

Marx and Engels' Theory of The State and Its Contemporary Enlightenment

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Abstract

Marx and Engels' theory of the state is an important part of Marxist theory, which has experienced a long-term development process from germination to enrichment and perfection, its main contents include the origin of the state, the nature of the state, the function of the state and the future development trend of the state. The modernization of national governance is the CPC's inheritance and development of Marx and Engels' theory of the State, and is the latest achievement of the Sinicization of Marxist theory of the state. Digging deep into the rich wisdom contained in Marx and Engels' theory of the State has important practical value for promoting the modernization of national governance.

Keywords

Marx, Engels, The doctrine of the State, National governance.

1. Introduction

The state is the inevitable outcome of social development to a certain stage. According to Marx and Engels, the emergence and extinction of the state are inevitable, the state comes into being in the stage of irreconcilable class contradictions in the society, and at the same time, it dies out in the communist society that realizes the "comprehensive and free development of human beings". Marx and Engels' theory of the state has undergone a development track from "rational state" to "dictatorship of the proletariat" from the beginning to "self-extinction", and the function of the state has also changed from "state rule" to "social governance". Marx and Engels' theory of the state revealed the origin of the state, determined the nature of the state, pointed out the functions of the state and described the future trend of the state.

2. The theoretical origin of Marx and Engels' state theory

2.1. The state theory of Ancient Greece

The state theory of ancient Greece is an important theoretical source of Marx and Engels' state theory, especially Plato's and Aristotle's discourse on the state.

First, Plato's theory of "just state". The Republic is an important work of Plato on the theory of the state, and it is also a theoretical platform that elevates ethics from Socrates' individual pursuit of wisdom, knowledge and virtue to the dual justice of the state and the citizen. Plato believed that the state arose from the contradiction between the diversity of individual needs and the one-sidedness of individual talents. He pointed out in the Republic that "a city-state is built because each of us cannot be self-sufficient by ourselves; we need many things." [1] Social division of labor is the fundamental solution to the contradiction between the diversity of individual needs and the one-sidedness of individual talents. Plato regarded the division of labor as a necessary constitutive principle of the state and believed that the division of labor was determined by the natural endowments of man. According to the principle of division of

labor, Plato pointed out that the state has three functions, namely: to rule, to defend, and to produce, and that the performers of these functions are divided into three different classes in society, and that only when the men of each class perform their duties and obey their orders can the state achieve "justice" and the individual achieve "good." From this we can see that Plato's state theory has dual functions of "state rule" and "state governance" since its emergence. Plato's explanation of the function of the state from the principle of division of labor touched the class origin of the state to a certain extent, which also laid the theoretical foundation for Marx and Engels' state theory later.

Second, Aristotle's theory of "the mean state". Aristotle believed that the state was the highest and broadest kind of social group, arising from the development of human gregariousness. "The polis is the union of a number of families and villages [of which a number of families are integrated], and by this union the whole polis can live in self-sufficiency and perfection, these are what we call the true happiness of mankind." [2] Therefore, in Aristotle, "the state and society are compound, there is no distinction between state and society, and the basis and bond of the compound is the justice and goodness of the polis." " [3] But his distinction between the state and the family, the village, etc., can be seen as an initial attempt to distinguish between state and society.

On the basis of Plato's just state, Aristotle proposed the "mean" way of managing the state, that is, the middle class to deal with the state problems, so as to reconcile the contradictions between the nobility and the common people. He opposed Plato's "philosophical king" to govern the state. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle said: "Virtue, like nature, is more accurate and better than all technology, so that it is a strike in the middle; Moderation is the highest good and extreme beauty." [4] Aristotle not only pursues the virtue of moderation in ethics, but also pursues moderation in politics. He believes that moderation in moderation is the best political outlook in reality, and also the best country in reality.

2.2. Hegel's theory of "rational state"

Hegel denied that the state originated from the "social contract theory" and believed that the state was an organization with certain binding force based on the rational will of the public. In his *Principles of Philosophy of Right*, Hegel pointed out that "the state is an organization with certain binding force based on the rational will of the public, and it is an alliance based on the common will of individuals" [5]. Hegel made a strict distinction between state and society, believing that family, society and state are concrete links of "spiritual" existence and different stages of development from lower to higher. He believes that the state is the highest stage of the development of ethical spirit, which has surpassed civil society and is the highest good in society. Therefore, he believes that the state determines civil society.

Marx inherited Hegel's division between civil society and the state, and agreed that Hegel's state should be a place of freedom and reason. However, Marx criticized Hegel's "inverted" state theory from the material basis of the reality of the state, arguing that it is not the state that determines civil society, but "the family and civil society are the premise of the state" [6]250, and he believed that "relations of production" is the essence of civil society. When Marx criticized Hegel's idealist state theory, he got the materialist state theory that "the state is the product of society in a certain stage of development".

