

Structure/mechanism explanation and the evolution of the structure-mechanism relationship after the Big Bang

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Structure/mechanism explanation is the core of sociological analysis. But why does it have to be? For example, why is the explanation in physics centering on laws rather than the structures/mechanisms? And what is the relationship between structures and mechanisms in sociology? Specifically, do structures determine mechanisms or vice versa, or are there any other kinds of explanations? Driven by these confusions, I integrate my physics, chemistry, biology, and social sciences knowledge to propose a unified model that captures a constantly evolving and complex relationship between structure/mechanism, formed immediately after the Big Bang. Based on this model, I discuss how the structure-mechanism relationship evolves, what are the patterns behind, as well as what are the model's implications for social analyses.



Professor Zhao Dingxin is professor of sociology at Zhejiang University, and the Max Palevsky Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Chicago. Professor Zhao's research covers historical sociology, social movement and social science methods. His book, *The Power of Tiananmen*, published by the University of Chicago Press, won the Best Book Award for Asian Studies in 2001 and for Collective Action and Social Movement Studies in 2002 from the American Sociological Association. *The Confucian Legalist State*, published by the Oxford University Press in 2015, won the Best Book Award for Political Sociology from the American Sociological Society in 2016. Prof. Zhao's Chinese monographs include 《社会与政治运动讲义》、《东周战争和儒家国家的形成》、《民主的限制》、《合法性的政治》、《什么是社会学》以及《国家、战争与历史发展：前现代中西模式的比较》。