

Reflections on the Status Quo of Grassroots Governance and the Modernization of Governance Capacity in the Post-epidemic Era

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Abstract: *The modernization of grassroots governance in the post-epidemic era has attracted the common attention of social groups. However, under the normalization of epidemic prevention and control, grassroots governance has exposed deficiencies and defects. This paper analyzes the current status of grassroots governance by sorting out the Chinese development of grassroots governance and puts forward thoughts and suggestions on the modernization of grassroots governance in the post-epidemic era.*

Keywords: *Post-epidemic era; Grassroots governance; Modernization*

1. Introduction

A research team at the University of Barcelona in Spain detected COVID-19 in wastewater collected in March 2019. A case of unknown pneumonia was reported in Wuhan's Jiangnan District in the spring of 2020. Since then, COVID-19 has spread throughout the country from Wuhan. The COVID-19 virus has continuously evolved and mutated over the past three years. Within a specific range, the public health event of the spread of COVID-19 has occurred uninterrupted. Epidemic prevention and control require grassroots governance in the post-epidemic era. However, COVID-19 has also exposed the shortcomings and deficiencies of grassroots governance. As a result of changes in the internal and external environment post-epidemic, grassroots governance faces unprecedented challenges.

2. The Meaning of the Word "Governance" and Grassroots Governance

The word "governance" comes from the Latin *gubernare*. The original intent was to steer, guide, and govern. It has long been used in conjunction with the word "government", and is mostly used by scholars in the West's political science field. In the 1990s, scholars began using the term "governance" in economics and languages other than English. Scholars from different countries have different views on governance theory [1]. In 1995, Rosenau (J.N.Rosenau) defined governance as the management mechanism of a series of activities [1]. They are activities supported by a common goal, with no formal authority vested in them, not necessarily the government, but they can play an active role in many areas. In 1995, the Global Governance Council published a study, "Our Global Partnership," which defined governance as the sum of how individuals and institutions, public or private, manage their common affairs. It is an ongoing process through which conflicting or different interests can be accommodated, and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions and institutions that have the power to enforce compliance and informal arrangements that people and institutions agree to or consider to be in their interests. In 2001, Chinese scholar Yu Keeping said that governance is the use of authority to maintain order within a given range, and to guide, control, and regulate various activities of citizens and various institutional environments. Governance is the cooperation of multiple subjects. According to the principle of the market, the state is responsible for management to meet the needs of the public [1]. Today, the concept of "governance" is still being extended, and the definition of "governance" is still being debated.

In grassroots governance, grassroots party organizations, governments, social organizations, individuals, and other active subjects deal with public affairs in their communities or streets, adhere to the leadership of the party organizations, and manage public affairs collaboratively and cooperatively to maximize public benefit [1]. In April 2021, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and

the State Council issued the "Opinions on Strengthening Grassroots Governance System and Governance Capability" (hereinafter referred to as "Opinions"). According to the report, "grassroots governance is the cornerstone of national governance" and is fundamental to the country's modernization efforts [2]. "A strong grassroots will make a country strong, and if the grassroots are safe, the world will be safe," said General Secretary Xi Jinping. The modernization of grassroots governance plays a crucial role in improving governance capabilities, and we must do a good job in the basic work of grassroots governance modernization."

3. Chinese Grassroots Governance

The Communist Party of China has been rooted in the grassroots since its inception, establishing revolutionary bases at the grassroots level, encircling cities with rural areas. In the end, the armed regime was seized, and the People's Republic was established, completing the goal of the democratic revolution of anti-imperialist and anti-feudalism and opening up a new era in China.

