

# Control over Mass Disturbances under the Vision of Social Ecology

Yuqin Jiang

Department of Law and Politics of Jiangsu Polytechnic University  
Changzhou 213164, Jiangsu, China

Henglong Ding

School of Economics and Management of Jiangsu Polytechnic University  
Changzhou 213164, Jiangsu, China  
E-mail: yzdhl@126.com

## Abstract

Keeping the balance of social ecology has decisive significance to prevent and resolve mass disturbances in China. At present, the root cause for the high frequency of mass disturbances lies in the unbalance of social ecological environment. It is, therefore, indispensable for the government to reconstruct a fair, democratic, rule-by-law and harmonious social ecological environment in order to prevent and control mass disturbances.

**Keywords:** Mass disturbances, Social ecology, Fairness, People's livelihood, Rule by law

At present, mass disturbances in China is rapidly on the increase. In 1993, there were altogether 8709 mass disturbances all over the whole country, and a rising trend is maintained afterwards; there were over 32000 mass disturbances in 1999, 60000 in 2003, 74000 in 2004, and 87000 in 2005, almost a rise of ten times within the one decade or so. The fundamental causes for mass disturbance in China lie in imbalance of social ecological environment, such as ecology of the common people, administrative ecology, organizational ecology, ecology of rule by law, and cultural ecology, etc. Therefore, reconstruction of fair, democratic, rule-by-law and harmonious social ecological environment is the fundamental policy to control mass disturbances.

## 1. Social ecological balance is the fundamental guarantee to prevent mass disturbances.

Social ecology is a concept of ecology of flora and fauna borrowed by social scientists in 1920s, and analysis of the social life of human being is an interdependent co-occurrence relation in the aspects of politics, economy, culture, society and the nature, etc. There are two forms of existence of social ecology, one being balanced and stable and the other being unbalanced. A balanced social ecology is manifested as political transparency, economic prosperity, affluence of human being, harmony solidarity and friendship of all nations, continuous improvement of the ideological ethical standards of the citizens, positiveness, health, vitalness of the general mood of the society. On the contrary, unbalanced social ecology is manifested as loss of control of power, prevalence of corruption, loss of credit, loss of order and environmental deterioration. In a balanced social ecology, the political administration is logical and relationship between people is harmonious, people live and work in peace and contentment, all sorts of social contradictions get resolved through mutual coordination, and thus, mass disturbances also lose the soil for survival. By contrast, an unbalanced social ecology will necessarily result in overgrowth of contradictions, exploding popular discontent, social turbulence, and ceaseless mass disturbances. Therefore, optimization of social ecological environment and maintenance of social ecological balance is the fundamental policy to control mass disturbances.

*1.1 In the situation of social ecological balance, all stakeholders work according to their ability and to the satisfaction of all and get along harmoniously, which is the fundamental condition to prevent mass disturbances.*

Marx once said, "All that people struggle for is interrelated with their interest." From the perspective of sociology, society is a community of living in which people have mutual relations with each other according to certain criteria. In the final analysis, maintenance of social ecological balance is to adjust relations between all stakeholders, to form a generally balanced interest pattern and thus, to realize a society in which interests of all are generally balanced. If a general balance of the interest pattern is lacking, then social ecological balance has

no way to be discussed. Occurrence and development of mass disturbances is an outcome of multiple factors in the process of social transition, and is also a comprehensive reflection of all sorts of social conflicts, but most fundamentally, it is a concentrated reflection of conflicts of all sorts of interests. Differences and contradictions of interests of different classes, different groups and different stakeholders result in imbalance of social ecology, and finally lead to occurrence of mass disturbances. Therefore, the fundamental condition to prevent mass disturbances is to realize balance of social interest pattern. However, realization of the balance of social interest pattern is an extremely difficult matter. In a diversified society, it is unlikely that contradictions of interest do not exist among human beings and among all kinds of social classes. Even with the premise that the basic interest of all is unanimous, there interest may differ from each other as a result of different social status and self cognition. Thus, in understanding the connotation of social ecological balance, we have to come to realize that, it is not that social ecological balance does not have contradictions of interest, and on the contrary, existence of interest contradictions is a normal social phenomenon, and the key is whether contradictions of interest can be coordinated in an appropriate way.

