

美国两次镀金时代及其后的治理转型

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[摘 要] 美国第一次镀金时代发生在 19 世纪中后期,南北战争后经济快速扩张,一路高歌猛进。第二次镀金时代是指从里根执政到 2007 年金融大危机之前的二十多年,经济再一次放量增长,持续繁荣。然而,经济上的增长并非零代价,它伴随着对弱势劳动群体利益的牺牲、对社会长远利益的忽视以及对自然资源的滥用。美国两次镀金时代所产生的问题以及政府对应的调控措施希望能为发展中的中国提供些许借鉴。

[关键词] 美国; 镀金时代; 经济增长; 社会矛盾; 政府职能; 政策转型

Two Gilded Ages in the United States and Transformation of Governance

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Abstract: The first Gilded Age of the United States was the late 19th century, right after the American Civil War, and the second Gilded Age refers to the period from Reagan administration to 2007 when the financial crisis occurred. Both Gilded Ages witnessed rapid economic growth. However, rapid economic growth was not necessarily cost-free. It might have been achieved at the expenses of the interest of disadvantaged labor class and of long-term public interests, and by the abuse of natural resources. This article focuses on the problems of the Gilded Ages and the policy solutions provided by the American government. The lessons left by the two Gilded Ages might be of value to policy makers in China whose economy is experiencing rapid growth.

Key words: U. S. A.; the Gilded Age; economic growth; social contradiction; government functions; policy transformation

一、第一次镀金时代

1873 年,马克·吐温出版了小说《镀金时代》(*The Gilded Age*),小说以讽刺的手法描绘了西

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部投机家、东部企业家和政府官吏相互勾结,大肆掠夺社会财富的景象。由于小说生动地反映了当时的社会现实,人们便开始用“镀金时代”这个词来特指从南北战争(1861—1865)结束到 19 世纪末的美国历史。马克·吐温用“镀金”来表达“金玉其外,败絮其中”的矛盾现象。镀金时代最鲜明的特性是高速的经济增长与尖锐的社会矛盾相并存。

南北战争为美国资本主义发展扫清了障碍,加上不断扩展的领土、源源涌入的移民和西部新发现的矿藏,使美国经济快速增长,国家财力和居民生活水平大幅提高。首先,美国的农业在镀金时代实现了大发展。比如,从 1865 年到 1898 年,小麦产量增加了 256%,玉米产量增加了 222%^[1]。其次,镀金时代启动了美国的二次工业革命,能源、交通和通讯产业均实现了飞越式的发展。这一时期开始依赖包括石油、煤炭、天然气在内的化石燃料,刺激了巨型能源企业的发展。从 1865 年到 1898 年,光煤炭产量就增加了 800%,铁路总里程也增加了 567%^[1]。汽车工业开始起步。同时,新科学技术在工业中创造了诸多奇迹,比如这一时期发明了电报、电话、电灯、电梯和留声机,其产品开始进入家庭消费,极大地改善了新兴中产阶级的生活质量。再次,镀金时代的工业化需要大量劳动力,因而人口分布开始向城市倾斜,城市化进程加快。仅在 19 世纪 80 年代,美国的城市人口就增加了 800 万,比同期农村人口增加多了一倍^[2]。镀金时代造就得像纽约、费城、芝加哥这样人口超过百万的大都市。总之,美国在镀金时代实现了前所未有的经济增长以及资本和财富的快速积累。到 20 世纪初,美国已经成为世界上首屈一指的工业强国,其人均工业产值达到了当时英国的 1.5 倍,超越了德、法两国的总和^[1]。

正如 Klein 所指出的,经济的增长并非零代价,它伴随着诸多的牺牲和滥用。他举例说,在镀金时代,不计后果、不考虑未来的能源开发使自然环境伤痕累累;产业工人丧失家园,并且作为机器的附属而丧失了部分人格;传统的手工业者被市场所排挤;城市中的贫民窟和血汗工厂里挤满了儿童;大量企业在竞争的漩涡里倒闭;社会动荡和冲突此起彼伏^[3]。总结起来,可将镀金时代所产生的主要经济和社会矛盾概括为以下四方面:

第一,经济资源高度集中,各产业被少数大资本所垄断。早在 19 世纪 80 年代初期,俄亥俄州标准石油公司就利用信托的方式把其他 40 家同行企业由竞争者变成了产业同盟(托拉斯)。借此,标准石油公司垄断了美国 90% 以上的炼油市场^[4]。在工业总量上,1901 年时美国 1% 的公司生产了全国 44% 的产品^{[5]66-67[6]175}。在金融方面,当时摩根、范德比尔特、洛克菲勒、卡内基梅隆等几大财团所控制的财富力量已经强大到可以与国家权力相抗衡。一个具有极端讽刺意味的例子是,美国 1907 年爆发的经济危机几乎是被老摩根一己之力化解的,而当时的美国连中央银行都没有。美国第 19 位总统海斯在卸任五年后(1886 年)的一篇日记中这样感叹道:“政府不再属于人民,受制于人民,并服务于人民。现在的政府属于大公司,受制于大公司,并服务于大公司。”^{[3]31}

第二,与经济垄断相联系,贫富分化问题凸显。在镀金时代,经济繁荣的成果并没有公平地为社会各阶层所共享。当新兴的工业资本家和中产阶级财富成倍增加的同时,产业工人们不得不忍受低工资、长工时以及恶劣的工作环境。到 1900 年,占美国人口 1% 的富人拥有美国财富的 87%,而人口中的约 1/8 生活在极度贫困中^[7],表明贫富悬殊已经到了非常危险的地步。这一时期,劳资冲突的规模、频率和持续时间也以惊人的速度增加。其中比较著名的事件有 1877 年的铁路工人大罢工,1886 年干草市场(Haymarket)事件及其后的围剿,1892 年洪姆斯特(Hmestead)罢工,1894 年的卜曼(Pullman)铁路工人大罢工,以及 1902 年美国矿工联合会发动的煤矿工人大罢工等等。

