

Nation-State and Chinese Practice

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Abstract—With the emergence of "nation-state" and the advancement of world history, "nation-state" is the inevitable stage in the development of human society, and the construction of "nation-state" and "nation" has become a realistic choice. Going through the evolution process from "freedom" to "consciousness", Chinese nation is a "community of common destiny", which supports the institutional system of a modern nation-state. Based on the world system of nation-state and Chinese practice, the fundamental construction of nation-state lies in realizing and guaranteeing the national identity of citizens through the policy path and strengthening and consolidating the political integration ability among groups in "multinational state".

Keywords—Nation-state; Chinese Nation; National Identity; Integrative Construction

I. THE ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF "NATION-STATE"

Nation is a historical category. Human civilization has evolved from the period of barbarism to the obscure era, last to the age of civilization. The national community has also progressed from freedom to consciousness, and the connotation and extension of "nation" has expanded continuously. Before modern times, the original attribute of a nation has always been based on some real or imaginary kinship bonds, which had little political connotation and no necessary connection with the state. In 1913, Stalin put forward the classical definition of "nationality" in his article *Marxism and the National Questions*, that is, *a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture*. Among them, Stalin distinguished "nation" from "race" and "tribe" and emphasized that *"a nation is not merely a historical category but a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism."* What is "the historical category belonging to the epoch of rising capitalism"? This is related to the construction of "nation" and "nation state" in modern Europe. With the development of productive forces and the expansion of capital, especially from the 15th to 18th century, the Renaissance, Reformation, the first industrial revolution and capitalism swept across Europe, and the epoch of rising capitalism came. In this historical context, Stalin's definition of the "nation" as a general law is mixed with the consideration of the political situation in Russian more or less, and it has obvious political

entity implications. Moreover, Stalin described the evolution of the nation as: clan-tribe-tribes-nation, in which tribes refer to the people's community in the slave society and feudal society, and "nation" is the people's community formed in the era of rising capitalism. In China, this process is described as: clan-tribe-ancient nation-modern nation. In view of this, nation is a historical concept [1], which appeared before the decline of Dynasty in the 18th century and developed constantly along the axis of time.

Although "up to now, the nation-state is still the only internationally recognized political organization structure" [2], there is no consensus on the connotation of the "political organization structure" of the nation-state in academic circles. Nation-state, formed in the West, is the product of the evolution from dynastic state to sovereign state. The Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century BC, and the Germanic Empire that conquered the Roman territory only retained its most basic organizational form. Western Europe, as a result of the collapse of the Roman Empire, became a multi-region lacking central authority, presenting a jungle region similar to Hobbes' description. Without a central authority, the church has supreme power and strives to pursue universal values, which forms a clear confrontation with the competition for interests of the feudal lords everywhere. The Frankish Empire, founded by Frankish leader Charlemagne the Great in 800 A.D., formed the current outline of Europe, but was soon occupied by aliens from the East. Until 1000 A.D., a local political entity was formed by local lords and governors' ties, which relied on its agricultural economy, and towns became trade centers and transportation hubs. The arrival of the currency era replaced the feudal barter system. The emergence of the merchant class promoted the development of capitalism. The interaction of commerce, bureaucracy and emperors made it possible for Europe to expand and enrich its capital accumulation. In 1492, Columbus discovered the Americas and changed the original imagination of the world. Then, during the long historical journey from the 15th century to the 18th century, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution broke the relatively closed order pattern in Europe and reconstructed the time-and-space concept in the Western world. Capitalism developed rapidly and overcame space obstacles. The world has been "compressed" into a "global village" by telecommunication. The emerging bourgeoisie devotes itself to breaking away from the fetters and oppressions of feudal religious forces, trying to awaken the "national identity consciousness" of the people's community with the origin of the original cultural ties, and sublimating the nationalist theory of "one nation, one country" according to its

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political needs and interests. In 1648, the countries of Central and Western Europe established national sovereignty by signing the *Westphalia Contract*, believing that sovereignty belonged to the absolute and eternal power of the republic, and set up the Westphalia system to maintain peace, which solidified the theory paradigm of “one nation, one country” and established the modern bourgeois nation-state.