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In the early 1930s, the Soviet regime was established, and grassroots Soviet regimes were widely established in urban and rural areas. The distinctly democratic Soviet regime expanded the grassroots of the democratic revolution and mobilized the broad masses of the people to participate in the democratic revolution [3]. During the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the Communist Party of China formulated the "Three-Three System" to establish an anti-Japanese national united front, which stipulated that the personnel of the grassroots political power and public opinion organs should be distributed proportionally. Chinese Communists (representing the poor peasants and the working class), non-party leftist progressives (representing the petty bourgeoisie), and middle elements (representing the middle bourgeoisie) each account for one-third. The "Three-Three System" with proportional distribution of representatives inspired the broad masses of the people to participate in the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. It expanded the influence of the Communist Party of China and laid the foundation for forming a political system of multi-party cooperation and joint consultation [3].

In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic, the Chinese economy and society were very backward. At the same time, the Western capitalist camp led by the United States implemented a policy of political isolation, economic blockade, and military sanctions against China to bring down the People's Republic. China learns from the successful experience of the Soviet Union and has prioritized the development of heavy industry to drive China's overall economic development [3]. Under this system, the "unit system" was gradually established, employees were incorporated into each unit community, and the state was unified in management and distribution, forming a distinctive "organizational" feature [4].

From the period of reform and opening up to the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China introduced market mechanisms to regulate the market economy, internal reform, establish a socialist market economy, open to the outside world, attract foreign investment into the domestic market, and promote domestic economic development. The early "highly organized" grassroots society exposed problems such as gradual administrativeization, an overburdened government economy, redundant personnel, and other problems.

Market forces are injected into grassroots governance to alleviate society's growing administrative burdens and mismatch of power and responsibilities. The first property management company in China, Shenzhen Property, was established in 1981, marking the establishment of the Chinese property management market and the involvement of the market in grassroots governance [4].

Since the 18th National Congress of the Party in 2018, remarkable achievements have been made in constructing grassroots democracy with Chinese characteristics. The Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed to "improve the social governance system of co-governance, co-construction and sharing", which profoundly explained the Meaning of "for whom" and "depending on whom". The "Opinions" continued to mention "co-construction, co-governance and sharing" and, at the same time, mentioned the need to "build a grassroots governance community where everyone has responsible, take responsible and enjoyed by everyone" [2]. The Party Central Committee, with General Secretary Xi Jinping at its core, conforms to the requirements of the times and the expectations of the people, further enrich the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics,

and proposes to promote the construction of socialist democracy, and he has repeatedly stressed the need to uphold and improve the grassroots mass self-governance system, develop grassroots democracy, it is the foundation and an important part of the socialist democratic political construction. Grassroots governance should give full play to the party's overall leadership and coordination of the core role of all parties. Give full play to the core leadership role of the party's grassroots organizations in grassroots self-governance, improve grassroots governance mechanisms, and expand democratic channels. Ensure that the people practice democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision by the law, and promote the people's self-involvement, self-service, self-education, self-management, and self-supervision in grassroots public affairs.

4. Status Quo of Grassroots Governance in the Post-epidemic Era

In the post-epidemic era, COVID-19 continues to evolve and mutate, and epidemics continue to occur one after another. COVID-19 must coexist with humans for a long period of time. Therefore, normalized prevention and control are of particular importance. A discussion was held during the inspection of Zhejiang by General Secretary Xi Jinping regarding the importance of external defense against imports and internal defense against rebound and the need to emphasize the prevention and control of epidemics. Always remain vigilant and take precautions. Achieve dynamic zero cases and firmly fight the epidemic prevention and control war.

To prevent rebound, grassroots governance is the main line of defense. The use of grid management to achieve dynamic clearing will significantly impact social and economic development as well as people's work, life, and study. How grassroots governance can achieve dynamic clearing under enormous pressure and ensure the stability and harmony of grassroots society is worthy of our consideration.

4.1 The Predicament of Grassroots Governance in the Post-epidemic Era

The first is the administrative and signalization of grassroots governance. In accordance with the development of the times, grassroots governance is given more responsibilities and responsibilities. The government's dominance in emergency management is an objective requirement. However, grassroots governance assumes too much administrative responsibility in normalized and emergency management. "Insufficient power and responsibilities", "insufficient grassroots governance resources", "many administrative affairs", and "information asymmetry" is pressed on the grassroots governance. Grassroots have high pressure, such as low governance efficiency and poor governance efficiency [5].