第三,政府管理严重缺失,自然环境和食品安全等经受威胁。在缺少政府约束的自由市场中,企业往往只考虑自身利益,而不顾及生产带来的外生社会成本。与原来的小手工业相比,镀金时代大规模的集中生产和城市化更造成了前所未有的环境污染。一方面是金属矿藏和煤炭石油的滥开采使一些水资源受到严重污染,自然风光和生态环境都遭到不同程度的破坏。另一方面,急剧增长

的城市工业排放大量的废水废气直接影响着市民的日常生活和健康安全。与此类似,食品与药品安全也在镀金时代引起人们的担忧。黑心商贩销售的劣质牛奶、不清洁的饮用水和未经严格测试的药品成为当时美国平均寿命偏低与婴儿死亡率居高不下的主要原因。面对这些问题,人们开始对美国传统的自由市场和有限政府的治国理念提出质疑。

第四,政治腐败案件在各级政府中频繁发生,政治体制的弊端日益显现。当时美国从联邦到地方政府都采用政党分肥制(Spoil System),即当选政党一上台就重新任命政府工作人员。而任命的标准首先不是看工作能力,而是被任命者是否忠诚于政党的领导。所以政党分肥制是政党用政府职位去奖励支持者并维护政党利益的机器。这一制度的采用可追溯到19世纪30年代安德鲁·杰克逊总统执政时期:他上台不久就撤换了423名邮政官员(当时邮政系统是联邦政府中最大的部门),尽管其中的大部分资质过硬^[8]。政党分肥制既降低了政府的管理能力和效率,也为官员间的相互勾结和集体腐败埋下了制度种子,以致镀金时代成为美国历史上最腐败的时期。根据历史学家梅涅斯的统计^[9],在1850年之前,美国各级政府中鲜有腐败现象;腐败在1850年后开始上升,并在19世纪80年代达到顶峰。此后经过各种改革,到20世纪30年代以后官场腐败才逐步下降。镀金时代中一个著名的腐败案件是美国动产信贷公司丑闻(Crédit Mobilier Scandal)。它发生于1868年,而一直到四年后才被揭露。当时动产信贷公司承接了第一条横贯美国大陆的铁路修建项目。但是公司从成立就和一些高层官员有利益关系,而后又涉及向联邦众议员行贿、从联邦财政中骗取巨额铁路建设款以及不法资本运作等问题^[10]。镀金时代的政治腐败和其他社会问题催生了美国的制度改革和政策转型。

二、镀金时代及其后的制度和政策转型

改革的呼声其实在19世纪70年代的美国就已经非常响亮,只是人们对于如何改革莫衷一是。到1890年前后,改革思路逐步清晰,“进步主义”(progressivism)思潮渐渐被进步的中产阶级所接受,最终演化为主导美国改革的进步主义运动。进步主义运动持续到20世纪20年代,对传统的资本主义制度进行了全面改良。

参考马骏等多位学者的总结^[11],19世纪末的进步主义思潮更新了社会意识和治国理念,表现为以下五个方面:第一,重新认识资本主义,尤其是自由放任的资本主义和市场行为。资本主义在美国经过一百多年的自由发展,使美国人意识到完全放任的资本主义及垄断集团的特殊利益已经威胁到美国社会的平衡。“适者生存”的社会达尔文主义受到了越来越多的质疑,强调广泛民主与社会公平的新理念在这个时期逐渐深入人心。第二,社会责任意识开始被广泛接受。在此之前,美国的民主政治不太强调社会责任。而在进步时代的改革过程中,越来越多的美国人意识到民主应包括一个社会纬度,即在坚持个人主义的同时,每个人都应该有一点对他人的社会责任。因此,在公共对话和政策制定中,需要用社会责任意识来平衡个人主义^[7]。第三,重新界定政府的角色和作用。一些美国人因社会责任意识开始放弃小政府和有限政府的信念,转而接受新的治国理念,即建立强有力的政府调控经济,管制市场,并利用税收对社会财富进行再分配,为所有公民提供公共服务和社会保障。这一新主张也为日后凯恩斯主义的盛行奠定了思想基础。第四是重新理解民主。事实证明,选举并不能保障人民获得真正的民主,民主还需要配套的人事制度和对权力的有效社会监督。第五,强调“效率”与“科学方法”。当时许多人潜心研究传统生产、管理方式的不足,寻求提高生产效率的科学方法(比如Frederick Taylor和Mary Park Follett等),并把这种科学方法推广到包括行政管理在内的社会经济实践中。行政管理从此也变为一项需要特殊专业技能的职业。

镀金时代的社会矛盾催生了进步主义思潮,而进步主义思潮又促进了当时的政治改革和社会

进步。镀金时代和进步时代的改革涵盖面广,历史影响深远,尤其是以下变革意义非凡:

其一,公务员制度改革。1883 年美国通过了联邦法《彭德尔顿公务员制度改革法》(Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act),规定政府部门的职位聘用必须以能力和业绩为标准,而不是政治立场;政府招聘可使用竞争性考试办法择优录用;任何以政治原因的解聘和开除都视为违法。美国还专门成立了公务员制度委员会,用于监督此法律的贯彻执行。最初的法律仅适用于联邦政府中的一小部分职位,且对州和地方政府没有约束。后来经过历任政府的修改和完善,到 19 世纪末,绝大部分联邦政府职位都被纳入了公务员制度体系,而越来越多的州政府也相继采纳这套制度。公务员制度改革的结果是政府的职能性提高了,而党派性降低了;政府的管理效率和廉洁程度都实现了大幅度提高^[12]。与公务员制度改革相并行的其他政治改革也付诸实施,比如,联邦参议员开始由选民直接投票产生,妇女被赋予了参政权等等。

