



THE IMPORTANCE OF E-GOVERNMENT AND MASS MEDIA

(As an example of the People's Republic of China)

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the features of e-government and the unconformity of traditional management methods of governments to the people's requirements of the information society. Furthermore, it considered about using of mass media in the dialogue with the people on the example of the People's Republic of China.

KEY WORDS: *dialogue with the people, mass media, Internet, e-government.*

DISCUSSION

"The main purpose of the creation of a government was to maintain just and rational social conditions of living for people..."¹.

Aristotle.

One of the urgent requirements of the society is that the government implements modern governance adapted to modern innovations, clashes and exchanges of civilizations to ensure the well-being of the country's citizens and society, to effectively protect their interests. It is known from history that when a new type of media emerges, it always brings changes in the political sphere as well. This can also be seen in the emergence of the press and the dramatic changes that radio and television have made in the world of politics. The Internet has not only changed people's lifestyles, but has also given a new look to politics, for example online politics. The online audience in the virtual world was in a sense able to influence real politics with its power. The development of media on the Internet is encouraging many scholars to study the "hidden" influences of different countries in the political system. Even

people who were not so interested in politics in the past are becoming more and more interested in it through the Internet. Especially the ones who know their rights as violated try to protect their rights through the network.

The network has already become a platform that gives the public the right to observe, comment and even discuss political processes. In a virtual audience, the impact power of society is increasing. In many countries around the world, political bodies and organizations are also creating their own news sites, realizing the importance of the Internet audience, and are giving opinions, comments and interpretations on various problematic situations. This is positively received by the audience with great interest. It is significantly important to follow the experience of the government of the People's Republic of China, which has a population of about one and a half billion in order to study the way of providing information to nearly a quarter of the world.

Chinese scholar Wang Linlin points out in his book, *The Online Age and Government Updates*, that while the information technology revolution has not radically changed government regulations, it has had an impact on the government system, even the Communist Party of China. It is now clear that the government cannot fully meet the demands of the people when it conducts governance based solely on its traditional characteristics. This, in turn, led to government updates in the Internet age, and the

¹Wang Linlin (王淋淋). *Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新)*. Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 46.



number of theoretical researchers in the field also increased. The Eighteenth Plenum of the Communist Party of the People's Republic of China discussed such important issues as "strengthening the social governance of the Internet, promoting the orderly movement of Internet standards", "paying high attention to Internet security."² The advancement of such issues and the thorough study at the highest government level indicate that the government leaders of PRC are paying close attention to changes in the political environment. The "42nd China Internet Development Statistical Report" released by the China Internet Information Center (CNNIC) on August 20, 2018, shows that in the first half of 2018, China's Internet population reached 802 million.³

This number ranks first among the world's countries due to China's large population. Current moment which is full of great changes is thought to be in turn requiring the updates from the government. During a visit to Peking University in 2004, Lee Bolinger, the president of Columbia University in the United States, said: "Currently, three different forces are making a difference in the world's development, and these forces, which are also evident in China, include:

- An economy that is constantly evolving in the process of globalization;
- Government activities;
- The Internet"⁴.

Today, it is known that the governments of many countries around the world use the Internet effectively to implement their functions. Internet media, unlike newspapers, radio and television, has enormous power and influence.

Although the online community and online politics are virtual, its functions and effects are by no means virtual. It can have a serious impact on real governance. According to Chinese scientists, the new government should manage the Internet world in harmony with the free spirit, especially to find ways

to promote a positive Internet world.⁵

With the rise of online networks, the PRC government has taken the necessary control actions in a timely manner. At the meeting of the Political Department of Central Committee (中共中央政治局) on April 23, 2007, important aspects of the development of China's unique Internet culture were highlighted. In September 2007, the main topic of the department's eighteenth further training course was "the Development of World Internet Technology and the Formation and Management of Chinese Internet Culture." In his speech at the event, former Chinese President

Hu Jintao said, "The rapid development of Internet culture has played an important role in disseminating messages, acquiring knowledge, promoting the party's teachings and priorities, while bringing new themes to China's socialist culture. It is necessary to form and manage the Internet culture in a creative spirit, to meet the growing spiritual needs of people"⁶.

According to Chinese researchers, the following should be analyzed for the effectiveness of government activities in the online information age⁷:

First, the government is no longer just a traditional authoritarian body, but a modern system that serves the public.

Second, changes in the activities of citizens, they are now becoming the owners of civil society, not traditional citizens.

Third, the changes in the sources of the government's fairness, especially, the increase in the significance of the people's authority and opinions on the net place can influence the government on remaining the same or becoming different.

