

# Boost a New Function of CPPCC in Grassroots — Based on the Implementation of “Proper Negotiation” Carried out by Jiangsu Province

Zhou Wenzhang, Zhao Longlong, and Xiao Lixun

**Abstract**—There are plenty of measures to negotiate appropriately. Motivating the public to tackle communal affairs via appropriate negotiation is the main request delivered by the socialist negotiatory democracy. In order to implement it, the Provincial CPPCC in Jiangsu pioneered an innovative way by extending the unique advantages of themselves. As a particular consultative body to the basic governance practice, the Provincial CPPCC creates a new function and builds a practical platform to promote actual negotiation. It develops the definition of primary negotiation and creates a chance for basal CPPCC to boost grassroots governance. This approach has specific universal outreach value. It has solved many complex problems that emerged before and has drawn much attention from the academic and practical circles.

**Index Terms**—Proper negotiation, primary CPPCC, consultation, civil democracy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is a socialist institutional production with Chinese characteristics, and it is an essential organization for promoting socialist negotiatory democracy [1]. In order to promote its essential effects in forming collective consensus among all parties and boost the speed of problem-solving in the grassroots, the Provincial CPPCC in Jiangsu (South of China) vigorously developed a project called "proper negotiation" [2]. This project aims to motivate the public to tackle communal affairs through negotiation. It has been actively organized and implemented at the primary level. The outcomes of it are surprising and remarkable [3]. Our research team conducted a field investigation in Nantong, Suzhou, and Yangzhou to reveal the operation process and distill the successful knowledge because the three of them were exemplary in Jiangsu Province during the implementation of the above project<sup>1</sup>.

Taking Nantong as an example, in the short two years of 2019 and 2020, its "proper negotiation" Chamber has organized and carried out more than 8,100 negotiatory activities in response to essential matters concerned by the

(Communist Party of China) CPC and government, practical trifles related to civil livelihood improvement, and complicated affairs about social governance. More than 60,000 citizens were invited to participate in the consultations, and over 4,200 problems related to civil livelihood were solved<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, about 23,000 relevant suggestions were offered by the participants. An investigation performed by the local government in 2020 showed that nearly 60.87% of recommendations were implemented, and 18.79% were transformed into policies or regulations<sup>3</sup>. Thus, this satisfactory performance contributes to constructing the distinctive brand of "proper negotiation" in Jiangsu Province.

Developing a new concept of direct negotiation, building a new platform for the CPPCC to negotiate at the primary level and exerting a new grassroots CPPCC are the significant features of "proper negotiation" in Jiangsu, and they are also the key to success. Under the directing of the CPC at the same level, the grassroots CPPCC committees in Jiangsu Province adhere to the new concept of "co-operating, consulting and negotiating for the public". They rely on the "proper negotiation" chamber and perform well as "a good helper for the CPC and government", "a connector linked individuals' hearts", and "a pioneer committed to his duties". So they have explored a new function of universal significance for practising the true meaning of socialist negotiatory democracy.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Field research is the most important research method in this paper. In late March 2021, with the efficient support of Provincial CPPCC in Jiangsu, a research team led by Professor Zhou Wenzhang went to Nantong, Suzhou and Yangzhou in Jiangsu Province to conduct an in-depth investigation of the results achieved since the implementation of "proper negotiation". Through field visits, on-site observations and random interviews, the research team collected a lot of relevant data and information. After systematic collation and induction, some valid data and information have been well applied in this paper. In addition, in the process of writing, this paper also uses the literature review method to analyze some theoretical issues involved in the application of "proper negotiation" in detail.

Manuscript received March 29, 2022; revised May 7, 2022.

Zhou Wenzhang is with the Central Party School (National School of Administration), Beijing, 100086, China (e-mail: jaryqotter@163.com).

Zhao Longlong is with Renmin University of China, Beijing, 100086 China. He is also with the Department of Philosophy, University College London, UK (e-mail: longlong.zhao.19@ucl.ac.uk).

Xiao Lixun is with the Northeast Normal University of China, 130024 China (e-mail: 503279273@qq.com).

