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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Elections officials fear Georgia law could politicize voting operations

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Election officials in conservative and liberal parts of Georgia say a new law allowing a Republican-controlled state agency to take over local voting operations could make the process too partisan.

FILE PHOTO: Kimberly Latrice Jones speaks during a gathering outside of the Georgia State Capitol to protest HB 531, which would place tougher restrictions on voting in Georgia, in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. March 4, 2021. REUTERS/Dustin Chambers// File Photo
Voting rights advocates have also warned that the provision, part of sweeping voting restrictions signed into law last week by Governor Brian Kemp, targets Democratic bastions such as Atlanta's Fulton County that helped deliver the party control of the White House and Congress in recent elections.

The new law has mostly gained attention for its measures to strengthen absentee ballot identification requirements, curtail ballot drop box use and penalize members of the public who offer food and water to voters in line.

Months after former Republican President Donald Trump falsely claimed voter fraud in the 2020 elections, Republican backers say Georgia's law is needed to restore confidence in election integrity. Civil rights groups have filed three lawsuits asserting the law illegally restricts voting rights, particularly for minority voters.

The legislation authorizes the Republican-majority legislature to appoint the state election board's majority while demoting the elected secretary of state, Georgia's top election official, to a non-voting position.

It also allows the state board to remove local supervisors it deems derelict and replace them with individuals of its choosing.

That power has alarmed Democrats and civil rights organizations in light of Trump's unprecedented pressure campaign to overturn the results in key Democratic counties.

But even some election officials from Republican-leaning counties said they

opposed allowing the state board to take over local elections, a Reuters survey of the state's 159 counties found.

'DANGEROUS PATH'

Of the 55 that responded, officials in 11 counties of varying sizes and political leanings - Bartow, Macon-Bibb, Cobb, DeKalb, Floyd, Heard, Jones, Murray, Paulding, Quitman and Tattnall - said the law gave the state too much control over election administration. Traditionally, locally appointed nonpartisan or bipartisan boards and judges oversee issues such as voter eligibility, polling place locations and vote certification.

"If we don't rely on and hire smart people with institutional knowledge, and the process becomes politicized, then we go down a very dangerous path," said Baoky Vu, a Republican on the DeKalb County elections board.

Election officials in 12 other counties did not express concerns with the law, while 32 officials declined to comment.

Georgia is among several battleground states, including Florida and Arizona, where Republican lawmakers have pushed new voting restrictions they say will curb voting fraud, despite research showing such instances are rare in the United States.

Voting rights advocates say some efforts are intended to punish election officials who, like Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, rebuffed Trump's demand to change the election outcome.

Asked for comment, Kemp's spokeswoman pointed to a Fox News column the Republican governor published on Wednesday, arguing that the law "makes it easy to vote by expanding access to the polls and harder to cheat."

The bill's main Republican sponsors in the legislature did not respond to requests for comment

The law underscores how deeply Trump's fraud assertions have penetrated his party. A Reuters/Ipsos poll in February found 62% of Republicans were "very concerned" that elections were tainted by ineligible voters.

'FRANKLY SCARY'

Some election officials said that far from improving trust in elections, the law could diminish local oversight. Joseph Kirk, the elections supervisor in Bartow County, which Trump won by 50 percentage points in 2020, said he found it "frankly scary" the state would replace a bipartisan local board with a political appointee.

"You're basically allowing the general assembly to appoint people who may not know anything about running elections," said Deidre Holden, the elections supervisor in heavily Republican Paulding County. But in rural Lowndes County, elections supervisor Deb Cox told Reuters the new measure would improve upon the current oversight procedures for election mismanagement.

Aklima Khondoker, Georgia state director of All Voting is Local, a voting rights group, said she has heard from election officials that some are afraid to criticize a measure that effectively allows state lawmakers to remove them from their jobs. The law, she said, is "holding our counties hostage." Amy Steigerwalt, a political science professor at Georgia State University, said unproven voter fraud allegations could theoretically serve as the basis for suspending a local official. The law cites long lines as a reason for possible intervention, though its other provisions will likely worsen waits in populous counties, she added.



WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

CORONAVIRUS DIARY

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The American Job Plan



President Biden touted his massive infrastructure plan in remarks Wednesday saying that it is a once in a generation investment in America and the largest American jobs investment since World War II.

Biden acknowledged that his plan is "big and bold," and he added, "But it's going to create the strongest, most resilient and innovative economy in the world. The plan is unlike anything we've seen or done since we built the interstate highway system and the space race program decades ago."

President Biden said he

wants to talk about a modernized transportation infrastructure that will include our roads, our bridges and our airports.

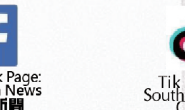
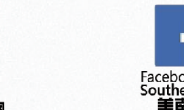
"When we make all of these investments," the president said, "We're going to make sure that the executive order, as I signed early on, that we buy American."

Roughly 2 trillion dollars will be aimed at improving the nation's infrastructure and shift to green energy over the

next eight years.

We are so grateful that the president has finally kept his promise to rebuild our nation and create an American Jobs Plan.

We are long overdue, Mr. President. With our nation facing the most serious challenges, we need to be united and move both the House and Senate of the Congress to pass the bill as soon as possible.





North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visits the construction site for a residential district of terraced apartment buildings on the bank of the River Pothong, in North Korea. KCNA via REUTERS



Cats are pictured at Ernesto's sanctuary for cats in Idlib, Syria. REUTERS/Khalil Ashawi



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo arrives to visit a new vaccination center for the coronavirus at Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, New York. REUTERS/Mike Segar



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visits the construction site for a residential district of terraced apartment buildings on the bank of the River Pothong, in North Korea. KCNA via



A South Korean elderly woman waits to receive her first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination centre in Seoul, South Korea. Chung Sung-Jun/Pool v



U.S. President Joe Biden boards Air Force One as he departs Joint Base Andrews on a rainy afternoon in Maryland. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque

Hackers Access Documents Related To Authorized COVID-19 Vaccines



Illustration/Sarah Tew/CNET

KEY POINTS

Attackers were able to target the European Medicines Agency, which regulates vaccines, including Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 treatments

"Big game hunting" (BGH) has escalated, and ransom demands have soared into the millions, causing unparalleled disruption

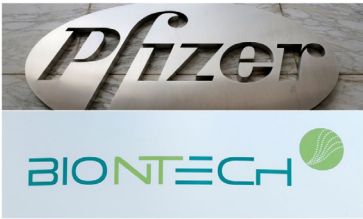
Cybercriminals are weaponizing sensitive data to increase and maximize pressure on ransomware victims

The "eCrime ecosystem" is evolving, increasing in specialization, tailor-making their actions to the victim

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Hackers were able to get documents related to approved COVID-19 vaccines after they hit the European Medicines Agency with a cyber-attack. The attackers "unlawfully accessed" regulatory documents related to the coronavirus vaccine candidate put forward by biotech firm BioNTech and partner pharmaceutical company Pfizer, BioNTech said in a statement Wednesday. The European Medicines Agency, which is responsible for reviewing vaccine effectiveness, confirmed the hack in its own statement but declined to provide additional details during an ongoing investigation. The agency said the hack won't affect its timeline for release of the vaccine. BioNTech said that its own servers weren't af-

fected and that it's unaware of a theft of any personal data belonging to its 43,500 test subjects being. It's unclear who was behind the cyberattack, but hackers from countries including China, Russia and North Korea have targeted pharmaceutical firms that are developing COVID-19 vaccines. The United Kingdom began its mass vaccination program on Tuesday, becoming the first country to start delivering the vaccine on a wide scale. The program, expected to reach 4 million people by the end of December, is using BioNTech and Pfizer's vaccine, which showed a 95% effectiveness rate during its clinical trials.



