

Political and Social Changes and Ecological Environment Evolution in Modern Times in China

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Abstract—From the perspective of political and social changes, the paper scans the evolution of the ecological environment in modern times in China, with profound historical coordinates of the political and social revolution, based on the characteristics of Chinese modern political and social development, the research content is divided into three periods to respectively discuss the influences of political and social evolution on the environment in different periods. To be specific, it refers to the stirring political and social changes in the period of late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, the large-scale political and social movements in the 30 years after the founding of New China and the destruction of the ecological environment, the huge political and social changes leading to the crisis of the ecological environment since the reform and opening up. Then the paper approaches the subject from the evolutions of the ecological environment under the conditions of Political and social changes.

Index Terms—Political and social changes, ecological environment evolution, political civilization, ecological civilization.

I. INTRODUCTION

At present, the ecological environment crisis is spreading, and it has posed a serious threat to human health and social development. In 1962, American Marine biologist Rachel Carson published a book called “silent spring”, revealing the dangers of DDT and other pesticides on the environment, which is one of the most important work that, for the first time, focused on ecological environment problems. The book notes, “The history of the lives on earth has been a history of interactions between living things and their surroundings” [1]. “Silent spring” can often be seen as the beginning of the modern eco-environmental movement. The publication of the book led to the foundation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the folk environmental NGOs, and at the same time it also caused the discussion about the environmental protection all over the world, which opened the academia to the studies of environmental protection.

The development of the modern machine big industry, especially the rapid development of science and technology and its wide application in the field of economic and social, has brought the growing material wealth and spiritual wealth for human beings, and at the same time, it also greatly promotes the economic, cultural and social prosperity and progress. However, when we sincerely praise the great achievements of science and technology civilization, we must

also see clearly that the double-edged effect of industrial civilization is becoming increasingly prominent, and it provides the huge material benefits for human beings, and also destroys a natural original ecological balance ruthlessly. The survival of humans have done serious damage to natural ecological environment, and the survival of mankind is also faced with serious crisis of resources drying up, vegetation destruction, forest demolish, environmental pollution, which are increasingly becoming serious threatens to human survival and development, and have transcended the geographical and ideological barriers and become the plight of human survival and development.

Since the late Qing Dynasty, profound historical changes have taken place in politics and society in modern times in China, and the evolution of the ecological environment different from traditional society has also begun to occur. The three periods are the period of the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, 30 years since the founding of New China, the period since reform and opening. From the perspective of methodology, this paper will study Politics, sociology, economics, ecology, environment science, philosophy of science and technology, and other disciplines. The paper tries to reveal the dynamic interaction law between the ecological environment and the political and social changes, by analyzing the relevant social background, political and social changes, the conditions of ecological environment, and the rational and irrational factors affecting she political and social changes.

II. THE STIRRING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE PERIOD OF LATE QING DYNASTY AND THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The stirring political and social changes in the period of late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China changed the ecological environment. From the historical background of the traditional farming civilized society, the paper discusses the basic characteristics of the traditional farming civilization, modern industrial development in China, and stirring political and social changes in modern times in China. The author believes that the traditional farming civilized society in China, characterized by “intensive cultivation” and “diverse intersection”, combined with the traditional not only creates the brilliant material achievements, but also shows strong vitality of ecological environmental protection. But in the context of “malaise” era, industrialization has been developing rapidly during, China’s modern political and social changes are stirring, and during the period of late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China the development of industrialization was rapid, foreign powers’ invasion began

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and war disasters occurred frequently. In this period, China showed the characteristics of “all kinds of frequent natural disasters”, “resource exploitation in low level” and “serious man-made destruction”.

Specifically, during the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China and in the context of the historical intersection and collision between the Eastern and Western civilizations, China’s political tumulted and lacked political authority, the social development status was in a disorderly spontaneous combined with the natural economy. In the background of the pursuit of “strength and wealth” in Westernization Movement and the reform movement of the late Qing government’s “top-down” Reformation Movement, modern Western scientific and technological means and industrialized production methods were actively brought in, which made modern Chinese industry developed rapidly, making natural ecological environment changed gradually and the damage in some areas were more serious. In a certain sense, the foreign powers’ aggression and plunder in China and the frequent tragedies of war can be seen as the main reason for the destruction of the ecological environment.

