



A Powerful Government: The Basic Need for China’s Social Transformation

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Abstract

Ever since the thirty years of reform and opening up, the socialist modernization of China has entered a crucial stage, during which a variety of complex conflicts of interest are bound to affect its social and political stability, thus endangering China’s modernization drive. Combined with China’s actual national conditions and based on the successful experience of other countries in terms of modernization, China’s social transformation needs a strong government, with the assistance of which to ensure the whole society to run smoothly and orderly. Therefore, the basic mission of a strong government is to foster a favorable environment for China’s socialist modernization through bringing the governmental functions into an effective play.

Key words: Powerful government; Modernization; Social transformation; Governmental functions

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INTRODUCTION

“Modernity breeds stability, but modernization process produces unrest.” After the thirty years of reform and opening up, the socialist modernization of China has entered a crucial stage, during which a variety of complex conflicts of interest are bound to affect social and political stability, thus endangering China’s modernization drive.

Combined with China’s actual national conditions and based on the successful experience of other countries in terms of modernization, China’s social transformation needs a strong government, with the assistance of which to ensure the whole society to run smoothly and orderly. Therefore, the basic mission of a strong government is to foster a favorable environment for China’s socialist modernization through bringing the governmental functions into an effective play.

1. THE CONNOTATION OF POWERFUL GOVERNMENT

After World War II, a large number of emerging countries have encountered various problems on the path toward modernization, such as the decline of politics, social unrest and economic stagnation, and so on. Faced with the confusing political and economic situation of the world, Western scholars pioneered to conduct a research on these problems, and thus put forward the theory of powerful government. For example, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington believed that a powerful government should be firstly established to eradicate political turmoil and decedent during the modernization for developing countries, and the building as well as the maintenance of a powerful government is dependent on a powerful political party, whose strength instead of quantity is the first key to measuring its power. Meanwhile, this kind of powerful government also has the ability to balance the participation of political parties and institutionalize government itself.

“The high priority for China is to pursue stability. Without a stable environment, nothing can be done, and even the results that have been achieved will be lost.” The phase of social transformation belongs to a critical stage of China’s modernization when a strong government is urgently needed to intervene and solve those frequent social conflicts. In this sense, the theory of powerful

government put forward by Western scholars will surely be of great significance for China. On the basis of the actual situation in China, the so-called “powerful government” refers to a government with high management capabilities who can effectively maintain a good social order at the sharp and complex social transformation stage, can cope with various challenges at home and abroad, and can mobilize and organize community resources to promote social transformation and social development.

However, in order to better understand the connotation of powerful government, we should differentiate it with omnipotent government. The latter is the government who plays all the social functional roles but with low administrative efficiency; in contrast, a powerful government does not play the functional roles not belonging to itself, but gives them to society and market to play. Besides, it tries to ensure an efficient performance of the functional roles belonging to itself. In addition, a powerful government in the social transformation period also has the spirit of reform and modern consciousness.

2. THE NECESSITY OF BUILDING A POWERFUL GOVERNMENT

Since the socialist modernization of China has entered a crucial stage at which there are frequent social conflicts, complex international and domestic environment during the stage will surely influence the stability of Chinese society and politics, thus jeopardizing China's modernization drive. Therefore, a powerful government is needed for our social transformation to respond flexibly to challenges from domestic and abroad. And the basic mission of this strong government is to build a favorable environment for China's socialist modernization through bringing its functional roles into efficient play.

2.1 Complex International Environment

In the late 20th century, the process of global integration has remarkably sped up, and the economic and social development among all countries in the world influence as well as constrain each other. Therefore, the importance of international environment for China's economic and social development is self-evident. As for the success of China's modernization, it has a high requirement for international environment: stability, sustainable energy supply and equitable international economic order, and so on. However, the current international environment is now witnessing an unprecedented complexity.

