

Positive Interaction Between Government and Society in the Innovation of Grassroots Social Governance

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Abstract—China's social governance model has experienced four development periods: the traditional social period, the beginning of PRC, the reform and opening up, and the modern society. From the initial "social management" to the current "social governance", the difference in only one word implies the constant friction and debugging of the management role of government and the autonomous status of the society. There is no doubt that the government is a pioneering force and also a leading force in the process of social governance. However, it is not sufficient to rely solely on the government's mandatory control to govern the grassroots society. Based on government's intervention extent, the relationship between government and society can be divided into government-embedded grassroots social governance mechanism and social-autonomous grassroots social governance mechanism. For government-embedded grassroots social governance mechanism, the grassroots governance may be failed if there is no internal autonomy of the social foundation. The innovation of grassroots social governance is to change the usual situation of "government dominant" and clarify and balance the relationship between government and society. Hence, the government as an external "intervention factor" must reduce its "embedding" extent; in addition, the society must play its driving role to complete self-governance on the society; finally, the "external" government and "internal" society should interact with each other and produce good interaction effect to achieve better social governance.

Keywords—grassroots social governance; government; society; interaction

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to better study the interaction between government and society on social governance in China, it is firstly needed to sort out the grassroots social governance models in different historical stages of China.

Social governance model in traditional society: In the period of feudal society of China, the national political organization structure only reached county level, and county magistrate was the highest chief executive of the grassroots society¹. The social governance links below county level mostly rely on family rules and local rules, as well as the

¹ [UK] R. MacFarquhar, Fei Zhengqing. *The Cambridge History of China: the Emergence of Revolutionary China (1946-1965)* [M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1998: 43-46.

ritual laws and regulations at that time. If the family member is to assume corresponding responsibility, the responsibility will be transferred to the family, namely the family is responsible for the outside. Local affairs below county level are granted to local gentlemen who have relatively large powers in maintaining social order, distributing social welfare, and building utilities. It can be said that during this period, the grassroots social governance lacked the external regulation by the state's official government agencies. At the same time, the self-management of the social masses accounted for a relatively large proportion in the social governance. And this self-management is mostly regulated by family tribes having blood relationships.

Social governance model in the beginning of PRC: From the Anti-Japanese War to the War of Liberation, the value systems of society and government organizations in China have been seriously broken. It was urgently needed to transform the country by a unified and powerful country and political party². At the beginning of PRC, China is respectively unified in the levels of government structure and political party construction: in government unification, the unit system was established in urban area, and people's commune was established in rural areas to complete the integration of government management; in the construction of political parties, each unit is required for having its own party organizations, from factories to enterprises, and even to small factories and mines. This is also the main reason for the rapid development of party members in the 1950s. Through those measures, everyone in the society was integrated into the organization and accepted the leadership of the party and the state. During that period, the governance of the grassroots society relied entirely on the adjustment of the government. The self-consciousness of grassroots society was completely occupied by the will of the state, and the previous local rules and family tribes in the traditional society were substituted. The operation and adjustment of the whole society were in the scope of state regulation and control, and losing the space for social self-governance.

Grassroots social governance model from the reform and open up to the period before 21st century: The household contract responsibility system implemented since the reform and open up had disintegrated the rural people's communes,

² Han Jincao. *An Ziwen's organization work selection* [M]. Beijing: Party School of the Central Committee of CPC Press, 1998:129-133.

individuals could become independent business entities, and the unit system in urban area has gradually declined. The market-oriented social reform had caused many people leaving the unit and entering the market. The party and the state also began to adjust the governance model of the grassroots society. Represented by "Village Committee Organization Law" and the "Organizational Regulations for Urban Residents Committee", the government gave the society more free spaces. In addition, social organizations had emerged on a large scale. The issue of those organization laws and regulations and the emergence of social organizations all indicate that the state encouraged self-governance of society.

New social governance model in 21st century: Today in the 21st century, China has always been encouraging all sectors of the society participating in the governance of grassroots society. With the deepening of social unfairness and the intensification of interest conflict, large number of petitions and group cases appear. Therefore, the government has gradually adjusted the policies governing grassroots society. On the one hand, through index assessment, the lower-level and grassroots governments have explored more governance mechanisms, including grid management, resident (joint) village cadre system, etc.; on the other hand, the existing social autonomy system has been refined and strengthened. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee clearly stated that "it is needed to adhere to the system governance, strengthen the leadership of the party committee, play the leading role of the government, encourage and support all sectors of society to participate in the management, and achieve a benign interaction among government governance and social self-regulation, and resident autonomy". The promotion of those policies strengthens the cooperation between social autonomy and government adjustment in grassroots social governance.

