Thoughts on Urban Ethnic Work in China*

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Abstract—**The acceleration of urbanization in China makes urban ethnic work more and more important. By analyzing the new tendencies and difficulties of urban ethnic work encountering in the new situation, this paper puts forward solutions for perfecting legislation, improving work mechanism, and governing with collaborative and innovative measures.**

Keywords—urban ethnic work; tendency; predicament; reflection

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic work has always been attached importance in unified multi-ethnic China, while urban ethnic work is a critical part of ethnic work. Urban ethnic work was first presented in official documents in 1987. In 1993, the state council approved the promulgation of the *Urban Ethnic Work Regulation*, the first legal document for urban ethnic work, marking that this work has entered the legal track. Urban ethnic work is to deal with ethnic affairs in cities, solve ethnic problems in the process of urbanization and handle ethnic work related to urban functions, playing an essential role in strengthening social management and maintaining social harmony and stability.

II. NEW TENDENCY

A. Increasingly Important Urban Ethnic Work

With economic development, social change and accelerated urbanization, the city presents a strong aggregation and radiation effect, attracting more and more people and resources together. China has gradually changed from a relatively closed regional urban society to a diversified and civilized immigrant society [1]. The central conference on ethnic work in 2014 made a critical judgment that China has entered an active period of population migration with large-flow and cross-regional features because the number and speed of population flow of all ethnic groups have increased significantly. According to the data of the 5th and 6th censuses, combined with the current situation, it can be seen that cities with 56 ethnic groups have

grown from only one, Beijing, to most provincial capitals in China in less than two decades.

At the same time, the urbanization level of ethnic minority areas has also been improving. From 2000 to 2013, the urbanization rate of ethnic minority areas raised from 28.89% to 43.13%, an increase of 14.24% [2]. It can be predicted that more and more ethnic minorities will move into cities and towns in the future.

With the accelerating urbanization, cities have become an important field for ethnic work, in which ethnic relations have become more and more diversified and complicated, while the requirements for urban ethnic work grow higher and higher.

B. Changing Characteristics of Urban Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic minorities living in cities can be divided into two kinds: the permanent population owning urban household registration after the founding of the People's Republic of China and the floating population without urban household registration entering the city to work or to do business since the reform and opening up. Nowadays, one of the distinctive features of urban minority population is the large increase of floating population. For example, the floating population of ethnic minorities in eastern parts of China is increasing by 20% every year, even exceeding the number of local permanent ethnic minorities. According to the data from the 5th and 6th censuses, the ethnic minority population in Zhejiang province is more than tripled in 2010 compared with that of 2000, while such number in Shanghai increased by 166% [3]. Data released by the central conference on ethnic work in 2014 showed that there are 961000 in 1215000 ethnic minorities in Zhejiang province coming from outside. Of more than 320000 ethnic minority people in Guangdong Province, 250000 people come from outside. The floating ethnic populations in these two provinces have far surpassed the local permanent ethnic population [4].

More and more ethnic minorities live and breed in cities. Ethnic minorities pay more and more attention to education. Besides, preferential policies on education for ethnic minorities are provided by the state. All these factors give rise to another distinctive feature of urban minority population, that is, the intergenerational replacement of the floating population. The new generation of ethnic minorities with higher education level and stronger legal consciousness

of rights protection has gradually become the main part of the floating ethnic minorities [5].

C. Propelled Establishment of Multi-ethnic Embedded Social Structure and Community Environment

Unprecedented flow makes the economic development and the national contact, communication, and convergence between ethnic groups more possible, and also poses a challenge to the governance ability for functional departments of the government. In response to the new situation, the Chinese government puts forward promoting the establishment of the multi-ethnic embedded social structure and community environment, which is a top-level design for urban ethnic work.

The term "embedded", derived from structural engineering, vividly depicts the structural relationship of close connection, mutual influence and mutual penetration between different subjects, which expresses not only the closeness in form, but also the beautiful vision of expecting the emotional and psychological integration of ethnic groups.

Multi-ethnic embedded society does not mean throwing ethnic groups together stiffly and mechanically, but focusing on respecting the consciousness of different subjects and various culture of different ethnic groups. Equality and unity of ethnic groups is realized based on a solid mass foundation and lasting psychological support. The ultimate goal is to establish a multi-ethnic community with organic unity holding same emotion and interests, that is, the community of the Chinese nation. The embedded state is progressively from material to culture and then to emotion.

