

An Analysis of Tullock's "Political Man" Hypothesis —Based on Reflections on the Politics of Bureaucracy

Junhua He

Heilongjiang University, Harbin, Heilongjiang, 150080, China

Abstract: *Gordon Tullock, in his book "bureaucratic politics", illustrates the concept of "political people" to us, and assumes that in a bureaucracy within individual will appears in the face of "political people", are as a "political man" is engaged in the activities. As a result, Mr Tullock then raises the key assumptions of the book - "political man" hypothesis. Combined with Tullock's elaboration, this paper first defines the concept of the hypothesis of "political man", then analyzes the characteristics and roles of individuals under this hypothesis based on the connotation of the hypothesis of "political man", and finally expounds some thoughts on the hypothesis of "political man" based on the Chinese context.*

Keywords: *Gordon Tullock; The "political man" hypothesis; Bureaucratic system*

1. Introduction

The construction of a theoretical system often requires a series of exact premises as the cornerstone, and a theory that is essentially based on an individual should be based on an idealized individual acting according to a pure pattern. The establishment of such a base point can be regarded as the assumption of individual behavior. Gordon Tullock in the bureaucracy of the political setting of "political people" was generally follows such a logic. Nine years of government departments work experience make Mr Tullock understand bureaucracy system, know more about the bureaucratic system, and the study of public choice theory can fully based on the economy—to Mr Tullock individualism behavioral assumptions look the thinking logic of bureaucratic behavior. Because of this, Mr Tullock of the bureaucratic politics to a great extent, is a bureaucracy individuals as a starting point, and through the description of individual behavior and hierarchy relationships will gradually horizon extends to the operation of the bureaucratic organizational level. Such a discourse logic deeply reflects Mr Tullock clear the necessity of individual behavior hypothesis, also gives us the analysis of Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis of more significance.

2. The Concept of "Political Man" Hypothesis

Tullock's understanding of the hypothesis of "political man" is to some extent influenced by the research paradigm of economics, and to some extent can be regarded as an extension of the key hypothesis of the public choice theory that "individuals are self-utility maximizers." "Economists," he notes, "rely on the assumption that people try to maximize their utility in an economic environment." In turn, Mr Tullock is discussed based on the bureaucratic political context focuses on in his mind in the political environment, economic environment and show his research points to the "a thinking of the political environment of utility maximization behavior". Based on Mr Tullock expression and show the characteristics of, we can this economy form as of the individual pursuit of utility maximization is the behaviour of the "economic man", while Mr Tullock is intention in shaping such a political environment has the homogeneity assumption.

Based on the above considerations, Tullock defines a "political man" as a person in a hierarchical organization who has brains, ambition, and a little lack of morality.[1-4] And "political man" hypothesis is the assumption that such a person is the basic unit of the bureaucratic group, and to shape the people's behavior as a bureaucratic system is the basis of operation rules.

3. Individual Characteristics under the Assumption of "Political Man"

As the key premise of Tullock's theory of bureaucracy, the role of the hypothesis of "political man"

lies in laying the foundation of the ideological system, rather than explaining the situation of the real environment, or the hypothesis of "political man" itself does not seek to be verified in reality. Therefore, "political man" under the assumption of individual naturally is idealized, which shows the characteristics of the individual also is an ideal and pure.

(1) Rationality

Under Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis, the individual is rational. In order to explain the concept of rationality, Tullock borrowed a distinguishing idea from economics, that is, people's behavioral motivation can be divided into instrumental motivation and fundamental motivation. If the purpose of action lies in the behavior itself, then the behavior is triggered by the fundamental motivation. So this kind of behavior is caused by instrumental motivation to inspire. On the one hand, although the behavior caused by the fundamental motivation may not be explained by reason because of the obvious tendency of personal value, Tullock believes that such behavior cannot be judged in fact, so it is not necessary to discuss the rationality. On the other hand, for the behavior inspired by instrumental motivation, Tullock believes that such behavior has exact purpose and must go through a series of reasoning, so it can be seen as rational. In this sense, Mr Tullock think that individuals are rational.

(2) Self-interest

Since the sex is under the "political man" hypothesis of Tullock and characteristics of the individual. In the political environment Tullock describes, there is a clear direction for this self-interest, which he refers to as "the will to succeed and move up in the hierarchy." [5-7] It can be said that such self-interest is not oriented by objective results, but focuses on the subjective behavioral motivation of individual "political people", that is, whether the individual's behavior is fundamentally altruistic or self-interested, it is the result of individual driven by self-interest. In other words, the individual "political people" always act in a way that can promote their position.

