

# **The Republic of China's Government and Voting Procedures**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The People's Republic of China (commonly referred to as China) established a communist government on September 15, 1954. Since then, the Communist government has been the “people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants” [1]. But based on the government structure and election process, there are major issues in the way officials are elected that need to be further explored.

## **CHINESE GOVERNMENT**

The Chinese government's structure is unique. China has nine branches in their government called organs. The National People's Congress (NPC) is the power of the state that elects officials in the following organs [2]. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) is the legislative organ that makes most of the laws, interprets the constitution and laws, conducts a constitutional review, and supervises the other organs. The State Council, also known as the Central People's Government, is the executive organ of the nation that enforces and executes the law. The Premier is the head of the State Council, which is elected by the President. The President is a ceremonial head of China with no actual power other than to elect the Premier and the Vice-President. The Vice-President assists the President, and just like the President, it has no other power in the government [2]. The Central Military

Commission (CMC) is the military organ and the Chairman is the commander-in-chief of the national armed forces. The National Supervisory Commission (NSC) is an organ that combats corruption; the Supreme People's Court (SPC) is like the organ that ensures laws abide by the Chinese constitution, and the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) is the organ that conducts legal court hearings [2]. To ensure that no organ has more power than the other, there is a checks and balances system in place.

## **COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA**

Even with the intricate government system in China, to be involved in the Chinese government, one must be a part of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The CPC is the majority ruling political party in China and they operate on the idea of “democratic centralism” modeled after the Soviet Union’s ideals that the government should rule by making decisions after a consensus has been reached [3]. Within the CPC, there are certain committees and positions of power.

There are two big political bodies in the Communist party: the Central Committee and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI). The Central Committee's political body is in charge of creating and updating laws and regulations. It is the most important part of the CPC [1]. The General Secretary is the highest-ranking position in the CPC. They are the party leader and hold the most power over the state and federal government. The next level of power in the Central Committee is the Politburo Standing Committee. This includes 7 members, including the general secretary, and they oversee the decision making for all the various areas of life in China [4]. The wider Politburo committee has 25 members total, including the seven in the standing committee. Further down the scale, there are lower-level committees and organizations.

The second political body, CCDI, is in charge of enforcing the party's rules and regulation, and combating corruption within the party [5]. The Secretary is the head of the CCDI and in charge of the Standing committees of the CCDI as well [7]. The CCDI controls 12 Discipline and Inspection offices, they are responsible for reporting corruption within the party, the government departments, regional offenses, and many more. Similar to the Central Committee's political body, the CCDI has many lower-level committees and structures as well.

## **CHINESE GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNIST PARTY**

Because there is only one political party in China, both the Communist Party and government are intertwined. The General Secretary of the CPC is usually the President of China [9], while the Premier of the State Council holds a position in the Standing Committee as well [8]. This is because the government officials only have as much power as they do in CPC. If they don't hold a high enough position in CPC, then they won't be able to have much power in government.

## **CHINESE ELECTION PROCESS**

There are two types of elections in China: indirect elections and direct elections. According to the Chinese constitution, direct elections are conducted when the people's congresses are not divided into districts, counties, city districts, towns, townships, and ethnic townships [1]. Therefore, direct elections are not very common and only occur in villages and small areas not officially designated into a region. The Local People's Congresses are elected using a process called "three ups and three downs" [10]. An election committee collects all of the nominations from the voters and then posts the nominees' details (first "up"). The list is given to

groups of electors, which consists of voters in each geographical electorate to discuss who to vote for (first “down”). The opinions of the groups of electors are told to a group representative and at a committee meeting, the respective group representatives will share their group's views and are discussed further to reduce the list. (second “up”). The views of different electoral groups and the discussions at the committee meeting are conveyed to voters, and then the voters are asked again for their viewpoints (second "down"). The consensus of the groups of electors is once again gathered and reported back to the election committee and then they finally determine the final list of candidates (third "up"). The list of names and basic details is published by the electorate (third "down"). Nominations for leaders are determined by the Communist Party, and voting is done by a secret ballot. Chinese citizens only get to vote in direct elections to elect people for their local people’s congresses, local people’s governments, and the village chiefs. These elected individuals then vote for a higher-level position in China. This direct election system is very similar to the Iowa caucus system where the candidates that don’t have enough votes are considered “ not viable”.

