

Zhao Dong

DPhil Candidate in Economics, University of Oxford (Lady Margaret Hall College)

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Research Interests

Quantitative economic history; political economy of institutions; elite recruitment and state capacity; comparative long-run development using historical data

Education

University of Oxford – DPhil in Economics, 2021–2026 (expected) – Supervisors: Prof. Stephen Broadberry, Prof. Sheilagh Ogilvie

University of Cambridge – MPhil in Finance, 2018–2019

University of Bath – BSc (Hons) in Economics, 2015–2018

Research

Crisis and Elite Composition in Late Qing China: The Loyalty-Competence Trade-off, 1825–1911 *[Job Market Paper]*

Examines provincial elite appointments in Late Qing China (1825–1911), exploiting temporal and geographic variation in internal rebellions and external invasions to identify causal effects of crises on bureaucratic composition. Using comprehensive personnel records covering 18,647 province-year observations across 24 provinces and 10 major crises (5 internal rebellions and 5 external invasions), I demonstrate that crisis type systematically determines elite composition: internal rebellions decrease competence-based selection by 0.4–0.6 standard deviations as regimes prioritize politically loyal Manchu bannermen, while external invasions increase competence-based selection by 0.4–0.6 standard deviations as regimes elevate competent Han Chinese examination graduates, with effects persisting over a decade. This asymmetric response pattern reveals how autocratic regimes dynamically balance loyalty and competence based on threat type.

The Great Divergence Revisited: Reconstructing China's GDP per Capita, 2–1328 CE

Builds the first continuous series of premodern Chinese GDP per capita based on population, agricultural output, and price data. Provides new evidence on when and why China's growth stagnated relative to Europe, contributing to the Great Divergence debate.

Kinship, Merit, and State Capacity in Imperial China, 207 BCE–1912 CE

Explores how patrimonial institutions and meritocratic reforms shaped bureaucratic structure, war frequency, and fiscal performance across more than fifty dynasties. Combines quantitative institutional analysis with comparative political economy.

Teaching Experience

Somerville College, Oxford – Graduate Teaching Assistant in Quantitative Economics, 2025

Brasenose College, Oxford – Graduate Teaching Assistant in Introductory Economics and Core Macroeconomics, 2022–2024

Conferences and Seminars

- Jun 2025 – Oxford Political Economy Workshop – Invited presentation (Oxford, UK)
- May 2025 – LSE Graduate Economic History Seminar – Invited talk (London, UK)
- Aug 2025 – 2nd Tsinghua–Oxford Comparative Economic History Workshop – Paper Presentation
- Jul 2024 – 1st Tsinghua–Oxford Comparative Economic History Workshop – Co-organizer and presenter (Oxford, UK)
- Jun 2024 – Cambridge Economic and Social History Workshop – Invited seminar (Cambridge, UK)
- Sep 2023 – EHES Conference – Paper presentation (Vienna, Austria)
- Apr 2023 – Economic History Society Annual Conference – Poster presentation (Warwick, UK)
- Jan 2023 – Oxford Economic & Social History Seminar – Paper presentation (Oxford, UK)
- Oct 2022 – Chinese Economy in the Long Run Conference – Paper presentation (Manchester, UK)
- May 2022 – Early Modern Institutions Conference – Poster presentation (Manchester, UK)

Leadership and Academic Service

Co-organizer, 1st Tsinghua–Oxford Comparative Economic History Workshop (2024)

College Tutor, Somerville College (2025) – Quantitative Economics teaching and mentoring

Awards and Scholarships

- Oxford Economics Doctoral Bursary, 2022–Present
- George Webb Medley Research Grant, University of Oxford, Dec 2022
- China Scholarship Council (CSC) Award, 2022
- Lady Margaret Hall Graduate Research Grant, University of Oxford, 2021–2022
- Neil Farmery Prize in Economics, University of Bath, 2018