II. GRASSROOTS SOCIAL GOVERNANCE MECHANISM OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIETY

The basic model of grassroots social governance now seems to be very clear, but there are still constant problems. How to effectively achieve a balance between government and society is the primary problem in modern grassroots social governance. It is difficult to explore a way to not only maximize the government's management functions but also stimulate the self-regulation role of the society. The way needs to be verified by theory and practice. Because the government's operational mechanism is very different from the social operation mechanism, the benign interaction between the two requires a long-term impact and debugging to achieve their maximum effect.

A. Government-embedded Grassroots Social Governance Mechanism

The process of government's external "embedding" into the social governance, on the one hand, can be understood as the intervention of the national legal system, government institutions and value consciousness in the grassroots society; on the other hand, it can be understood as the diversified interaction between national administrative organs and social

organizations, groups and individuals^{3,4}. The former can be understood as "the national leader's goal and ability to transform the society through national plans, policies and actions". Evans believes that it is not enough to form a strong national ability if there is only either autonomy or embedding ability. The first premise for guiding the interaction between government management and social autonomy is that the government must intervene in social governance. At present, China's social governance model adheres to the government-led model. Without the pioneering power of the government to maintain social stability, there is no way to talk about the benign interaction with social organization autonomy. The government-embedded governance model relies on a top-down management policy, and the public's opinions may be collected not that comprehensive. The single one-way government governance can't achieve the expected results, but the mandatory role of the government plays a fundamental role in maintaining the stability of grassroots society.

B. Social-autonomous Grassroots Social Governance Mechanism

Although the external intervention of the government is an important prerequisite for achieving the effect of grassroots social governance, it is still necessary to rely on social self-management and self-regulation in order to maintain the sustainable effects of social governance⁵. Just like the enacting process of law, the decrees issued from the top level to down level are far from as smooth as the law implementation from bottom level to national will. If the system externally imposed by the state is not intrinsically recognized by the society, it will lead to the failure of grassroots governance. There are often large difference between the state representing rationality and coercive force and the sub-culture and customs representing local interests and personal interests. In severe cases, the governance may even be resisted by local power. Especially, China has vast territory and various cultural customs, lack of local social self-adjustment; and only by the government's unified, standard regulation, it is not available to meet the development demand of different places. In addition, in the process of grassroots social governance, effective implementation of various national policies requires coordination between social organizations or other autonomous institutions, in order to be accepted, recognized and implemented by local people. From this perspective, the government represents the overall consensus of the society, while the grassroots society represents the regional consensus. Only by realizing effective exchange and communication between those two kinds of consensus can it be available to better carry out grassroots social governance.

³ Migdal, Joel. *Strong societies and weak States: states and society's relations and states capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press: 1998, p4.

⁴ Evans, Peter B. *Embedded autonomy: states and industrial transformation*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995, p178-206.

⁵ [US] Joel S. Migdal *Countries in society: how the state and society change and interact with each other* [M]. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing .LTD. 2013: 94.

In the governance structure of grassroots society, the government bears the basic governance structure of modern society; and social autonomy develops on the basis of government intervention, makes up for the deficiencies in the process of government governance, and excludes the negative effects brought by government's arbitrary intervention with grassroots society.

III. BALANCING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY IN THE PROCESS OF GRASSROOTS SOCIAL GOVERNANCE

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that government and society coexist in the grassroots social governance. However, in practice, the government has always been in a strong position, and the spatial scope of social self-government activities is limited, and its participation enthusiasm is not high, so that the two parties are insufficiently connected and it is difficult to achieve a benign interactive governance effect. So, it is necessary to explore a balanced mechanism between the two parties.

A. *Limiting Government's Involvement in Grassroots Social Governance*

“All-round government” refers to the government’s full involvement in social governance. “Limited government” means that the government gives part of the social governance right to the society. One of the important signs of the social governance model entering modernization is the transformation from the former into the latter models. In order to achieve better governance effect, grassroots social governance needs government's limited intervention in society. At present, the government is facing tremendous pressure from grassroots public services, maintaining social stability and promoting economic development so that it is needed to continuously strengthen the extent of government's intervention in grassroots society. As a result, the administration of grassroots social autonomous organizations is becoming increasingly obvious and increasingly lacking its independency and autonomy.