3. The main content of Marx and Engels' State theory

3.1. The origin of the state - the inevitable product of irreconcilable class contradictions

Marx and Engels both believed that the state is not a beginning, nor is it necessary, the state is a necessary product of the development of human history to a certain stage. Engels pointed out

in the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State that the state did not always exist, but was the product of the division of society into classes when social and economic development reached a certain stage. With the development of social division of labor, production activities and exchange activities have developed greatly in both breadth and depth, and the contradictions caused by the division of labor can no longer be resolved internally, and an authoritative organization is needed to ensure the normal operation of production and exchange and alleviate the contradictions, so the state was born. Engels said, "The state is the product of society at a certain stage of development; The state is acknowledging that the society is caught in irresolvable self-contradictions, divided into irreconcilable opposites and powerless to get rid of them. And in order that these opposites, these classes with conflicting economic interests, may not annihilate themselves and society in a senseless struggle, there is a need for a force ostensibly above society, a force which should ease the conflict and keep it within the bounds of policy. This power which arises out of society, but which prides itself on it and is increasingly alienated from it, is the State." [7]186 It can be seen that the state is born in the stage of irreconcilable contradictions, and its main function is to ease conflicts and control unavoidable conflicts within an orderly range in order to maintain state rule. It can be seen that the state itself has the function of political rule and maintaining social stability.

3.2. The nature of the state - an instrument of political domination by the ruling class

The essence of the state is the core issue of Marx and Engels' state theory. Marx and Engels pointed out that the state has class and sociality once it comes into being. Marx explored and clarified the essence of the state in the process of discussing the class and sociality of the state. As for the class nature, Marx and Engels conducted corresponding investigation and discussion in the process of exploring the origin of the state. Marx and Engels pointed out that the emergence of the state has a certain class basis, and under the development of the social division of labor, there is a contradiction between the national (collective) interests and individual interests. The common (collective) interest then takes "the form of the state, which is independent from the actual individual and general interests, and at the same time takes the form of an illusory community," in which "one class dominates all the others." [8]164 It can be seen that within the state there is a struggle of interests between different classes, that is, the actual struggle between common interests and illusory common interests and the special interests on behalf of individuals, the fundamental purpose of which is to safeguard the interests of a specific ruling class with the help of the illusory "general interests" of the state. Therefore, the emergence of the state is the need of the ruling class to maintain their so-called "general interest", and this "general interest" is indeed "illusory", the interests of the ruling class, for the ruled class, their interests are not included in the illusory interest of the "general interest", so the state is only an "illusory community" for them; As far as sociality is concerned, Marx and Engels pointed out that sociality is mainly reflected in the independent sovereign social organization once the country comes into being, which is an institution that manages social public affairs and provides public services for all members of society. The political rule of the state is based on the performance of certain social functions, and political rule can only be maintained when the social functions are performed, but in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie monopolizes the social services provided by the state. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels pointed out the essence of the modern state: "Modern state power is nothing more than a committee for the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." [8]402 It follows that the state is merely a committee for the bourgeoisie to rule over other classes in order to safeguard the interests of the bourgeoisie.

3.3. The functions of the state - the dual functions of political rule and social management

Marx clearly pointed out that "the functions of the state include both the public affairs arising from the nature of all societies and the special functions arising from the antagonism between the government and the masses of the people." [9] The class nature of the state has determined the intelligence of the political rule of the state, but at the same time, its sociality also determines that the state has the function of social management, such as promoting economic development and social management. First, the political function of the state. The main function of political rule is that the economically dominant class represses and exploits the ruled class in order to maintain its own class interests and ruling order in the process of ruling, and implements democracy and dictatorship within the ruling class. The ruling class not only occupies an absolute position in the material field, but also spares no effort to defend its dominance in the ideological field. Marx and Engels pointed out in the Communist Manifesto that "the ruling ideas of any era are always only the ideas of the ruling class." [8] 420 Fundamentally, the function of political rule reflects that the essence of the state is class oppression. Second, the social management function of the state. Social management functions are functions other than political rule, including social economy, culture, education and other functions of managing public affairs. Engels once stressed that when the state has the function of political rule, it also shoulders the function of social management, and with the end of the primitive social formation, the function of national social management will become increasingly obvious.

Although the state has the function of social management, in the "modern state", the social management function of the state has essentially served the interests of the ruling class. It is in this sense that both Marx and Engels believe that the power of the capitalist state is, in essence, nothing more than a committee for the management of the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie. Therefore, even if the state performs the function of social management to maintain social stability, in fact, the state does not act as the protector of "public interests", but to safeguard the "special interests" of the ruling class. The so-called "public interests" are only a shiny cloak shaped by the ruling class, and the functions of the state have been "alienated".