2.1.1 Intensified World Political and Military Struggle

In order to maintain their hegemony and obstruct the development of Chinese society, Western countries continuously support Tibetan separatist, East Turkistan separatists, Taiwan independence separatists and other extreme separatists, while taking advantage of China's geopolitical complexities and draw neighboring countries

to stir up troubles. In this way, they try to develop a kind of containment on the part of China. Besides, they also spread Western theories on democracy and freedom of speech in China, making an attempt to stage a peaceful evolution, thus consuming Chinese government's strengths to develop economy and suppressing the rise of the Chinese nation.

2.1.2 Growing Shortage of World Energy

In the era when the Western countries promote modernization, the energy resources in the world are in a “blowout” situation, so that and Western countries have adequate resources and labor to support the country's modernization. Meanwhile, there were only a handful of countries in the pursuit of modernization at that time, so competition among countries in terms of development was obviously lower than now. However, for the present, a large number of emerging countries are making strides forward towards the goal of modernization. In this sense, the demands for energy and resources have seen an unprecedented increase. At the same time, due to the fact that the storage capacity of the world's energy resources is increasingly on the wane, international conflicts caused by the competition for energy are more and more fierce. As for the China, as its reserves of natural resources are not much, it has to import from other countries to support the social development.

2.1.3 Unfair International Economic Order

The current international economic order is dominated by Western countries, so the international rules of economic competition is obviously not conducive to developing countries. Therefore, in order to survive and develop in a complex international environment, China must give full play to and make an effective use of international and domestic factors.

All of the days, the impact of the international environment for China's modernization is very straightforward. Faced with such a complex international environment mentioned above, China must establish a powerful government. Through the full and effective utilization of domestic resources, this government is supposed to improve national cohesion, respond flexibly to the challenges from the international world, thereby safeguarding the interests of the state and providing a peaceful and stable international environment for its modernization.

2.2 Difficult Domestic Environment

2.2.1 Complicated National Circumstances

The first one needs to focus on is the demographic problem. China has a large population base, many new population, and the quality of the population is low. Besides, China has a large rural population, its aging of the population has been accelerated, and the demographic distribution is out of balance. The former Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao once said that a small number could become

a big one once multiplied by 1.3 billion, while a large number could become a small one after divided by 1.3 billion. Indeed, for China, such a large number of people has an amplifying effect on its social conflicts, and it also has a narrowing effect on the development and progress of Chinese society. Therefore, the population problem has become a serious impediment to China's rapid economic development. Followed is the resources problem. China's arable land is limited, which is also on the decline at a faster speed. Furthermore, the pressure from guaranteeing food security is too high. In addition, there is a dire shortage of available natural resources, and exploiting them faces high difficulty, not mention to the low efficiency of resources utilization. The final problem comes to the ecology. Since China has long implemented an extensive mode of economic development, its ecological environment has been deteriorating, causing great damage to the ecological environment. So the function of ecosystem is degradating, natural disasters become more frequent, and disasters are posing greater threats to humans and so on. In short, China's basic national conditions are severely hampering the advance of modernization, offsetting the bonus that modernization has achieved.

2.2.2 Unsmooth Development of Modernization

The Opium War could be regarded as the beginning of China's modernization, but looking back on history, we can see that the real advancement of China's modernization began from the founding of New China, the time when a truly government who was able to manage the whole country was established for the first time after a century of turmoil. Difficult and complex reform calls for a powerful government. "In order to succeed, the reform must be proceed in an orderly manner under rational leadership. Without this condition guaranteed, it will go astray and into a mess. How does the reform take effect?"

2.2.3 Defective Market Economy

China is in a transformational period in terms of socialist market economy at the moment, and the transformation cannot be achieved in a short term. Therefore, China's socialist market economy is immature, has many defects, and cannot make self-development. Moreover, we can witness many areas and fields which are under the impact of the failure of market economy. With a powerful government, market economy could be effectively protected, developed and the defects within could be remedied.

2.2.4 Unbalanced Social Development

An important feature of China's national conditions is unbalanced development. Unbalanced regional development is the first reflection. According to the standard of economic development, the whole China could be divided into eastern, central, northeast and west part, in which the east China enjoys the highest level of development, while the west remains the lowest level.

