Thoughts on How to Increase Government Credibility: In View of Government-Society Relation

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Abstract

Credibility refers to the influence and appeal of a government. It is an objective result of its administrative ability, as well as a comment of the public, reflecting how much they lay satisfaction and trust on the government. After 30 years of reform and opening up, at present, our country is at the critical transition period to become an economic society. During this time, various social contradictions are beginning to reveal themselves, and the public is also raising their standard on the government credibility. The paper is to make a brief analysis in terms of the current situation of government credibility, causes of problems and related solutions and suggestions.

Key words: Government; Society; Government credibility

INTRODCTION

Government credibility means the trust credited by the public on recognizing ordinary code of conduct and network, together with the social order formed. To be short, it is the ability for a government of gaining people's trust and acceptance by its own behaviors, reflecting how much they trust and satisfy with it. Government credibility equals to the vitality of government work, it is an important factor on measuring the administrative ability and action effect of modern government. Increasing government credibility can help simplify the complexity and uncertainty of the transitional society and maintain a stable order; provide persistent legitimate foundation for public power and improve common approval and support; effectively promote multi-central management of government, market and society and realize social management innovation. As a result, to increase government credibility appears to be the crucial work of future administrative reform.

1. CURRENT SITUATION OF CHINESE GOVERNMENT CREDIBILITY

Since reform and opening up, our economy has maintained a steady pace of growth, and people's living standard has been relentlessly improved. With the further deepening of administrative reform, social management and public service standards of all government levels have also been enhanced continuously, so is government credibility. According to *Annual Report on Chinese Society Development (2012)* released by CASS on December 26, 2013, the percentage of people's trust on functional government departments reached 65%, while trust on administrative ability struck 69%. Based on the report, from a general view, the public is confident in their governments, whose credibility looks good. However, as the policy of reform and opening up is maturing, all sorts of social problems and contradictions are highlighted; together with the conflicts between old and new systems and clear social interest differentiation, government's social management and public service can no longer achieve as expected, and government credibility declination caused by government dishonesty has also become a serious issue. The above problems are specifically manifested in the following four aspects.

1.1 First, limited ability of regulation and control of local government

1.1.1 To Begin With, Restricted Ability On Regulating Macro Economy

Local government's policies and measures set little influence on the economic development, the public then becomes doubtful about their local governments and even reckons that they have done nothing on the developing economy.

1.1.2 Blind Pursuit for Number

For the sake of an official career, certain governments generate a phenomenon of "officer-number counter production": They release fake data to the public that does not comply with their living standard, so they start losing basic trust on their governments.

1.2 Government Administrative Behavior Anomie

1.2.1 "Incapable Behavior"

At present, our "one government, two departments" are carrying out works under the Party's lead, while denials of justice still exist during duty execution. Reasonable requests cannot be settled, and the public turns to the governments who are not entitled. Consequently, the public will just think their governments have done nothing and grow furious.

1.2.2 "Misbehavior"

On one hand, the government internal administrative systems are not sound, so the public can barely get used to their multiple sectors and executions. On the other hand, low quality of law-enforcement officers. Some national personnel, especially senior leaders are incapable and weak in acting by law, they deliberately break the law and conduct power politics, and damage the public interest to some extent.

1.2.3 "Administrative Omission"

A phenomenon of "department interest economization and economic interest departmentalization" is appearing at different local governments that then lead to "rush for profits and absent from things of less interest", and the final victims could only be the public.

1.3 Weak Consistency and Stability of Public Policy

Policy transparency and predictability are a vital element for the government to earn people's trust. But many local leaders arbitrarily amend and abolish effective measures and break promises with others; some "new officers turn a blind eye on old matters" that results in policy breakdown; some places are dominated by "new policy with every government" and people just feel lost; in addition, to promote work, some local governments enact policies in a haste without deep consideration and fail to keep promises afterwards, and then lose faith with their people.

1.4 Fourth, Incapability in Dealing With Public Crisis

In recent years, the declined government credibility caused a growing number of group appealing incidents, for example, Sichuan Shifang Mo-Cu incident. Another manifestation is that, after the release of a certain policy or information, the public will always disagree with it and express their personal views via network, media and social opinion, so some local government would then be stuck in "Tacitus trap". For instance, Wenzhou bullet train accident and Red-Cross Guo Meimei Incident, the events were both raised doubt by net citizens and then be investigated by the government, who finally unraveled the truth.

