

Digital Party Building Leadership: Building A “Smart Fortress” for Grassroots Governance

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Abstract: Since the new century, technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence have been developing rapidly. Human production and lifestyle have undergone tremendous changes compared to the past. Digital empowerment has become a new breakthrough for party building to lead grassroots governance in solving historical problems, and it is also the inevitable path and choice for promoting the improvement of grassroots governance efficiency and the modernization of governance level. Digital party building, relying on new technologies, has great superiority and has a profound historical logic and real connection with the modernization of grassroots governance, and plays an important role in it. Digital empowerment has transformed grassroots governance into “smart” governance, which has set a typical example for building a “smart fortress” for grassroots governance.

Keywords: Digital empowerment; Party organization; Grassroots governance

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1. Introduction

The grassroots society is the terminal link of the national governance system and is of paramount importance in the overall strategy of national governance modernization. Achieving the modernization of grassroots social governance is an inevitable requirement for comprehensively promoting the modernization of national governance. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China clearly pointed out that we should promote the leadership of Party building in grassroots social governance and effectively realize the leadership of the Party, making the grassroots Party organizations a strong fighting fortress^[1]. On the path of comprehensively promoting the modernization of grassroots governance, we must ensure that Party building runs through grassroots social governance and plays its role of guarantee and leadership^[2], so that the leading role of Party building can be exerted in all aspects of grassroots social governance. In the context of the national digitalization strategy of building a strong country and a digital China, digital Party building replaces traditional Party building to adapt to the needs of the times.

2. How digital party building can lead to grassroots governance

2.1. The combination of party leadership and grassroots governance

The historical mission of the Communist Party of China determines that the Party organization should lead grassroots social governance. The first program of the Communist Party of China, passed at the First National Congress, already clearly stated that the political goal of the Communist Party of China is to carry out a social revolution to achieve a great transformation of society ^[3]. During the New Democratic Revolution period, the Party sent work teams to the liberated areas to confiscate land and divide it among the people, uniting most of the people in the grassroots society around the Party, and transforming the grassroots society. At this time, grassroots governance has already been carried out under the leadership of the Party. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the working masses were completely liberated and could own production materials and participate in political life. At the 11th National Congress of the Party, the Party and the state, based on a global perspective, made the decision to carry out reform and opening up, and the focus of the Party's work shifted to the correct track of economic construction. Under the leadership of the Party, the rural economic system reform was fully launched, and the development of the collective economy ushered in new opportunities, and the enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity of farmers in production and operation were greatly mobilized.

After the 18th National Congress of the Party, under the leadership of grassroots Party organizations, grassroots society accomplished many major things that were previously intended but not carried out, solved many problems that were previously intended but not resolved, and China's poverty alleviation cause achieved great accomplishments, historically resolving the problem of absolute poverty. These remarkable achievements in history are all attributed to the leadership role of the Communist Party of China in grassroots governance. Whether it is poverty alleviation or promoting national modernization construction, the key point is the Party, and the arduous tasks still lie in rural areas. In the process of leading grassroots social governance under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, we should adapt to the gradually changing social circumstances and the general trend of the times, play the role of a fighting fortress of grassroots Party organizations, and lead grassroots social governance and development with Party building ^[4].

2.2. The compatibility of technological progress and the modernization of grassroots governance

The modernization of the production and lifestyle of the grassroots society inevitably requires the improvement of the efficiency and level of grassroots governance to be in line with it. The level and efficiency of grassroots governance are important indicators for measuring the level of grassroots governance modernization. With urbanization and the increasingly large volume of population mobility, the traditional grassroots governance model faces more and more challenges. Due to factors such as going to work outside or children going to school in the city, more and more young people have entered cities, and the proportion of rural permanent residents with children and elderly people living alone is quite large. The rapid growth of the urban population and the increasingly complex population composition have brought great pressure and challenges to urban grassroots governance. In contrast, in rural areas, the loss of permanent residents of middle-aged and young people has led to a significant reduction in the rural labor force, and grassroots governance lacks talent support. Moreover, with the improvement of the modernization level of society, the activity space of the population is larger, and population mobility is increasingly frequent, which poses new challenges for the management of mobile Party members. Under such circumstances, the Party and the state proposed the important tasks of building a strong country through the internet and a digital China, providing an opportunity and direction guidance for empowering grassroots governance with science and technology. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance technological empowerment, improve the efficiency of grassroots work, break through the barriers of time and space, closely connect all the governance entities at the grassroots level, coordinate the participation of various entities in grassroots governance, and actively offer suggestions and advice.

2.3. Unification of the purpose of serving the people and the goals of grassroots governance

Marxists uphold a mass-oriented view of history in their historical perspective. “Only the people are the driving force behind the creation of world history”^[5]. The Communist Party of China regards the mass line as its lifeline. At the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee, the Party and the state made the historic decision to implement reform and opening-up. Over the past four decades, by adhering to the principle that “development relies on the people and is for the people,” China has achieved two remarkable milestones: rapid economic growth and long-term social stability, significantly improving the living standards of the populace. Since the 18th National Congress of the Party, General Secretary Xi Jinping has placed great emphasis on people’s livelihoods, using public satisfaction as the benchmark for evaluating governance performance and setting the people’s aspiration for a better life as the Party’s overarching goal. On schedule, the first centenary objective, building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, was accomplished during the Party’s centennial celebration. Following the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, grassroots infrastructure has been progressively developed, substantially enhancing citizens’ sense of fulfillment and well-being, thereby strengthening the Party’s governing foundation.