<sup>1</sup>The research team is conducted by professor Zhou Wenzhang. Zhao longlong is a core member of this team.

<sup>2</sup>These figures come from the official investigation 2021 of Nantong.

<sup>3</sup>These figures come from the official investigation 2021 of Suzhou.

### III. DEVELOP A NEW CONCEPT OF PRIMARY NEGOTIATION FOR CPPCC

"Co-operation for the common good and negotiation for every Chinese citizen" [4] is a new concept adhered to by Jiangsu CPPCC in the process of "proper negotiation". It is initiative as this definition gives a creative interpretation of the CPPCC's political consultation in top-level design and grassroots exploration.

From the perspective of top-level design, constructing the negotiatory mechanism in grassroots for the CPPCC is an important part and a necessary procedure of the socialist negotiatory democracy system. Additionally, it guarantees the continuous development of the Chinese Multiple Cooperation Institution among different parties at the ground level [5]. Therefore, negotiation and co-operation have become two important and main contents for improving the negotiatory system at the primary level. What is more, it can safeguard unity and defend the practice of socialist negotiatory democracy in the long run [6].

From the perspective of grassroots exploration, "without opening up a new kitchen," "facilitating problems' solving", and "drawing consensus from all participants" are the core contents of "proper negotiation". As for "without opening up a new kitchen", it refers to not adding new burdens to the basic level, not building new buildings for negotiatory chambers and not establishing new organizations, but relying on existing "offices for the CCPCC" or "local convenience service centres" to hold negotiatory activities. Taking Suzhou as an example, at the end of 2020, about 98.2% of villages or communities held negotiatory activities, and the ratio of negotiatory meetings was held nearly four times a day, of which the transformation and landing rate of policy recommendations in the month of individuals' livelihood thematic consultation was as high as 72.19%.

"Negotiation for the common" means that the grassroots CPPCC committees have a responsibility of guiding and organizing negotiations among all parties to achieve the target of "facilitating problems' solving", "drawing consensus from all participants", and safeguarding the interests of the public. The grassroots CPPCC facilitates "problems' solving" rather than dealing with issues directly. They focus on proceeding from their unique advantages and promoting the solution of various questions at the fundamental level in three ways. Firstly, when participating in social governance at the primary level, the grassroots CPPCC will positively impact the practical situation. They will use their particular strengths to promote problems that can be solved within their capabilities, rather than blindly addressing all problems without considering the fact. Secondly, they participate in social governance at the ground level by promoting the solution of problems and playing the role of a negotiatory promoter and a participant. So, various problems that arise in social governance at the primary level need to be negotiated at the grassroots CPPCC rather than negotiate with them.

The problem can be solved in a step-by-step manner [7]. In the negotiation process, the grassroots CPPCC is the cohesives of the consensus of all parties. When problems can be solved quickly, the grassroots CPPCC will promote various stakeholders to form an effective plan to solve the problem. When the problem's solution takes a long time, the

grassroots CPPCC will promote negotiation, advertising policies, maintaining unity, etc.

### IV. BUILD A NEW PLATFORM FOR CPPCC TO NEGOTIATE AT PRIMARY LEVEL

In order to perform efficiently in popularizing "proper negotiation", the grassroots CPPCC committees in Jiangsu integrates their possessory resources according to the practical situation, creating a new platform called "co-operation and negotiation chamber" for the development of grassroots negotiation under the guidance of "Co-operation for the common good and negotiation for every Chinese citizen". The newly created chamber relies on the previous boardrooms that were not frequently used. Thus, creating this new chamber does not bring any additional burden to the locals. On the contrary, it promotes the efficiency of present resources' usage. "Co-construction, co-governance, and co-sharing" are three significant features of the new chamber, and they are also the detailed implementation of the grassroots negotiation.

First of all, "Co-construction" is to make total usage of community service centres, representatives' studios and other places to set up a negotiation room for "proper negotiation", so as not to add extra loads to grassroots units, and to achieve the aims of collective constructing, staggered using and efficiency-enhancing. Using public conference rooms and promptly carrying out various negotiatory works implements the grassroots CPPCC's instructions at the construction level.

