

Rational Reflection in the Post-epidemic Era: Institutional Advantages and Improvement of Governance Efficiency

Miaomiao Qiao*

Northwest University of Political Science and Law, Xi'an 710063, Shannxi Province, China

*Corresponding author: Miaomiao Qiao, 1004906444@qq.com

Abstract: Currently, the national epidemic prevention and control is still facing the challenges of secondary risk stacking, coordinated optimization of multi-party governance resources, and effective conversion of normal and abnormal conditions. Therefore, systematic thinking should be established in the normalized precision prevention and control and local emergency response, prevention and control should be implemented in accordance with the law, and source governance should be strengthened so as to overcome the risk challenges and improve governance efficiency.

Keywords: Epidemic prevention and control; Institutional advantages; Governance effectiveness

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1. Introduction

The socialist system with Chinese characteristics is a scientific system formed by the party and the people in long-term practice and exploration. All work and activities of state governance are carried out in accordance with the socialist system with Chinese characteristics. This includes not only work and activities under normal conditions, but also work and activities under abnormal conditions. Fighting the epidemic is an abnormal form of work and activity. The system and governance capabilities of a country are often tested in response to risks and challenges surpassing the tests under normalization. Compared with the epidemic situation in other countries, this “big challenge” has reflected the superiority and strong vitality of China’s institutional advantages and national governance system. It will be an important research topic to explain the appearance of system advantages and the transformation of governance efficiency from the perspective of the unity of political and academic rationality, and the unity of value and knowledge.

2. Institutional advantages: China’s basic experience in defeating the epidemic

2.1. Centralized and unified leadership of the party

Modern China that embodies historical changes lasting for a century, especially the practice of social development since the founding of the People’s Republic of China 70 years ago, has proven that “the party leads everything, ranging from the party, the government, the military, the civic studies, to the east, the west, the north and the south.” Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics has adhered to the party’s centralized and unified leadership. Under the leadership of the Party Central Committee and the State Council, relevant departments at all levels perform their duties to ensure that the epidemic prevention and control work can

be carried out vigorously and orderly ^[1].

2.2. People-centered value adherence

The fundamental difference between socialism and capitalism is that socialism is based on both society and people as the society refers to the communities of people that are social creatures, whereas capitalism is based on the capital-based pursuit of profit maximization. The Communist Party of China is a political party that is guided by Marxism and takes the realization of communism as its lofty ideal. It is a party that serves and seeks happiness for the people wholeheartedly. During the epidemic, the general requirements of “to help each other, strengthen confidence, scientific prevention and control, and precise policy implementation” were put forward.

2.3. Advocating the role of the government in the health of citizens

Since the outbreak of the epidemic, China’s open, transparent, and responsible attitude towards the epidemic and its responsibility as a major power have been praised by the international communities. China has always practiced the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind. The government has timely and accurately released epidemic information, actively shared prevention, control and treatment experience with WHO and other countries, and provided humanitarian assistance to other countries and regions in need.

3. Challenges facing the improvement of governance efficiency

3.1. Challenge of secondary risk stacking

In this epidemic, it can be found that once an epidemic breaks out in one area, the entire associated area is facing a escalating risk of epidemic, and any region or country’s ineffective anti-epidemic measures will affect the development of the global epidemic. Owing to the dynamics and openness of globalization, the epidemic has become extremely easy to expand and eventually out of control. The difficulty of understanding and predicting epidemic risks will increase significantly in an uncertain environment. Secondary risks such as enterprise survival risks, public safety risks, public opinion risks, and environmental pollution pose huge challenges to epidemic prevention and control and emergency response.

3.2. Challenges of collaborative optimization of multi-party governance resources

This epidemic is infested with many battles stemming from relevant prevention and control departments, conflicts of prevention and control measures, poor communication between the superior and the same level, single-level prevention and control methods, lack of interaction between different organizations and groups, and the low overall prevention and control effectiveness. The first is in the power structure. There are many order-issuing departments but too few specific departments that handle order implementation, and the functions among certain departments seem to be overlapping; therefore, prevarication has occurred from time to time. Second, in the distribution of responsibilities, “territorial management” is still obvious, and supervisors’ responsibilities are weakened and evaded, and the delegation of tasks is fragmented. Third, the inefficient flow of information across departments affects the prevention of the epidemic and the joint actions of various entities. The contingency plans among the various entities generally lack comprehensiveness, coordination and professionalism.

3.3. Challenge of effective transformation between normal and abnormal conditions

How to balance the relationship between normalized national and local governance and abnormal public health emergencies is also a challenge for governance in the future. At present, the legal system for the transition between the two in China is still not sound; the two key links of prevention, control and treatment

still lack effective institutional guarantees; a sound and perfect public health emergency management system remains to be established. Whether from the combination of the top-level design of the macro governance and the micro governance measures, or the normalized governance and abnormal crisis governance transitions, it is a key link to test the sustainability of governance.