BioNTech didn't respond to a request for comment on what details about the vaccine the hackers were able to access. Hackers have also targeted how the vaccine will be rolled out -- posing as cold storage supply chain companies and aiming at distributors who will be providing the vaccines to millions of people. The UK's National Cyber Security Centre said that it is supporting vaccine research and helping its defense against hackers. It's still investigating the breach, the agency said in a statement. "We are working with international partners to understand the impact of this incident affecting the EU's medicine regulator, but there is currently no evidence to suggest that the UK's medicine regulator has been affected," the agency said. (Courtesy/www.cnet.com)

Related

Hackers Are Going After COVID-19 Vaccine's Rollout The cyberattacks are targeting distributors who will be distributing and storing vaccines for the coronavirus pandemic

Hackers aren't just looking to steal information on the vaccines for COVID-19 -- they're also going after its distribution and suppliers, security researchers warned in a report released on Thursday. Researchers from IBM's X-Force team detailed a global hacking campaign targeting government agencies, tech companies and energy suppliers in countries like Germany, Italy, South Korea and Taiwan. The companies and government agencies are all connected to the Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform (CCEOP), a partnership between UNICEF, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and other organizations to help with vaccine

distributions.



One hacking campaign posed as a cold storage container company. Pfizer's vaccine needs to be stored at extremely low temperatures.

The attacks came as emails pretending to be from Haier Biomedical, a Chinese company that says it's the world's only complete cold chain provider. The cold chain is a crucial part of the Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine rollout as it needs to be stored at a temperature of -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit). Haier Biomedical is working CCEOP, the World Health Organization and the United Nations to help with the COVID-19 vaccine's rollout, and the hackers sent emails to targets asking for price quotes, IBM's researchers said. The emails contained a malicious attachment that would ask people to enter their passwords to view the files, which the hackers would steal. It's unclear if any of the attacks were successful, but the purpose was likely to gather information for future attempts, IBM's researchers said. "Moving laterally through networks and remaining there in stealth would allow them to conduct cyber espionage and collect additional confidential information from the victim environments for future operations," Claire Zaboeva, a cyber threat analyst at IBM's X-Force and co-author of the report, said.

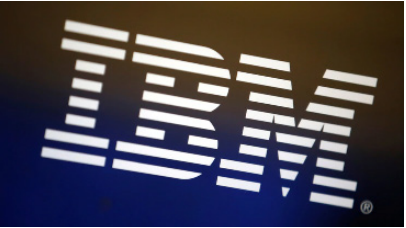


The hacking targets included the European Commission's Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union, who would be in direct contact with several countries and could open pathways for more targeted attacks. The hackers also sent malware-laced emails to companies making solar panels, which provide power for

cold storage containers in countries without access to electricity, and IT companies in South Korea and Germany who support pharmaceutical manufacturers. "A breach within any part of this global alliance could result in the exposure of numerous partner computing environments worldwide," IBM's researchers said. The report didn't indicate who was behind this hacking campaign, but suggested that it's likely a nation-state behind it because of how sophisticated the targeting is. In recent months, countries like China, Russia and North Korea have launched cyberattacks against pharmaceutical companies developing COVID-19 vaccines.

IBM Warns Hackers Targeting COVID-19 Vaccine Operations

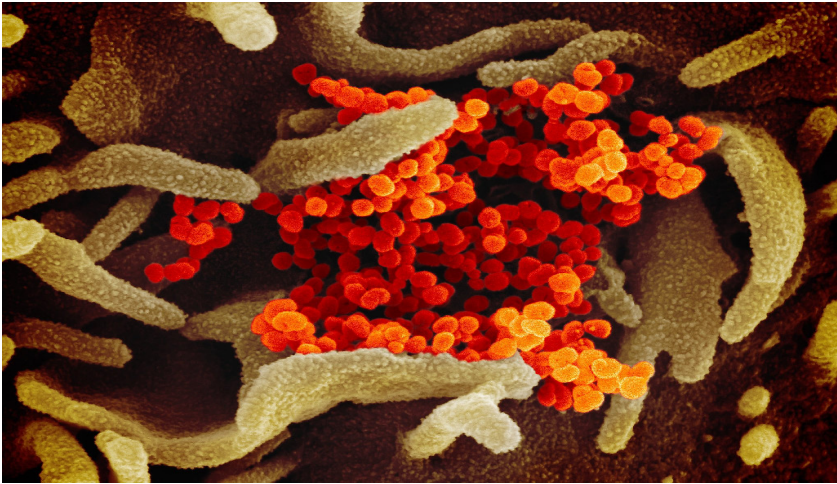
In a blog post released Thursday, IBM said it had uncovered a phishing plot targeting "organizations associated with a COVID-19 cold chain," referring to the chain of people and businesses responsible for storing the vaccine at the necessary cold temperatures. The U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency shared the report Thursday along with a warning to anyone involved in operations related to the vaccine.