Solidified employment tendency, prejudiced career selection opportunities, residence division caused by human being's gregarious nature, interracial marriage difficulty caused by different ethnic customs, these might be the obstacles hindering the construction of embedded society, in which multi-ethnic embedded community is regarded as one of the effective measures to break the division of residence and also one of the concrete ways to realize embedded society. Therefore, at the micro level, the community plays a major role in co-governance with multiple subjects in urban ethnic work. The academy has reached a consensus on the concept and origin of community. Policies and practices of mixed ethnic communities in foreign countries such as the United States, Malaysia and Singapore have provided references for the construction of multi-ethnic embedded community in China, in which, the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is the first pilot region, and Chengdu city is one of the most successful regions. Comparatively speaking, the former depends more on government's advocacy and policy guidance, while the latter is formed naturally by economic and life needs, which has different research values.

This paper believes that in addition to the current researches on theoretical connotation, realistic background, practical path and observation dimension of the multi-ethnic embedded social structure, the concept definition, construction plan and empirical investigation of the multi-ethnic embedded community, the change of value orientation,

working mode and working mechanism of the multiple subjects in the multi-ethnic embedded social background is also worthy of studying.

III. PREDICAMENTS

A. Objectively Existing Contradictions and Disputes Involving Floating Population of Ethnic Minorities

The disharmony arising, developing and transforming from the ethnic factors exist objectively in the cities and towns [6]. The contradictions and disputes mainly occurred involve floating ethnic population. Differences in production mode, language, culture, customs, religious belief and psychological identity between ethnic minority people and urban masses cause disharmonious phenomenon and disputes in the interaction of individuals, which lead to mass exclusion idea and behavior. It is not easy to form the tolerance values and effective system of trust.

There is a process of adaptation from misunderstanding to understanding between ethnic minorities and urban residents, between ethnic minorities and urban ethnic work mechanism. Discrimination or disguised discrimination against ethnic minorities, as well as disrespect for the differentiated customs and habits of ethnic minorities, occur frequently in urban life. Poor or lagging management exists in the working process of functional department to varying degrees. All these have hurt the feelings of ethnic minorities, caused some contradictions or disputes involving ethnic factors, and undermined unity, social stability and harmony.

B. Imperfect Urban Ethnic Work System

There are some problems in urban ethnic work, such as unclear governance subject, asymmetric information of the ethnic minority floating population, incomplete service mechanism and functional target.

Some people, when talking about ethnic work and solving urban ethnic problems, regard it as a responsibility of ethnic work departments. Problem solving is overly dependent on ethnic work departments. Other functional departments only play an auxiliary role and even shift responsibility to each other. In addition, there is a misunderstanding that the subject and the object of ethnic work are completely separated, believing that the minorities themselves are just the objects in the solution of the problem and ignoring their subjective initiative.

Actually, the ethnic work department is the main body of implementation of urban ethnic work, but it is not the sole subject, and there are some serious problems in its work system. Grass-roots institution construction of ethnic work department itself is a serious problem needed attention, especially the staffing of county-level ethnic work departments. The staff member is far from enough, but also is often assumed more than one role due to working with other department, which lead to heavy pressure and overburden tasks. The community organizations, the core of the ethnic work, not only suffer from understaffed situation, but also lack of professional talents. In addition, insufficient funds is another serious problem, which causes the dilemma

that the issues requiring financial input in ethnic work cannot be solve in time and in proper way.

C. Outdated Urban Ethnic Work Policies

Urban ethnic work in China involves a wide range of fields, decentralized body of formulation and implementation. Urban ethnic work policy is the legal basis for the work. The value orientation of existing policy and legislation focuses more on the right protection of permanent population, ignoring the rights and interests of floating population. Most of the policies are outdated, lagging behind the social development. Taking the *Urban Ethnic Work Regulation* as an example, there are many problems, such as low rank and unsystematic structure, the lack of higher-level law, the sluggish and rough state of lower-level law, and policies with many vacuums and so on. In 2006, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission officially started the revision work of the regulation, but it still hasn't been completed after more than ten years.

Most of ethnic minorities inhabit in the plateau or mountainous areas of borderland or poverty-stricken region. The relatively backward economic development, tough living conditions, adverse ecological environment and unbalanced industrial structure are the driving force for the ethnic minorities' emigration to the city. The relatively superior administrative status and economic location of cities, good living conditions of modern cities, perfect welfare environment and inclusive urban culture are the pulling force. In addition to the traditional push-pull theory, in China, blood relationship and kinship are also obvious factors attracting ethnic minorities moving to the city. It can be predicted without doubt that the inevitable social development trend in China is that the urbanization process will be further accelerated.

