

# PS 642 POLITICAL POWER IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

## Final Examination Essay

Dongrui Zhao

Qingwei Wang

Shiyuan Lin

Yining Zhang

Word Count: 2014

### 1. Introduction

Although China has successfully achieved the second-large economic entity, the large challenges still remain, such as political corruption, inequality of the education and human rights problem. While Chinese government would spare no effort to solve those problems by many effective policies, there are still some shortages of those policies, which need to be amended and improved. This paper aims to discuss the effectiveness and challenges of some policies in terms of corruption, inequality and human right of Internet censorship.

### 2. Becoming Determined, Remaining Corrupted

In 1982, Chinese leaders publicly realized that corruption had reached crisis levels (Manion, 2004), and would challenge the Party-state. Hence, the Chinese government has been taking many measures to deal with corruption. The main countermeasure in China today is the punishment of corrupt officials. There are three kinds of punishment: 1) political punishment, the Discipline Inspection Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is authorized to set up rules, investigate corruption cases, and punish corrupt party members by expelling them from the party; 2) administrative punishment, the Administrative Inspection Agency of the Chinese Government regulates and punishes its members. The main responsibility of this agency is to impose administrative sanctions on corrupt officials. 3) Criminal punishment, most of forms of corruption are considered as serious crimes in the Chinese Substantive Criminal Law, where the death penalty can be applied in some circumstances for corruption. In addition, the government also established a system called “Ju Bao Zhi” (People’s Reporting System) to encourage public to report corruption to the authorities in terms of post, fax, email or any other methods (Wang, 2005).

Although the Chinese government is making anti-corruption a key part of its future development, the corruption is still ranked at the top of public opinion as the most serious problem confronting the country. The corruption in China can be described as bureaucratic commerce, predatory exactions, corrupt exchanges, use of public funds as private capital, and illegal privatization of state enterprise assets (Manion, 2004). There are so many forms of corruption that has emerged and is growing in politics, and all aspects of social life (Manion, 2004), which impede the development of China. The *Nomenklatura* system provides potential corruption opportunities for cadres. As we know, the *Nomenklatura* system is an important organizational method for ensuring the Communist Party rule in government (Manion lecture, 29 September 2014), which provides the principle for leaders recruitments. The cadres can be chose from lower levels of the Party hierarchy while considering their loyalty and contributions to the well-being of the Party (Polazzo’s page, 2010). The *Nomenklatura* system is important due to its

encouraging the development among the leadership of patron-client relations (Burns, 1989). The patron-client relations called “guanxi” that emphasize the importance of personal career ties between individual as they rise in bureaucratic or political structures (Polazzo’s Page, 2010). In order to further the political careers, the cadres who locate at the lower organizations need patrons at higher levels of the bureaucracy. The *Nomenklatura* provides a clear poetical road map for them to seek who can be the patronages and who need to be bribed. Meanwhile, the *Nomenklatura* system cultivates a personal recommendation system as the best method to fill organization position. It is easy for top leaders to assign their henchmen who often pay “tribute” to them to fill the crucial position.

In addition to the *Nomenklatura* system, environmental projects constituted one of the most common sources of rents in corrupt exchanges. In order to prevent corruption, the Chinese government has set up the Measures Environmental Information Disclosure in 2007 enable the stakeholders to exercise a certain degree of monitoring and supervising over the environmental projects construction (Measure Environmental Information Disclosure, 2007; Zhao, 2010). However, there is considerable scope for manipulation if project proponents would like to cover the negative impact information related to project construction. Project proponents bribed village heads and party secretaries through offering kickbacks (*Hongbao*) to buy their silence. In addition, the environmental projects are often related to land leasing, which open up new opportunities for local officials in certain position to obtain rents from their discretionary authority at what price to lease the government land for environmental development (Manion, 2004; Manion, 2014). The projects normally take place in an opaque negotiated transfer between project proponents and local officials. In order to obtain the targeted land without public bidding or public auction, project proponents may offer 5-10 percent of total investment as a kickback and profit sharing to local officials. In this way, proponents are able to get the land use rights without any external disturbance. Local officials are able to not only boost revenues to fulfill new unfunded mandates from the central government (Manion, 2014), but also reap some benefits from the project proponents to supplement their incomes. It is a “win-win” situation for both local officials and project proponents.

The corruption penetrates into all aspects of politics and social life. The new Chinese leaders should give priority to anti-corruption work on their agenda and strengthen anti-corruption efforts.

### **3. Great Progress, Wide Gaps**

Reform and opening policy released by Deng Xiaoping brought significant socioeconomic changes, including the development of primary education. Chinese government introduced many effective policies and practiced strengthful implementations in the past several decades, aiming at increasing primary education popularity and narrowing th urban/rural gaps. One of these policies is “Hierarchical management system”(fenji guanli) and “county-oriented”(yixianweizhu). Due to these two policies, the enrollment ratio of junior middle school students has remained at a high level (nearly 100%) in recent years, which means that the nine-year compulsory education policy became virtually universal (Jun yang, Xiao Huang, Xin Liu, 2014). However, despite the great efforts, the gap of education inequality between rural and urban area still remains in terms of education funding, quality, and educational attainment (Wang, X., Lin. L.). Based on the survey conducted by China Youth Daily in 2009, only 11.2% of respondents thought that educational gaps had been narrowed. (Jun, Y., Xiao, H., Xin., 2014)