Modern industry in the late Qing Dynasty and the period of the republic of China obtained the huge development, foreign powers plundered China’s natural resources, and wars frequently broke out, which brought the huge impacts and endless disasters to the Chinese modern natural ecological environment. Cotton textile industry, SaoSi industry, flour industry and other industry enterprises as well as paper mills, tanneries, power plant, dyeing factory set up factories in promoting economic and social development at the same time, brought profound changes to the environment. A large amount of untreated waste water, waste gas and waste residue (hereinafter referred to as “industrial three wastes”) were released in the industrial production, they and other hazardous waste seriously destroyed the original ecological balances between nature, and brought great harm to the natural resources and the development of agricultural production. At the same time, because the modern industrial enterprises with the characters of low levels of science and technology, the simple and crude equipment, the sole technology etc., are responsible for a large number of resources wastes and serious environmental pollution. Furthermore, since modern times, foreign powers invaded China gradually, they realized the effective control of China and exploded and plundered natural resources crazily by force. This not only brought severe suffering to the people living in society, but also brought serious damage to the ecological environment and natural resources.

However, during the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, the people were poor and the country was broken, so people did not just talk about the ecological and environmental protection, and there was no awareness of the ecological and environmental protection, and people did even not really take the long-term interests of the protection of the ecological environment into account. Therefore, in essence, if there were environmental behaviors, that could only be said for maintaining the survival instinct in this period. For example, during the war, when facing resources and increasing environmental destruction, the NUC District Government and the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region

Government had taken various measures in order to coordinate the relationship between economic construction, resource utilization and environmental protection, and achieved good social effects.

III. THE LARGE-SCALE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE 30 YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF NEW CHINA AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

Then, I’ll focus on the large-scale political and social movements in the 30 years after the founding of New China and the destruction of the ecological environment. During this period, the development of Chinese society underwent profound institutional changes, and the social development foundation was weak, political and social changes had a strong ideal. Construction of about seven years after the founding of New China, the socialist system in China was quickly established, and China gradually established socialist public ownership and a highly centralized planned economic system. However, the historical experience of the victory of the revolution and the ideals of communism brought too much self-confidence, which leads to the blind, large-scale and warfare political social changes. In the conditions of the planned economic system, political authority was hugely magnified, and the development and construction of the warfare seriously damaged the ecological environment. In the the ideological fanaticism era, from 1958, the mighty “Great Leap Forward”, the People’s Commune Movement and the “Great Cultural Revolution” started in succession. As Deng Xiaoping said, “completely contrary to the objective reality, hot-headed, people want ultra-high-speed development, which brought great disaster to the ecological environment in China. “It took us three years to correct the error before the sound up”. However, the guiding ideology of the “left” did not eradicate, the “Great Cultural Revolution” in ten years made the Chinese people eat suffered a lot, which delayed China foe ten years. Overall, in 30 years after the founding of New China, the overall state of the ecological environment continued deterioration, which mainly damaged ecology and in the local area environmental pollution was serious.

Facing prominent ecological disasters, the ecological and environmental protection started difficultly, but there was good ideological foundation, which is mainly reflected in the emphasis of the central collective leadership on environmental protection issues, and which was actively promoted by the World Environment and Development Conference. The reason why it had a tough start is mainly that in the early days of New China, our country was eager to build national economic from the ruins left by years of war, combined with the lack of understanding of environmental issues. Especially under the influence of “leftist” and rigid thinking, ecological and environmental problems were often seen as a unique product of capitalism and socialism did not exist the problem of environmental pollution, thus taking a standing on the sidelines, the negative attitude of narcissism, leading to the loss of good environmental governance opportunity to cast a diehard environmental pollution passive situation. Thinking of environmental protection of late awareness and fast start as well as the institutional safeguards

of the initial environmental policies and measures effectively delayed the continued deterioration of the ecological environment overall.