When we follow the self-interest characteristics of individuals and regard the desire for promotion as an individual's behavioral purpose, the above rational characteristics can be responded here, that is, we can make a statement based on the rationality and self-interest of individuals: individuals from the perspective of "political man" are individuals who carefully calculate for the purpose of achieving promotion.

(3) Immorality

In Tullock's view, individuals under the "political man" assumption are immorality. A negative correlation is expressed as follows: in the political environment, the higher the individual "politician" is, the more doubtful his moral level is. Therefore, the "general moral level" of the "politician" at the top must be quite low. [8]

This thesis is based on the logic: The lack of external control makes the promotion path of the bureaucratic organization may be moral or contrary to morality. When the promotion path is moral, not only the virtuous will act appropriately, but the unvirtuous will also pretend to act in accordance with the requirements for the virtuous. When the promotion path is contrary to morality, the virtuous will obviously be unable to adapt, while the unvirtuous will be able to act contrary to morality. It can be seen that the unvirtuous are more advantageous in the promotion, so the moral level of the final person in the top has to be questioned. As a matter of fact, this is called "political man" without virtue under the assumption of a reflection of individual image.

4. Individual Roles under the "Political Man" Hypothesis

In the Politics of Bureaucracy, Tullock often uses a specific politician as a reference to describe the individual role in the bureaucratic organization based on the hypothesis of "political man", and the political man used for comparison is the reference political man. From the perspective of an established reference politician, all people in the political environment are in a relationship network based on hierarchy, and the differences in positioning and roles determine that individuals in the relationship network play different roles.

(1) Observers and Allies

If the criterion of judgment is whether to directly participate in the struggle to maximize the self-utility of reference politicians, then in Tullock's opinion, individuals who do not directly participate

in this struggle are the watchers.[9] Although the observer does not directly participate in the activities of the reference politician seeking promotion, it still has a general or special influence on the reference politician. The general influence is that the spectator group has largely created the reputation of the reference politician, so it plays a certain role in restricting the reference politician in the moral level. The influence of particularity is related to another special role in the observer group -- the ally. In Tullock's view, the "alliance" between the ally and the reference politician does not refer to the same position, but to the existence of a special relationship between the two sides outside their respective hierarchies.[10] Based on this relationship, to refer to exert influence on political Allies is the special effects. This influence the actual effect depends on each side of the connection between the bureaucracy.

(2) Leadership

Tullock believes that the leader can reward or punish the referent political person, is the referent political person's immediate boss and must please. [11] Under Tullock's hypothesis of "political man", the leader is the most important individual role. The reason is that the leader has the right to reward and punish the reference politician, and the reference politician pursues the maximization of self-utility within the organization, which can be regarded as an attempt to obtain as many rewards as possible, so the leader is the key to the realization of the value of the reference politician. In this sense, the leadership will inevitably become a "political people" assumption that the most important role. In general, if the superior leader tries to impose his personal will on the subordinate without real knowledge of the facts and relevant experience, then it will cause more or less conflict within the bureaucratic organization, even if this conflict may be more potential.[6] But this would never be the case in the bureaucratic organization assumed by Tullock, because subordinates would take the initiative to act in the way that the leader thinks is right without being directed by the leader.

(3) Peers, Courtiers, and Barons

In the world of the "politician," the term "colleague" refers to those who are at the same level and in close organizational position to the reference politician, so that the colleague also often exists as a competitor of the reference politician. [12] In the role of peers, the two extremes of the scale of dependence on leadership create two specific subdivisions, namely the courtier and the baron. The courtier is an individual who completely depends on the leader, and this individual's behavior is directly motivated by pleasing the leader. In contrast to the courtier, the baron's value as a political person does not need to be recognized by the leader, so that the individual actually exists more independently of the leader.

(4) Followers

Still from the point of reference to political people, Mr Tullock believes in the hierarchical and reference to political man at the bottom of the individual is following.[13] The role of followers are able to exist in reference to political people field of vision, because its really with reference to related to the promotion of political people. Correlation in two, one is the followers for the reference of political people dependent with reference to political career appears as positive correlation, and the change of the dependent is an implied role; The second is the scale and efficiency of the followers of the team itself affects the reference to the political relationship with the superior.[14]

5. Reflections on the Hypothesis of "Political Man" Based on Chinese Context

Tullock's understanding of the assumption of "political man" is largely influenced by his experience in American government departments. Although this assumption itself is idealized, perhaps from Tullock's perspective, a bureaucratic system does basically follow this assumption. However, if we further explore the "political man" hypothesis in the context of China, the situation may not be as Tullock thinks.