其二,市政改革。城市是工业化的发源地,也是社会与政治问题最为集中的地方,因而它也就成了进步主义改革的前沿阵地。19 世纪末之前,几乎所有的美国城市都沿用与联邦和州政府结构相似的分权与监督制衡体制(即强势市长体制)及政党分肥制:官员的选举为党派选举;市长作为市政府最高行政长官和政治领袖掌握财政、人事等重权;市政府工作人员由市长基于党派利益任免;市议会成员名义上是城市政策的制定者和市长的监督者,但他们由于缺乏权力和资源,并不能实现对强势市长的有效监督和制约。权力集中和监督不力,再加上政党分肥制,为市长及其同僚的腐败行为提供了便利条件,比如他们与市政工程的承包商私下交易,用工程合同换取回扣。市政改革的要点包括重新调整市长与市议会之间的权力分配,削弱市长权限,废除分肥制,推行无党派选举,增设城市经理人作为城市的最高行政领导,而城市经理人应该是受过良好教育和技能培训的职业管理者,以及城市经理人由市议会任免等。这样的改革旨在从制度上避免官员腐败的发生^[13-14]。

其三,社会媒体带头揭露和抵制腐败。20 世纪初至第一次世界大战期间,美国一批新闻记者配合进步主义改革,掀起了一场专门揭露政治丑闻和商业腐败的运动,即“扒粪运动”(muckraking)。扒粪运动一词因为西奥多·罗斯福总统在 1906 年的演讲中所提及而变得流行。在此运动中,当时著名的报刊如《克利尔周刊》(Collier's Weekly)、《马热杂志》(Munsey's Magazine)及《麦克鲁尔杂志》(McClure's Magazine)等积极鼓励记者实地调查政府官员的贪污和腐败案件,并及时在报刊上登载调查结果,大胆揭露官场丑闻。新闻媒体的努力使腐败问题引起了美国各个阶层的关注,迫使政府推行政治改革。

其四,调整经济政策和劳资关系。镀金时代出现的产业高度垄断和居民收入两极分化问题已经危及到美国社会的稳定,调整经济政策势在必行。在这一时期,联邦政府规范了联邦收入所得税和关税制度,建立了中央银行系统(即美国联邦储备局),并通过了《反垄断法》。在州政府一级,15 个州在 1888 年至 1890 年间也通过了法律对市场垄断进行积极干预^[4]。另一方面,美国联邦政府注重协调劳资关系,在全国范围内建立公平的劳工标准,督促资本家改善底层工人的工作条件和福利。例如,1902 年,美国矿工联合会发动煤矿工人大罢工,威胁城市取暖燃料供应,引发了一场举国危机。西奥多·罗斯福总统召集矿主和劳工领袖在白宫谈判,最后双方达成妥协,将工作时间从每天 10 小时缩短到 9 小时,并且给予工人 10% 的加薪,结束了持续 163 天的罢工。1913 年,美国成立了劳工部,致力于保障工人福利并改善其工作环境。

其五,关注环境保护。美国在镀金时代的经济高速增长是以环境破坏为代价的,所以经济高速增长后需要长时间修补环境问题。1899 年,《河流港口保护法》在国会通过,从此禁止向航道内倾倒垃圾杂物。值得一提的是,1901 年至 1909 年任期的西奥多·罗斯福是第一位对环境保护有长远考量的美国总统。他常给《户外生活》(Outdoor Life)杂志撰稿,宣传自然保护理念并报告国

家公园状况。他认为自然资源应有效使用,避免浪费。1904年,罗斯福在佛罗里达州设立了第一个国家鸟类保护区。1905年,成立了林业服务局,管理国有森林和土地。同年,美国国会通过法案在堪萨斯州建立了第一个野生动物保护区。罗斯福设立的国家公园和自然保护区面积共一亿九千四百万英亩,比其所有前任所设总和还多。举世闻名的大峡谷国家公园也设立于西奥多·罗斯福执政时代。1906年,罗斯福在白宫召集全国州长会议,讨论水、森林和其他自然资源的有效规划和使用问题。环境保护举措也在一些地方政府中得到积极回应。比如,1894年进步主义人士乔治·华林(George E. Waring Jr.)受命担任纽约市街道卫生局局长,他采取果敢措施清理街道垃圾,使纽约的城市面貌大大改观。1906年,匹兹堡市通过了控制烟尘排放的法案,并建立了专门的监督办公室。

其六,立法食品安全。镀金时代后,罗斯福总统于1906年签署了《食品和药物纯净法案》(Pure Food and Drug Act)和《肉类产品监督法案》(Meat Inspection Act),对养畜和肉类加工企业进行检查及实施强制卫生标准。国会此后修正了该法案,以避免小型屠宰场的不合卫生标准的产品损害出口和国内市场。以此为开端,美国政府不断完善食品安全措施,最终于1927年建立了专门机构负责食品和药品的安全,即美国食品药品监督管理局的前身。

总之,美国镀金时代过快的经济增长伴随着许多意想不到的社会和政治问题。当这些问题积累到一定程度时,就逼迫政府不得不有意放慢经济增长的脚步而去纠正这些问题。然而,这一过程并非易事:美国为此花费了二十多年的时间。