2. ANALYSIS ON CAUSES OF GOVERNMENT CREDIBILITY DEFICIENCY

Government credibility deficiency will increase administrative cost, reduce administrative efficiency and widen the gap between government and the masses, even lead to political and social disorder. The author believes that, there are mainly fourth causes that bring about government credibility deficiency.

2.1 Lagged Government Functional Transition

2.1.1 The First Point Is Responsible Ambiguity

Under traditional administrative system, a serious "department barrier" is existing between each department, whose overlapping functions and duties remain unclear and may easily cause mutual denial, lower administrative efficiency and government credibility.

2.1.2 Lagged Functional Transition

In the course of vigorously building a well-off society, the public demand higher on public services and products, along with their soaring expectations of the government. But the government functions haven't transformed in time and play as a leading character in the market competition for too long; they have neglected the functions of social management and public service as a government, and the public could only reduce their ratings on government credibility.

2.2 Non-Transparent Public Power Execution and Serious Corruption

On one hand, officers are positive in the "thought of official position" and negative in democracy and lawful ideas, they lack the consciousness of publicity, especially which involves department interest and people's interest, they always make excuses and refuse to go public. The information asymmetry directly results in people's resistance on the government and is disadvantageous to

build a relationship of mutual trust. On the other hand, it is really a shock to see so many corruption events that are of wide range and high amount happened in China during all these years, and people cannot help but to consider that corruption has penetrated into every corner of the government and find it difficult to believe in it.

2.3 Deep-Rooted "Skeleton Government" Philosophy

Back when we were ruled by the feudal society, the governments were all almighty governments integrated by legislation, administration and judicature. Government decision was above all others and superior. Such concept has made some people rely too much on the government and wished that every social matter could be dealt with solely by it. And if problems could not be tackled, they would also refuse to show understanding and merely become suspicious. At the same time, some officers exceed their powers during work and intervene administration of justice, they replace the public opinion with their own; some leaders have little service awareness and even become masters of the people. All these behaviors have greatly reduced people's trust the government and set a negative impact on the construction and development of government credibility.

2.4 Duty Ambiguity Is Caused by Lagged System

Traditional government is built on the basis of bureaucracy: the government makes decisions and executors just carry out orders inflexibly. In this way, government decision-making and power execution are two distinctive subject behaviors that cause ambiguous duty subjects, and the government and officers might avoid their responsibilities when exercising powers. At the same time when the government functions are transformed, lagged and absence of related liability systems would then lead to public power abuse and low administrative efficiency. As a result, "administrative omission" and "misbehavior" appear accordingly.

3. SOLUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ON INCREASING CHINESE GOVERNMENT CREDIBILITY

Decision of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee pointed out, "It is a must to transform government functions, deepen administrative reform, create administrative management method, enhance government credibility and executive force and build a legal and service government." Currently, China is at the critical period of comprehensively deepening reform and building a well-off society, and government credibility proves to be a source of power for the sound development and orderly operation of the entire society. Thus, government credibility should be strived to increase

and overcome the obstacles getting in the way. The author thinks, the fourth following ways can serve as a starting point.

3.1 To Build an Affectionate and Pragmatic Government, and Close The Distance With the Public

3.1.1 To Genuinely Do Practical Things for the People
People-orientation and governing for the people are ideological basis for building an affectionate government, whose job is to set intent and purpose on maintaining, realizing and development people's fundamental interests. Therefore, the government must treat seeking people's interest as its responsibility and do practical and good things for them.

3.1.2 Clear Channels for Public Appeal
To build a frequent "go grassroots" system and turn people visit to leader visit, go deeply and closely to the public and delicately settle down their problems. Further perfect hearing system, reinforce the speculation and legalization of it, broadens its scope of application and positively accepts public opinions and protect their interests.

3.1.3 Increase Public Participation in Government Decision
Decision-making is a significant linkage of government's public policy, and it is a must to boost a scientific and democratic decision-making, further widen channels for public participation and arouse all-round enthusiasm.

3.2 To Build an Honest and Legal Government, and Enhances People'S Foundation of Trust

3.2.1 Insist on Administration by Law
To judge whether a government is of credit or not, one important criterion is to see whether it is administrating and acting by law. Focusing on the goal of establishing a legal government, a government should implement lawful administration in an all-round way, enhance administrative legislation, perfect administrative liability system and intensify administrative lawful responsibility mechanism. After that, make further efforts on reforming the administrative approval system, shortening approval time-limit, reducing approval procedures and increasing approval efficiency. Practically strengthen and improve administrative law enforcement, and accomplish a strict, fair and civilized enforcement.