The second is "co-governance". Under the direction of the Communist Party of China, the local government conducts the whole process of social governance at a basic level participating with the public. The grassroots CPPCC could take part in and deliver its values with the help of the negotiation chamber. They try to accomplish the task at the content level given by "Co-operation for common good and negotiation for every Chinese citizen" via actively promoting and enthusiastically attending all kinds of consultative and negotiatory works.

Finally, "co-sharing" mainly includes internal and external aspects. Nevertheless, from achieving their goals, the two can be combined. That is, "sharing with the common". The so-called "sharing with the common" refers to the fact that within the grassroots CPPCC, the construction of the portal website is used as an opportunity to gradually disclose the development direction, normative process, typical cases, and successful experiences of negotiatory works to the whole society, to realize the goals set by the grassroots CPPCC. The successful lessons that could be extracted from the practice of Jiangsu are meaningful and valuable. Especially for creating a chance for others to analyze its advanced experience. In a word, this is the implementation of the grassroots CPPCC's instructions at the resulting level.

In order to fully ensure the normal state and long-term effectiveness of "proper negotiation", it is necessary to establish an efficient operating mechanism to escort the improvement of the quality efficiency of orderly consultation and scientific negotiation from the institutional level [8]. Jiangsu province has formed an effective grassroots consultation and negotiation system under the close direction

of China's provincial and regional Communist Party, with the support of virtual consultation and negotiation chamber, promoted by the regional CPPCC committee. In addition, the new chamber still has to deal with questions caused by the object, content, manner and implementation of negotiation. Many representatives, such as community administrators, local managers, regional shareholders, relevant officials etc., would assemble at the new chamber discussing how to solve the problem advocated by local officers, CCPCC members and the public. To achieve it, they create online seminars, face-to-face meetings, and lists of recommendations, responsibilities, implementations, feedback etc. For example, judging from the data statistics of Nantong, Suzhou and Yangzhou in the past two years, the new chamber of "proper negotiation" have achieved full coverage, and the operating mechanism of grassroots consultation and negotiation works have become increasingly perfect. The operational results have increased year by year.

#### V. EXERTING A NEW FUNCTION OF GRASSROOTS CPPCC

In the light of the new concept of grassroots consultation and negotiation, the CPPCC in Jiangsu Province at ground level has realized the extension of CPPCC consultation to social governance at a basic level depending on the new platform for grassroots in consultation and negotiation activities and has also created a remarkable pioneering move in the work of the CPPCC. "Fresh force", "good helper", "close connectors", and "new platform" are the suitable labels for the role they can play, and they are also the four new effects played by "proper negotiation" in social governance at a basic level. Specifically, they refer to the "fresh force" of grassroots consultation and negotiation, the "good helpers" of the CPC committees and governments at all levels, the "close connectors" of the masses, and the "new platform" for CPPCC members to perform their duties.

"Proper negotiation" has opened up a new position for the grassroots CPPCC to carry out consultation and negotiation. Furthermore, it has dramatically stimulated all parties' enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity to participate in grassroots consultation and negotiation activities. At the same time, it also provides sufficient impetus and a solid institutional guarantee for the rational and orderly development of grassroots consultation and negotiation work. According to the composition of the members of it, the new chamber is mainly composed of six objects, including the convener, the co-convener, the CPPCC members linked to the public, the representatives of stakeholders, the representatives of the masses (the number of it is not less than one-third), the representatives of grassroots social governance admins, and the managers of relevant departments. It provides a guarantee at the institutional level for each group. It makes sure that all participants can exercise their right to participate and discuss. Thus, relying on the new chamber of "proper negotiation when needed", the grassroots CPPCC has created an opportunity for the CPC committee and government, the public, CPPCC members and stakeholders. It also opens up a new path for grassroots democracy.