三、新镀金时代

1981年至2007年的美国历史统称为里根时代,又称为新镀金时代^[3,15-18]。其最鲜明的特征是借助政府经济政策以及新兴产业尤其是信息技术产业的兴起实现较高速的经济增长。但是,经济的高速增长再次伴随着收入的两极分化以及金融业的垄断和腐败。根据美国商务部经济分析局(the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Department of Commerce)提供的数据,从1981年到2007年,按照当年币值计算,美国国内生产总值(GDP)平均年增长6.2%;而扣除物价上涨因素,平均年增长3.1%。但财富分配不公及两极分化速度再次加快。在2005年,美国家庭税前收入的中位数是56 000多美元。同时,有五分之一的家庭年收入在26 000美元以下;五分之一的家庭年收入在103 000美元以上;5%最富有的美国家庭年收入超过184 000美元。5%最富有的家庭在2005年占有37.2%的总财富,比1980年上升了14.2%^[15]。《纽约时报》在2005年针对《福布斯》杂志每年评出的400个最富有的美国人做了一个20年回顾专辑,发现最富有的400个美国人的平均净资产在20年间增长了近4倍,即从1985年的6亿美元增长到2005年的28.1亿美元。在2005年,400个最富有的美国人的净资产总和超过了加拿大的国内生产总值^[19]。

财富分配的两极化是由产业的集中和垄断以及不公平的收入分配引起的。在新镀金时代,越来越多的社会财富被少数金融寡头所控制,包括5家投资银行(高盛、摩根士丹利、雷曼兄弟、美林和贝尔斯登)、2家金融集团(花旗集团、摩根大通)、3家证券保险公司(AIG、MBIA、AMBAC)及3大评级机构(穆迪、标准普尔、惠誉)。从1990年到2008年,美国银行的数量从15 000家减少到8 000家。与此同时,10个最大的金融企业拥有的资产规模占整个金融业的百分比由10%增长到50%^[17]。在2007年,金融部门在整个经济中所占的份额大概在20%,而制造业仅占12%左右^[18]。

美国金融业在新镀金时代的最严重问题是监管不力,以及由此产生的掠夺式和腐败式经营。在美国20世纪30年代的大萧条后,特别是1940年到1980年的40年间,受凯恩斯主义影响,政府

对金融业实行比较严格的管制。但从里根政府开始,经济政策再次转向自由主义,对金融系统的管制逐渐弱化。虽然学术界在 20 世纪 90 年代一直呼吁金融业改革并加强监督,但由于大银行的抵制和政府的放纵而不了了之,使纳税人和中小投资者蒙受巨额经济损失。20 世纪 80 年代末的储蓄和贷款危机已使纳税人多花费了约 1 240 亿美元。之后,投资银行在明明知道互联网公司即将倒闭的情况下仍大肆推销网络股,结果 2001 年网络股泡沫的破灭又造成投资者共损失了 5 万亿美元^[17]。在 20 世纪 90 年代,金融衍生工具开始流行并泛滥,更增加了金融业的风险。而《2000 年商品期货现代化法案》进一步为金融衍生工具的掠夺式经营大开绿灯,使金融泡沫越聚越大,最终不可避免地在 2007 年爆发了大规模的金融危机——先是 2007 年 3 月份开始一些大次级贷款企业纷纷倒闭,然后 2008 年贝尔斯登银行出现现金枯竭,房利美和房地美在即将崩盘时被联邦政府接管,紧接着雷曼兄弟倒闭。而具有讽刺意味的是,所有这些企业在出事之前都拥有 AA 或 AAA 评级,并在出事后很快被联邦政府救助。更让百姓怨声载道的是,金融业高管们在连续多年得到巨额分红和奖金后,并没有为企业的倒闭负任何责任,他们甚至在政府救助后分发数十亿美元的奖金。获 2011 年奥斯卡奖最佳纪录片的电影《内幕》(*Inside Job*)忠实地再现了美国金融业的腐败内幕和金融危机发生的过程。

财富分配的两极分化、金融腐败以及 2007 年爆发的经济危机直接引发了民间的大规模抗议活动。2011 年 9 月,“占领华尔街”运动正式在纽约华尔街的金融区拉开序幕,并迅速蔓延到美国其他大城市甚至欧洲国家,而华尔街即代表美国金融业。这次运动的焦点是反对社会和经济的不公平、高失业率、金融业的贪婪和腐败以及金融服务业对政府的不当影响。抗议者的口号是“我们是 99%”,寓指最富有的 1% 侵占了过多的社会财富,政府应该实行改革去保护其余 99% 人口的利益。有人把正在进行中的“占领华尔街”运动看做是新一轮进步主义运动的开始^[20]。虽然下此结论为时过早,但民众对新镀金时代的失望和对新一轮改革的向往表露无疑。

四、新镀金时代的政策演变及新一轮社会改良

两次镀金时代的大部分时间都由共和党总统执政。在第一次镀金时代,两党均奉行自由主义的经济政策,没有出现太大的政策分歧。然而在第二次镀金时代——包括三届共和党(里根及布什父子)和一届民主党(克林顿)——两党表现出迥异的政策偏向:共和党支持传统的自由资本主义,倾向于小政府和低税率;民主党强调用税收政策调节财富再分配,主张政府应增加和维持一些支出项目来帮助社会弱势群体。这里我们着重讨论一下新镀金时代美国的政策演变,以便更好地理解社会矛盾的由来,并且思考美国下一步可能的政策走向。

罗纳德·里根上任伊始即抛弃之前采用的凯恩斯主义政策而转向供给学派。除了减少政府干预,特别是放松对金融业的管制外,里根降低了税率并简化了税收,同时削减政府开支,以期刺激民间投资和经济增长,并降低通货膨胀。比如,《1981 年经济复兴税法》将联邦个人所得税的最高税率档从 70% 降到 50%,而最低税率档从 14% 降到 11%。1986 年的《税收改革法》进一步将所得税率的最高档从 50% 降到 28%,但最低档从 11% 提高到 15%。显然,里根政府的税收政策高调地袒护了富裕阶层的利益而忽视了对中下层民众的关怀。他的这一倾向性还体现在对待工会和罢工的态度上。例如,1981 年夏天,联邦空中交通管制员为争取福利而举行了全国大罢工,违反了公务员工会不准罢工的联邦法律。里根发表严厉声明,要求他们在 48 小时之内复工,否则将被开除职位。结果 11 345 名空中交通管制员因为违抗里根命令而丢掉工作。这一事件的处理方式完全不同于第一次镀金时代的共和党领袖西奥多·罗斯福总统。而里根借此向资本家传递了一个明显信号——不必害怕工会力量。其实,里根倾斜性减税政策在带动经济增长的同时,也造成了联邦