The government is an effective coordinator for contradictions of interest among all stakeholders. As a coordinator of interest, its purpose is to form a social ecological environment in which all people work according to their ability and to the satisfaction of all and get along harmoniously and give full play to their strong points. In order to achieve this purpose, the government should, first of all, look at divergence of interests among all stakeholders in a fair and objective way, take into full consideration interests of different regions, industries, classes and groups, give full consideration to risk tolerance of all parties of the society, and should especially pay attention to groups that live in difficulties, improve their employment environment, resolve the actual issue of protection of interests of laborers, and resolve issues of employment and social security of the groups that live in difficulties. Then, the government should adopt various measures to smooth channels of expression of interests appeals, establish and make perfect communication channels and coordinative mechanism of the social interests, take measures of education, coordination and conciliation by strategic, legal, economic and administrative means, and resolve internal interests contradictions among the mass people in the new situation and condition so as to compensate appropriately the party whose interests are damaged. In such a way, the government can effectively prevent peaceful interests appeals from evolving into irrational interests contradictions, which may result in mass disturbances, and even incidents of violence.

*1.2 Social ecological balance is directly manifested as relative balance of all subsystems of the society, and coordinated development of political, economic, cultural, social and ecological aspects is the fundamental condition to prevent mass disturbances.*

Direction manifestation of social ecological balance refers to the situation when all aspects of the society correspond with each other, political ecology, economic ecology, social ecology and natural ecology are interdependent on each other and can be developed in a coordinative way. According to the Barrel Theory, the quantity of water that a barrel can contain is not dependent on the longest board, but on the shortest one. The same case is true to balance of social ecology. Compared with natural ecology, environmental ecology and economic ecology, political ecology, cultural ecology and social ecology are actually "soft environment", whereas natural ecology, environmental ecology and economic ecology are "hard environment". "Soft environment" and "hard environment" have to correspond with each other, be developed in a balanced way, and bring out the best in each other. Of course, this sort of balance is also relative and temporary, whereas imbalance is absolute and everlasting. A social management system should correspond with the social environment, has an adjustive ability to adapt itself to the environment, and maintain relative balance of all subsystems in a dynamic condition. Otherwise, one long leg and one short leg will necessarily cause imbalance of the social ecology. For instance, even if the economy is developed, the society will necessarily lose its stability because the gap between the rich and the poor is enlarged and a growing income disparity appears. Furthermore, for example, it is true that the economy has been developed, but the society will also lose its stability as a result of environmental deterioration and loss of the security feeling among the common people. In order for the subsystems of the society to keep relative balance, they should be avoided to be one end high and one end low just like a seesaw. Thus, it is required that the CPC and the government should realize scientific development, learn to play the piano with ten fingers, take into full consideration work of all aspects, make an effort to build good socialism material civilization, political civilization, spiritual civilization, social civilization and ecological civilization, and make the "five civilizations" mutually conditional and supplement each other, and become an integrity closely connected to promote overall development of the economy and the society. A society in which the "five civilizations" are developed coordinately is necessarily a society with social ecological balance, socialism harmony and low frequency of mass disturbances.

*1.3 Social ecological balance is also manifested as correspondence between running of social management system and social environment, keen reaction of the mechanism, timely adjustment, and seek for balance in a dynamic condition, which is the important guarantee to prevent mass disturbances.*

Correspondence between social management and social environment is that, full play of the adjustive function of social management can satisfy requirements of development and changes of social environment, and exchange of information between them can guarantee bidirectional flow so that effective adjustment can be made at the proper time and to an appropriate degree. Development and changes of social environment will necessarily propose continuously all sorts of demands on the social management system. After the social management system receives information input, it works out such public products as new laws and regulations, policies and guidelines for social management to satisfy new demands of development of social environment after digestion, absorption, processing and manufacture. Interaction between social management system and social environment is circularly and constantly conducted by focusing on proposal of new demands and satisfaction of new demands.