The second is that the services provided by grassroots governance are not equal to the needs of the masses [4]. General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China that "socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era." The main contradictions in our society have transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing needs and the imbalanced development of the people's growing needs. "The inefficient energy of grassroots governance cannot meet the high-quality and wide range of needs put forward by the people. Single administrative forces cannot meet the needs of the public while providing basic public services [5]. The quality of social staff is uneven and lacks talent reserves of social work professionals. As another subject of grassroots governance, the public is not high in participation, weak participation, and lack of participation. Considering how much market efficiency and profit, social organizations have been involved too little power in grassroots governance, and it is difficult for grassroots social governance to obtain emerging development forces.

Third, the phenomenon of primary governance is more serious. Various grassroots governance models combine personal interests with public interests. In various grassroots governance systems, personal interests are bundled with public interests. In order to consider public interests, it is necessary to consider the realization of private interests. For example, they may consider economic development more frequently depending on the level of grassroots administration. Investing a large amount of manpower, materials, and financial resources in constructing an economy. The second is the construction of a grassroots society that disregards the integrity of grassroots governance [4]. Splitting private interests from public interests is the primary goal of the social forces of the market. During the prevention and control of the Shanghai epidemic, supplies will be assigned to neighborhood committees, and property will be distributed to residents.

There is a lack of awareness of self-governance among grassroots people, which is one of the main bodies of grassroots governance. Most individuals participating in community governance consider

whether their own interests are being met. Residents always ignored the overall situation, did not listen to advice, and walked around during the epidemic prevention and control period.

Fourth, the intelligent effect of grassroots governance is low. The "Opinions" mentioned "strengthening smart governance capacity building" and implementing the "Internet+grassroots governance" operation to build a grassroots smart governance system [2]. However, the reality is that the focus of the construction of grassroots administrative departments is concentrated on facilities construction, and technology and grassroots services cannot be effectively connected. There are information barriers between the departments, which cannot overcome the "information gap" of the administrative department, between the street community and the government department, and between the street community and the residents. "Internet+grassroots governance" is too focused on the process, the utilization rate of governance is not high, the structure of information exchanges is smooth, and the efficiency of grassroots governance is improved [6].

Fifth, grassroots governance lacks humanistic care. Social subjects are in the same position in social life and enjoy the same development opportunities and power. At the time of the early outbreak, the state decisively adopted the "sealed city" control measures. In the event of a sudden public health incident, it is a timely and necessary method of emergency management that can effectively contain the spread of the disease [5]. After experiencing COVID-19 many times, the city's emergency management level has been improved to a certain extent, and the main body of grassroots social governance can also learn lessons from previous experiences. However, the reality is that to shirk the responsibility of grassroots management, to shirk responsibility, it has adopted simple and rude management methods such as "one-size-fits-all", "layer plus", and "exposing privacy". These programmatic and mechanized working methods violate the fundamental position of "people-centered", and run counter to the fundamental purpose of "serving the people wholeheartedly". During the Shanghai epidemic outbreak, distributing materials in registered residences stabbed the masses' hearts, lacked humanistic care, and intensified the contradiction between the masses and the main body of social governance at the grassroots level.

4.2 The Development of Grassroots Governance in the Post-epidemic Era

After multiple epidemic prevention and control, the level of grassroots governance has been improved. As a result of the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the institutional advantages of socialism, China has made significant progress against the current epidemic. In the governance process, grassroots organization adheres to the interaction and coordination of multiple subjects under the party organization's leadership, the party committee's oversight, and the overall planning of the party and government. It serves as the battle fortress for the grassroots organization. In every epidemic prevention and control effort, many party members at the grassroots level are on the front line, playing a leading role, and encouraging more people to participate. Typically, most of them are members of the party and cadres. To carry out a successful epidemic prevention and control campaign and maintain the health protection line for the people, many have fallen on their posts and practiced how to do so [7]. "Focus on the people's interests and serve the people wholeheartedly."