"The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) encourages Operation Warp Speed (OWS) organizations and organizations involved in vaccine storage and transport to review the IBM X-Force report," its post read. On Wednesday, the Wall Street Journal reported that North Korean hackers have targeted at least six pharmaceutical companies on the US, UK and South Korea that have been working on COVID-19 vaccines. The US's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency released a statement on the hacking campaign, urging companies involved with COVID-19 vaccines to review IBM's report. (Courtesy www.cnet.com/)

501Y.V2 Variant May Escape Immunity From Antibody
Drugs, Convalescent Plasma And Prior Infection

South African Coronavirus Variant May Block Antibody Drugs, Former FDA Head Says



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Though COVID-19 vaccines will likely render effective against the South African coronavirus variant -- according to an infectious disease expert -- the former head of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said the strain may “obviate” other countermeasures, including antibody drugs. The South African virus variant, known as 501Y.V2, has sparked serious concern, and the strain has already been described as more infectious than the COVID-19 virus identified at the start of the pandemic. In South Africa, it has rapidly become dominant in the country’s coastal areas. Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the former commissioner of the FDA, told CNBC’s Shepard Smith last Tuesday that the strain appears to escape immunity from convalescent plasma and prior infection. “The South Africa variant is very concerning right now because it does appear that may it obviate some of our medical countermeasures, particularly the antibody drugs,” Gottlieb said, pointing to evidence from Bloom Lab.



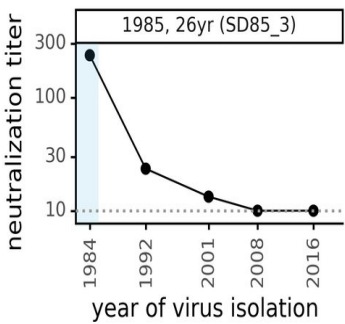
Bloom Lab

The variant involves mutations on the spike protein, including E484K, though the laboratory said the changes “reduce neutralization activity, they don’t ablate it.” What do results mean for possible #SAR-SCoV2 immune escape? Certainly mutations like E484K are concerning. But they *reduce* neut activity, they don’t ablate it. Again, look at CoV-229E: takes years of evolution to escape serum neut of most people https://twitter.com/jbloom_lab/status/1339939732529111040... (16/n)Next we tested how well human sera collected shortly after 1984 neutralized each viral spike. Below is serum from 26 yr old collected in 1985: it neutralizes 1984 virus well, but 10-fold less activity against 1992 virus & no activity against viruses after 2008. (3/n) Gottlieb stressed that prompt vaccination is crucial amid the worrying strain, which has already been identified in Austria, Swit-

zerland, Japan, France, Zambia and the U.K., per a report by CNBC. “The vaccine can become a backstop against these variants really getting more of a foothold in the United States but we need to quicken the pace of vaccination,” the former FDA head said.



Dr. Scott Gottlieb, the former commissioner of the FDA.



A top official with the World Health Organization said Tuesday there’s no indication the virus is more or less transmissible than the separate mutated strain detected in the U.K. “There’s no indication that the 501Y.V2 variant has increased transmissibility compared to the U.K. variant,” Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO technical COVID-19 lead, said during a briefing, noting many ongoing studies in South Africa are looking at the variant’s circulation and transmissibility in modeling and neutralization studies. “But there’s no indication that it’s more or less transmissible than the Variant of Concern that was identified in the United Kingdom.”

