



# COMPARATIVE GOV

China Notes

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_

**“Let China sleep. For when China wakes, it will shake the world.” Napoleon**

## Problems with Economic Reforms

- Reformers believe that an iron rice bowl providing cradle to grave coverage have led to poor work motivation and excessive costs for the government and enterprises most social services have been slashed (if you live in a poor area – typically rural and inner China – you’re out of luck)
- Income and employment are now no longer guaranteed but are more directly tied to individual effort – “from each according to their ability to each according to their work”
- Unemployment is estimated at 20% of the total labor force.
- Labor unrest (strikes, slowdowns, demonstrations, sit-ins were all on the rise in the 1990s. (Tiananmen was crushed because the CCP was alarmed at the large number of workers who had joined the protests under the banner of an unauthorized union).
- Floating populations (including many migrant rural folk) is stressing China’s social services (their presence could be unsettling – it would be much worse without the TVEs)
- Corruption is on the rise. Because the rule of law is often weaker than personal connections (called guanxi) nepotism and cronyism are rampant.
- Environmental concerns

## Cleavages

- China is very culturally homogeneous and has a very strong sense of national identity (Middle Kingdom)
- Cultural homogeneity has saved it from the kind of ethnic or religious violence that has plagued so many countries in the modern world. There are Tibetan and Muslim areas (but they are on the fringes and only account for 8%)
- China has suffered from identity politics as a legacy of Mao. Mao pitted workers, peasants, and loyal party activist against “capitalist roaders” and other alleged counter-revolutionaries.
- Glaring inequities between the “haves” and “have-nots” because of the economic miracle. China has more than 200 million people who no longer live in absolute poverty but still only have minimally adequate supplies of food, clothing, and shelter
- Inequities between the rural and urban populations

## Rural Change

- Household Responsibility System which is still in effect today – Farmland is contracted out to individual families who take full charge of the production and marketing of crops. After paying taxes, contract fees to the village (which owns the land) the family is free to consume or sell what it produces. There has not been a move to sell individual tracts of land to farmers.
- Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) expanded enormously under Deng.
- Economic Warlord-ism – Do regions have too much autonomy? Local governments have been known to defy or ignore the central government by evading taxes or undertaking massive construction projects without notifying Beijing.
- In recent years, village leaders and representative assemblies have been directly and competitively elected by local residents which has brought an important degree of democracy to village government (however in each village the most powerful person is still the CCP leader)
- Patron-Client relations are very pervasive at the local level (as it is in many developing countries where ordinary people have little access to official channels of power). For example, a village leader (the patron) may help farmers (his clients) avoid paying some taxes by reporting false production statistics in exchange for their support to keep him in office

### Trade/International Interests

- SEZs are faster-growing than the overall Chinese economy (also they are hotbeds of crime, speculation, bribery, and corruption).
- Human rights are an important issue with China's MFN status with the US. MFN guarantees the most favorable trade terms such as low tariffs. Many US politicians believe that encouraging the Chinese economy is striking a blow for democratization in China and they turn a blind eye towards human rights violations.
- China believes that a view of rights that stresses individual liberty above all else is inappropriate because Chinese culture emphasizes social needs and responsibilities.

### Organization of the State

- "The force at the core leading our cause forward is the CCP" – Mao on page one of the Little Red Book
- Party members join more for career advancement than because of ideological commitment (something for which Mao is spinning in his grave)
- China has a unitary system (with the CCP guaranteeing that everything is top/down)

### Danwei (Unit) System

#### CCP

- Individual power, factional maneuvering, and personal connections (guanxi) are more important than titles (Deng never having the highest title)
- Only 5% of the population are members (50 some million people)

#### National Party Congress

- Meet for one week every five years.
- They basically rubber stamp the decisions already made by the top party leaders and provide a showcase for the party's current policies.

