

The Dilemma of the Identity Politics and a New Thinking

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Abstract: *The western countries have failed to face the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to economic recession and a large number of death in the middle and lower class. New social issues and existing problems such as the gap of wealth, racial tensions have becoming increasingly fierce. The current identity politics issue is mainly manifested in the "extreme pursuit" of political correctness by liberals, which even leads to criticism of past history and historical figures, and the spread of historical nihilism. The rejection of immigrants by natives, and the deep-rooted Islamophobia of Europe are becoming more intense. Under the case that neoliberalism crisis and anti-globalization trend, the radicalized identity politics movement in the western countries will continue to remains high. At the international level, the new identity politics in The West countries is also combined with the increasingly obvious national nationalism. The wave of anti-globalization, anti-multilateralism and right-wing populism is sweeping in, and the process of globalization is facing great challenges.*

Keywords: *Identity politics, Populism, Citizen politics, Class politics*

1. Introduction

Identity politics is the product of the failures of class politics in western countries after the Second World War. In the past, it has improved society in ways big and small, helped vulnerable groups and fought against inequality. But the root cause of inequality is economic inequality, which is still growing. The most serious deficiency in identity politics is being assimilated by capitalism, weakening its revolutionary nature.

2. Historical Evolution of Identity politics

Scholars from the East and the West have tried to prove that a link between social status and political participation. They intend to demonstrate the rationality of the hierarchy identity and politics have been associated before the 20th century.

In the 1950s, Identity entered the category of social psychology. At the same time, social movements in western countries rose and fell one after another. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, African Americans set off large-scale movements to fight against racial discrimination, and fought for equal political and economic opportunities and equal social rights. The feminist movement also reached a climax. As a result, women not only are allowed to serve in different levels of leadership and no limitation, but also hold more parliamentary seats. The movement has also spread to third world countries. In this period, the civil rights movement was no longer autonomous and spontaneous. The New Left movement, the counterculture movement and the civil rights movement of black Americans, shared common values. Various identity political movements had an effect on each other, and boosted living environment of the disadvantaged groups. In the 1990s, the reality of the situation of immigrants and identity has been paid wide attention to. Social problems arising from immigrants become prominent in many western countries. Immigration is the painful process of leaving behind one culture and way of living so that your children and children's children can enjoy a different future. Many immigrants suffer from a sense of alienation, they demand equal rights at work, education and so on.

Since the 21st century, the identity politics is starting a new trend that with the rise of rights protection of the minority groups, white supremacy take up from where it left off. Right-wing Populists are more organized, have won more seats in Parliament. They use social media information to their advantage, form a sort of social glue. The age of new recruits of right-wing populism showed a trend of getting younger over the designated period of time.

Modern identity politics has two origins. On the one hand, identity politics is the instrument acted as minority groups striving for rights and equality. On the other hand, identity politics replaces class division with identification. According to Huntington, identity politics overrides the civic politics, preaching cultural differences in subjective affirmation and undermining political identity. People have advocated the rights and interests of identity groups with the sub-political multicultural identity. Political citizenship, which generally enforces citizens with the responsibility for the country, has been abandoned^[1].

Compared with traditional identity politics, modern identity politics is more diversified in identity types and emphasizes more features, such as sexual and gender diversity and striving for mainstream society's recognition of its special cultural identity. Recognition is directed at members outside the group, so within the whole society, there is always a "us" and "them" zone. Due to the problems carried over from the past (discrimination and oppression in the past) and the current contradictions, the antagonism and exclusivity of the new identity politics are more obvious, and the distrust and hostility to "others" are more intense. The deep rivalries between different groups are extremely difficult to reconcile because there is no objective norm can measure identity recognition.

The purpose of the identity politics is no longer to promote social progress and equality, demand the legitimate interests and equal rights of vulnerable groups as in the past, but to pursue formalization and advocate complete equality of different groups, which is separated from reality.

There are differences between the different identities is an objective phenomenon such as religion, ethnic and so forth, which is not influenced by people's intentions. For example, in history, the immigrants' home countries endured centuries of exploitation. To fight against the discrimination and oppression, many immigrants preserve their traditional customs, language and religion, they appeal for recognition and respect under the discourse of identity politics. The exclusivity and isolation between identities escalate tension between the minority and the majority, contradictions among the people are escalated, tend to the trend of fragmentation.