Minzu (including three meanings, that is, nation, nationality and ethnic groups), the product of human society in certain stage, is a historical category and a way of social existence. As a stable community for human being, it has its objective laws of emergence, development and extinction. This process is bound to be long, so Minzu will exist for a long time. As unified multi-ethnic China is in the primary stage of socialism, differences between ethnic groups exist objectively. Ethnic work policies that help ethnic minorities achieve actual equality need adjusting to play a positive role at the present stage. One of the reasons of abnormal phenomenon and injustice in law enforcement, such as solving the ethnic problems with money or dealing with ethnic issues with different standards, is that the laws or policies basis for solving the ethnic problems have been unable to meet the need of reality.

IV. SOLUTIONS

A. Perfecting Urban Ethnic Work Legislation

Social transformation, comprehensive deepening of reform and the promotion of urbanization make urban ethnic work more and more important. Since some current legislation on ethnic work have lost the environment and conditions for its implementation, it is more urgent than ever to improve the legislation, enhance the ability to govern urban ethnic affairs in accordance with the law, and safeguard equal participation of all ethnic groups in the urbanization process. It is of great practical and historical significance to make laws, especially good laws, for urban ethnic work to follow in order to consolidate and develop the new socialist ethnic relations of equality, unity, mutual assistance and harmony and to promote ethnic unity and progress.

It is suggested to improve the legislative system of urban ethnic work represented by the *Urban Ethnic Work Regulation*, focusing on the local laws involving the management and services of the floating population, such as the information registration of the floating population, public security management of rental houses, management and service of residence permits.

B. Improving Urban Ethnic Work Mechanism

The practical national condition of multi-ethnic in China should be fully recognized. The importance of urban ethnic work should be deeply understood. Concrete measures to modernize the governance system and capacity for urban ethnic affairs should be taken. Professional and service-oriented work institutions should be established through institutional reform, increased staffing, independent working conditions, the setting up of special financial funds, and the strengthening of personnel training.

Routine work mechanism of urban ethnic work should be straightened out to provide services in accordance with the law, and improve the service system for ethnic minorities. The platform for coordination and cooperation should be established and basic public services in cities, such as employment planning, skills training, social security, and medical and health care, should be actively provided for ethnic floating population. Self-inspection and supervision mechanism for urban ethnic work should be put into practice to evaluate the work effectiveness on a regular basis, sum up experience and reflect on lessons. The coordination mechanism between urban ethnic work organs and other relevant functional departments should be regulated.

C. Coordinating Among Multiple Subjects

Modern urban governance is a systematic project, which can not be completed only by the government or any single department. Reform in areas such as planning, construction, management and household registration need to be carried out. Deepening reform of the urban management system requires ascertaining management scope, power list and the main bodies of responsibility [7].

When it comes to urban ethnic work, the government should take the lead in coordination, straighten out the work process, build various platforms for management and decision-making, encourage good cooperation between functional departments, communities and people, which will accelerate the integration of the ethnic floating population into the city and form a multi-body governance pattern. For example, departments involving ethnic and religious work,

public security organs, street office, communities, the original registered residence place collect, share and integrate dynamic information together to understand the floating ethnic population such as age, income structure, work mode, etc.

D. Innovative Governance with the Times

In the context of service-oriented, professional and information society, urban ethnic work should make breakthrough on the traditional government management mode and explore new ideas. It is suggested to introduce buying service from the society to serve society, making full use of the intermediate branches such as social work organs, social organizations, enterprises, institutions or colleges. Information construction should be strengthened in the era of big data. For example, considering the new characteristics of urban minority mentioned above, the methods and forms of urban ethnic work can be innovated and reformed. The new generation of 80s and 90s are with high cultural quality, strong legal consciousness is strong, good grasp of the network. They accept new things quickly and yearn for a better life in the city. Internet communication platform like micro-blog, WeChat, virtual community or E-mail could be established to actively communicate, encouraging them to participate in solving difficulties ethnic minorities meet in the process of merging into urban society.

V. CONCLUSION

The general trend of population mobility brought by the reform and opening up has not yet shown signs of fading. The inter-ethnic cross-regional population flow is in two-way direction, including the flow of ethnic minority population to cities and inland, as well as the flow of inland population to ethnic areas. To do a good job in urban ethnic work is to better serve the people of all ethnic groups, promote economic development and ensure social stability in new situation.

The right ways with Chinese characteristics to solve ethnic problems include governing urban ethnic affairs according to law, and promoting the institutionalized, standardized and refined urban ethnic work with safeguarding the legal rights and interests of all ethnic groups as the core, propelling establishment of multi-ethnic embedded social structure and community environment as the support. Making the city better accept ethnic minority people, and letting the ethnic masses better integrate into the city will strengthen the communication between ethnic groups [8].

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