Grassroots governance is injecting fresh blood. To resolve the shortcomings of grassroots governance, the "Opinions" proposes strengthening grassroots governance teams, promoting the development of neighborhoods and townships streets, establishing a reserve talent pool, and "raising college graduates who will engage in community service [2]." In June 2022, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security issued the "Notice on Doing the Employment of General College Graduates in 2022", it is proposed to absorb college graduates into entrepreneurship and employment in urban and rural communities and improve the level of refinement of urban and rural communities.

5. Post-epidemic Reflections on Grassroots Governance

5.1 Handle the Relationship between the Modernization of the State and the Grassroots Level

In the post-epidemic era, grassroots governance under the risk of composite types must deal with the relationship between national and grassroots governance. Grassroots governance is the cornerstone of national governance. The premise of realizing the modernization of national governance is to achieve the modernization of grassroots governance. Grasp the modernization of the grassroots governance system, clearly realize that grassroots governance must strengthen the function of "party heart gathers and people's hearts" and maintain the long-term Governance of the Communist Party of China. Grassroots

governance is like a "nerve ending". It is the "last mile" of public governance, it is the "source" of community identity to social identity, and social identity goes to the party's identity [8].

To achieve national governance to grassroots governance, the first is to effectively combine national and social governance and use information technologies such as "Internet+" and blockchain to create an innovative cooperation governance system. Avoiding grassroots organizations tends to administrative management in the vertical direction but instead establish a diversified, self-development, self-adjusting governance subject horizontally [6]. Second, the effectiveness of national governance can be enjoyed by the masses. The results of national governments must be felt by the masses promptly so that the masses can see and contact them. In formulating policies, the state is more of a macro-made decision to make decisions [9]. State policies are put on local implementation, and it is impossible to fit the local situation fully. This requires the grassroots to consider the specific and direct needs of the people and to flexibly implement national policies based on adhering to the principles of national policy.

5.2 Introduce Tough Governance to Promote the Modernization of Grassroots Governance

By increasing the resilience of governance actors as well as urban and community systems to severe disasters, toughness governance aims to overcome the ineffectiveness of traditional disaster risk and emergency management models in addressing compound disasters. Efforts should be made to improve the diverse cooperation and governance system as part of tough governance [10]. Create a social participation system based upon party building and social forces, which includes group construction and party building, uniting grassroots party organizations, social organizations, and public social forces, integrating resources from all aspects, and forming a joint force for grassroots social governance.

At the same time, it is also necessary to promote the "enhancement of rights" between the government and society [6]. On the one hand, at the grassroots level, to improve functions and avoid the phenomenon of "inconsistent power and responsibilities", the government needs to give some power at the grassroots level to enhance the ability to allocate grassroots resources. The administrative department shall not submit its own power to the grassroots. On the other hand, society must also "enhancement of rights" the government. Market entities, social forces, and government can relieve the pressure of grassroots governance, enrich grassroots services, improve service quality, and better meet the needs of the masses [8].

5.3 Grassroots Governance Should be Based on "People's Livelihood."

The people are supreme, and the people's happiness is the foundation of the country's success. General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned, "We must adhere to the people's supremacy. As long as it is welcoming and grinning the people, it must be done to the end. The things that people don't like, don't do that!" The fundamental interests of the broadest masses of people should be the starting and the end point of grassroots governance. Achieving the people's longing for a better life is the goal of the modernization of the grassroots governance system. Build an organic and unified grassroots governance system in which the people are the masters of the country and govern according to the law, arouse the people's awareness of participating in grassroots governance, and enhance the sense of participation, gain, happiness, and security among the people.

6. Conclusion

As a result of the post-epidemic era, the modernization of grassroots governance faces many challenges, and it is still in its infancy. In short, we can analyze the path of the development of grassroots governance in China and sort out the predicament of the grassroots level, such as "administrative and single". The services provided by grassroots governance are not equal to the needs of the masses, low lacks humanistic care.

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