财政赤字和债务的巨幅增加。根据美国财政部公布的“历史债务余额”数据,在里根执政的8年时间里,国家债务从不足1万亿美元飙升到2.85万亿美元。继里根之后,尽管同为共和党的老布什总统在竞选时为了赢得支持也宣称将实行减税政策,但在巨大的债务和赤字压力下,最终不得不向民主党控制的议会妥协,而将税率稍微上调。

有学者视克林顿总统执政为新一轮进步主义运动的开端^[16],这也许过于乐观了。诚然,克林上任伊始就表达了增加联邦税收、调整税收结构、关注社会下层并改善民生的愿望。他1993年推行的《综合预算协调法》针对收入最高的1.2%的富人,重新将个人所得税率从28%调高至36%和36.9%;同时降低一千五百万低收入家庭的所得税率以及90%的小企业的所得税率。克林顿的税收调整政策很快产生了积极效果:贫困人口的数量有所减少,财政平衡逐步实现。当克林顿卸任时,美国联邦政府实现了财政盈余。另外,克林顿在任期中还提出了旨在实现全民医疗保险目标的医疗改革方案,并不遗余力地游说,但因花费巨大,被相对保守的两院议员强烈抵制而被迫中途流产。

之后的小布什总统面对克林顿留下的乐观经济形势开始了另一轮的减税措施。布什的减税政策包括两个立法:《2001年经济增长与减税和解法案》(Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001)及《2003年就业和经济增长减税调和法案》(Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003)。后者作为前者的强调和补充,两者有效期都为2010年;法案规定国会届时可决定是否延长减税有效期。布什减税法案被称为美国历史上规模最大的减税举措,它涉及个人收入所得税、资本收益税、退休金计划及地产和赠与税等等。就个人所得税来说,在五个累进税率档中,每个都降低了3—5个百分点,使最高税档为35%而最低税档为10%。布什的减税政策没有像里根那样过度保护富人利益,似乎更多地体现了刺激经济增长的愿望。然而,经济并没有如期望的那样出现涨势,反而是就业率和人均收入在布什执政期出现了下滑景象。例如,从2000年到2007年,扣除物价上涨因素,美国家庭年收入中位数降低了1175美元^[21],而贫困人口的比例从2000年的11.3%增加到2006年的12.3%。与此同时,由于税收减少和反恐安全开支扩大,联邦债务在2008年10月份达到11.3万亿美元,比2000年初翻了一番还多。

新镀金时代后美国一直深陷经济危机之中。经济危机一方面呼唤经济政策转型以扭转目前低迷的经济形势,另一方面因为资源有限,使政府鲜有余力去推行改革。而这正是奥巴马政府面临的难题。奥巴马于2009年初上任以来一直表现出对收入再分配问题的关注,比如他多次提及税收调整,希望终止布什早前实行的对富人的减税优惠政策,但目前还没有实质性措施,因为担心就业机会随之减少。医疗制度也是收入再分配的形式之一。在奥巴马的努力下,其医疗改革方案终于在2010年3月通过两院立法。其目的是针对收入分配的两极化而造成的低收入家庭缺少医疗保障的情况,政府向失业者和穷人提供一定的医疗保险。同时医改方案要求医疗保险公司放松一些限制条款,向客户提供更多的福利。然而,奥巴马医改的大部分条款要等到2014年以后才能兑现。此外,联邦政府与华尔街的关系也是人们关注的焦点。民间寄希望于政府加强对金融业的管制,使金融服务系统在经营上对客户更加负责。但是,奥巴马在2009年和2010年的两次国情咨文中都重点解释政府为什么对华尔街实施救助,而管理和监控方法的革新并没有被提及。

公平与效益的平衡和取舍一直是每个政府面临的难题。未来美国政府改革的方向也会立足于此。尽管仍有许多美国人相信较大的收入差异有助于经济繁荣,但经济学家们通过实证研究得出的结论是:经济的快速增长可以导致收入两极分化,但收入两极分化却不能推动经济持续增长^[22-25]。所以,有识之士再次呼吁,新镀金时代后美国政府改革的重心应是实现政府对经济的合理干预,抑制财富分配的不公平,而不是简单地刺激经济的复苏。另一方面,改革的目标不是为了强化政府,而是适时地利用政府去维护市场公平竞争的秩序。正如《华盛顿邮报》专栏作家迪翁早

在 1998 年指出的,新进步主义运动的目的绝不是利用政府去破坏自由市场,而是创造一种让市场更适当运作的社会条件^[16]。

在具体的措施上,美国政府需要找到再次改革的突破口。综合几十年美国经济的发展,我们的看法是:第一,税率结构调整不可避免。新的税率结构应该体现公平且能有效刺激经济发展。克林顿时期的税收政策是第二次世界大战后最能体现公平和效率的政策,应成为下一步税收调整的重要参考。第二,政府应加强对金融业的干预,并制定出有效的管理办法,以维护市场的自由公平竞争,防止欺诈经营,使金融业在政府的合理监督下对客户负责。第三,政府应加大投资,鼓励对新兴能源和新兴产业的研究与开发,激励经济创新。奥巴马在 2011 年的国情咨文中也特别强调了这一点。其实,历史上每一次连续的经济高速增长都与新兴产业的崛起和发展有密切关系。可以预见,在未来的全球经济竞争中,谁创造了新技术、新产业,谁就掌握了主动权。另外,削减政府开支应成为坚持不懈的努力。正像奥巴马指出的,重复性的职能部门在美国政府中随处可见,既浪费了资源,又降低了效率。在未来几年,对政府机构的合并和重组应该成为当务之急。