Fourth, the widespread development of online media today and the active participation of the audience in it has created a great opportunity for free critical thinking. The lifestyle of the online community is based on openness, diversity, liberalism, and citizens in the online community are also becoming more independent and individualized. As a managing power, the government has to take steps to maintain its authority in order to adapt to the new form of society.

Fifth, the comprehensiveness of government activities should be reflected mainly in ensuring the well-being of citizens.

In order to adapt the government to the modern environment, to answer the questions in it, and to increase the effectiveness of its implementation, it is necessary, first of all, to involve the public opinion in

²Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 1.

³ http://www.cnnic.net.cn/gywm/xwzx/rdxw/201720177_7047/201808/t20180820_70486.htm China Internet Research Information Center (中国互联网罗信息中心) (CNNIC). 38th Statistical Report on the Development Status of the Chinese Internet. 20.08.2018.

⁴ <http://www.southcn.com/tech/news/tech/news/200404110015.htm>, 2008.

⁵Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. Page 31.

⁶This source. —page-42.

⁷This source. —page 45-47.



the government mechanism and strengthen its response. According to a survey conducted by the Chinese Youth Newspaper (中国青年报) on online public opinion: 61.4% of the public believe that "it is very convenient to tell the truth through the internet"; 67.2 per cent of the public agreed that "stratification and many similar differences in online audiences have decreased", the distance between government agencies and the general population has become closer; According to 57.3% of the population, online public opinion polls by officials "help to ensure harmony between the government and the population".⁸

In virtual power, knowledge and information form the basis of organizational power. Chinese scientists compare the different aspects of virtual government and traditional government and classify them as follows.

Table 1. Different aspects of virtual government and traditional government

The objects of the research	E-government	Traditional government
Organizational structure	Online	Functional
Type of activity	Direct contact with society, businesses and citizens	Indirect concern for society, businesses and citizens
State	Active, changeable, elastic	Quiet, stable
Sources	Knowledge, talent, information	Power, authority, property
Leader (head)	Acts as a director in government actions	The scale of middle-level managers is wide and there is a lack of coordination
The method	Soft, collaborative, coordinated work	Standardized uniformity, struggle between ministries
The point (place) of activity	Electronic point	Own points of each one
Function	Socialization, popularization	Closedness

For several years, many countries around the world have been organizing virtual government in practice. According to the World Market Organization (WMRC), in terms of region, government virtualization is highest in North America at 51 percent, Europe and Asia at 34 percent, and the Middle East, Russia and South America it is from 27.7 percent to 31.1 percent.⁹

⁸ Hou Jaosiao (侯兆晓). Public opinion is becoming a bridge to democracy (网络民意渐成民主渠道) // The Democracy And Law Journal (民主与法制), 2008. #16. — pages 42-44.; Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 78.

⁹ Liu Лю Фенгюань (刘凤元). The analysis about the development and future of "E-government" (浅析“虚拟政府”发展趋势及其启示). Business Period Journal (商业时代), 2008. 20 №, page 10; Wang

The government's openness to the public, especially through the media, can be seen it has developed since the foundation of the U.S. White House Press Office and its Speaker in the 1950s. The spokesman had officially become a political system in the United States. Today, this system has been significantly refined, the content of which mainly includes issues related to major government and other important events, emergencies, and the public interest in general. This, in turn, implies a system for answering public questions. In China, however, the system gradually began in the 1980s. In 1983, the working group of the foreign propaganda department of the Central Committee (中央对外宣传领导小组) made a "proposal to establish" a system of press conferences "and strengthen the activities of international journalism." (关于实施“设立新闻发

Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 93.



言制度”和加强对外国际记者工作的意见¹⁰。On April 23 of that year, the Chinese Journalists Association first introduced a new press secretary of the State Council for International Journalists officially announcing the establishment of a government press conference system in China.

Since the new century began, the implementation of a number of legal documents, such as the “Regulation on Information Transparency of the Government of the People’s Republic of China,” has become the political and legal basis for the functioning of the government press conference system. Following the rapid spread of SARS in the country in 2003, the Ministry of Health held a total of 67 press conferences from early April to June 24, 2003.¹¹ It was the period with the most press conferences in the country’s history. For more than thirty years, the Chinese government press spokessystem has been carrying out special tasks such as shaping public opinion and improving the government’s image. At the same time, it provides the media of different countries with the necessary information about China.