Apart from this, there are differences in economic policy, the number of population, reserves of resources, and ethnic composition among the four regions. Therefore, a powerful government is needed to coordinate and integrate labor and natural resources in the different regions, thus promoting a coordinated development of regional work. The next is the unbalanced class development. The income gap between different sectors of China is gradually expanding, and contradictions between classes begin to emerge. The final unbalance is in terms of urban and rural development, which is mainly reflected in infrastructure improvement and health care, education, income and so on. Such conditions as infrastructure, public service, public health and education are much better in urban areas than those in rural areas, and there are a majority of rural areas having not resolved the problems of poor access to and high fees in hospital as well as schools. What is more, the overall level of social security is quite low, and rarely covered in rural areas. In this sense, radical development imbalance between urban and rural areas are quite apparent. Last but not least, unbalanced social development will further lead to a widening social gap between the rich and poor, thus increasing social instability.

2.2.5 Frequent Appearance of Corruption

Corruption refers to the fact that civil servants take advantage of their position and go against the laws and regulations in order to seek a variety of material and immaterial benefits. Huntington believes that due to the new sources of wealth and power opened up by social changes, most countries are prone to witness many corruption behaviors in the process of modernization, and corruption is the major illness reducing government's legitimacy and authority. For today's China, owing to the imperfect power supervision system and people's reduced tolerance for corruption, China is still in the phase when high incidence of corruption could be seen, and when individual corruption coexists with group corruption, grassroots corruption coexists with middle-and-high-level corruption, and political corruption coexists with economic corruption as well as institutional and non-institutional corruption coexist with each other. So the situation of anti-corruption in China is extremely grim. According to Professor Hu Angang, China ranks in the world's lower-middle level in terms of cleanness and integrity; if compared with the major countries in the world, China's ranking on the list falls even behind.

2.2.6 Social Ideological Confusion

This year is the 35th year of China's reform and opening up. With the gradual advance of political and economic reform, China is congested with various ideas and ideologies, social morals are on the decline, and egoism, money worship, hedonism prevailed. Things get to the point where voices against Marxism even appear. All these have seriously jeopardize the dominance of China's

socialist core value system. In short, unlike the mature civil society in Western countries, the Chinese society is in the stage of rapid growth. Its society, politics, economy and culture are undergoing a process of cleaning away the old and ushering in the new, in which favorable and unfavorable factors for modernization co-exist. If the government was weak, the whole society would have the risks of losing direction and developing disorderly. Therefore, in the social transformation period, China's government should strongly promote all aspects of society moving in the right direction, timely eliminating hazards, so as to ensure the success of social transformation.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE THEORY FOR CHINESE GOVERNMENT

3.1 Be Powerful in Implementing Major State Policies

For China who is at a crucial stage in the modernization, its government should give a top priority to maintaining the correctness of national policies so as to avoid any mistakes on the road to reform. In fact, if we investigate the real political life in China, we can find that the country's major policies are formulated in the fundamental interests of the country as a whole and of the people; they are in accordance with the national conditions, as well as on the basis of full investigation in each different periods of history. Besides, they are produced through the wisdom of the masses and with the assistance of practical experience in different areas in China. What is more, they are determined in accordance with legal procedures. Therefore, the country's major policies are scientific, practical and instructive, thus they are the policy guidelines for China to promote modernization. Governments at all levels should strictly follow the principles of national policies to develop public policies in each period, and strive to be powerful in the implementation of national policies.