五、美国两次镀金时代的启示

美国两次镀金时代的积极方面在于经济的高速增长和居民总体生活水平的提高。然而,两次镀金时代客观上都产生了诸多的社会问题和矛盾,包括收入分配不公、产业垄断、腐败严重以及大规模社会动荡等。两次镀金时代后都需要用政府的力量去纠正偏差,调整利益关系,从而引导社会走向较均衡的发展。美国镀金时代的教训启发我们重新思考经济增长与社会发展的关系。我们希望这样的思考能为中国未来的发展提供一定的借鉴。

第一,经济增长本身是手段而不是最终的目的,经济增长是为了实现社会的均衡发展,即物质文明和精神文明的共同进步。在物质文明上,一个国家可以借助消费能力的提高及新技术、新产业的发展,使居民生活的物质条件和舒适程度得到逐步改善。在精神文明上,理想的模式是,居民的安全感、满足感和社会责任感随经济财力的增长而增长,人际关系向着健康和谐的方向发展,民主制度日益完善。如果把经济增长(如 GDP 增长率)作为压倒一切的核心目标,为增长而增长,甚至不计成本,不顾后果,不择手段——包括对自然资源的滥用、对弱势劳动者利益的牺牲以及对长远社会利益的忽视,经济增长和社会均衡发展之间就会出现尖锐矛盾,利益群体之间的强烈冲突就在所难免。

第二,单从物质文明的角度看,也不是经济增长速度越快越好。一方面,物质文明提高的主体应是大部分居民,而不应仅仅局限于极少数人群。如若经济增长导致财富分配更加不公平,以至于有些社会群体的基本民生问题出现困难,社会冲突和动荡就在所难免。另一方面,物质文明的提高应是一个可持续的过程,不应以牺牲未来利益乃至后代利益为代价。所以经济增长的同时应兼顾到自然资源的合理开发和利用。竭泽而渔式的过度开发虽然可带来短期的经济效益,但未来的发展会遇到严重制约。更严重的是,一旦环境遭遇严重破坏,其恢复要么变成不可能,要么付出远远超出经济增长的代价。况且,自然环境条件是物质文明的一项重要指标。用牺牲环境的办法换取经济的增长就等于缘木求鱼。人们所熟识的“亚洲四小龙”在 20 世纪 80 年代经济增长的奇迹其实也包含了破坏自然环境的教训。有学者指出,中国台湾地区的经济崛起模式不应成为发展中国家学习的榜样,因为其业绩很大程度上是以破坏环境和牺牲居民健康为代价的^[26]。当时台湾当局对环境污染没有限制,工业有毒垃圾可随意向空气、土壤和水源中排放,自然食物链遭到严重污染,职业疾病和癌症的发病率在三十年间增加了整整一倍。所以,对策之一就是适度放慢经济增长速度,

中止高污染工业,并采取环境保护和清理措施^[26]。

第三,市场和政府都不是万能的,应各司其职,相互补充,而不能随意取代。市场是基础机制,能最好地实现私人利益,并通过私人利益激发经济活力,但它对公共产品却无能为力。政府肩负社会责任,在市场和整个社会中制定政策规范与维护法律秩序,保证公共安全,提供公共服务项目,保护弱势群体利益,协调社会关系。美国传统上一直崇尚自由市场经济和有限政府,因而两次镀金时代的问题一定程度上都源于对政府职能的排斥。里根最广为人知的名言是“政府不能解决问题;政府本身就是问题”。所以,他对企业和个人减免税收的同时,极力压缩职能部门,将政府对市场的干预降到最低。然而,“大市场小政府”的负面结果是:企业间不当竞争频发,产业趋于集中和垄断,腐败盛行,财富分配的不公平性加剧,社会稳定和安全岌岌可危。另一方面,当产业集中和垄断达到一定程度时,市场经济的活力就会直接降低。当然,在市场和政府的关系中也要注意适当遏制政府的权力。当政府的力量过大时,政府本身就可能变为市场竞争的参与者,亦即政府充当裁判和球员的双重角色,那么,政府主导型的垄断就会发生,腐败因此蔓延,这同样会严重扼杀经济活力并阻碍社会进步。

第四,因为政府的职能是市场的监督者、管理者、服务提供者及社会利益协调者,而不是市场的直接参与者,对政府官员的考核应集中在他们是否主动了解公众的要求,提供符合大众要求的公共服务(包括环境、社会保障、健康、教育等服务);是否制定公平政策,合理协调社会利益关系;是否遵照法规办事,廉洁奉公,保护公民的人身和财产安全;以及他们是否真正对公民负责,提高服务的质量和效率。如果对官员的评估单纯地建立在年度经济指标的考核上,或者把短期经济指标当做最核心的考察指标,那无疑混淆了市场和政府的权限,错误地定位了政府官员的责任,从而忽略了政府本该重视的职能。

第五,在经济高速发展和社会财富快速积累过程中,政府官员追求个人财富的私欲不可避免地随之增长甚至膨胀,从而引发贪污腐败等不良行为。而政府官员的廉洁不可能单靠个人的道德约束自动实现。所以,在经济高速发展时期,倡廉反腐措施必须适时跟上且力度到位。从美国的经验看,动员社会监督机制,尤其是利用媒体的力量遏制贪污腐败,不失为一条见效快速的途径。另一方面,以能力为标准的用人制度以及政府运转的透明化和规范化,将从制度上有利于良好官场风气的树立,防止腐败之风的泛滥。

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Two Gilded Ages in the United States and Transformation of Governance

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I. The First Gilded Age in America

In 1873, Mark Twain and his coauthor Charles Dudley Warner published their novel *The Gilded Age—A Tale of Today*, in which they satirized the greed and political corruption of the western speculating investors, eastern entrepreneurs, and public officials in the post-Civil War America. The novel depicted the reality of that time so vividly that since then people refer to that period in American history as the "Gilded Age." The most striking feature of the first Gilded Age is the coexistence of the rapidly growing economy and increasingly severe social conflicts.