Indirect elections are done for the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National People’s Government (NPG). The NPC members are elected by the people’s congresses at the province level, and the NPG is elected by the NPC members. All the party and government positions like the President, Vice President, Secretary-General, the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, the President and Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court are all elected by the NPC [14]. Although legally any party can run for any government position, the CPC will intervene and discourage other party members not affiliated with the CPC from campaigning. [13]

## **ELECTRONIC VOTING DISCUSSION**

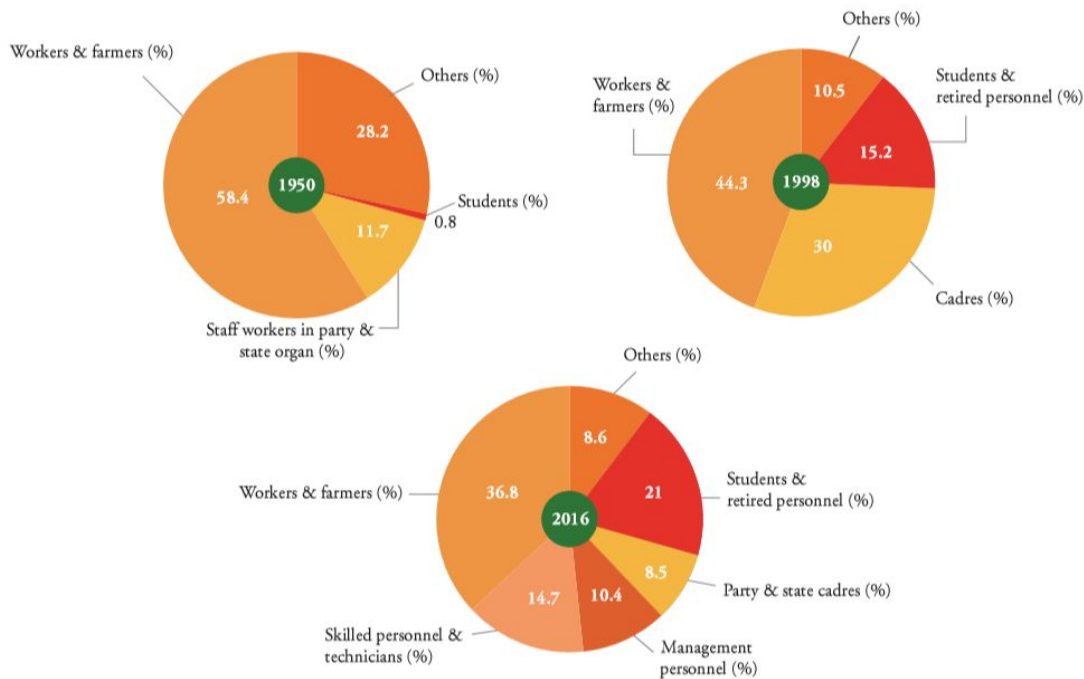
Presently, voting in China is done by secret paper ballots, but many Chinese people have been inventing electronic voting processes that detect fraud and keep votes secure [19]. However, a lot of the voting systems proposed, like the invention by Xue Miao and Wei Wang, is a voting method that uses a mobile terminal to ensure voting authenticity and uniqueness of voters by identification authentication. [19]. Patents similar to these like a network-based voting system [20], a facial recognition voting system, voting method based on intelligent mobile communication devices [22], or even a patent for distributed network voting that provides network security [23] were all patents that suggest a democratic approach to voting, which poses a great threat to the CPC. Xiang Jiang in [25] talks about how in 2016 a singing show similar to American idol was introduced. People could vote for their favorite singer by popular vote, which was exhilarating to Chinese citizens because they have never voted in this way before. The show boomed with popularity, and this raised red flags to the Chinese government, and they immediately wanted to shut down the show but settled to modify the voting system of the show. [25, pg 1245]. The CPC doesn't like any threat to its socialist standards, and anything that promotes democracy is immediately shut down. According to Victor Gao, a former official in the Chinese foreign ministry, the Communist Party will be in ruling for many more decades to come, but they will always have to combat the more democratic policies that the public brings to light [12]. But the CPC is aware that a total socialist government brings instability in China, [24]. In 1987, the chaos started to brew in rural areas of China, and the CPC struggled with how to suppress this. They reluctantly decided to pass an Organic Law on Village Elections, which implemented democratic voting approaches in the village elections to combat the chaos in rural