Today, nation-state has become the universal state form and basic unit in the world system. Here, “nation” and “state” are integrated. The meaning of “nation” usually matches the political entity “state”, which basically refers to “nation” or “national citizens”, rather than a particular “nationality” or “ethnic group”, emphasizing the political meaning of the concept of the nation. The formation of a modern nation-state is of great significance to the construction of the nationality. National boundaries separate the residents within the scope of their own territory and sovereignty from other regions. People communicate more and more frequently until they merge into a “nation”. That is, a community of history, culture, and politics that has internal differences as well as common ownership. Looking back at the historical evolution of western civilization since the 15th century, it is not difficult to find that the higher the degree of “homogenization” of human community, the more stable it will be, and the stronger its cohesion and external competitiveness will be. Therefore, it is possible to implement inter-ethnic political integration in multi-ethnic country, cultivate the loyalty of all citizens to the country and make it a nation with modern significance.

II. CHINESE NATION IS A “COMMUNITY OF COMMON DESTINY” WITH FORMS OF STATE

Judging from the historical evolution of China's formation and development, it is undoubtedly that multi-ethnicity is the basic national condition of China from ancient times to the present. People in Pre-Qin understood that the initial outline of “nation” was “people from five directions (east, west, north, south and center)”. Different human groups are shown by “ego” and “other” in the process of increasingly frequent interactions. Mr. Hao Shiyuan pointed out that “people from five directions (east, west, north, south and center)” was the most ethnographic record in the Pre-Qin literature [3]. From the legend of Pangu(creator of the universe in Chinese mythology) to the “Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors”, from the “distinction of Han and minority ethnic groups” to the “reverse the emperor and repel the barbarians”, from “courtesy distinguished Chinese and barbarians” to “assimilating barbarians with Chinese civilization”, from the “unification of Chinese and the ethnic groups” to “all under heaven are of one family”, the Chinese ancestors moved from barbarism to civilization, from blood clans and tribes to geographic tribes, the “ethnic” community was gradually shaped. The term “Chinese” began to appear in the literature during the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties. It was first seen in the *Records of Three Kingdoms – Biography of Zhu Geliang*” noted by Yu Peisong that “Chinese” is the complex concept of “China” and “Huaxia”, which broke through the limitation of “Huaxia and Han nationality” and began to expand the meaning of various nationalities in China. It can be concluded that it is the inevitable trend of historical development in China

because the various ethnic groups have jointly extended China's territory, developed China's economy and culture, maintained national unity and created the People's Republic of China. The cohesiveness of all ethnic groups is greater than the power of separatism, so the reunification of China is the mainstream and the mainstream of our national relations.

The emergence of the concept of the Chinese nation, the discussion of the “Chinese nation is one” and the proposal and debate of “the diversified and integrated pattern of the Chinese nation” reflect the sublimation of the connotation of the “Chinese nation”. It is undeniable that the theoretical discussion also reflects the construction of the Chinese national community in academic circles. In this process, it will inevitably involve the whole of the Chinese nation and its various ethnic groups, especially the relationship with ethnic minorities.

As a concept, “ethnic minorities” formed in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China. The preamble of China's Constitution clearly states that the People's Republic of China is a unified multi-ethnic country jointly created by the people of all nationalities in China. This statement is also a legal orientation of Chinese nation and the relationship between the various ethnic groups and the state. Chinese history provides us with a lot of information to discover and understand the various joys and sorrows that Chinese nation has experienced in the long history from freedom to self-consciousness. Especially in modern times, China became the target of all the Western imperialist powers and was even coveted by them “like fat meat on the chopping block” (Zhou Enlai). All Chinese ethnic groups have become the targets of oppression and exploitation, and the corresponding resistance and struggle have also unveiled the prelude to the movement of the Chinese nation from freedom to consciousness. With the goal of safeguarding national unity, the importance of unity and cooperation among all nationalities has become increasingly prominent. The fate of the entire Chinese nation is consistent, and the cohesiveness between them has also been cultivated and has great tension under this background. Undoubtedly, it is because all ethnic groups have jointly extended China's territory, developed China's economy and culture, maintained national unity, created the People's Republic of China which is the inevitable trend of historical development in China, and all ethnic groups of cohesion is greater than the splitting strength that China's unification is the mainstream and the mainstream of national relations in China. Based on the summary of Chinese history, the formation and development of the Chinese nation's community of common destiny are always related to the formation, development and historical fate of China and to the relations among the ethnic groups in China. The community of common destiny is not imaginary but exists objectively. It is a national entity that has a historical development and evolution process and plays an important role in people's social life.

