

A Comparative Study of Officials and Politicians from the Perspective of Modernization

– Starting from Max Weber's Theory

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Abstract: The relationship between officials and politicians has been a topic worth discussing in the fields of public policy and political science. Starting from Max Weber's famous theory, this paper mainly studies the distinction between the two concepts and the nature of the relationship from the perspective of modernization by using the literature analysis method and case analysis method, trying to give a discussion of the relationship in the context of modernization. This paper finds that the main differences between officials and politicians are reflected in whether politics is a regular source of income, how they handle the command-obey relationship and their responsibilities. Also, this paper finds that making practical decisions should be a common goal of both officials and politicians. What's more, there indeed exists a two-way street between officials and politicians. They influence each other in an independent state and achieve the common goal within the integration of vision.

Keywords: official, politician, Max Weber

1. Introduction

In the field of public administration and bureaucracy, the relationship between officials and politicians seems to have been discussed widely. The quality of decision, the quality of execution and the efficiency of execution are all affected by the relationship between the two. Weber's argument was one of the most influential in this context, arguing that officials live depending on politics, while politicians live for politics [1]. Since the beginning of the 21st century, most of the discussions have focused on comparing similarities and differences and concept clarification, with relatively few conceptualizing the relationship between the two. In that case, it is meaningful and vital to study how to define the relationship between officials and politicians and explore its feature. This paper is motivated by this, starting from the concept of discrimination between officials and politicians, focusing on the characteristics of relations, so as to try to fill in the blank of previous studies. In addition, this paper is also combined with the modern bureaucratic system to explore the rationality and practical significance of this relationship.

In addressing this relation, literature analysis and review is the main method used here. This article takes Weber's work "Academia and Politics" as the starting point, combined with its theoretical

development to illustrate the feature of the relationship between officials and politicians. Case analysis is used as an auxiliary method to illustrate the statement. In Weber's theory, rationalization and modernization are equated. Nowadays, all aspects of society have been developing on the road to modernization. In this context, exploring the relationship between the two concepts is of profound value and historical significance. Additionally, it is also of great practical significance to re-apply and re-analyze the famous theories of the 19th century.

2. Concept Clarification

2.1. Modernization

Rationalization and modernization were equated in Weber's perspective. In other words, what is now commonly called modernity is characterized by rationalization, which is manifested in nearly every aspect of society. In the case of economics and politics, a sound accounting system (bookkeeping) is an expression of economic modernization, while political rationalization is characterized by bureaucracy. Bureaucratic administration means that knowledge governs fundamentally. This is a feature that makes it particularly rational [2]. In a word, scientific systems and rational thinking are widely constructed and applied in the background of modernization.

2.2. Officials

2.2.1. Traditional Official

Traditionally, officials or mandarins are more administrative. It can even be said that officials are 'operators' under different political systems. In that case, this kind of political 'operation' requires practitioners to have professional training, usually with higher education, passing the appropriate examinations [1]. Therefore, it can be said that officials are teams with special skills, political professional training, and highly qualified mental labor. Their gathering also contributes to the rise and development of the bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the responsibility of officials is more reflected in the execution of orders. It is the main responsibility and standard to carry out the orders of the superior with due diligence and to act according to the instructions of the superior even when the order is contrary to the subjective will. Thus, Weber believed that officials should not be engaged in politics and that what they should do was non-partisan administration.

2.2.2. Modernized Official

The characteristics needed by officials in the traditional sense are mainly reflected in the educational level from the perspective of modernization. This means that officials often come from families with higher social status and education, or that 'bureaucrats were an insulated elite [3]'. In addition, modernized officials as collectives are participants in politics and are also political, dealing with politics such as balancing interest groups and negotiating with interests.

