while maintaining political acumen, it is possible to rise from policy interpretation to real theoretical innovation, thus providing more powerful knowledge production for the construction of the theoretical discourse system of Marxism in the Chinese era.

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Conflicts of Interest

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