That said, Britain’s health secretary on Monday warned that the coronavirus variant first detected in South Africa is a “very significant problem” and poses more of a risk than others. “My concern is that it seems to be even [easier] to transmit than the new variant that we’ve seen here, and obviously it’s been a huge challenge controlling the new variant in the U.K.,” Hancock said, noting two cases of the South African variant were detected in the U.K., as of Monday.

South African Researchers Testing Current Vaccines Against Variant South African Coronavirus Variant ‘Very Significant Problem,’ UK Health Secretary Says



Britain’s Health Secretary Matt Hancock

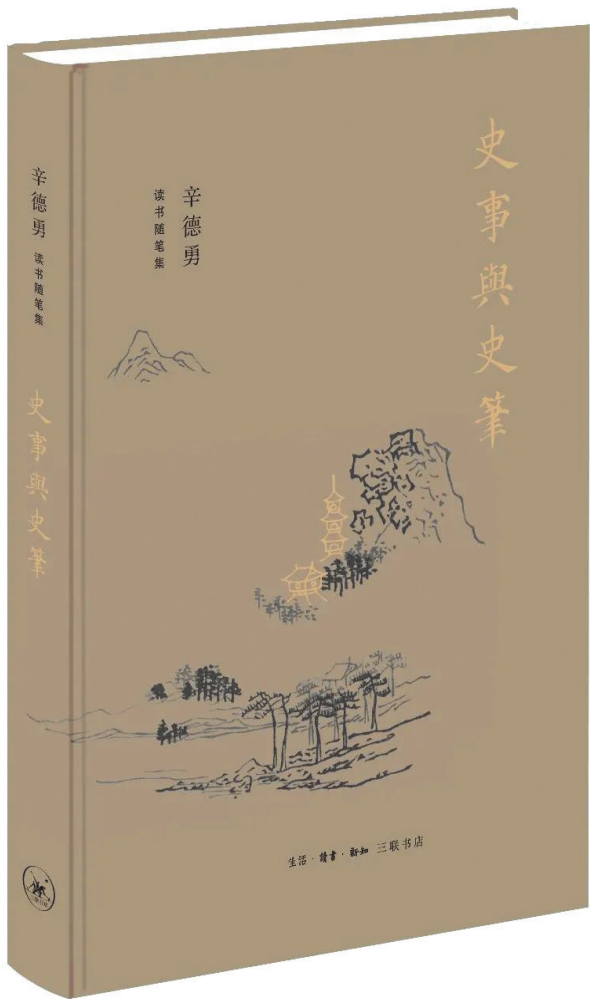
Britain’s health secretary on Monday warned that the coronavirus variant first detected in South Africa is a “very significant problem” and poses more of a risk than others. Matt Hancock told BBC radio that he’s “incredibly worried” about the new variant as others questioned whether currently approved vaccines would be effective against it. “I’m incredibly worried about the South African variant,” Hancock told BBC Radio 4’s Today. “That’s why we took the action that we did to restrict all flights from South Africa, and movement from South Africa, and to insist that anybody who’s been to South Africa self isolates. This is a very, very significant problem.” South African researchers are already working to determine whether the vaccines developed to combat COVID-19 will see the same success against the new variant, identified as 501.V2. “This is the most pressing question fac-

ing us right now,” Dr. Richard Lessells, an infectious disease expert who is working on the country’s genomic studies of the variant, told the Associated Press. “We are urgently doing experiments in the laboratory to test the variant.” The tests, called neutralizing assays, will test the variant against the blood of people with antibodies and against the blood of people who have already received vaccines, the Associated Press reported.