3.2 Be Powerful in Unifying Social Ideologies

As is the often the case that ideology will guide action. China's socialist modernization needs the cohesion of the whole nation's strength, and needing a unified social ideology is the basic premise of achieving China's modernization. Therefore, it is of great importance for China to unify social ideologies and ensure the dominance of socialist core value system. According to "Decisions on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society" published at the sixth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, the basic content of the socialist core value system includes Marxism, common ideal of developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, national spirit with patriotism as the essence, spirit of the times featured by reform and

innovation, and the socialist concept of honor. All these are the quintessence accumulated in the socialist revolution and construction by Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and are the ideological foundation for various ethnic groups to undertake socialist modernization, reflecting the development direction of socialist advanced culture. Hence, at this moment when there is a confusion of ideologies, China's government should vigorously strengthen the education and publicity on socialist core value system, guide social ideologies towards the right direction, and unite the wisdom and strength of the entire nation in the great cause of socialist modernization. In other words, the government should be powerful in the publicity and education on socialist core value system, efficiently unify the ideologies of the whole society, and ensure the stability and security in the field of ideology, so as to avoid any mistakes in socialist modernization.

3.3 Be Powerful in Anti-Corruption and Upholding Integrity

In today's China where the socialist modernization is in full swing, political instability and decadent is unlikely to happen in a short term, but the problem of corruption should be attached great importance to by the Chinese government, which could lead to a loss of government authority and political instability. Therefore, fighting against corruption and upholding integrity is highly essential for China in the new era. As for the reasons for the repeated corruption in China's transformation period, they are not only related to the defects in macro-institutional structures, but also to some of the specific institutional arrangements. Only by successfully finding the particular system contributing to various forms of corruption can we give effective countermeasures. For example, we can rely on institutional innovation to prevent and control corruption from the source, so that the problem will be eradicated totally. To be specific, the first measure is to establish and improve relevant laws and regulations, and never tolerate any corruption. Since harnessing corruption in accordance with the law is a proven effective experience in various countries of the world when they fought against corruption, we should establish and enforce sound anti-corruption laws and regulations, and never tolerate any kind of corruption, so that corrupt officials will not dare to take chances. Second, we should enhance the supervision role of the news media and public opinions, and encourage people to expose corruption. Finally, giving publicity to socialist morals and providing education courses throughout the whole society are also advisable. In this way, we can combine the rule based on virtue and the rule based on law together. In other words, the government should be powerful in maintaining an efficient and clean governmental system.

3.4 Be Powerful in Expanding Political Participation

“One of the most amazing phenomenon of modernization is that it can produce awareness, a growing sense of cohesion, well organization and decisive action among a lot of social forces, and these social forces in the traditional society are just some protoforms of awareness or organization at a fairly low level.” Economic growth, improvement of living and cultural standards, especially the spread of Western values in Chinese society would naturally enhance people’s desire to participate in politics. In Huntington’s view, the political stability of developing countries depends on a powerful government who can absorb new social groups into political life in a timely manner. Thus, during the transformation period of modernization, Chinese government should broaden political participation channels, listen to the voice of the people, and try to be powerful in expanding political participation.

3.5 Be Powerful in Meeting Challenges From Home and Abroad

3.5.1 Ensuring a Stable International Environment

The success of China’s modernization has a higher requirement for international environment. It poses a great test to the capabilities of Chinese government to meet the challenges from the international community and foster a good international environment for the development of its domestic economy. To respond to this, Chinese government should be flexible to change the foreign policy, on the one hand; on the other hand, it should be powerful in dealing with the provocations from neighboring countries, mobilizing all the elements in national competitiveness and reconciling international disputes. In this sense, this government will do no harm to its national dignity and interests, but establish a good international image, and build a stable international environment for the domestic economic development.

3.5.2 Guaranteeing a Harmonious Domestic Environment

The main social problems that China is now facing are widening wealth gap, imbalance of social development,

environmental degradation, decline of social morals, and so on, which are also potential factors affecting China’s social stability. If we do not pay enough attention to them, our domestic social conflicts will be increasingly intense, even undermining the environment for economic development in China. Therefore, in the domestic front, a powerful government is needed to control social conflicts within a certain range through institutional innovation and policy innovation.

CONCLUSION

It can be said that there is no country in the world like China to face such a complicated situation in terms of modernization. China proceeds its reform and modernization under a difficult backdrop of historical problems. All levels of society should recognize that China’s modernization will be a durable and hard work, and only a powerful government can provide a stable and peaceful environment for development, guiding and promoting its socialist modernization.

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