3.4. The tendency of the state to wither away and be replaced by a communist society

Marx and Engels believed that the state was not an eternal being, and that when the advanced stage of communist society arrived, the state would "self-annihilate" with the elimination of classes. In his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx criticized Hegel's false view that the state was eternal, saying, "In a true democracy the political state disappears." [6] 282 In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels argued that public power loses its political character when class distinctions disappear. The power of the public means the power of the state. Political rule in the original sense has lost its condition for existence, because classes have been abolished. Engels wrote in The Family, Private Property, and the Origin of the State: "The State has not always existed. But not all the time... With the disappearance of classes comes the inevitable disappearance of states." [7] 190 It should be noted that by extinction we mean the extinction of the state of the proletarian character, not of the bourgeois character, which was overthrown by the violent revolution of the proletariat.

The demise of the state will not be realized all at once, it will be a long historical process, the process of the demise of the state is a process of the return of state power to the society, and the demise of the state is "self-demise", that is, there is no coercion and oppression by external forces, and it is the result of the self-movement of internal contradictions in the society.

After the demise of the state, the association that exists in its place is communist society, in which society will take back state power and public power will no longer be political in

character, but will transform the forces that rule and suppress society into its own forces. In this society, oppression and exploitation no longer exist, everyone can enjoy free and comprehensive development, and everyone in the society uses the public means of production to work, so that labor has got rid of the attribute of private, and has become a real social activity. At this time, the association no longer has the function of political rule, but only the function of social management. Therefore, only the "association of free men", that is, the communist society, can realize the final liberation of mankind, and the state will inevitably die out and eventually be replaced by the communist society.

4. The practical enlightenment of Marx and Engels' theory of the State

Therefore, the in-depth study of Marx and Engels' state theory has important enlightening significance and practical enlightenment for promoting the modernization of state governance. First, strengthen the construction of high-quality service-oriented government to promote the modernization of national governance system and capacity. Marx and Engels clearly pointed out in the Communist Manifesto that the proletarian movement is a movement that seeks the interests of the vast majority of the people, which is a fundamental feature that distinguishes it from all previous movements and also determines the "people's character" of the government of the proletarian state. According to the foregoing, the nature of the state determines its functions, and therefore the "people nature" of the proletarian government determines that the proletarian state must have the social function of serving the people and seeking their interests. Marx and Engels pointed out that all workers of the proletarian government would be servants for the people, and they would no longer have the privilege of being above the members of society. In the Civil War in France, Marx praised the Paris Commune, noting that "all public officials, from the commissaries of the Commune, from the top down, are paid only the wages of the workers." With this came all the privileges and perks enjoyed by the former high officials of the state. They all disappear with the characters themselves." [10]154-155 In order to effectively serve the people and improve the efficiency of the government, Marx pointed out that "the state must limit its own expenditure, that is, simplify the government, administer as little as possible, use as few officials as possible, and intervene as little as possible in the affairs of civil society." [10]153 In order to meet the new development and new requirements of the new era, the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues concerning Upholding and Improving the Socialist System with Chinese Characteristics and Promoting the Modernization of the National Governance System and Governance Capacity once again emphasizes "building a service-oriented government that the people are satisfied with". The service-oriented government satisfied by the people is the inheritance and development of Marx and Engels' theory of the state, which requires the construction of high-quality service-oriented government to be accelerated. On the one hand, the government should increase the financial investment in basic public services, and full financial investment is one of the important guarantees for building a high-quality service-oriented government. On the other hand, while building a clean government, we should strengthen the change of ideas and gradually build a more efficient government. To build a service-oriented government, clean government must be taken as the means to achieve this goal, and efficiency is the goal. In the process of governance, the government needs to consciously delegate power, further expand the autonomy of local governments and grassroots, "empower local governments with more autonomy, and support local creative work," [11]

Second, we should adhere to the people-centered development philosophy to modernize the country's governance system and capacity. As mentioned above, the form of national governance is determined by the nature of the country, and the form of governance will also be different depending on the nature of the country. Our country is a socialist country under the

people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants. This essence has already determined that the governance of our country reflects the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people and reflects the essential requirements of the people as masters of their own country. Therefore, our country must adhere to the people-centered development thought while promoting the modernization of national governance. Marx and Engels pointed out that in the future communist society, the ruling function of the state no longer exists, replaced by the function of "social management", to provide all-round services for the people, therefore, the "people" stance insisted by Marx and Engels also determines that our country's national governance must adhere to the people as the center. On the one hand, the realization of the goal of the modernization of national governance must rely on the strength of the people, on the other hand, the realization of the modernization of national governance will ultimately benefit the broad masses of the people.

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