The end of Civil War paved the way for the development of capitalism in the United States. Expansion of US territory, waves of immigrants, and newly-found mines in the West caused the US economy to grow very rapidly. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States had become the number one industrial power in the world. However, advances in economy didn't come without a price. In general, we can summarize the major economic and social problems in the Gilded Age as follows:

First, economic resources were highly concentrated and many industries were monopolized by a few capital powers. In 1901, about 1% of the companies produced about 44% of the total industrial products in the United States. As Rutherford B. Hayes, the 19th US President, once put it in his diary: "This is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people no longer. It is a government of corporations, by corporations, and for corporations." Second, linked to the economic monopoly was the problem of social stratification. In the Gilded Age, the economic prosperity was not distributed equally among all social strata. By 1900, the wealthiest 1% of US population possessed about 87% of total wealth, whereas 1/8 of the total population lived in extreme poverty. During the same period, conflicts

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between workers and capitalists became more frequent, intense, and lasting. Third, there were serious deficiencies in public administration and governmental regulations, jeopardizing natural environment and food security. In a free market economy lacking governmental regulations, firms tended to merely maximize their own profits and disregard the externalities. As a consequence, increasing pollution, deteriorating environment, and rising fatality rate took place. Finally, corruptions occurred more frequently and on a larger scale at all government levels, and defects in the political system became more and more obvious. Both the federal and state governments adopted the spoil system, a practice where a political party, after winning the election, gives government jobs to its voters as a reward without regard to their qualification. The spoil system made governments inefficient and corrupt in the Gilded Age.

II. The Governance Transition during and after the Gilded Age

As early as in the 1870s, the call for reforms had begun to rise in the United States. But it was not until the 1890s before the idea of "progressivism" was gradually accepted by the middle class and finally evolved into a large-scale political and social Progressive Movement. As summarized by some scholars, the progressivism reform restructured the social consciousness and public management in five major ways: reinterpreting capitalism, especially the overly liberal and totally uncontrolled capitalism; building social responsibility and accountability; redefining the role and function of government; re-understanding the meaning of "democracy"; and emphasizing on "efficiency" and "scientific methods." In line with these ideological changes provoked by the heated social conflicts in the Gilded Age, the progressives managed to carry out many far-reaching reforms:

First, the reform in government employment system. The United States passed a federal law "The Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act," which stipulated that government jobs should be awarded on the basis of merit, rather than of ties to politicians or political affiliation. The Pendleton Act reduced the partisanship, improved efficiency, and curbed corruption. Second, the municipal reform. Before the end of the 19th century, almost all American cities adopted a governing structure that was similar to that of federal and state—strong mayor and spoil system. The reform weakened the mayor's power, eliminated the spoil system, and promoted the use of professional city managers. Third, exposing corruption. Muckraking became popular at the beginning of the 20th century. The journalists exposed waste, corruption, and scandals in the highly influential Medias of national magazines, such as *Collier's Weekly*, *Munsey's Magazine*, and *McClure's Magazine*. They called the public attention to the problems and forced the governments to change. Fourth, adjustment on economic policies and the labor-capitalist relationship. The polarization in income brought about social turmoil in the Gilded Age; and the progressives were committed to rebuilding social stability by limiting monopoly power and establishing new employment standards to improve the living condition for the working class. Fifth, environment protection. Laws and regulations such as "Rivers and Harbors Act" of 1899 were passed at federal, state, and municipal levels to protect the environment and reduce waste. Finally, food security. "Pure Food and Drug Act" and "Meat Inspection Act" were passed by the Congress; and the amendments to these acts finally led to the establishment of today's Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In short, the rapid economic growth in the Gilded Age produced many social and political problems. The government had to slow down the growth in order to deal with these problems. This was not an easy task of course, which took America about twenty years to complete the process.

III. The New Gilded Age

The period between 1981 and 2007 is so-called Reagan Era, or the New Gilded Age. The most prominent feature of this era was the fast economic growth propelled by new industry, particularly the information technology, as well as a series of economic policies. The growth, however, came at the cost of polarization in wealth distribution, and the monopoly and corruption of the financial sector. According to the data from Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Department of Commerce, from 1981 to 2007, US GDP grew at 6.2% per year, or 3.1% on a real dollar basis. In the same period, the polarization in wealth redistribution also accelerated significantly. In 2005, the wealthiest 5% of the households controlled 37.2% of the total wealth, representing a 14.2% increase from 1980. In the New Gilded Age, more and more social wealth fell in the hand of financial oligarchies such as the biggest investment banks, financial groups, and insurance companies. By 2007, the financial sector counted for 20% of the total economy while the production sector only counted for 12%.

One of the biggest problems in the Reagan Era was the lack of supervision over the financial institutions. In order to maximize their profits, these financial institutions, investment banks in particular, took advantage of the dot-com bubble in the early 2000s, and the proliferation of financial derivatives since the late 1990s. They reaped huge profits at the expenses of millions of small investors. When the subprime mortgages inevitably caused the most severe financial crisis in 2007, none of the high-level managers of the investment banks got punished for their mistakes—they got fat bonuses from the government bailout money instead. In September 2011, the Occupy Wall Street began from New York, and swiftly spread to many other cities and countries. The protests are against social and economic inequality, high unemployment, greed and corrupt financial sector and their undue influence on government. The protesters' slogan "We are the 99%" refers to the growing wealth inequality in the U.S. between the wealthiest 1% and the rest of the population. Although it is still too early to make any judgment, the Occupy Wall Street movement clearly shows people's disappointment about the New Gilded Age and their desire for reforms.

