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Party, State and Society: The Core Issue of Party Politics

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Abstract

The issue of relationship among party, state and society is the core problem of party politics. A clear understanding and handling of that relationship is basic requirement of party politics' general principle, also the key to promote the smooth running of party politics.

Key words: Party; State; Society

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INTRODUCTION

The relationships among party, state and society are the three main factors in the operation of modern society. The three each has its different function already connect with each other closely. Party is a political organization with concentrated class interests. The state is power agency engaged in class domination and society management while society is mass movements' field that independent of party and state. (Liu, 2004)

The issue of relationship among party, state and society is core problem of party politics. A clear understanding and handling of that relationship is basic requirement of party politics' general principle, also the key to promote the smooth running of party politics.

1. PARTY AND STATE

Party is closely linked with state and its emergence and development has been connected with the country all

along. Party is the product when the country enters certain stage, also the central link of the effectively running of a modern state. The party considers the pursuit of national power as the primary goal and promotes development of modern democratic politics in the process. It's because modern country wields national power through party that modern democratic politics was called as "party politics". Just as Goodnow pointed

a method must be found to express and implement the state will in order to make government run harmonically ... Such method can not be found within the government system, so we have to turn to the system out of the law besides the government. In fact, we can find it in the party. The party not only takes on the responsibility to select personnel to express state will, namely the membership of the legislature, in government system theory; but also bears the responsibility to choose personnel, namely the executive officers, to implement such will. (Goodnow, 1987)

On the other side, party and state are radically different. Party is "a political organization in certain society groups which a group of people with common political will stay together voluntarily and consider the seizing of political power as the primary goal." (Wang, 2009) The nature of the party is a political organization. However, the state is an institution that manipulated by related personnel. The state is acting as an institution that attaches great importance on violence and compulsory (Hall & Ikenberry, 2007). The nature of state is state power. Differences in nature between party and state determine the differences in functions as well as the object and method of how it fulfills.

The condition that party and state are connected yet differentiate requires us must handle the relationship between them correctly. Jean Blondel pointed out that

Party and government (state) are interdependent with each other more or less. However, we must make appraisal to the other situation: Namely there is no relation between the two. Government is free from party's influence in some aspects and so does the party. (Blondel, 2006)

There are five types of relations between party and state in accordance with party's attitude and understanding to exist state power and combined with different ways of how the party seized state power: Firstly, party—state deviation type. Party deviates from all national requirements and do not identify with legitimate of existing state power with the goal of overturning existing state power and seizing executive position in this type. Such party is illegal, doesn't engage in existing legal order and seizes executive position mainly through violence and revolution accordingly. However, there are exceptions, represented by “nonviolence and noncooperation movements” of Indian national congress. Parties of this type are mainly Communist Party and parties in nationalist countries. Secondly, Party-state dissociates the type Party opposes existing state power and hopes to change the essence of currently country on the one hand and emphasizes on using peaceful and legitimate way to achieve the aim since it is legitimate and engage within existing legal order on the other hand. The communist party in western countries and far-right party is representative ones in such type. Thirdly, party—state substitute type. Party usually becomes ruling one in this type and controls state power. Such party fails to handle relation with state power correctly and exercises functions that should be performed by organs of state power under the influence of the way party seizes state power, namely existing state power emerges after party. Communist parties in Soviet Union and Eastern European countries are representative examples. Fourthly, party—state unity type. The party is not only ruling one but exercising one-party dictatorial rule. All power is concentrated in the leader who ignores the differences between party and state power and confuses the two's functions. Party's organization mixes with state power's organs and the political system of united leadership of party and government was carried. Such type mainly includes Fascist party. Fifthly, party—state interaction type. Party engages in the existing political system, takes part in political participation according to law with the goal of seizing state power or influencing the operation of it. Party and state are interdependent. While the former controls the operation of state, the latter also influences activities of the party. Parties in western developed countries are mainly of such type. The relation between state and country of such type conforms to general regulation of party politics and should be learned by us.

2. PARTY AND SOCIETY

The “society” here does not refer to something general, but only to civil society that corresponds to the political state. Civil society “is a general term that signify society and state originally and synonymous with political society; it denotes society, economic arrangements, rules

and regulations that outside state's control later.” (Miller & Bogdanor, 2001). Party is closely linked with civil society. It derives from and constrains by civil society already has to bases on it. To be specific:

Firstly, party is inevitable outcome of the civil society's development. The process of its development is in fact one that state constantly separates from society during which state power constantly withdraw from society; organization of civil society keeps coming; the authority of politic state continuously constrained by civil social organization and the dual structure of state and society is formed gradually. The development of civil society requires the limitation of state power inherently. However, it should be helped by certain tool and party is such tool exactly. This is because single, dispersive citizens can not withstand national public power's infringement and citizens can only use political rights of association to form party so as to acquire strong power to compete against state and eliminate the infringement of national public power to its own interest.