The whole economic and social operation was severely damaged under the control of the Kuomintang government in the eve of liberation, and the semi-colonial and semi-feudal economy under Kuomintang's rule was on the verge of collapse. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China's urban development has been badly damaged due to its failure to paying full attention to the development planning of the city and its policy guidance in urban construction. In this period, people also presented a series of city development slogans, such as "transfer consumption cities for production cities", "first make, then live," and so on. In the influence of such slogans, many ancient historical and cultural cities also actively joined in the production and construction, building a batch of heavily polluting industrial enterprises in succession, thus increased the burden of urban society, led to a serious deterioration of urban living environment. The consequences were dangerous. Meanwhile, the cities' detailed and comprehensive overall planning work was delayed, causing the construction of the overall city layout was chaotic. The unreasonable construction projects were built without argument, ignored the infrastructure construction, and did not consider the city space layout and relevant work of the construction and utilization of clean energy, unusually sharpening urban environmental problems. At the same time, during the "cultural revolution", the destruction of the city and its culture was also disastrous [2].

During this period, Chinese society in the changes of the political ideals realized the "double deprivation", namely deprivations of the land of the landlords and capitalists capital, and had "Great Leap Forward", the people's commune movement and the "Cultural Revolution" due to ideological fanaticism which ruthlessly destructed the ecological environment and wantonly deprived the natural resources, which made the fragile ecological environment once again face a grave disaster.

IV. THE HUGE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES LEADING TO THE CRISIS OF THE ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT SINCE THE REFORM AND OPENING UP IN CHINA

In this part, I'll emphasize the huge political and social changes leading to the crisis of the ecological environment since the reform and opening up. In 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the party achieved a great historical turning in contemporary China, and the CPC Central Committee made a strategic decision "by shifting our focus to socialist modernization" and brought the policy of reform and opening up into force, so Chinese society has undergone unprecedented, extensive and profound political and social changes. Implementation of the household contract responsibility system, the initial formation of the full range, multi-level and wide-ranging opening up momentum, the initial formation of the economic development pattern of the diverse forms of ownership, the gradual establishment of the socialist market economic system, and the great changes of the ideological and cultural clearly reflect the

characteristics of the times in this period. Since the reform and opening up, the construction of the "four modernizations", including the rapid development of industrialization, an increasingly accelerated urbanization, increasingly prosperous marketization and more widely open globalization, has a great effect on the ecological and environmental problems yet resuming. Chinese industrial continued growing at about 10% per year on average, greatly improving the overall strength of China's industry, and it was the fastest and the most obviously effective period of industrialization. China has become one of the world's largest industrial producers, both in terms of output and output in the fields of major industrial products, and it is the world's manufacturing hub or the "workshop of the world" that is emerging. The emergence of township enterprises is a distinctive feature of this period, and the great development of township enterprises has promoted the whole process of China's industrialization. When Deng Xiaoping talked with foreign friends in 1987, he used the term of "meteoric rise" to describe the rise of township enterprises, and he said happily: "In the rural reform, we didn't absolutely anticipate the fact that the biggest harvest was the development of township enterprises, and a variety of industries suddenly came up, starting commodity economy, and starting all kinds of small businesses, meteoric rise." [3] However, in the meantime, the rapid development of township enterprises has caused the pollution of the ecological environment to spread rapidly to rural areas, and the scope of ecological damage has been greatly increased. Today, the growing ecological environment and the growing population problem are becoming the bottleneck that hinders China's economic and social development. With the promotion of urbanization, a large number of labor forces are flooding into the cities, and the urban economy has achieved rapid growth. Although the urbanization process has many promoting effects on China's economy, its analysis of environmental quality is not negligible. With the expansion of urban space layouts, the demands for soil and water resources in cities have increased sharply, resulting in a large number of resource shortages and ecological damage problems. The production and life in cities also put serious pressure on the urban ecological system with the discharge of a large amount of waste, which is beyond purification ability of nature, resulting in the serious problems of environmental pollution.