The Party’s objectives and the fundamental principle of grassroots governance both aim to serve better and benefit the people. Under the Party’s leadership, remarkable achievements have been made in grassroots governance: politically, whole-process people’s democracy has been consistently implemented; economically, the revitalization of local industries has driven public prosperity; the Fengqiao Experience has been applied in practice to foster social harmony at the grassroots level; and ecologically, lessons from the “Ten Thousand Villages Project” along with General Secretary Xi Jinping’s “Two Mountains” concept have been adopted to address pollution and carry out ecological restoration. Significant transformations have occurred in grassroots society, substantially enhancing the people’s sense of fulfillment and well-being.

3. Digital party building leading the practice of grassroots governance

3.1. Construction and application of digital platforms

Since China’s economy entered a stage of high-quality development, the scale of new economic organizations and new employment groups has continued to expand. The management of mobile party members and the transfer of party member relations have become increasingly complex and burdensome. Against this background, the Central Organization Department decided to launch the construction of a digital platform for the national party member management system. The opening and application of the system have enabled a qualitative leap in the digital level of party organization construction and the management of party members. To strengthen political theory learning and ideological and political education, the Central Propaganda Department launched the Learning Power platform for the public, through articles, audio, and other forms, to study and understand the Party’s lines, policies, and current affairs news. Since its launch, this platform has continuously improved its functions, successively launching multiple functional sections, and gradually enriching its content. The learning methods have been developing towards diversification, winning unanimous praise.

In addition to the central departments promoting the construction and application of the digital party building platform, various provinces and grassroots units have also made new attempts in digital party building. For example, the Lantiao Party Building in Shandong Province and “AI Xiaohuo” in Chaoyang District of Beijing. From the central departments to grassroots units, the digital party building platform has been widely constructed and applied, playing an important leading role in the Party organization in grassroots governance, and successfully turning the Party organization into a “smart fortress” leading grassroots governance.

3.2. Grid-based management and services

Grid-based management is a grassroots governance model that divides and governs the governance area based on population size or the number of households. Digital empowerment of grid-based management has significantly improved

the level and efficiency of grassroots governance. The Party organization plays a leading core role in the entire process of grassroots governance and uses digital platforms to divide and code the governance area for unified management. It fully encourages and mobilizes party members to play exemplary roles in grid-based governance. The grid leader bears overall responsibility for grid-based management, while the grid member completes specific tasks such as risk identification and regular inspections under the leadership of the Party organization and the grid leader. In regular grassroots governance, digital empowerment of grid-based management also plays a significant role and demonstrates great superiority. Grid members identify problems during their daily inspections and only need to take out their phones to take photos and upload them to the platform. The command and dispatch center, based on the feedback from the grid members, will issue resolution tasks to relevant departments. After the handling departments arrive at the scene to solve the problem, they will promptly provide feedback through the platform. The command and dispatch center will track the entire process from problem feedback to handling situation feedback to ensure the timely resolution of problems. Digital empowerment of grid-based management has no blind spots and directly reaches the “nerve endings” of grassroots governance, achieving the goal of co-construction, co-governance, and shared governance. The sense of gain and happiness of the people has been greatly enhanced.

3.3. Promoting the participation of multiple parties in grassroots governance

“Public participation” is an extremely important part of grassroots governance, determining the effectiveness of grassroots governance. Digital empowerment of party building has promoted the gradual change of traditional grassroots governance situations through the construction of digital platforms, opening up new paths for promoting the modernization of grassroots governance and the participation of multiple parties in grassroots governance. In the construction process of the digital empowerment of the party building platform, multiple governance modules have been embedded, including the Party organization, government institutions, social organizations, economic organizations, and grassroots people. On the digital platform, the Party organization takes overall control, coordinates all parties, and coordinates various resources to ensure that all governance entities participate in grassroots governance in a coordinated and orderly manner, working towards a common goal. The digital party building platform has opened a “complaint window”, smoothed the channel for the public to express their demands, and used the new Fengqiao Experience of the new era to resolve grassroots conflicts at the bud. Major decisions in grassroots governance are promptly disclosed on digital platforms through publicity windows. Before and during the implementation process, full consultations are conducted with all stakeholders, ensuring the full implementation of the principle of people’s democracy in practice, and guaranteeing that all participants in grassroots governance can supervise the entire process. When people work outside or for other reasons cannot physically participate in grassroots governance, digital platforms break down spatial barriers, enabling them to express their demands, present their opinions, and offer suggestions for grassroots governance through online channels. Digital platforms break down spatial barriers while also inviting people outside to participate in meetings, enhancing villagers’ voice, providing functions such as villagers’ interaction and public opinion collection, and promoting villagers’ participation in grassroots governance. This significantly enhances the security and transparency of grassroots governance.