For the CPC committees and governments at all levels,

"proper negotiation" plays an essential role in assisting grassroots social governance. It has helped the CPC committee, the government, and the public solve many practical problems in real life and has also promoted social development and harmony. The creation of the new chamber of "proper negotiation" has broadened the channels for communication and discussion between the CPC committee, the government, and the public to a large extent and provided a stage for the government to deliver its service functions better. In addition, the "proper negotiation" chamber has also fully consolidated the consensus of all parties through extensive consultation and negotiation. In short, the emergence of the new chamber has deepened the closeness of the ties between the CPC committee, the government and the public and has provided significant assistance for the smooth and efficient development of public management.

"Proper negotiation" has played an irreplaceable pivotal role in grassroots consultation and negotiation for the public. "Proper negotiation" has opened up a new path for the government to figure out the current situation at the grassroots level in detail and in-depth. It uses consultation and negotiation to build a bridge for communication and consultation between the CPC committee, the government, the public, CPPCC members and various stakeholders. Under the active promotion of CPPCC members, the public has effectively expressed their reasonable demands by actively participating in grassroots consultation and negotiation activities and taking the new chamber of "proper discussion" as an essential platform for speaking out. At the same time, in the process of citizen participation in consultation and negotiation, it can improve the public understanding and recognition of various public policies. In particular, those complex problems that are difficult to solve for a while correctly have enabled the public to form a comprehensive understanding of the difficulty and stages of problem-solving through personal participation in consultation and negotiation. Thus, the phased solution of such problems has won the most significant degree of support from the public.

As for CPPCC members, "proper negotiation" has opened up a way for CPPCC members to perform their duties efficiently. On the one hand, the "proper negotiation" chamber has created an opportunity for CPPCC members to display their strengths and abilities. The subject of each negotiation is markedly different, so various CCPCC members are needed in a series of topics. Therefore, "proper negotiation" can provide every CPPCC member with sufficient space to "show his fists and feet" to the greatest extent. The new chamber may selectively give chances to the professional expertise of each CPPCC member according to the different topics of specific topics. In this way, it can promote the solution of problems more efficiently and enhance the sense of honour and achievement of CPPCC members themselves.

On the other hand, performing duties and serving the public require every CPPCC member's contribution. The "proper negotiation" chamber provides an accurate "training ground" for the daily exercise of the necessary skills of CPPCC members. Taking Yangzhou as an example, by the end of 2020, the National and provincial CPPCC members stationed in Yangzhou had participated in 56 consultations

and negotiations related to "proper negotiation", and more than 2,780 CPPCC members of cities and districts had participated in "proper negotiation". It is precisely in carrying out grassroots consultation and negotiation that the necessary skills of CPPCC members have been strongly tempered and improved. "Understand negotiation, do well in negotiating, and being able to negotiate" is gradually becoming a new magic weapon in the necessary "skill pack" for CPPCC members in the near future [9].

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the three aspects of consultation and negotiation, such as the concept, platform and efficiency, "proper negotiation when it is needed" has shown some new characteristics that are different from the past, and these new characteristics have played a positive role in promoting the creation of a new situation in grassroots consultation and negotiation. As a new form of grassroots consultation and negotiation, "proper negotiation when it is needed" creates a brand-new platform for CPPCC members to perform their duties and successfully demonstrate the grassroots practice of civil democracy. Moreover, these new features provide an institutional guarantee and set a new pursuit to grassroots consultation and negotiation in the new era.

We should vigorously carry forward the new concept of grassroots negotiation prompted by the CPPCC adhere to the value orientation of consultation for and negotiation with the common. Furthermore, actively advocating that the managers, operators, and members of CCPCC regard "real consultation," "real promotion," and "real cohesion" as their responsibilities, taking the initiative to sink to the ground level, directly participating in consultation and negotiation activities at a basic level through offering practical suggestions, seeking common ground with "consultation", and improving quality with "specialization".