areas [24]. Soon after rural areas started to stabilize, so the CPC determined that small quantities of democratic voting were okay, but too much would threaten their party.

### **CPC MEMBERSHIP CONCERNS**

To be a part of the CPC, you must apply for membership, which requires certain regulations and background checks [11]. For one to be considered for promotions, start their own company, or have other similar benefits, they have to be registered as a CPC member. Being a part of the CPC grants so many opportunities, so it's no surprise that the political party continues to grow in numbers. Censorship and content filtering are also controlled by the CPC; any anti-communist news will be restricted to breed more support for the Communist Party [12]. According to the figure from Brødsgaard's book, "China's Communist Party: From Mass to Elite Party" [11], in the 1950's the CPC 58.4% of its members were represented by the workers and farmers, who are among the lower economic class of China. Brødsgaard points out that as the years pass, the percentage of working-class representation has been steadily decreasing. As of now. CPC represents more of the "elites" in the nation. [11].

*Figure 2*  
Composition of CPC Membership (1950–2016)



The decrease in representation causes some concern on whether the CPC is fairly representing China’s working-class citizens. As the CPC becomes more exclusive, the issue of whether all of the nation’s citizens are being represented fairly arises. Also, citizens who have connections to members of the CPC are more likely to be approved for CPC membership. These ideals breed nepotism and cause more likely chances of corruption and scandals to occur in the CPC [12].

## **CENSORSHIP AND CORRUPTION**

As the CPC controls all aspects of China, there is no way for any other party to rise to power [13]. With the increased usage of the Internet and social media such as Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok, censoring can only do so much to prevent citizens from viewing pro-democracy about the Chinese government. The current president, Xi Jinping, has more power than any of the previous presidents. He is not only the president and the general secretary, but he also has access to the military, and his father is one of the founders of the Communist party. Xi Jinping also created new sectors in the government, appointing himself as chief, to put a tighter rein on the censorship [4]. Such power has increased corruption now more than ever. As John Acton

said, "absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely" [15]. Not only Xi Jinping, but other Standing Committee members also have immense power. Zhao Leiji, another Standing Committee member, is also the current secretary of the CCDI. The CCDI is the part of the government that enforces rules and regulations, therefore his unique government position brings light to the question of how someone who works on making the laws and regulations can also be enforcing them without any coercion or corruption.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Communist Party's influence has been dominating China since the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and it is said to still be ruling for decades to come [12]. China's voting procedures ensure that China remains a socialist government. The CPC does its best to shield the citizens from their government activities, guaranteeing they are doing what is best for their citizens, but when scandals are linked to the Chinese government like Bo Xilai, a former government official who was charged as a convicted criminal for corruption and murder, it makes the Chinese citizens uneasy about what else is happening in the government [16]. As long as the CPC is in the ruling, there is no chance for the other pro-democracy political parties to compete [13]. With all the benefits linked to being a part of the Communist party, it's no wonder that coercion and corruption grows. Implementing electronic voting procedures in China seems unlikely for now, but hopefully, in the future, China will advance their voting systems and catch up with the rest of the world.



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