First, it is needed to make clear the government's governance capability. Many people have a lot of wrong opinion on the government's social governance capability. First, many people think that the government is so huge in scale that its governance capacity must be strong. For this view, it is needed to realize that there is not a universally applicable criterion. Similarly, the government's social governance capability is not directly related to its scale. Second, some people think that government power covers all aspects of the society. Indeed, even the law cannot regulate all the behaviors that happen between people. The government is also the same. Even if government functions are relatively strong in social governance, the power of government is not unlimited. A truly effective government governance capability should be judged by the effectiveness of the government's actual governance. And if there are too many government functions, it means that the social self-regulation ability is reduced, and the government assumes the responsibility that should be borne by the society. On the contrary, if there are over few government functions, social

governance will rely heavily on the society itself, which will greatly reduce the effectiveness of social governance. Having a correct understanding of government governance capability can provide a guarantee for dividing the extent of government's intervention in social governance. Next, it is needed to divide the scope of government action. The government must take certain actions to guarantee social development, and government's intervention in social governance must be reasonable. Once government intervention exceeds its scope, it is easy to lead to the emergence of all-round government, thus inhibiting the self-development of society. Finally, it is needed to improve the government's ability to govern society. The government department governing the society is a complete system structure. Different government departments have different governance capabilities, and each capability is interconnected and mutually restrictive to each other. Good social governance effect not only requires interaction between government and society, but also requires good interactions between different governance departments within the government, so as to maximize the government's ability to govern the society.

B. *Encouraging the Self-governance Enthusiasm of the Society*

To promote the benign interaction between the government and the society, it is necessary to get rid of the cycle of “maintaining social order by increasing the government's responsibility and increasing economic cost”. The modernization of grassroots social governance must focus on society itself. In social governance, in addition to the government, other social groups must also assume corresponding social governance responsibilities. However, the enthusiasm and autonomy of social groups in China are not high, so that the effect of social governance is not very good.

Although in traditional society, the management of Chinese government agencies below township level was basically dependent on the self-regulation of social organizations, this was not the villager autonomy in modern sense. Due to the intervention of the mandatory role of government, the activity space and scope of social group governance society were restricted. Therefore, in promoting the positive interaction between society and government, the primary task is to stimulate the enthusiasm of social groups to take part in social governance. The higher enthusiasm the society has in self-governance, the greater positivity the society will have for participating in grassroots social governance together with the government, and the more beneficial it will be for balancing the relationship between society and government. If the autonomy of the society is improved, the extent of autonomy of the society will be higher, so that the grassroots social governance will achieve double effect with half effort. At the same time, it is also needed to stimulate the autonomy of social organizations. The state should guide pluralistic entities in the society to assume the responsibility of social governance and encourage the society to make self-regulation through policy. However, how to cultivate their autonomy is a major issue

that will be faced next, and is also the specific realization of the principle of people's sovereignty in grassroots social governance. First of all, grassroots social governance should improve the sense of social responsibility of each citizen, fully respect their subjective status, cultivate their sense of "ownership", and cultivate their legal thought and manner. Secondly, there is not any social governance model that is fully applicable to all cases; it is necessary to take appropriate measures in different cases to stimulate the social self-governance ability. Formation of any governance model must be based on its unique living soil, and the realization of the governance effect need to be driven by virtue of the power of traditional society. In particular, China's unique cultural characteristics in honesty and the sense of shame, morality and ethics should be concerned. In the process of participating in grassroots social governance, society knows more about the traditional culture and customs of the region than any individual, group or political party. It should seek an effective social governance model suitable for the local conditions.

The history of China's development of social autonomy in the modern sense is short; and social groups and individuals have not enough experience of participating in social governance. At present, the government has a wide range of functions, and gives extremely limited space for social self-governance so that it is difficult to explore some innovative ways in this environment. Therefore, it is still needed to rely on the power of the government to stimulate the enthusiasm of social governance and foster the enthusiasm of social autonomy. The measures that the government can take include purchasing services from social organizations, and enacting some incentive policies, so as to promote citizens participating in social governance and further foster the autonomy of the society.

C. Promoting Interaction Between Government and Society

In the process of research on grassroots social governance innovation, government and society cannot be separated. Although the two parties are quite different in the operational mechanism, they both need to constantly collide and coordinate with each other in the grassroots social governance, in order to better promote the sound operation of social governance.

The government manages the grassroots society through the "embedding" approach. The process of embedding is not only a one-way intervention from the outside to the inside, but also requires collaboration and cooperation within the society. In turn, social self-governance also needs to be combined with the mandatory role of the government to better govern the society. By constructing some intermediate links and taking the said method such as purchasing services, it is available to realize a well communication between the government and the society, balance the relationship between the two parties, and maximize the effect of grassroots social governance.

IV. CONCLUSION

In short, an innovative grassroots social governance model needs to promote the positive interaction between government and society. Further, the following three points need to be realized: first, clearly make clear and define the scope of government intervention; secondly, stimulate the enthusiasm of social self-regulation; finally, create conditions and platforms for the benign interaction between government and society. However, the three points are not independent of each other, but depend on each other. Wherein, the government's intervention mechanism is considered as the main driving force for social self-governance, and social autonomy can provide a powerful social foundation for the government to better intervene in social governance, and further realize a well communication and exchange between the two parties and find a new balance in the interactive mechanism.

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