2.3. Politicians

2.3.1. Traditional Politician

Unlike officials, the character of politicians is more distinct. Politicians are more like leaders, with clear good or bad positions, which is their natural quality. They live for politics and should possess three qualities in their personality: passion, responsibility, and judgment [1]. Weber believes that politicians have a strong sense of mission. When faced with "official position" and "faith", real

politicians should choose "faith". This kind of faith is called "the inner faith that borders on 'vocation'" [4]. Compared with the previous officials, this faith cannot be suppressed by external orders. Correspondingly, a politician has to take full responsibility for his actions, representing the interests of the people.

The candidates for politicians were initially parliamentary politicians. Weber sees parliament as a base for training and selecting politicians. Political parties use free solicitation to gain followers and compete for the highest political office through power struggles. Therefore, those who have the opportunity to take over this top political office are the most politically sensitive or rights-conscious people.

2.3.2. Modernized Politician

The advent of the era of mass democracy has provided new possibilities for the emergence of politicians. The two roles of politicians and bureaucrats have a relatively high level of education. With the introduction of the concept of democracy, the understanding that politics was limited to the struggle within the elite circle has changed. A distinction between parliamentary and democratic systems becomes necessary [5]. The question then arises as to who is the representative of the people. From a democratic perspective, politicians almost necessarily rely on personal traits to win over supporters to become representatives of the people, or charismatic leaders.

3. Similarities and Differences Between Officials and Politicians

Based on the clarification above, it can be easily seen that the role of politicians and officials and the system behind them are worth discussing. They have overlapping scopes but are also separate roles. This part will illustrate it from three perspectives as follows.

3.1. Income

Apparently, both roles are political and live by politics. Economic interests are one of the important aspects for them. Regardless of whether they live for or depend on politics, they can receive income or compensation from politics. Weber did not distinguish between the two roles in his terminology, using the term "career politician" in both. The difference is that those career politicians who depend on politics (defined here as officials) are committed to turning politics into a regular source of income. Professional politicians who live for politics, on the contrary, should be able to generate income economically without relying on politics. It is worth noting that this is not to say that people who participate in politics have only these two states. Income conditions are not a factor that limits whether people participate in politics. People without accumulated assets can participate in political work, but such people must be paid.

3.2. Command and Obedience

As mentioned earlier, officials are the ones who carry out orders and obey them, while politicians have a clear position and should represent the interests of the people. But that's not mean that politicians don't face this command-obey relationship. Whether politicians are represented by party leaders or elected group representatives, the group management form will have the shadow of bureaucracy, thus resulting in command-obedience relations because this is the 'basic feature of all bureaucracy' [6]. Nevertheless, the difference between politicians is that they cannot be suppressed by external commands. They can be subject to management, but obedience cannot be the fundamental guide to their actions. Instead, the inner belief in 'vocation' is the ultimate criterion for their value judgments. Particularly, this article argues that "vocation" here refers to their political ideals.

Furthermore, the distinction between the two roles of obedience seems to invisibly expose politicians and officials to the illusion of hierarchical subordination. However, the two should be independent. The detailed definition of the relationship will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.3. Responsibility

The difference in responsibility should be the most obvious difference between the two roles. Officials are tasked with translating political goals into action, with limited responsibility for the partial work they do. Politicians need to take full personal responsibility for their actions. The pursuit of power must bear the corresponding political responsibility. Personal responsibility here specifically refers to self-responsibility in a position of strong power where the decisions are the result of their complete personal will. In short, politicians like to say what should be done while officials need to figure out how to do that.

In addition to the nature of their duties respectively, the sense of responsibility, one of Weber's requirements for the character of a politician, is worthy of emphasis here. The ethics of responsibility is that the parties are responsible for the foreseeable consequences of their actions [1], which should be the action principle for politicians. In other words, Weber actually suggests that politicians should be wary of the consequences of sanctifying means with ends, hoping that politicians can achieve some balance between faith and objective reality.

4. Relationship Definition

There is no doubt that politicians and officials are separate roles. Although their responsibilities differ, it is inappropriate to use a simple dichotomy to show that accomplishing their own tasks is a good official-politician relationship. This paper tries to define a rational relationship from the following three characteristics.