(1) Partial explanation of the situation in reality

From a practical point of view, Tullock's hypothesis of "political man" can be more or less used to explain the behavioral motivation and actual behavior of a small part of civil servants in our administrative organization, that is, this hypothesis of "political man" has certain explanatory power in the realistic environment of our country. There are two typical public servant behaviors that can be explained, one is aimed at performance, and the other is aimed at superiors. On the one hand, under the current performance appraisal system, the direct purpose of some civil servants' work lies only in the

form of work itself, that is, they pay attention to the performance that can be brought by this form of work, and do not pay attention to the actual utility of the work project to the service object, namely the social public, which presents a short-sighted action and a waste of resources. On the other hand, some civil servants may attempt to gain the preference and favoritism of their superiors by various unreasonable, illegitimate and even illegal means, including but not limited to unprincipled pandering, ingratiating and even various forms of bribery. The direct purpose of the two behaviors listed here is to obtain more "benefits" for oneself as much as possible, which includes not only promotion of position, but also other situations that can benefit oneself. So in that sense, Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis to explain became part of the actual circumstances of a presumption.

(2) Deviation from the fundamental value of what should be

In our country, the logic of state-building naturally requires that the behaviors of administrative organizations and their personnel must conform to specific values, which are directly manifested as the mission of pursuing social development and people's happiness, and in essence, as the public pursuit based on the logic of "the people shape the country." [3] Because of this, the administration of our country must take "the people" as the fundamental value foundation. This kind of ought value orientation has essential difference with Tullock's "political man" hypothesis, or the logic contained in Tullock's "political man" hypothesis deviates from our country's administration value orientation fundamentally. From this perspective, Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis is one-sided and narrow, it can neither corresponds with our country's administrative value orientation, also cannot completely linked to the behavior of the administrative organization and its members. For example, when COVID-19 broke out, the administrative organizations in our country always followed the fundamental principle of "people first", whether in policy design or epidemic prevention practice. The behavior pattern of administrative organizations guided by this principle should not be regarded as the same as the organizational action logic under the assumption of "politicians" in any case.

6. Conclusion

From the point of view of theoretical basis points, Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis can be said to be successful. He used the hypothesis of "political man" to fully describe the typical characteristics and images of bureaucratic individuals and the hierarchical structure in bureaucratic institutions, and based on this, he elaborated the situation and methodology of downward management in bureaucratic systems. Although the hypothesis of "political man" is idealized, the theory of bureaucracy based on it can indeed bring many positive inspirations to people.

From the perspective of reality presumption, Tullock's "political man" hypothesis also has limitations. As mentioned above, the assumption of "political man" is not completely applicable in the Chinese context, and in fact, even if this assumption is discussed in the general reality, its fit may be questioned. Therefore, it is obviously not sufficient to understand the behavior of bureaucrats and the operation of bureaucracies in reality only from the perspective of "political man" hypothesis. This hypothesis can be used as a perspective to view bureaucracies, but cannot be the basis for explaining them.

In short, Mr Tullock "political man" hypothesis as we see bureaucrat individuals and bureaucratic system provides a theoretical thinking. From the perspective of broadening horizons and examining paths, both the hypothesis of "political man" and the bureaucratic operation depicted by Tullock based on it can provide some meaningful references for us to further deepen our understanding of the bureaucratic system.

References

- [1] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012:37.
- [2] Jing Huimin. *Research on Bureaucracy from the Perspective of Public Choice Theory* [D]. Dalian: Master Dissertation of Liaoning Normal University, 2021.
- [3] Zhang Yaqin. *Public Administration: Theoretical origin and Chinese Logic* [J]. *Social Science Research*, 2021(1):123-132.
- [4] Lin Hongxia. *Study on the reform and function transformation of government institutions from the perspective of public choice Theory* [J]. *Special Zone Economy*, 2020(5).
- [5] Frederickson H G, Smith K B, Larimer C W, Licari M J. *The Public Administration Theory Primer*

[M]. Boulder: Westview Press. 2012.

[6] Peters B G. *The Politics of Bureaucracy: A Continuing Saga* [J]. *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 2020, 13(2):213-220.

[7] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 40.

[8] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 31.

[9] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 65.

[10] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012:68-70.

[11] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 72.

[12] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 149.

[13] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 162.

[14] Gordon Tullock. *The Politics of Bureaucracy* [M]. Burke, Zheng Jingsheng, trans. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2012: 163.