3.2.2 Live Up to Service Promises
To make a decision needs to conduct deep investigation and research, extensively ask for mass opinion and try best to make decisions that suit interest to the most. When a policy comes out, the government should keep promises strictly to the policy and stay in true and absolute line, set up an image of honest government.

3.2.3 Positively Guide Public Opinion
Stick to the principle of information openness, establish a perfect information disclosure mechanism and release

timely, comprehensive, fair and objective information that is related to the vital interests of the people via all kinds of media, in order to guarantee people's right to know, enhance government work transparency, give them the knowledge of the latest news and changes of national policies and laws, and guide the public to make right decisions based on such knowledge.

3.3 To Build a Diligent and Honest Government and Rebuild Government Image

3.3.1 Strengthen the Efforts to Anti-Corruption

Treat anti-corruption as a top priority for increasing government credibility, greatly enhance the construction of a diligent and honest government and strongly voice and fight against corruption. Persist in strategic guidelines of resolving both current problems and roots, comprehensive treatment and promoting simultaneously punishment and prevention, actively build a punishment-prevention corruption system focusing on education, system and supervision and eliminate corruption to the core. Reinforce administrative auditing and supervision and set up an honest government image.

3.3.2 To Intensify the Construction of Government Ethics

Promote a promise system for public service, establish a rating system for government credibility and implement consecutive opinion poll, and set honest records as evaluation for the assessment and employment of civil servants. Build a system for administrative accountability: based on distinctive duties for different department, allocate specific work to every position, and establish an honesty file for government workers as an important evaluation for their annual performance assessment. Include honesty construction as a part of "diligent and honest government" and regulate dilatoriness, roughness and low-efficiency and treat the phenomena as "corruption without taking bribes"; relentlessly increase efforts on education rectification, for the purpose of improving working ethics transformation and working efficiency, and increase the overall government credibility with concrete actions.

3.3.3 To Strengthen a Sense of Working Responsibility

Leaders should always love the people and keep down to the earth, establish a good image depending on their own realistic and pragmatic working style and then increase government credibility. Civil servants ought to reinforce ethics construction, spare no efforts in increasing morality and a sense of working responsibility and see clearly their vital role in the construction of government credibility and speak and act with caution and accountability.

4. TO BUILD A GOVERNMENT OF HIGH SERVICE EFFICIENCY, AND CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE THE PUBLIC WELFARE.

4.1 Clearly Position Government Function

According to *Decision* released by the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee, "only by correctly define the function and role of the government and stay out of government offside can market play a vital role in resource allocation and settle down the problems of government offside, omission and misbehavior." Energetically promotion authority list system for local governments of all levels and related sectors, publicizes operation procedure by law and defines their power limits and put government authority under the supervision of people.

4.2 Vigorously Develop People's Livelihood

Enhance the ability to develop service economy, constantly optimize and develop environment, stay out of specific economic activities or behaviors, and maintain a fair and just order for market competition. Continuously strengthen infrastructure construction, and emphasize on coping with troubles that the public fails to conquer by them and improve their production and living environment. Further perfect social security system, provide more public services and products and practically solve problems such as difficult livelihood, employment, education and medical service, as well as road and matter issues, in order to make more people share the fruits of development with fairness.

4.3 Enhance the Ability to Deal With Emergencies

Preparedness ensures success, and unpreparedness spells failure. Insist on taking preventive measures, building and improving various emergency management mechanisms and steadily increasing the ability to deal with emergencies. Start from people's interest, and depend closely on the crowd, believe the crowd and keep and implementing their interest in tackling emergencies as the first priority, and seek for their support and cooperation. Stick strictly to the principle of justice: share no efforts in protecting legal rights, and punishing illegal deeds and crimes, ensure a more just and fair result in dealing with emergencies and practically maintain social stability and people's fundamental interests.

Government credibility serves as a significant foundation in acquiring political legitimacy, and the

ultimate fate of administrative ability construction and creative administrative management ways. As a result, to increase government credibility helps push the government to the people and hear their voices; achieve a scientific and democratic government decision-making and further boost working capability; build a good image and ensure the stable development of a harmonious society.

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