American famous ecological theologians Thomas Berry said, "GDP growth will eventually make the earth into a wasteland" [4]. With the development of advanced science and technology, industrial engineering and developed commercial network, the development of modern society to the arrogance of the natural world has come to a surprising degree. The causes of this situation are based on the presuppose that the human is the supreme reality, so all other existing things are in the service of mankind. The supreme laws of the preset economics is to grab as much processable natural resources as possible, and by means of the consumer economy as soon as possible, making it to be garbage in garbage in the end. Because people think, the more natural resources is consumed in this way, the greater the GDP is. And thus human is more successful, even if the ultimate consequences of this economic program is to make the entire

planet to be a wasteland. Thomas Berry thought that all the words which because of the fear of nature, praising the integrity of the inner natural world or divine brilliance, human constrain their behaviors, is considered unacceptable romantic fantasy [5].

However, it is gratifying that with the upgrading of the rational degree of the ruling party ideology and scientific and technological progress, China's ecological environment construction has gone through a twists turns of coexistence of "breaking" and "building". The enhancement of leadership collective wisdom and the establishment of the concept of ecological civilization, the favorable international environment exchanges and the recognition of the concept of sustainable development, the setting of the national environmental agency, the introduction of environmental protection policies and the formulation of related laws and other factors together, are the key to ecological environment construction going on a health, good development road.

V. THE EVOLUTIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

Last but not least, I have to say that since Modern Times, political and social changes have been agitated, and the evolutions of the ecological environment have been dramatic. During the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, regime changed a lot, and the government lacked the necessary political authority, in the case of natural economic system still dominant, the damages to the ecology caused by the behaviors of human were spontaneous. However, the development of modern industry, to a certain extent, foreign powers' plunder and disasters of war occurring frequently led to the ecological environment changes, some areas showing catastrophic damages, which was difficult to restore. In 30 years after the founding of New China, in the dominance of political and social ideals of ideological fanaticism and overconfidence, large-scale political and social changes in the planned economic system made the ecological environment suffered from serious destruction in large areas. The social and political development is relatively stable since the reform and opening up, the ownership structure is not undergoing a fundamental changes. However, the comprehensive pursue economic development mode taking economic construction as the center and taking the total GDP for standard make an unprecedented destruction of the ecological environment. The "market failure" and "government failure" in the protection of the ecological environment seriously highlight. The government are facing the dual pressures between promoting economic and social development and improving the ecological environment construction.

To some extent, the inducement of "tragedy of the commons" leading the ecological environment crisis, such as excessive deforestation, pasture overgrazing, overfishing of the oceans, indiscriminate discharge of pollutants, or even serious groundwater pollution, is closely connected with it. In summary, all of these are nothing more than the failure of the management driven by economic interests, eventually lead to the collapse of public property which is the cradle of human existence [6].

By the influence of the traditional one-sided view of development which is the "development is economic growth", for a long time, China's governments' achievements appraisal and evaluation for all authorities are too focused on the economic indicators such as GDP, which leads to the government putting great enthusiasm on economic development, and lacking responsibility for a series of the ecological environment protection and sustainable development that should be linked to population, resources and environment, and many other important things. In this case, the competition between local governments tends to be plagued by the "prisoner's dilemma" in the process of game, and under the pressure of competition between local governments, they finally go against each other more intensely, which, in the eyes of Cumber Rand, may be called "destructive competition" [7].

VI. CONCLUSION

To sum up, political issues, economic issues and environmental issues are in fact closely linked together, which is a problem overall. In order to protect the ecological environment, we must change the mode of economic development, and political civilization also needs to be improved. In the future, China should rely on the construction of political civilization to improve the ecological environment, and the growing demand of the synchronization building in the field of political civilization and ecological civilization is being highlighted increasingly.

In short, the history of modern Chinese political and social changes and ecological environment evolution show that China's "tragedy of the commons" and "prisoner's dilemma" in China's environmental governance is the result of the political civilization and ecological civilization construction deviating. Therefore, in the aspect of protecting and improving the ecological environment, we should first raise the degree of recognition for "ecological civilization" of the ruling party's "ideology", implement the institution of the leadership cadres environmental protection one card ruling, establish a more widely open platform for environmental protection supervision, strengthen environmental protection legislative and enforcement capabilities, focusing on the coordination of the executive power and judicial power in environmental protection, maximize the ability of the government managing ecological environment and the whole society concerning the environmental protection work and supervision, and achieve synchronous development and positive interaction of political civilization and ecological civilization.

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