#### Central Committee

- One level up from the Congress
- 190 full members and 150 alternate members
- Meets annually for about a week
- Elected by the National party Congress
- Central Committee directs party affairs when the Congress is not in session (which is most of the time)
- Significance is more the political maneuvering between CCP factions that occur during their plenums
- Elect members to the Politburo and Standing Committee (from their own members)

#### Politburo

- 24 members who elect the Standing Committee

#### Standing Committee

- 7-9 members
- Each member has executive responsibility for a particular area of policy
- The composition of this group determines which way China moves
- Very secret
- Meetings are rarely announced
- General secretary presides over both the meetings of the Standing Committee and the Politburo

### Premier (PM) and the Government

- Premier is formally appointed by the president with the approval of the Congress; however, the CCP really decides who this is going to be.
- Post has always been held by a member of the party's most powerful body (the Standing Committee)
- Premier has a two term limit as does the president.
- Premier directs the State Council which in theory is appointed by the Congress, functions like the cabinet in a parliamentary system
- State Council is comprised of the premier, vice premier and the heads of government ministries

- Dual Role means that the government organizations below the national level are under both the vertical supervision of the next higher level of government and the horizontal supervision of the CCP at their own level (just as in Russia).
- Since the 1980s, government administration in China has become increasingly decentralized as the role of central planning has been reduced and more power has been given to provincial and local authorities (particularly in economic matters)
- The Bureaucracy is immense in size and scope. There are 30 million cadres (people in positions of authority who are paid by the government or party – but cadres are not necessarily members of the CCP)
- In the reds vs. experts debate, the shift has been strongly to “experts” since Deng’s reforms started in the late 70s
- The government has announced a 50% cut in cadres to further increase efficiency in the economy

#### National People’s Congress

- Thousands of delegates
- Meets once every a year for five years for only two weeks make it more symbolic than a real power
- Power to enact and amend laws
- Approve and monitor the budget
- Declare war
- Elect and recall the president and vice president of the PRC, the Chair of the Central Military Commission and Head of the Supreme Court
- Final approval over the selection of the premier and members of the State Council
- 70% are CCP members
- Rather than emphasizing party, their social and occupational backgrounds are emphasized to show how “democratic” the Congress is (workers/farmers 20%, intellectuals and professionals 20%, government/party cadres 35%, women 22%, ethnic minority 14%)
- Congress elects the president and vice-president of China (but there is only one candidate chosen by the CCP (terms of these offices are concurrent with that of the Congress-5 years)

#### Military

- People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is the world’s largest military force
- Mao “Power flows from the barrel of a gun. Our principle is that the party commands the gun and the gun must never be allowed to command the party” (the second part is often overlooked)
- Connections to the military have been very important in the power calculus and Byzantine maneuverings that occur in Beijing
- The PLA is in favor of the economic reforms because they supplement their official budget by converting a number of their factories to the production of consumer goods, running hotels, and discos, and opening up their facilities to tourists.

#### Judiciary

- Supreme People’s Court down through higher, intermediate and basic people’s courts located around the country.
- Does not exercise judicial review over the government
- More than 100,000 judges and lawyers have been trained (some abroad)
- New criminal and civil codes have been necessary to regularize the legal system (which tends to be important if you are pursuing economic goals)
- In recent years, there has been an enormous surge in the number of lawsuits filed (and often won) by people against business, local officials, and government agencies.
- Criminal system works swiftly and harshly. In 1997, there was a conviction rate of 99.65%
- China has become a country where there is rule by law (which the CCP uses to carry out its policies and enforce its rule). It is not yet a country where there is rule of law in which everyone is subordinate to the law.

#### Other Parties (the loyal non-opposition)

- Eight non-communist parties exist in the PRC
- China Democratic League (intellectual party)
- China Democratic National Construction Association (business party)
- Less than half a million members in the non-communist parties
- Do not contest for power or challenge CCP policy
- Function is to provide advice to the CCP and generate support within their constituencies for the CCP policy
- Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) meets once a year for about two weeks

#### Elections

- CCP has effective veto power over the election process. It controls the commissions that run elections and it reviews the lists of proposed candidates
- Direct elections and indirect elections
- Direct election turnout is heavy (over 90%)
- All citizens over 18 may vote
- Since the 80s there have been multiple candidates on the ballot (before the only protest vote was to abstain)
- Independent candidates have beaten the CCP endorsed candidates (but they had to be approved by the CCP to be put on the ballot in the first place)
- The most democratic advances in elections have occurred in rural villages where multi-candidate, secret-ballot elections are the norm (although still carried out under the watchful eye of the CCP)
- The CCP says that multiparty elections would not work well in China because of the country's low level of education and economic development and its poor communications system. (there's also the fear of losing power, chaos, and potential civil war to worry about)