Political leadership derives from traditional status of government and society in the absence of party. Party, which is a great innovation, is born to be a great threat to political power of privileged class that based on hereditary system, social status or land possession. (Huntington, 2008, p.337)

And competition among different parties is just major impetus to the emergence and development of modern democracy. Just as Hills pointed:

Civil society is not confined to a set of market systems and systems similar to it. Are there other factors that civil society needs? It must have a set of systems that enable it free from state expansion and maintain its identity as civil society except party competition system. It needs parties compete to get support in the regularly held general election which aims to elect representative system legislature. Such institution, once elected, must reserve some autonomy for voters. (Deng, 2005, p.39)

On the other hand, civil society means diversification of interests. Party was needed in order to better express and convene citizens' diversified interests as well as coordinate and process conflicts of interest caused by interest differences. One of party's functions is interest expression and integration.

Secondly, there is direct correlation between party activities' level and scope and civil society's development degree. Huntington pointed out that:

Party organizes political participation. Party system affects expansion speed of politics. The stability and strength of party and party system depend on its level of systematism and political participation. High level participation and low level party system lead to political disorder and violence; on the contrary, low level participation will undermine party's status in the political institution and social forces. (Huntington, 2008, pp.335-336)

And it's development degree of civil society determines party's level of systematism and political participation. Civil society nurtures the emergence of party and provides driving source to promote further

development of it. Civil society is the footstone of modern democracy. The higher development degree of civil society is, the sense of democracy and rule of law of citizens is stronger, the level of political participation is higher and so does the level of political activities and vice versa. Just as Professor Wang Changjiang pointed: “the level of civil society’s development degree determines the level of party modernization. Party and civil society is thus closely connected.” (Wang, 2004, p.102) It’s worth adding that although parties in developing countries are not product of the development of civil society, but outcome of national liberation movement and revolutionary struggle. However, once seizing regime, the activities’ level and scope of these parties are constrained by development degree of domestic civil society. The level of citizens’ political participation tends to be low; social basis of parties usually weak; the level of party activities tends to be low when domestic civil society is immaturity.

It’s showed in the following how the party was frequently used to support rulers with leader charisma. But it signifies nothing in terms of program and principle. It’s completely different from party’s functional role in western countries as connection between government and public. (Mayer, Burnett, & Ogden, 2001, p.379)

Thirdly, party must stand on society to consolidate and expand its social basis. The fact that party comes from society requires it must do as above. Otherwise, party will lose foundation of subsistence and development without social support. Just as Huntington pointed:

A party with massive support is stronger than one with limited support obviously. Similarly, if a party system has extensive mass participation, and the other one is detaching from former supporters owing to its growing political participation and thus degraded to a pinch of uprooted politicians from a political organization with extensive basis, then the former is definitely better than the latter. (Huntington, 2008, p.336)

Therefore, though being representative of parts of social members, party has to take measures to consolidate and expand its society basis and appear as Volkspartei to acquire recognition and support from the public in order to seize and maintain state power. For parties in western countries, whether they can come into power or not depends on quadrennial “general election”. Hence, they must put forward right policies to acquire voters’ recognition and support as well as consolidate and expand its social base to “maximize its ballot” (Hague & Harrop, 2007, p.278). Problem as consolidating and expanding social basis also exists in developing countries’ parties. Although these parties have strong ability of “organization” and “mobilization” in early stage, building social consensus, gaining the largest possible support from the public and achieving the success of national liberation and revolutionary struggle, they will build single-party system which will eliminate the social conditions used to make it success once survived in the struggle. “Once

in power, what motivation will drive it keeps high level of motivation and organization?” (Huntington, 2008, pp.354-355) Given enough time, party will become bureaucratization and its control over state will mainly depend on state machinery rather than support of the public. Its ruling foundation will become shaky and will in danger of losing ruling status. The reason why some big and veteran parties lose its ruling status successively is that they lose the support from the public. Therefore parties in developing countries must also consolidate and expand its social basis.