Identity politics works very differently from traditional form of political struggle. First of all, identity politics emphasizes respect for different identities related to gender, race and sexual orientation, and requires full respect and recognition for "others" in a weak position. Secondly, under the logic of identity politics, self-identity is established on the basis of certain discourse power, all kinds of discrimination and oppression based on social identity, and the loss and dislocation of minority groups' right to speak. Based on the above two points, the core of identity political is to struggle for discourse power, which is a kind of decentralized micro-power, not discrimination and oppression built on the basis of discourse, so the struggle for discourse power becomes the central field of identity political struggle. Schools, families, cultural institutions, and even social networks and new media have become a major battleground. The way to strive for right is not traditional party politics or violent revolution, but social movements.

Many Western politicians and thinkers have seen the drawbacks of identity politics. Mark Lilla is one of the most consistent critics of identity politics, he even regarded it as "pseudo-politics". American scholar Francis Fukuyama proposed a "national identity of faith" as a response to the crisis of identity politics.

2. The imperfections of identity politics

In order to ensure the harmony and stability in countries and ethnic groups, western countries have implemented the policy of multiculturalism that recognizes cultural differences. Will Kymlicka, one of the representatives of multiculturalism stated that equality and justice not only reflected in terms of individual political rights, but also reflected in the collective cultural rights and individual cultural rights, the cultural demands from minority groups should not be ignored, but be recognized and protected^[2]. According to the views of multiculturalism thinkers, cultural identity of the national state emphasizes collective conformity, which will cause oppression to individual rights.

Rousseau once noted, "When the bonds of social solidarity begin to loosen and the state to weaken, when the interests of the individual begin to be felt and the small societies begin to affect the large; That's when the public interest changes and goes against it." Rousseau and his idea of distinguishing "the will of all" from "general will" overlooks the limits of his time. When a specific group pursues special interests, it will inevitably damage the national interest or collective interest beyond it. When the "the will of all" is cut off from the "general will", the identity of individuals or groups will lead to in-group favoritism and out-group hostility^[3]. Modern identity has shifted from seeking common ground to

seeking difference.

Populism is adept at creating group opposition and has a strong Excludability. Right-wing populism is particularly xenophobic outrage, they have so much trouble with immigrants of different religions and cultures. Most poor white working class adhere to traditional values and traditional concept of religion, reject social change, and blame immigrants for domestic security problems, employment problems, social security and welfare problems. When the traditional culture and values are being undermined, degraded or even marginalized, their fear and hatred arise. Right-wing populists grip the need of the white working class's psychology, repeatedly hype that migration, globalization, Muslim, refugee crisis cause the country's decline, issues such as terrorism and against elite, called for advocating "the voice of the people", now western democracies white population birth rate is low, the Middle East and north Africa immigrants poured in, It is difficult for immigrants to join the society in Europe. The religious tension, the competition for job opportunities between immigrants and lower-middle class white people, the high crime rate of immigrants, and the frequent occurrence of terrorism have become increasingly prominent, which further deepens the misunderstand between native borns and foreigners. Nowadays the network technology develops very rapidly, the mainstream media tend to downplay ideology and class divisions, "information cocoons" offers a selection of news and information to people which are right to their personal preference, strengthening their cognition and thought, strengthen the negative cognition on the minority groups, Shaping the social environment and culture that fosters right-wing populism.

Identity politics completely ignores the disastrous economic consequences of neoliberalism for the working class. In the context of identity politics, although capitalism has serious economic and class inequality, as long as women, ethnic minorities and sexual minorities have their voice to be heard, "capitalist society will become impeccable." [4] In the 21st century, capitalism has changes a lot, the economy has been "financialized, the financial risks are transferred to the whole society. In capitalist countries, the industry hollowing, the rising unemployment, the poverty-returning of the middle class and other problems have brought difficulties to the lives of the middle class and the lower class [5].

Many identity differences, such as race and religion, are difficult to overcome and change. An overemphasis on specific cultural and ethnic differences can potentially block communication. In the process of the evolution of identity politics, the exclusive and instrumental characteristics of identity are common, and the involvement of ideological politics will intensify vicious confrontation and radicalization of identity politics under certain conditions. In the CURRENT BLM movement in the United States, African Americans completely blame the current situation of black people on racism in the American society, but rarely mention the reflection on the problems of black people themselves. When identity becomes a political theme, any political issue involving identity will rapidly ferment, strive to win the support of specific groups, cause ethnic confrontation and social division, and the country's diplomatic activities will also be affected by domestic "public opinion", hindering the process of globalization and multilateral development.

Finally, identity politics is also utilitarian. Just as the immigrants in the past joined the Catholic Church to smoothly integrate into the local environment and use the resources of the Catholic Church. People can decide to change their positions and identities in order to gain profits. In the later stage, identity politics tends to focus on the interests of its own group, ignoring the national interests, public interests and social interests

Identity politics, as a political movement form, is the result of the predicament of western class politics after world War II. In the past, it has been progressive, promoting respect and protection for minorities and achieving equal political rights. But the root cause of inequality is economic inequality, which is still growing. Economic inequality and political polarization are intertwined and reinforcing each other.