III. ENHANCING NATIONAL IDENTITY AND PROMOTING INTER-ETHNIC POLITICAL INTEGRATION IN MULTINATIONAL COUNTRIES

China is a multi-ethnic country with complex ethnic composition and diverse ethnic cultures. National identity is

not only the psychological foundation of a nation-state, but also a necessary condition for national unity and stability. The issue of identity has received much attention from the academic community for a long time, which mostly involves psychology, ethnology, politics and other disciplines. In the era of traditional nation-states, there is an internal tension between ethnic diversity and national identity, which is difficult to adjust and eliminate. In a sense, national identity refers to people's emotional attachment and behavioral obedience to their country [4], and it is the "feeling of belonging to a country that subjectively accepted by individuals" [5]. Samuel Huntington, an American political scholar, elaborates on national identity from the perspectives of national, racial, cultural and political attributes in his book *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* [6]. National identity can be regarded as the core content of the political culture of a nation-state and the psychological foundation for the construction of a nation-state, which profoundly affects the behaviors of members from various ethnic groups in the relationship between the nation and the state.

In the 21st century B.C., the Xia Dynasty established the earliest Dynasty with the nature of state power in Chinese history. From then on, China began the long evolution process of dynasty-state, until the Revolution of 1911 overthrew the monarchy in the early 20th century, opened a new chapter in Chinese modern history, and began a new journey of building a nation-state in China. Diversified traditional ethnic groups have inherent, deep-rooted and natural identity with their own ethnic groups. They integrate the national unity of various ethnic groups into the national political community to build a national state. Although they have acquired the appearance of modern nation, they still maintain the original form of traditional nation. Therefore, national identity is particularly important for the construction and consolidation of a nation-state, and it is also one of the urgent tasks that must be solved in multi-ethnic country.

Firstly, we should enhance national unity, promote communication and integration among all ethnic groups, and strengthen the construction of the Chinese nation. The Chinese nation is not a simple combination of various nationalities, and the great development of the Chinese nation is not the sum of the development of all ethnic groups. To strengthen the construction of the Chinese nation, it is necessary to strengthen inter-ethnic political integration, dilute the borders, obstacles and barriers of inter-ethnic communication, intensify the identity of homogeneous national citizens, fully explore and utilize the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, and create a common spiritual home of the Chinese nation and all nationalities.

Secondly, we should establish a good ecological governance system in border areas to promote the harmonious and orderly development of the multi-ethnic border areas. The

coordination of ethnic identity and national identity is proportional to the situation of the border governance. We should strengthen social governance in frontier minority areas, adjust measures to local conditions, seek common ground while reserving differences, gradually shift from inter-ethnic governance to regional governance, and promote the coordinated development of regional economy and enhance national identity.

Finally, we should establish a dominant national identity strategy to enhance citizens' awareness of national identity. Nowadays, the world is turbulent, complex and changeable. The end of the Cold War brought about the transformation of the world system, and the third wave of nationalism seemed to make "racism and nationalism" the theme of the international society in "Post-Cold War Era". With the rapid development of globalization, capital has expanded rapidly, and socialization of productivity has reached an unprecedented height. The optimized allocation of resources has promoted technological progress and institutional innovation, which opens a new era of information, big data and network economy. In the international situation, China needs to form and consolidate policies, goals and measures for national identity construction, actively strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other countries, participate in the construction of the global governance system, and express China's position.

In a word, "the Chinese nation is not only an existing nation, but also a nation under constant construction. [7]" Therefore, the construction of the Chinese nation is still on the road, on which road is full of thorns, and the Chinese nation will continue to move forward.

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