IV. The Transition of US Policies in the New Gilded Age

Republican presidents were in office for the most part of the two times of Gilded Age. In the first Gilded Age, Republican and Democratic parties both adopted liberal economic policies without much discrepancy. During the second Gilded Age, however, the two parties differed significantly in policies—the Republican Presidents (Reagan, Bush, and Bush) advocated the traditional liberalism, favoring small government, and low taxes, whereas the Democratic President (Clinton) emphasized redistribution of social wealth through taxation and was inclined to increase budget to help the disadvantaged social groups.

Once Ronald Reagan took office, he promptly switched from the Keynesian economics to the supply-side economics. Reagan administration reduced the governmental intervention in the market, loosened the regulation on the financial sector, lowered tax rate and simplified tax code, and cut government's spending. Reagan hoped to encourage private investment and control the inflation through

the new economic policies. He favorably protected the welfare of the wealthy while neglecting the poor. He also took an intransigent attitude towards unions and workers' strikes. One consequence of Reagan's policies was that the national debt rocketed from less than 1 trillion to 2.85 trillions during his terms. Some scholars view Clinton's administration as the beginning of new progressive era, which might be too optimistic. Clinton increased the marginal tax rate for people in the top bracket, lowered taxes for small enterprises. These policies quickly led to the decrease in poverty and balanced budget. Clinton also pushed hard on the healthcare reform, but his effort failed due to the formidable cost of his plan.

George W. Bush's administration took advantage of Clinton's legacy and started a new round of tax cut—about 3–5% cut for every tax bracket. This was done primarily in hopes to stimulate the stagnant economy. However, in reality, it increased poverty rate and lowered the median household income in real terms. The huge expenditure in anti-terrorist wars, together with the tax cut, caused the US public debt to reach over ten billions by the end of Bush's administration. After the New Gilded Age, the United States has been trapped deeply in the quagmire of fiscal crisis. President Obama seeks to reform the taxation policy and healthcare system. Nevertheless, the overarching tasks such as increasing job opportunities and stimulating economy have prevented him from making substantial moves in that direction. Regarding the problems with the Wall Street, Obama has not taken any significant measures to date.

In reviewing the history for the past few decades in the US, we propose that the key to the success of future reforms is that government should properly intervene in the market and regulate the financial sector so that it can create an environment, in which the market can operate smoothly and efficiently. In the next few years, the US governments may take the following actions: (1) changing the current tax policy to make it more suitable for the needs of economic growth and to make it fairer to the poor; (2) adopting new rules and laws to regulate the financial market, so that it functions with less fraud and loopholes; and (3) investing more capital in research and development projects to explore new technology and new energy. In addition, government spending should be overhauled so as to curb the fast debt growth and also to reduce waste.

V. Lessons from the Two Gilded Ages in the United States

The two Gilded Ages in the United States both featured the high speed economic growth and great leap in living standard. However, both periods created huge social problems and conflicts, including unfair redistribution of wealth, monopoly, corruption, and social turmoil. The lessons learnt from the Gilded Ages inspired us to rethink the relationship between economic growth and development. It is our hope that such rethinking of the US case could provide useful clues for the future development of China.

First, economic growth is a means, not an end; the economic growth should ultimately serve the purpose of achieving a balanced progress in both wealth and culture. On the wealth progress, a government may take advantage of the increased purchasing power and advances in new technology brought about by the economic growth to gradually improve the living standard and comfort level of the citizens. On the cultural progress, the ideal model is that the general public's feelings about safety, satisfaction, and social accountability are fulfilled better and better along with the economic growth. If a government makes economic growth (GDP growth rate, for example) the sole and overarching goal and pursue it at all costs, the severe conflicts between economic growth and balanced social development will

take place, and conflicts between different interest groups will inevitably occur.

Second, even from the perspective of pure material progress, economic growth should not be thought of as the faster the better. On the one hand, economic growth should benefit the majority of the society, not just a few privileged citizens. The economic growth and the fairness in social wealth redistribution must be achieved simultaneously for the economic growth to be meaningful. On the other hand, the improvement in wealth progress should also be sustainable. It cannot be achieved at the price of future generations' welfare. Once the environment is polluted, it may never be able to get recovered. Therefore, a wise policy is to achieve a moderate economic growth while taking steps to phase out highly polluting industries and protect the environment.

Third, neither the market nor the government is omnipotent. The two should each do what it does best and function as supplement one to another. The market is the essential mechanism in allocating resources, and can maximize individual interests while increasing the total social wealth if used properly. However, the market can do little in providing and distributing public goods and services. Therefore, governments should take on this responsibility and make laws and rules to regulate the market so that it can operate properly and to the best interest of the majority of the society. It is an American tradition that people believe in free market and small government. But the history has proved that such belief and practice could lead to excessive concentration of industry and monopoly, unfair redistribution of wealth, and ultimately stagnant economy. In contrast, if the government grows too large, the government itself will be turned into a big player in the market place. In other words, it will serve as both the player and the judge at the same game. Under such situation, the state-owned-and-operated monopoly will emerge and corruption will become rampant. This will also strangle the economy and obstruct social advances.

Finally, considering the relationship between market and government, performance measurement of public servants should be revisited. Public performance should not be measured solely based on economic indicators; instead, it should be done by using indicators that measure how well they provide public services to the citizens. It is also essential to fight against corruption in the time of rapid economic growth. The muckraking movement, an approach used in the first Gilded Age, might be copied to another country with fast economic growth. In the meantime, transparency and due process of government can provide institutional foundation to prevent government officials from corruption.

(按：英文版由作者本人在原文基础上进行了缩写，内容已有删节。)