As the structural nature of capitalism problems are worsening, trade frictions are on the rise, the epidemic is poorly controlled, migration and refugee crises are intertwined, and western democratic systems are facing difficulties in implementing efficiency and making decisions. Identity politics focuses on cultural criticism, seeks decentralized power, and fails to unite groups that oppose capitalism As Francis Fukuyama sums it up: "What they mean by people is a particular category of people, usually defined by race or ethnicity, and often defined by traditional cultural values or traditional sense of national identity." When the purpose of preserving unique identity goes beyond the requirement of equality, identity politics will bring significant division to the Western society and aggravate the contradictions and opposition among the people.

To sum up, identity politics is not a prescription for a better future. It does not really solve the social problems and political polarization of western countries. On the contrary, identity politics is gradually

getting out of control, breeding tribalism and hostility. There are more political groups, which are culturally, ethnically and politically, are at odds with each other, consuming a great deal of social resources and dismantling the state and society.

3. New method: Marxism and Citizen Politics

3.1 *The new method of Marxism*

Under the context of identity politics, the left-wing movement only pursues the special interests of specific groups, but abandons the universal political planning. On the premise of failing to fundamentally change the social class structure, it overemphasizes the special interests of specific groups, but strengthens the internal division of the working class. As Eric Hobsbawm said, identity politics is "not for everyone in nature, but for members of a particular group", leading to the inability to form a "common interest across local boundaries" ^[6]. The identity politics did not touch on criticism of economic exploitation and prevented groups from working together. Race, gender, and sexual orientation are seen as intrinsic attributes that are deeply ingrained, self-shaping, and self-legitimizing. This concession not only reinforces the binary opposition of class and identity, but also leads to a stifled political imagination in which identity-based politics can only be conceptualized within the logic of liberal capitalism ^[7].

Antonio Negri argued with Harvey that identity struggles could not pose a threat to capitalism as a whole, because "we can imagine capitalism without these forms of identity, but we cannot imagine capitalism without classes." ^[8] Ellen Meiksins Wood criticizes that identity politics has weakened the revolutionary edge of left-wing politics by "drowning class in the diversity of 'interests' or 'identities'" because "class exploitation is a component of capitalism, but gender or racial inequality is not."

Francis Fukuyama saw the importance of economy, and he believed that in order to solve the dilemma of identity politics, we must start from the economic field and pay attention to the reform and adjustment of economic issues such as employment opportunities, welfare level and distribution policy.

At the same time, people should attach importance to class discourse. Only by returning to class identity and class issues, and realizing the unity of working class with different social identities on the basis of class identity. People should get rid of the dualistic dilemma of "identity politics-reverse identity politics" and emerged from the right-wing populism. Despite the impact of the financial crisis and COVID-19, many western scholars have returned to Marxism. The influence of class discourse continues to rise in western democratic countries. As far as the current situation is concerned, western society has entered a highly "post-industrial" era, and class politics with the working class as the political subject is still relatively marginalized on the whole.

3.2 *Reentry Citizen Politics*

Back in 2004, Huntington's book "*who is American?*" set out from a liberal standpoint, argues that the identity split caused by identity politics has torn the American society and weakened or worse, even destroyed the united national identity. Huntington regarded the construction of citizenship as the basis of the general national identity, he emphasizes the establishment of an "American faith" based on the principles of "freedom, equality, people, civil rights, non-discrimination and the rule of law".

Francis Fukuyama proposed a "creedal national identity" to resolve the crisis of identity politics. He summarized that the left wing used identity politics and multiculturalism to pursue equality, but left-wing radicals ignored the traditional working class and gradually shifted the focus from seeking welfare for the working class to expanding the rights of minority groups. He argues that "Governments and civil society groups must focus on integrating smaller groups into larger wholes. Democracies need to promote what political scientists call "creedal national identities," which are built not around shared personal characteristics, lived experiences, historical ties, or religious convictions but rather around core values and beliefs. The idea is to encourage citizens to identify with their countries' foundational ideals and use public policies to deliberately assimilate newcomers."

The Citizen Politics requires not only actions at the national level, but also the Internet and new media resources to counter populists and racists. Identity has always existed, and identity politics has always existed. We cannot try to eliminate the differences in identity, but only face them directly. Inclusive society needs to be rebuilt, with ethnic consensus attached to national consensus and civic identity.

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