4. Basic path to improve governance efficiency

To make the system more mature and finalized, it is important to improve the national governance system and the country's governance capabilities. The perfection and finalization of the system itself is a dynamic process, and the modernization of the governance system and governance capabilities is also a dynamic process. It cannot be accomplished overnight, nor can it be done once and for all. In response to the shortcomings and deficiencies exposed in this epidemic, we should pay close attention to the shortcomings, plug the loopholes, and analyze the strengths and weaknesses. We should insist on persistence, perfection, establishment and implementation. The prevention and control system and mechanism of major epidemics as well as the national public health emergency management system should be improved. Transforming the institutional advantages of fighting the epidemic into governance efficiency will ultimately be implemented in all aspects of prevention, control and governance ^[2].

4.1. Establishing system thinking

“System governance is the specific application of Marxist state theory and modern system science, and it is the basis and key to promoting the modernization of the national governance system and governance capabilities, and improving governance efficiency ^[3].” The scientific, critical and collaborative nature of major epidemic prevention and control in the post-epidemic era requires systematic governance. The power distribution and functional structure in system governance directly determine the effect of system governance. This epidemic prevention and control have already begun to show the operation mode of systematic governance. The systematic governance in the normalized epidemic prevention and control in the future are highlighted, and China's institutional advantages are transformed into governance synergy.

One is to continue to uphold the party's centralized and unified leadership. System governance is inseparable from the fundamental political guarantee of party leadership. It is necessary to continue to give play to the unique advantages of the Communist Party of China in commanding the overall situation, organizing and coordinating, and mobilizing strong execution capabilities. The second is to continue to play the main governance role of the government. The government assumes the responsibility for decision-making and deployment of major public crises, implements various emergency prevention and control measures, implements the release of epidemic information in accordance with the law, strengthens market supervision and promotes economic recovery, and guarantees the normal production and life of the people. The third is to promote the participation of grassroots society. This is a key part of systematic governance. It encourages and supports the people's social participation in governance, gives full play to the people's sense of ownership, and unifies the people. In this way, the positive interaction between the government and the society stimulates the vitality of social governance so as to realize the cooperation and co-governance between the government and society under the leadership of the party in the post-epidemic era.

4.2. Implementing prevention and control according to law

Prevention and control according to law is the specific application of the comprehensive rule of law in the prevention and control of the epidemic, and it is an inherent requirement for ensuring and serving the normalization of epidemic prevention and control and improving the effectiveness of the rule of law. The basic strategy of comprehensively governing the country by law requires that major epidemics be implemented in accordance with the law to prevent and control, and public health emergency management

is maintained based on the law. At present, it is necessary to focus on advancing governance according to the law in three aspects: legislation, law enforcement, and law popularization.

First, build a national legal and regulatory system on biosafety. The national prevention, control and governance of biosafety risk should be focused on, and a national biosafety legal and regulatory system should be established. Second, promote law enforcement capabilities. The vitality of the system lies in its implementation. The key to preventing and controlling in accordance with the law lies in whether it can enhance law enforcement and justice. It is particularly important to implement the public crisis assessment system, initiate decision-making in accordance with the law, strictly implement prevention and control measures, and increase law enforcement and judicial efforts for harmful prevention and control behaviors. Severely crack down on illegal and criminal acts that endanger the normalization of epidemic prevention and control. Local governments and relevant departments must accurately report and release the epidemic in accordance with legal procedures, methods and time limits. Finally, strengthen publicity for prevention and control in accordance with the law. It's important to deeply consolidate the responsibility of grassroots population and education for law-based prevention and control, enhance the legal awareness and legal thinking of the grassroots, as well as explain the development trend of the epidemic and the legal basis for prevention and control measures.

4.3. Strengthening source governance

Source governance is an ideal method of materialist dialectics that uses the law of quality mutual change and bottom-line thinking in normalized epidemic prevention and control. To strengthen governance at the source, it is necessary to treat both the symptoms and the root causes, with a special emphasis on the latter. It's necessary to highlight the source, grassroots, and innovative nature of source prevention and control. To solve the problem of why and how to eradicate it, discovering and solving problems at the source is the primary task, sorting out who is the first in the governance work, distinguishing the priorities of various issues, and clarifying the sample relationship of each element are essential.

First of all, prevention is prioritized. Prevention of major public health events is the most economical and effective strategy. It's necessary to resolutely implement the policy by prioritizing prevention and combining prevention and treatment, mobilize the frontier of prevention, establish a centralized, unified and efficient emergency command system, and improve the public health risk research, evaluation, and decision-making mechanisms. The gist is to prevent the minor diseases from becoming major epidemics. Second, take root at the grassroots level and grasp the source. Source governance emphasizes the need to take root at the grassroots level, prevent gradual failures, improve grassroots prevention and control capabilities in rural areas and communities, and solve the first-line problems of the epidemic. It's important to (i) timely sum up the practical experience of local prevention and control at the grassroots level; (ii) improve the classification, stratification, and diversion of infectious disease treatment mechanisms and normalized precision prevention and control measures; (iii) improve and maintain the prevention and control working mechanism of joint prevention, joint control, group prevention and group control; and (iv) focus on scientific and technological support, intelligent prevention and control. Hence, information technology is an important means to win the tough battle of epidemic prevention and control.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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