Balance between social management system and social environment is relative, integrative, macroscopical and temporary, and dialectical simultaneously. Social management should correspond with social environment, and social management can also employ and transform social environment. The value of existence and development of social management is that, on the basis of corresponding with social environment, social management can facilitate actively consolidation and development of economic foundation and national power which its existence depends on, can manoeuvre power of all parties up to the hilt by legal, economic, political and public opinion means, etc, can mobilize and organize most extensively active transform of the mass public to the social environment so as to promote development of social environment. On the contrary, if social management system can not satisfy all sorts of new demands for development and changes of social environment, then it will necessarily result in imbalance of social economy, which, in turn, will cause overgrowth of social conflicts, turbulence and instability of the society, and continuous mass disturbances. Therefore, the CPC and the government should liberate and develop productivity and make an effort to realize scientific development by concentrating on the principal contradiction of increasingly growing material cultural demand and laggard social production at the primary stage of socialism. In such a way, they can provide guarantee in terms of the running mechanism of social system for prevention of mass disturbances.

## **2. Major manifestations of social ecological balance in China currently**

In recent years, the scale of mass disturbances is on the increase day by day, and the forms of the manifestation become intense increasingly, which serious affects social stability, and has become the focus of attention of all fields of the society. The social root cause for the occurrence and development of mass disturbances also lies in changes of social ecology brought about by social transition. For example, in the process of social transition, distribution of interests is unfair, popularization of social classes is accelerated rapidly, gap between the rich and the poor is enlarged, and dissatisfaction feeling and the feeling of being deprived among the public exist within a certain scope. What is more, the public power of the former mode still has not corresponded with the "era that is going towards power", the channel of public protection is obstructed, and psychology of some common people is constrained for a long time, so mass disturbances happen ceaselessly.

### *2.1 Imbalance of distribution of interests and aggravation of contradiction of people's livelihood*

A general survey of mass disturbances, it can be discovered that quite a large majority of them are caused by unfair distribution of interests. For instance, the phenomena of black box operation, shady deal, collusion between government and businessmen and exchange of power and money exist in some local governments in engineering construction, mineral exploitation, removal and rebuilding, urban redevelopment, land leasing, emplacement of immigrants, reform of government-owned corporations, labor dispute, purchase and sale of agricultural means of production, etc. The above phenomena distort normal market economy order, cause unfair social distribution and pose serious damage to interests of the nation and the common people. Thus, the ordinary people show extreme dissatisfaction, and mass disturbances are unavoidably caused when interests of the common people are difficult to protect effectively or can not be resolved thoroughly.

### *2.2 Prevalence of bureaucratism and unhealthy administrative ecology*

Occurrence of mass disturbances is usually followed by negligence of duty and breach of duty among some local officials to varying degrees --- or administrative omission, unhealthy action, and even violation of the law, or negligence of appeals of the public, safety and danger of the common people and violation of interests of the common people. When some local governments release some new policies and systems, they do not take into full consideration various factors, which is not completely coincident with the actual local situation. Thus, the

common people are not aware of their role, and the resistance sentiment is caused, which results in radical action. In addition, the bureaucratic style of work among part of cadres is serious, unpractical in their style of work, indifferent to the common people. They take attitudes of avoiding, shirking, delaying and fooling, or even give a cold shoulder to them. Sometimes, their attitude is rude, which results in intensification of contradictions and occurrence of mass disturbances.

### *2.3 Organizational ecology is weak and social control power is weakened.*

organizations at the grass-root level are weak in terms of social control, and their social authoritarian structure loses balance, which is the systematic root cause for occurrence of mass disturbances. Since the reform and opening up of China, the social control power of Chinese social organizations at the grass-root level exhibits an obvious weakening trend, and the prestige is also relatively weakened. Especially in rural areas, administrative control of organizations at the grass-root level over farmers is seriously weakened. Appealing power, coagulative power and persuasive and educative power of organizations at the grass-root level on the common people are greatly weakened. Some grass-root leaders are lacking in the ability to resolve hot issues reflected by the common people of local areas and departments, and even pay no attention. They do not resolve issues due to be resolved, and thus, problems become more and more, finally hard to be got rid of, which causes the common people to call in question the governance capability of grass-root organizations. When interests of the common people are damaged, organizations at the grass-root level are not only unable to protect interests of the common people, but are also unable to lead the common people in a correct way, as a result of which happening of mass disturbances is inevitable.