4.1. Independence

Independence does not mean complete isolation, which seems to be a substantial independence in this sense, meaning that the two roles act according to their own principles, but there is no formal system to measure the relationship. Independence here acknowledges the contribution of officials to policy-making and implementation, as well as the shadow of bureaucracy within politicians' organizations. Under this premise, it would be too simplistic to define it solely in terms of hierarchical relations focusing on the extent to which officials are subordinate to politicians. Both sets of characters have influential power over each other. Officials can adjust politicians' theories according to reality, and politicians grasp the direction of policy implementation to ensure that they are on the right track. In other words, the relationship is a 'two-way street' [7].

Furthermore, since the influence of officials and politicians is two-way, the ethics of responsibility as an important requirement in the field of politicians should also penetrate to the level of officials. This is not for officials to become politicians or for them to abdicate their obedience obligations. Instead, at the very least, be wary of moral alienation. The lessons of the Nazi era are enough to tell the world that officials should be operators of bureaucratic machines, not cogs.

4.2. Mutuality

Independence frees the two concepts from hierarchical relationships and confronts each other's influence. However, this does not mean there is no mutuality between the two. Many politicians in history, such as Winston Churchill, have also had official experience (the period of the Lord of the Admiralty). Therefore, it is very likely that a person will become an official at some time and a

politician at some time, but a lot depends on whether the individual has the political character required by Weber.

Having reached this consensus, the further question is how to measure the role of political character in this process. Here wants to start with Churchill's political career as an example to analyze. During his tenure as Lord of the Admiralty, he allocated funds from the Navy to the manufacture of Army tanks. Despite not having the support of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for War, the Gallipoli campaign even resulted in Churchill's resignation as Secretary of the Admiralty, he still used his influence to make substantial progress in the tank's construction. Churchill was undoubtedly an irresponsible official in doing so, but the subsequent history of using tanks to win the war has proved this decision right. This statesmanship during his official period also paved the way for him to become a politician later.

After the outbreak of World War II, he served as prime minister to form a cabinet and was the first to oppose fascism, which brought Britain to stand up against Nazi Germany. His alliance with Russia led to the formation of the World Anti-Fascist League, despite his own vigorous opposition to communism. This is not to praise or judge Churchill's initiatives but to see his political realist style of governance from the perspective of his practical thinking of politics. He may not have always followed his political ideals, but in a given period of the war, that realism worked.

4.3. Compatibility

With the foundation of mutuality in place, the more noteworthy issue is the compatibility of the two roles. Formally, there is no such thing as a person having both a politician and an official profession because their responsibilities are independent. But that doesn't mean that it is impossible to work with each other's vision.

As mentioned above, Churchill had already demonstrated his charisma and political vision during his time as an official. This combination of visions may not make people good officials, but they can make good decisions. Similarly, the realistic style of governance during the war may have deviated from the political position, but it was the best decision of the moment. Therefore, the vision of politicians and officials can be compatible, but the purpose of compatibility is to make the right decisions.

However, the peculiarities of the times also need to be noted here. The governance of war does not necessarily apply in times of peace. Whether it is an official or a political leader who makes the decision, making decisions based on reality is always the first priority. Thus, in the actual integration of the perspectives of officials and politicians, the two must work together. Officials respect political control and formulate and implement policies in a way that promotes the public interest and strengthens the democratic process. Politicians entail at least some respect for the competence and contributions of officials [8].

5. Conclusion

In short, this article clarifies the similarities and differences between politicians and officials from traditional and modern aspects. Based on that, the characteristics of the relationship between the two are defined. The relationship between officials and politicians is to influence each other in independence and achieve common goals in the integration of vision. This paper doesn't introduce and combine bureaucracy or modern bureaucratic systems in detail. Hence, future research can focus on putting the defined relationship into the modern bureaucracy to verify its rationality. Besides, this paper does not address the problem of bureaucratic shadows within the party, nor does it analyze the relationship between politicians and officials in this situation. Future research can focus on this issue for further analysis and refinement.

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