Research on the Dilemmas of the Modes of Contemporary Chinese Citizen's Online Political Participation

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Abstract. The dilemma of the modes of the contemporary Chinese citizen's online political participation is mainly reflected in the conflict between the plural interaction mode and the group polarization behavior. The mode of plural interaction is the essential requirement of citizen's online political participation, and the "group polarization" behavior is the extreme way of citizen's online political participation. The Echo wall of Internet users interaction, creating a kind of "group polarization" phenomenon, "intergroup Homogeneity" and "out-group heterogeneity", lead to network public opinion "group polarization"; the thoughts on interactive between reality and network, aggravate the "group polarization" effect; asynchronous and real-time by the online information communication, to promote the "group polarization" all of these phenomena, which is conflict with the pluralism of participant, the diversity demands of the rights and interests, the modes of participation, the interactive information exchange that the inherent requirement of the citizens` political participation. This is to promote the interaction between the government and the citizens, and to improve the citizen's online political participation.

1. Introduction

Citizen's political participation is the core of modern democratic politics, and the extensive political participation is the essential requirement of the development of democratic politics. In recent years, with the rapid development of network information technology and the internet users, the enthusiasm of our citizens to participate in online politics is increasing day by day, and the modes of participation is becoming more and more diversified. The so-called online political participation is in the information age, with the Internet as the main space, target the reality of social political system, and with the online as a way of information carrier and activities, the Internet users, online community and network political elite as the subject of political participation, directly or indirectly affect the behavior of the national political decision-making. The rise of the Internet has expanded the channels of citizen's political participation and enriched the forms of participation. At present, the Chinese citizen's online political participation is mainly manifested as online political expression, political supervision, political association and political mobilization. [1]

2. Pluralistic interaction mode: the essential requirement of citizen's online political participation

The Internet is essentially plural, and citizens' political participation in cyberspace can often reflect the characteristics of multiple interactions.

2.1 The pluralism of online political participation

One is the diversity of information sources. In the process of online political participation, any participant are likely to become the main information of the receiver and the sender, the public can get
information and exchange of different point views through the multiple channels, which makes the government or the policy maker and the public can realize communication between two-way interaction. In addition, "because of Internet information throughout history and across borders, will inevitably bring about the cultural collision and integration of ancient and contemporary, home and abroad, the integration of single and multi-culture, the confrontation of the orthodox culture and counterculture, and ultimately the formation of the online political culture." [2], and the diversity of the network political culture, often directly affects the diversity of the content and mode of information acquisition and dissemination. The second is the pluralism of the subject of online political participation. Whether individual users or online political groups can almost unconditionally by different forms of interaction from one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many, discussion and comment on the issue, improve the public demands of diverse views to interact with each other in the virtual space. The third is the diversity of the ways of online political participation. The participant can participate in national political life through online voting, open e-mail, open "the network political blog" or "micro-blog", participating in the online signature, initiated and commented on current affairs in the network political forum. They can also participate in political elections, democratic supervision, political mobilization in the Internet, and even in the online group events, etc.

2.2 The interactive nature of online political participation

A really good citizen’s political participation is that the government and citizens talk to and discuss each other, so that the government can understand the views of the common people, and the people can understand the situation of the government. But the approach of traditional political participation does not or cannot fully achieve interactive requirements. In the Internet era, interaction is the catalyst of online political participation. In general, the interaction is mainly reflected in two aspects: one is the interaction between the users, the online communities, the Internet users and online community, and through mutual exchanges to reach a consensus, and influence the object of political participation; the second is the online participate in the interaction between subject and object. Virtual dialogue and network interaction that direct, equal and convenient, easy to collect public opinion, public decision-making process, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of political participation, promote effective communication between the political reality and online political subject, cohesion of social consensus, to realize the citizen’s online political participation. In addition, citizen online political participation is also the process that citizens supervise the personnel and decision-making of government. In this process, the interaction between the public expression of political demands and the government's serious response is essential. When there is a positive interaction between the two, the political participation is positive and effective. On the contrary, when the two parties show negative relation of reciprocal, it may lead to the disorder of participation.

3. "Group polarization" behavior: the extreme way of citizen’s online political participation

Cass Sunstein, University of Chicago School of Law and political science philosophy lectures Professor, believes that "group polarization" means that "members of the group at the beginning have some bias in the deliberations, tend to move in the direction of bias, and finally formed the extreme point of view." [3] He reminded people to pay attention to "information cocoon effect": that is, on the network, people only care about the people and things that their own interest in, and only follow their like-minded people. He said, "The new technology, including the Internet, makes it easier for people to hear like-minded statements, but also makes themselves more isolated and can't hear the opposite views. For this reason alone, this has created an extreme factor that is potentially dangerous to society and democracy." [4]

The basic goal in a democratic society is to make citizens, to some extent, able to exchange ideas with each other. Generally speaking, when the public into cyberspace, often access to massive network political information, based on their own interests and preferences, their interests and preferences
based on the interaction with other online political participation in subject and object, continue to strengthen their political psychology, and all his actions on the web automatically recorded, summarized and predicted by the network, and filtered through the filtering mechanism available to him, which often leads to individuals only in the information environment that conforms to their values. And when the information is too personal, so that people always hear their own echo, it will be unable to reach the point of view of their own different from the rational choice. "Network for many people, it is the hotbed of extremism, because like-minded people can easily and frequently communicate online, but can not hear a different view. Continue exposure to extreme positions, listen to the views of these people, Will make people gradually believe in this position. A variety of people who have no the original idea, because of read different, they will finally go to the extreme, resulting in the results of the split." [5] it eventually formed "a group polarization" phenomenon.