The variant has already been described as more infectious than the COVID-19 virus identified at the start of the pandemic. On Monday, Austria announced that it had discovered one case of the South African mutation in a 30-year-old woman who returned from a trip on Dec. 6. The country also said it had detected four cases of the U.K. variant, which has also been detected in the U.S. Britain is expected to expand further lockdown measures in a bid to stifle the spread of the new variant, which was discovered several weeks ago. The U.K. variant is believed to be the driving force of a new wave of coronavirus cases throughout the country. “The spread of the new variant of COVID-19 has led to rapidly escalating case numbers across the country,” a spokesperson for Prime Minister Boris Johnson said, according to Reuters. “The prime minister is clear that further steps must now be taken to arrest this rise and to protect the NHS and save lives. He will set those out this evening.” (Courtesy Foxnews.com)

辛德勇：有所立就必须先有破



《辛德勇读书随笔集》

《辛德勇读书随笔集》系列中的这一册《史事与史笔》，大致包括如下两方面的内容：一是论述一些历史问题；二是讲说自己出版的一些书，所谓“史笔”，是指这些书的写法。这些文稿所述及的历史问题，看起来比较零落，相互之间没有多大联系。这当然是由于我没有定性，做研究没有计划和目标，因而也就没有确定的主题和范围，遇到什么好玩的问题就研究，高兴了就随手写下一篇，所以就成不了一个体系。我“起家”的学术专业是历史地理学，可是离开核心学术圈稍微远一点儿的读者，很多人却完全不了解这一点。这种情况，固然同我这些年来对历史地理方面的研究做得比较少有关。但在另一方面，也由于历史地理这个学科比较偏僻，了解它的人比较少；特别是那些很专门、很深入的学术探讨，大多数这一行之外的历史学者都根本看不懂，更不用说那些非专业的普通读者了。

看惯了近几十年来中国大陆的官样学术论著，以为那种写法就是标准的模板。殊不知所谓学术论著，就是要旗帜鲜明地提出自己不同于他人的看法。你要是模棱两可，自己都不知所以然或者不敢明明白白地讲出个所以然，那还写它干嘛？在我看来，对于绝大多数历史问题来说，正与误，是与非，都是汉贼不两立的事情。在已有值得重视的成说存在的情况下，有所立就必须先有破；旧的不破，新的就不得立。这是学术研究应有的定规。在私心旧情方面，某些只了解自己狭小专业状况的人，一看到我对他和他这个学科内部所尊崇的学者提出不同见解，就以为这是越界者才会做出的刻意的冒犯，完全不知道敝人做研究一向是这种态度，对自己不认同的观点，不管是哪一个学科的学者，我都一样对待。《黄河奔涌浪，是天生不清——合理认识人为因素对黄土高原水土流失和黄河水患的影响》这篇

讲稿，其主旨乃是直接针对历史地理学泰斗谭其骧先生的重要学术观点而展开的（具体的论述，见于谭氏《何以黄河在东汉以后会出现一个长期安流的局面——从历史上论证黄河中游的土地合理利用是消弭下游水患的决定性因素》一文），而谭其骧先生是除了我的导师史念海先生之外，我最钦敬的历史地理学家。透过这一研究，大家可以很清楚地看到我的学术态度。那么，有些读者或许会问：“既然你那么钦敬谭其骧先生，为什么非要做这项研究不可？历史地理研究有那么多题目，为什么不去研究别的问题？”这是因为这个问题重要，而且不是一般的重要，是太重要了。谭其骧先生论述黄河下游的河道变迁，将其首要原因归结为中游的水土流失。后来包括史念海先生在内，中国历史地理学界对黄土高原植被变迁与水土流失的研究，对全国其他地区植被变迁与水土流失的研究，可以说都是渊源于此。因此，可以说这是一项在学术史上具有里程碑意义的研究。强自比较一下，若论在各自学科里的价值和影响，它可比田余庆先生《论轮台诏》一文在秦汉史上的地位与作用大得太多，只是由于懂得历史地理学的人很少，即使是中国古代史领域的大牌教授们也是知之者无多。正因为如此，我提出的同谭其骧先生不同的看法，也就不会像写《制造汉武帝》那样受到社会的广泛关注。做学术研究，我都会尽量努力接近更多的社会公众，但还是讲不得流行不流行、接受不接受的道理，这终究是一个孤寂的行道；甚至可以说是一项天知地知还有自己心知的事业。谭其骧先生这一研究对后来研究的巨大影响，主要体现在研究的方法和范式上，而我所提出的不同意见，恰恰就是直指这样的研究方法和范式。在这一研究中，谭其骧先生紧紧抓住植被变迁与水土流失的因果关系作为着力点，这本来自极学术眼光，至今仍无可非议。可是研究历史地理问题同研究所有历史问题一样，如果一上来就把着眼点过分聚焦于某一项要素，往往就很容易忽略历史事件的复杂性，以致未能捕捉到真正的主要因素。按照我的看法，谭其骧先生在这个问题上的不足或者说失误，就是没有充分考虑影响黄河下游河道决堤频发的诸多其他因素，特别是河道的情况——战国中期以来形成的单一固定河道以及此等河道的变化状况，应该是更加重要的因素。由此出发，进一步引申，自然会触及黄河中游水土流失过程中的“自然侵蚀量”和“人为加速侵蚀量”的问题。这反过来会促使我们更加合理地认识人为因素在黄土高原水土流失过程中的作用——历史时期所谓“人为加速侵蚀”，只不过是“在自然侵蚀”基础上的很小一部分叠加而已。这样思考问题与对待问题，我们的认识才能逐