3. STATE AND SOCIETY

The relationship between state and society is a very important social relation phenomenon in the process of human history. The development of society and state showed an evolutionary process that corresponds to the development of productivity and production relations as well as economic base and superstructure since the formation of society and state. Namely, the development transformed from homogeneous between society and state to binary separation and then to interactive balance. (Zhou, 2006, pp.340-341)

The relationship between the state and society is of great importance. Their different relationship status not only determines the state’s political ideology at that time, but the feature of the whole society. The democratic constitutionalism of the modern society can only form when the state and society are in the state of binary separation and interactive balance. Just like Herder said:

Autonomy principle can not achieve without a solid and independent civil society. But if a democratic state doesn’t provide strong and powerful methods of redistribution (of course, there are also other methods), the democratization of civil society is unlikely to success. (Deng, 1999, p.32)

Therefore, the relationship between state and society only refers to interactive balance relationship between them. It mainly demonstrated in the following two aspects:

Firstly, state derives from society and is the product when society enters certain stage. Both Liberalists and Marxists believe the aforementioned¹. As Engels pointed:

The state is neither a power imposed on society from external nor ‘reality of ethical values’ and ‘image and reality of reason’ as Hegel asserted. Properly speaking, state is the outcome when society develops to a certain stage. The state admits that the society fall into an unsolvable self-contradiction, splits into irreconcilable opposites and unable to shake it off. A kind of

¹ “Both liberalism and Marxism see the origin of country from the perspective of revolution. They asserted the lifestyle of hunting-gathering is obsolete and replaced by innovation of agriculture which defined as “Neolithic Revolution” later thus caused considerable social complexity. Such social complexity which connected with political organization that advanced from clan to tribe brings forth state.” See [America] Hall, J. A., & Ikenberry, G. J. (2007). *The state* (X. H. Shi, Trans., p.25). Jilin Peoples’ Publishing House.

power that above society is needed to make these opposites, namely classes with conflicting interests, does not destroy themselves and society in senseless struggle. Such power should mitigate conflicts and constrains them within “order”; the strength that derives from yet above society and alienated with society gradually is stated.²

In other words, state separate and independent from society. State is inevitable outcome of social development and its independent from society is to comply with the needs of social managements. Because people have a desire that he always wants to beyond the boundary set by legal, and then intervene others field. So the defects resulted and even fall out with others. It seems like the visible defects in the nature and it is also similar to the moral illness that due to excessive enjoyment and shortage or due to other inconsistent behaviors which are not coordinated with other necessary survival conditions. Therefore, the final result is self destruction (Von Humboldt, 1998, p.59). That requires the state must appear on behalf of the social common interests, and exercise social public power, maintain social public order, manage the society. In addition, coordinate the conflicts between different interests in society and solve the contradictions among them in order to promote the cooperation between different social interests as well as avoid their opposition and conflict that may endanger the society’s development and survive. So the society is inseparable from the state, especially when social members have no time and ability to engage in social and public affairs management. The society authorizes state to exercise public power, fulfils the functions of public management, and realization of public interests become more necessary.

Secondly, the state must be subject to society. “The state independent of the society in order to realize the management of it, while the society is to control the state.” (Zhou, 2006, p.285) The state is produced to meet the needs of social development, and the social members authorize the state exercise public power in order to survive and develop better. However, the state has dual characters in exercising the public power. On the one hand, the state positions itself on behalf of universal social interests. And it exercises public power, fulfills social functions, maintains public order, provides various public services to social members and realizes the maximization of public interests finally. As Humboldt pointed out that “the state’s purpose may be twofold. It may promote happiness, or just prevent disadvantages, while in the latter case is to prevent natural disasters and man-made calamity.” (Von Humboldt, 1998, p.37) On the other hand, it is possible that the state abuses the power. If not restricted, anyone who is potent will abuse it which would harm the public interests of the society. This is an

important experience which has been repeatedly proved by the history of human beings. Therefore, the power of state must be limited and must be restricted by the society. The society must also be independent of state and control it. As the Hills said,

civil society requires to restrict the state’s or government’s scope of behaviors, and demands state restricted by the law, but the state should effectively implement the law which could protect the diversity of the civil society and the necessary freedom in the civil society. Civil societies constitute restrictions on the state, they maintain the state, and set boundaries for range and power of national action. (Deng, 1999, p.32)

To be specific, society controls the state by using constitutional set boundaries for the power of state and the civil power, let civil power restrict the state power and then guarantee the realization of citizen rights.

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² *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels (Vol.4)*. (1995, p.170). People’s Publishing House.