4. Digital party building leading the path of grassroots governance

4.1. Innovate educational management models and leverage the exemplary role of Party members

Party members are the “cells” of the Party organization. Strengthening education requires practical efforts and focusing on quality. Although digital empowerment has significantly improved the effectiveness of Party building, some problems have emerged. Strengthening Party member education requires stimulating their initiative and enthusiasm, correcting their attitudes, rather than passive “input-oriented” education. While implementing thematic education initiatives such as “Staying True to Our Original Aspiration and Keeping Our Mission Firmly in Mind” and Party history study programs, it is essential to encourage Party members to share their learning insights, integrate them with practical applications, gain a

deeper understanding of the Communist Party of China's founding mission and principles through practice, demonstrate exemplary leadership in grassroots governance, and strengthen the foundation of effective local administration.

In the context of social transformation, the number of new economic organizations and new social organizations is gradually increasing, and the scale of new employment groups is expanding. Traditional Party building has become difficult to adapt to the current situation in terms of educational management. Especially in recent years, with the establishment of new free trade zones and science and technology parks, traditional Party building is difficult to adapt to new changes and precisely lead urban grassroots governance. Implementing Party building cooperation through digital platforms is a model innovation to solve new problems in traditional Party building. Different Party organizations can share learning resources, exchange learning outcomes, cooperate in conducting Party member education activities, work together in the same direction, and play the exemplary and leading role of Party members in grassroots governance.

4.2. Data participation in decision-making and scientific governance to enhance efficiency

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that information plays a vital role in advancing the modernization of China's governance system and capabilities, serving as a fundamental basis for national governance^[6]. In the digital era, grassroots communities continuously generate vast amounts of complex data. The gradual development and maturation of information processing technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and data mining have provided robust technical support for analyzing large-scale, complex, and distributed datasets.

The release of the "Opinions of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council on Accelerating the Development and Utilization of Public Data Resources" has made clear regulations and instructions for the development and utilization of public data resources, and pointed out the direction for the rational application of data resources. On the comprehensive government platform, building a database that collects data resources from all parties is the foundation for promoting the digitalization of grassroots governance. Utilizing data mining, cloud computing, etc., to screen, classify, and analyze massive data is an important process of digital empowerment of basic governance, and it is also the most arduous task. Applying the data analysis results to assist decision-making to address grassroots governance problems and unexpected incidents is the value manifestation and due obligation of data. In grassroots governance, by aggregating and analyzing massive data, key monitoring of "gray rhino" events can be carried out, and intelligent early warning for "black swan" events can be achieved. Timely making reasonable decisions and planning strategies based on the data analysis results and minimizing the impact and shock on grassroots governance can be done.

4.3. Strengthen digital supervision to ensure fair governance

Although the power of grassroots organizations is small, they are at the forefront of governance and are closely related to the vital interests of the people, directly affecting the people's sense of gain, happiness, and security. To ensure fair and effective governance, digital supervision should include all Party members and cadres in the supervision scope, implement comprehensive supervision, with no blind spots, and full coverage of supervision, widely collect and converge data traces, find "threads" from abnormal data, not miss any clues, and accurately uncover the "invisible clothes" of corrupt behaviors.

Under the background of the national governance strategy of promoting rural revitalization, national governance is sinking to the grassroots level, coordinating and integrating numerous funds and other resources to rural areas, greatly promoting rural infrastructure construction and industrial revitalization. Building a clean village is a key task and fundamental guarantee for promoting comprehensive rural revitalization. However, due to situations such as far-reaching superior supervision, difficult peer supervision, weak lower-level supervision, and limited channels for public supervision in grassroots society, grassroots supervision faces many difficulties and is unable to ensure fair and effective governance. At this time, digital supervision shows obvious superiority. When the public discovers corrupt situations around them, they only need to log in to the local digital platform and upload a description of the corruption situation. Party organization leaders will instruct the discipline inspection and supervision department to intervene in the investigation, verify, and

provide feedback on the investigation situation in a timely manner. The handling process is supervised by the command center of the digital platform to ensure that the reported problems are handled promptly, punishing corrupt behaviors, and creating a good political environment for grassroots governance. With the wide application of big data, cloud computing, etc., in grassroots social governance and discipline inspection, big data platforms have been established and put into use in many places across the country. The ultimate goal is to explore a way out of the predicament of grassroots power supervision.

5. Conclusion

The 2024 World Internet Conference has depicted a promising digital world and future for humanity. Digital empowerment has demonstrated significant advantages and superiority in governance practices across all regions of the country. The call to build a digital China and a strong cyber nation has been sounded, and deepening digital empowerment is an essential path to achieving modernization of grassroots governance capabilities. “In Party, government, military, civilian, eastern, western, northern, southern, and central regions, the Party leads everything.”^[7] Only through digital empowerment can Party building better play its leading role, enhance governance efficiency and standards at the grassroots level, drive a profound shift toward intelligent governance, and fortify the “smart bastion” of grassroots governance.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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