渐走向深入。由这个具体的研究事例，我联想到胡适先生一段关于古代文史研究方法的话：治历史的人，应当向这种传记材料里去寻求那多元的，个别的因素，而不应该走偷懒的路，妄想用一个“最后之因”来解释一切历史事实。无论你抬出来的“最后之因”是“神”，是“性”，是“心灵”，或是“生产方式”，都可以解释一切历史；但是，正因为个个“最后之因”都可以解释一切历史，所以都不能解释任何历史了！……所以凡可以解释一切历史的“最后之因”，都是历史学者认为最无用的玩意儿，因为他们其实都不能解释什么具体的历史事实。（见《中国新文学大系·建设理论集》之《导言》）这话比我所谈的又升高了一个层次，但基本原理是相通的。按照我的理解，历史研究的价值和意义，就在于面向每一个具体的历史问题，解决每一个具体的历史问题，而每一个具体的历史事件，往往都有其特定的历史因缘，这就意味着用某种单一的、贯穿一切的方法或范式来分析历史问题、解决历史问题，不仅在研究方法上是贫乏的，也是有害无益的，它往往会误导我们失去对那些真正具有决定性意义的个性化机制的关注，从而丧失揭示历史真相的机会。重要的是，我们应该充分理解胡适先生所讲的那句话，即“凡可以解释一切历史的‘最后之因’，都是历史学者认为最无用的玩意儿，因为他们其实都不能解释什么具体的历史事实”。除了《黄河奔涌浪，是天生不清——合理认识人为因素对黄土高原水土流失和黄河水患的影响》这篇讲稿所涉及的历史研究的复杂性之外，这本《史事与史笔》中研讨史事的文稿，在所探讨的具体对象之外还会顾及的一个普遍性方法论问题，乃是历史活动的偶然性。关于这一点，在《谈谈所谓“卫氏集团”和“李氏集团”》这篇讲稿中，有比较突出的体现。这篇讲稿，针对以“集团”划定政治斗争派别的通行观点，特别强调了具体个人利害关系对国家政治进程的影响。研究者若是忽视显而易见的历史活动而刻意求深，非要用个人头脑里既有的“规律性”脉络强自归拢史事，则只能构建出一座座虚幻的空中楼阁。希望读者在具体史事分析的基础上，对我这一研究的着眼点和着力点也都能有所关注。至于这本小书中属于“史笔”的那几篇文稿，都是就我已经出版的书籍加以说明，都属于对既有成果的进一步表述，在很大程度上也都属于对历史认识的表述形式问题。希望这些文稿能够帮助读者更好地理解我对相关问题的认识。不过从更深一层实质性意义上来看，所谓“史笔”的运用，同对“史事”的认识，本是合二而一的事情，二者之间是具有内在关联的。