### *2.4 The consciousness of rule by law is weak and the social order is unhealthy.*

Contradiction between strengthened democratic consciousness of the common people and the weakened legal concept will necessarily bring about happening of mass disturbances. For the time being, the democratic consciousness of the common people is increasingly strengthened, and their will to participate in the administration and discussion of state affairs becomes stronger, but their ability to participate in the administration of state affairs is relatively low and their concept of the law is weak. When disputes of interests between the common people and the general public and between the superior and the subordinate occur, some common people feel that it's too slow to "act according to the law", and that "creating directly a disturbance" may arouse attention of the CPC and the government. According to them, administrative intervention by the government may resolve problems faster, and "creating a disturbance" is a "shortcut" to resolve problems, which makes contradictions that are supposed to be resolved through normal procedures evolve into mass disturbances.

### *2.5 Feudal consciousness remains and cultural ecology is laggard.*

In rural areas, influenced by the feudal consciousness for several thousand years, power of some local clans is still strong, and when problems happen among the common people, they do not resolve these problems according to the law, but resolve according to the "instruction of the clan", depending on power of the clan power. The result is usually that, people of the same branch of a family get together to mastermind a scheme and discuss countermeasures, so that such mass disturbances as organized appealing to the higher authorities, gathering a crowd to engage in an affary and fighting with weapons happen.

## **3. Countermeasures to optimize social ecology and prevent mass disturbances**

A harmonious and good social ecology can be generalized as harmony of interpersonal relationship and harmony of human beings and the society, that is, coordinated development of mind and body, healthy body, moderate state of mind, sound personality, substantial spirit, and rich emotion; harmonious relationship between members of a family and between neighbours, and harmonious relationship between social classes, benefit clusters, and people of all nationalities. According to the author, reconstruction of a harmonious and good social ecology is the fundamental strategy to control mass disturbances, which can be commenced from the following several aspects.

### *3.1 To attempt to establish a fair and impartial social ecology*

In the macro-social ecology, to distinguish whether a social ecology is balanced, fair and harmonious is not only the primary factor that affects the overall social ecology issues of a country or a region, but also the premise background and important variable that affects the social stability. It can hardly be imagined that a harmonious society can be established in a macro-background and social situation when the regional development is seriously imbalanced and urban and rural areas are seriously segregated. At present, China is in a transitional period of rapid social changes, in which different social classes obtain different economic benefits and differ from each other in the degree of satisfaction with demands because they occupy different social resources and

have different opportunities in the process of social transition. Gap of interests is enlarged between individuals, groups and different social classes. Part of people and areas make efforts and become rich first of all through honest labor, but there are also part of people obtain social wealth by all sorts of inappropriate means, so the phenomenon of unfair social distribution is serious. Unfair distribution results in the emotion of dissatisfaction, and when this sort of dissatisfaction emotion is accumulated to a certain extent, mass disturbances may break out. Therefore, it is a necessary condition for prevention of mass disturbances to coordinate and balance the social ecological development in the eastern, middle and western areas of China, to gradually eliminate the dual economic structure in urban and rural areas, to diminish gradually income gap between urban and rural areas, to coordinate and develop reciprocity and mutual benefits urban and rural areas, and to gradually realize the common and comprehensive development goal of urban and rural areas.