As a result of the rapid development of the Internet, the public’s need for information is growing. In accordance with the need of the public and the initiative of the government, an online press speaker system was established. On September 1, 2009, the Guiyang Municipal Government of Guizhou Province announced the introduction of an online press speaker system. This system was the first sign that the PRC government was officially launching an online press speaker system¹². The government news site of China’s Shanxi Province has been running a “Communication with the Public” page since 2009 to answer every question asked by the audience. This, in turn, is important in ensuring that the audience is calm and stable towards the issues of that territory.¹³

After that, government online press services began operating in many parts of the country. This system now serves as a connecting bridge between the government and the population. According to a survey of 3,009 people conducted by the China

Youth Newspaper (中国青年报) in collaboration with the Beijing Income Market Research Company, 64.5% of respondents believe that the introduction of an online press speaker system means the government’s high public opinion, 80.3% and people hope that the city government where they live will introduce a similar system.¹⁴

Today, the political activeness of the Weibo network is increasing in China. According to Chinese experts, Weibo is a new type of media platform that has attracted a lot of attention. Various government and ministry agencies are also expanding their administrative capabilities by creating their own Weibo pages.¹⁵

In the second half of 2009, for the first time, the Taibuan Wang website of the Taoyuan County Government of Hunan Province was launched. It was the first government agency to launch a Weibo page. Later, the Weibo pages of the Yunnan Provincial Government, such as Weibo Yunnan, and Beijing’s Ping an Beijing, were organized. At the same time, the official Weibo pages of party leaders have also proliferated.

According to the e-government research center of the China Institute of Administrative Studies in February 2012, the total number of government pages registered on the Weibo pages of Chinese national news agencies Xinhua, Xinglang, Tengxun, Jenmin reached 50,561, of which 32,358 are government and party bodies and 18,203 are the official pages of the employees working in the party and government.¹⁶

Weibo has quickly become China’s big source of information, with the opinions well-known experts and scholars, as well as the voices of various categories of ordinary people. This vast information space has provided a convenient opportunity for the government to manage and gain the trust of the public. In the case of Beijing, the Beijing City Press Service officially launched the Beijing Weibo Press Group (北京微博发布厅) in November 2011. The page was a “joint service” launched by 21 ministries and seven speakers. It was the first regional-level Weibo press distribution group in the country.

Wang Shenshen, a Chinese expert, stated that the Chinese government’s online services, such as the government’s Weibo page, government websites or online press speaker system, are all in the early stages

¹⁰Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 174.

¹¹This source. — page 174.

¹²Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 174.

¹³Zhang Chunhua. Sociological Interpretation of Net-Mediated Public Sentiment. Social sciences academic press. Beijing. —P.086.

¹⁴Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 174.

¹⁵Zhang Chunhua. Sociological Interpretation of Net-Mediated Public Sentiment. Social sciences academic press. Beijing. —P.086.

¹⁶E-Government Research Center of the China Institute of Administrative Studies. <http://www.nsa.gov.cn>



of quality and content, and need to improve skills and learn the benefits of foreign experience¹⁷.

The speaker of a government online press conference should not be the same as traditional press speakers, he said:

- ✓ creative approach, devotion to work not with sense of compulsory;
- ✓ quick response to public opinion;
- ✓ having the ability to lead social opinion in its own way;
- ✓ be able to quickly resolve misunderstandings in the community;
- ✓ being based on facts;
- ✓ Speak with dignity, avoid arrogant and empty talk, and do as much as possible to prevent the online public from being skeptical of important political events.

A number of laws have been enacted by the Government of the People's Republic of China in recent years to ensure the legal participation of the online public in politics and to prevent unmanageable situations. For example, "Resolution of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on Internet Security" ("全国人民代表大会常务委员会关于维护互联网安全决定"), "Internet Information Service Management Measures" ("互联网信息服务管理办法"), "Principles governing the publication of information by Internet sites" ("互联网站从事登载新闻业务管理暂行规定"), "Emergency Response Rules" ("突发事件应对法") and the adoption of a number of similar legal documents have provided the legal basis for public participation in politics on the Internet and the activities of online media in general. However, the Chinese believe that the rapid growth in the number of Weibo users shows that the current legislation is still insufficient.

In an informed society, the influence of the media on international politics, economics, culture and other areas, as well as on people's thinking, work and life is expanding. That is why it is more important than ever to form a sense of social responsibility for every branch of media.

This means that China's major branches of media seek to integrate with the Internet, providing information in economic, political, cultural, social and environmental areas. It is also one of the priorities of the media policy to provide timely comment on the rise in real estate prices, to pay serious attention to economic issues such as food security, to respond quickly to sensitive issues raised on the Internet, to manage public mood. Quick resolution of problems by the government

strengthens the people's trust in the government and leaders. In addition, it requires a new approach and rapid performance from the media and all state bodies. As meeting the needs of the people in this information and rapid publication of articles on important issues, problems and the events of public interest, the activation of communication with the audience today demonstrates the unique development of the information industry.

¹⁷ Wang Linlin (王淋淋). Government updates in the Internet era (网络时代的政府更新). Institute of Public Administration Studies (国家行政学院出版社). 2013. — page 178.