The construction of a new platform for consultation and negotiation needs to be firmly rooted in grassroots practice. The model of "Trial operations & comprehensive coverage" is its construction blueprint, "without creating new kitchens and extra burden on the ground level" is its construction criterion, and "synchronous constructing of the platform and operating mechanism" is an essential guarantee for the ordinary and long-term operation of the new grassroots chamber. At the same time, building a work network and work system that matches it is also a vital and vital link. By improving the relevant systems such as regular contacting with the masses, it is possible to extend the tentacles of the work of the grassroots CPPCC, building a solid institutional guarantee for the realization of the tangible coverage and adequate coverage of the new chamber of "proper negotiation", effectively assisting the masses in solving problems, and also avoiding the harm of formalism to a large extent.

As a particular consultative body, the CPPCC plays a unique role in connecting the upper and lower levels, integrating inside and outside. The emergence of the new platform for consultation and negotiation can help the CPPCC to transform its advantages in the consultation into new efficiency in participating in grassroots governance to a

large extent. Relying on establishing the new consultation and negotiation chamber platform, the grassroots CPPCC has played a significant guiding and backbone role in organizing research, guiding topics, straightening out emotions, resolving contradictions, consolidating consensus, and proposing countermeasures forming suggestions. At the same time, it has also contributed a new force from the grassroots CPPCC to realize the new pursuit of "gaining the support and recognition of the common, benefiting the masses of citizens, and promoting CPPCC members in the new era.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Professor Zhou Wenzhang conducted the research and reviewed the final version; Zhaolonglong wrote the original paper; Xiao Lixun analyzed the data; all authors had approved the final version.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Some or all data, models, or code used during the study were provided by a third party called the CCPCC in Jiangsu Province. Direct requests for these materials may be made to the provider as indicated in the Acknowledgments.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks for the CCPCC in Jiangsu Province, especially for the CCPCC in Suzhou, Wuxi, Nantong, and Yangzhou. They provided adequate support during the field investigation headed by professor Zhou Wenzhang, and they offered lots of valuable datasets that developed our analysis.

## REFERENCES

- [1] D. B. Hutt, "Republicanism, deliberative democracy, and equality of access and deliberation," *Theoria*, vol. 84, no. 1, pp. 83-111, 2018.
- [2] M. Hammond, "Deliberative democracy as a critical theory," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 22, no. 7, pp. 787-808, 2019.
- [3] J. F. Han, "Give full play to the role of the CPPCC in social governance," *China Party and Government Cadres Forum*, no. 11, pp. 41-44, 2019.
- [4] A. Kadlec and W. Friedman, "Deliberative democracy and the problem of power," *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2020.
- [5] Y. Y. Nie, "Everybody's affairs should be discussed by everybody" is the true meaning of people's democracy," *Journal of China Yan'an Cadre College*, vol. 11, no. 5, pp. 22-27, 2018.
- [6] K. Strandberg, S. Himmelroos, and K. Grönlund, "Do discussions in like-minded groups necessarily lead to more extreme opinions? Deliberative democracy and group polarization," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 41-57, 2019.
- [7] D. Tong and B. He, "How democratic are Chinese grassroots deliberations? An empirical study of 393 deliberation experiments in China," *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 630-642, 2018.
- [8] J. P. Xi, "Decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way and winning the great victory of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era," *Renmin Daily*, 2017.
- [9] T. Yu, "Cultivating the spirit of social negotiation of "negotiating when something happens" — On the innovation of social negotiation mechanism in the social governance system," *Theory and Modernization*, no. 2, pp. 61-71, 2021.

Copyright © 2022 by the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted

use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited ([CC BY 4.0](#)).



**Zhou Wenzhang** was born in August 1953. He got the philosophy doctor in 1988 from Renmin University of China, Beijing, China; public management philosophy, public administration philosophy; the philosophy of national servants management. He is a professor of the Central Party School (National School of Administration) and a Ph.D. supervisor of Renmin University of China.



**Xiao Lixun** was born in June 1987. He got the philosophy doctor from Renmin University of China, Beijing, China. He is an assistant researcher of Northeast Normal University of China.



**Zhao Longlong** was born in February 1989. He got the philosophy doctor from Renmin University of China, Beijing, China. He is a Ph.D. candidate.