### *3.2 To continuously optimize rule-by-law ecology*

Rule-by-law is an important means to maintain social order. The function and mission of law is to generate and maintain social order by means of effectively resolving disputes and preventing disputes. At such a social transitional stage in China at present, all sorts of social contradictions increase sharply, and rule-by-law prevents and eliminates emergence and development of all sorts of unstable factors with its coercive power and deterrent force, alleviates the trend of increase of contradictions, prevents occurrence of disputes, and guarantees that all sorts of social activities are proceeding in a normal and orderly way. Therefore, to optimize rule-by-law ecological environment is an important measure to control mass disturbances. We have to make sound the socialist legal system, accelerate the democratic and political construction and the progress of rule by law in China, and promote legalization of political, economic, cultural and social life. Firstly, we should go deep into intensive propaganda and education of legalization, which may enable the mass public to come to know in time relevant laws and regulations, improve their legal consciousness, reinforce their concept of legalization, and fully realize illegitimacy and infeasibility of adoption of illegal means or improper means to maintain legal interests. Secondly, we should conduct administration according to the law, establish a democratic, orderly, honest, practical and high-efficiency government image. When government offices exercise their public administration functions, if they behave unscrupulously but not according to the law, then it is quite likely to become the transfer cord of emergency mass disturbances. Hence, establishment and making sound administrative laws and regulations, effective restraint of administrative power, exercising the state power in the interest of the people and administration according to the law is the basis to effectively prevent emergency mass disturbances. Thirdly, we should enforce the law in a fair way. We should set up a set of scientific standard of law enforcement, make explicit the task of enforcing the law, standardize the standard of law enforcement, and guarantee that in treatment with mass disturbances, the law enforcement officials can have laws to abide by, have rules to follow, and effectively employ the weapon of law to fight against crimes and to maintain social stability.

### *3.3 To vigorously renovate the ecology of social organization*

First of all, coordination and assignment commanding institution by several sections under the unified leadership of the Party Committee and the Government should be set up. In view of the multiple reasons for occurrence of mass disturbances, several aspects of the society are involved. Thus, in order to make preparations for the prevention and disposition task, a commanding and coordination institution has to be set up which is participated in by relevant functional sections, in which the policy of the Party is the main channel, and which is specifically directed by the "top" of the Party Committee and the Government. Then, such functional roles of organizations at the grass-root level as comprehensive management, popularization of law, and multipartite mediation, etc, should be brought into full play, and the information network should be established and made perfect to improve the ability of forecast and early warning. At the same time, we should give full play to the positive roles of such departments as the petition letter section, the Communist Youth League, and the Women's Federation section, etc. We should employ radio and television, newspapers and periodicals to extensively launch propaganda and education of new policies, laws and regulations, and to form an optimal situation in which prevention of mass disturbances is cared, supported and participated in. Finally, we should take full advantages of grass-root staff from the Neighborhood Committee, the Village Party Committee, and the multipartite mediation to manage collection of information. Meanwhile, we should depend on the grass-root organizations and the public and vigorously strengthen cooperation and contact between different departments, continuously set up and perfect information network that is criss-cross, indented, up and down connected, operates with high efficiency, flexible and unbolcked, attempt to realize early warning in advance, alarm in advance and disposal in advance, and really prevent and resolve mass disturbances at the grass-root level and eliminate them in their infancy.

### 3.4 To build perfect cultural ecology

Faith quality and social morality condition of citizens is an important symbol of perfect cultural ecology. In addition, faith quality and social morality of citizens is a significant motive to influence and promote establishment of balance of social ecology. As a necessary and most fundamental quality of citizens, faith is the starting point for morality of human beings to conduct themselves in the society, and is also the morality foundation to establish perfect and balance social ecology. Good morality of citizens represents the common interests of the social public and normal requirements of the social life. Good social public morality is an important target for constructing a modernized and harmonious urban ecology, and the degree of growth and maturity of public morality consciousness can be regarded as an indispensable mark and realistic basis to establish the balanced social ecology. As a matter of fact, the process of urbanization and socialization is to integrate and penetrate criteria of public morality into the ideology consciousness and behavioral habits of social members through families, schools and social organizations. Therefore, improvement of the ideological and ethical standards of citizens is not only one of the important targets pursued in establishing social ecological balance, but is also one of the important ecological factors to control mass disturbances.

#### References

- Marx. (1972). *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, Vol. 1, (82).
- Wang, Lin. (2009). Introspectiveness of Public Rights for Resolution of Mass Disturbances. *Southern Rural*, March 31, 3.
- Wang, Lin. (2009). The Key to Change "Fight with Weapons" into "Fight with Mouths" is Power of Public Rights. *Weekly News*, April 6, 5.
- Zhang, Xiaoxia & Chen, Nailin. (2008). *To Build Modern Urban Civilization through Learning of All the People*. Beijing: Learning Press, (187).