Generally speaking, in the process of online political participation, it is easy to appear "group polarization". The main reasons are autonomy of online political participation and hyperlink of internet. First of all, the network enables the participant to find a attributable groups based on their common interests, positions and attitudes, it makes the network group more internal homogeneity, and between groups are more heterogeneous, which strengthens the identity of the group, is easy to appear the "group polarization"; Secondly, the network hyperlinks for Internet users to browse information and website based on interest technical conditions. Usually the websites only links with their own views and positions consistent with the site, which makes the similar information gathered, but also easy to produce the polarization of the political community.

4. The conflict between the mode of multiple interaction and the behavior of group polarization

4.1 Echo wall internet users’ interaction to create "group polarization" phenomenon

At present, the rights of Internet users continue to grow, the capacity of network use continues to strengthen, as well as the sounds of users in the major social event more powerful, the public opinion on the Internet to condense and deepening, but more people often hear only their own echo, it should be "heteroglossia" of public opinion into a "uniform" one-sided, resulting in "echo wall" Internet users interact, create the "Group Polarization". Once the incorrect ideas or misguided ideas are polarized, it will lead to the actions that do harm to the healthy and orderly development of society.

In general, there are three factors contributing to this "echo wall" Internet Interaction: firstly, the consensus of the social empathy. The "group polarization" reflects the social consensus of the public, such as social justice, and other traditional media to create a symbolic world to strengthen this social consensus. Internet users under the leadership of the online opinion leaders, often with "fairness, justice" and other ideals as the starting point to conceive the facts, and collective catharsis of real life emotions. Secondly, the netizens’ choice mechanism of proximity information. Seemingly massive network information platform, through the government, the media and Internet users on the layers of information filtering, make diversified change information for close; and people according to their own position and preferences, selective access to information, and the free internet world has a greater initiative for the netizens, which strengthens the choice of information and communication objects that users are close to themselves, making the information and opinions in the group more convergent. Thirdly, the pressure brought about by cyber violence. Some of the network speech that beyond the normal rational remarks, implementation of sharp network moral trial to others, even the human flesh search, publish the privacy of others, and also extended this trial to the real world, further make those feel different views of the group Strong group pressure to turn it into silence or change the position.
4.2 "Homogenization within the group" and "intergroup heterogeneity" lead to network public opinion "group polarization"

In the process of citizen's online political participation, especially in the network forum, like-minded netizens often unconsciously according to the interests of the same or similar, or common interests formed by the "net margin", and to gather together characteristics of "homogeneity" and "intergroup heterogeneity", easily lead to too homogeneous circle of public opinion, and the tendency of network public opinion in "serious group polarization". But the participation itself has the characteristics that diversification of main body, interest demands, and interest expression, as well as the interaction of information exchange etc., which will undoubtedly conflict with the collective voice of homogeneity.

4.3 The interaction between reality and online intensifies the effect of "group polarization"

Along with the social characteristics of Internet users moving from virtual to reality, there is a trend of gradual convergence of reality focus and online hotspot. Most netizens who live in the bottom of society "are burdened with the change of system and structure, they have not really enjoyed the fruits of their development and become a silent and helpless group. But the network to a certain extent for these people to express their interest demands, and even to provide the place of resentment and discontent. Because in real life situation, common experience and emotional accumulation, as long as the network appears the same or similar circumstances of the incident, although there is no essential to their own direct or indirect conflict of interest, it easy to form the psychological resonance." [6] and online discussion, also tend to affect the individual's real decisions and ideas, even make the personal views become extreme, and this kind of extremist ideology, tend to prevail in the group of emotions, and the group emotion is often produced in the threat and challenges or setbacks of the situation, which makes the polarization effect more obvious.

4.4 Network information dissemination of asynchronous and real-time to promote the "group polarization" phenomenon

Asynchronous communication of network information provides the possibility of "group polarization", and the instantness of network communication, make Internet users in the immediate comment, rarely think about their own words and actions whether correct or not, so that in-depth, Rational thinking is difficult to achieve. On the one hand, asynchronous users can make different Internet users at different times, different space to read, comment on network information, which will continue the polarization phenomenon of short-term impulse. On the other hand, real-time ability to make users in the fast reading, rough browsing on the news or topic to make an immediate response, many netizens often do not go through careful investigation and thinking to express their views, and once the opinions published, less change the original attitude.

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References