Hierarchical management system was introduced in 1985, and experienced three main reform waves. In 1985, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) and the State Council jointly issued the *Decision on Reforming Chinese Educational System* (《决定》). Hierarchical Management System was implemented according to the *Decision*; power was decentralized to local governments as an incentive of encouraging self-running schools. Meanwhile, in order to reduce the financial burden of central government, local authorities were required to bear the financial costs of education, thus they have to find other funding channels to support school. In 1985, junior high school's gross enrollment rate was only 36.8%, but this number increased to 88.7% in 2001 after this reform of centralized authority reallocation. However, compared to the schools in urban areas whose funds was from industry or social organizations, the rural schools lacked stable channels to find their funding--decentralizing the power to the local government was not a good solution to narrow the education gap between urban and rural areas. The first change was raised in 2001 when the State Council revised the older version and issued a new *Decision* on reforming Chinese Compulsory Education System. From then on, the responsibility of popularizing compulsory education was shifted from township level to county level, while a "country-oriented" system was established. By this new policy, governments of different levels clarified their managerial responsibilities, practiced better management, solved considerably number funding issues countrywide, and established a supervision system to monitor the is position of funds. From 1985 to 2002, this change led to significant achievement: not only decentralized autonomy to the local authorities but also encouraged them run *minban* school, the non-state-sector school, in rural areas. Breaking the centralized education provision and delivery, the Hierarchical Education Management indeed promoted the process of nine-year compulsory education in rural areas.

However, it is important to investigate whether this policy changes have been accompanied with some problems. The Hierarchical Education Management Policy is no exception. One one hand, Hierarchical Education Management system generated corruption. As each individual township was responsible for their own budget, misappropriation and embezzlement became increasingly common in local education system during 1985-2001. Local schools established by many parties, who once acted as the leading strength of compulsory primary education development, became the victim of miscalculated education policies and the weight of debts, mainly due to blind and short sighted investments in the pipe bubbles. Hierarchical management system also impeded the pace of development because of the policy/official connivance of chaotic intervention of the government, and administrative omission and ultra vires. On the other hand, this policy was a disaster for some rural areas. With undeveloped industrialization on rural areas, they did not have enough salary to give teachers. During 1998-2000, the non-payment of salary for teachers totaled up to 1.27 billion. In order to cater to policy issued by central government, local authorities spent much money on establishing the school, ignoring the teacher's salary. Accordingly, the teachers were paid small salaries or unpaid by local authorities.

Implementing the Hierarchical Education Management policy might have contributed to promoting elementary education in rural areas, but was not a perfect policy to solve the education equality and quality in rural areas.

#### **4. Relatively Opening, Strictly Controlling**

Internet has become an important channel of accessing information for Chinese people. Chinese government has deployed numerous ways of censoring the Internet and entailed myriad effective policy actions to strictly accordingly. Ordinance for Security Protection of Computer Information Systems specified "harmful information" and "harmful activities" regarding internet usage (Li, 2010). In 2003, 2,000 websites had been closed; 4 cyber-dissents were arrested (Fielder, 2012). Under such strictly controlled Internet environment, people are exposed only to the information that is not officially identified as "politically sensitive", which is believed to be the reason of dramatically decreased probability of uprising political protests (Fielder, 2012). "keyword blocking" is another powerful tool of censoring. It disallows netizens (*wangmin*) to post sensitive words or phrases. For instance, "hexie" in Chinese is always written in a homophone that means "river crab" in English in order to avoid being blocked (Manion lecture, October 20, 2014). Keyword blocking list includes a series of sensitive phrases, and is regarded as a suppression against freedom of press (King et al., 2013, p.328) Silencing the comments curtailed the collective actions that aim at expressing political dissidence.

Along with aforementioned policy actions, "The Great Firewall of China", known as GFW is also operated by Chinese government, aims to prevent people from accessing certain websites, especially some foreign websites. In 2000, *Measures on the Administration of Internet Information Services* points out the restrictions for internet content providers, mainly aiming to disallow the linkage to foreign websites (Feng, 2012) Statistically, over 30000 people participate in censoring the Internet information by actively deleting undesirable contents from various channels, such as social networks, websites, chat rooms or blogs (King, Pan, Roberts, 2013, p.328). GFW is responsible of checking any information, on both domestic and foreign websites, that flows in and out of China to make sure that citizens are not exposed politically sensitive contents. To successfully achieve the target, GFW is designed to utilize various methods including IP blocking, DNS filtering and redirecting. Most time when Internet users accidentally opened a blocked websites, the user will encounter a "404 Error---Page not found," or "The connection was reset." (Novick & Goddard, n.d.). According to the Open Net Initiative (2009), China owns one of the most sophisticated filtering systems to censor Internet worldwide. Among the list of blocked websites, Facebook and Twitter are blocked social network websites to prevent stimulating rise of dissents, Firdler (2012, p.52) argued. Chinese citizens also cannot log in on Wikipedia, YouTube and Flickr simply because contents of these websites are out of government's control. Under such strictly controlled Internet environment, people are exposed to only information that are not identified as "politically sensitive", which minimizing the probabilities of emerging political dissidences.

Adversely, serious problems are accompanied with more censoring efforts. The whole censoring process requires large amount of resources and financial backup, which poses a serious challenge in terms of cost-effectiveness. Restrictions on accessing to Internet, a vital part of building civil society, violates human rights, further resulting in a ill-informed public (House, 2011). Netizens (*wangmin*) are disconnected with diversified information, thus are placed in a disadvantaged place in human development.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the aforementioned challenges, Chinese central government has to design scientific and reasonable amendments that focus on the shortages of those policies.

## Refereces:

- Burns, J. P. (1989). *The Chinese Communist Party's Nomenklatura System: A Documentary Study of Party Control of Leadership Selection, 1979-1984*. M.E. Sharpe.
- Feng, B. (2010, July 14). *China's Internet Censorship System*. Retrieved from Human Right in China: <http://www.hrichina.org/en/content/3244>
- Fielder, J. D. (2012). *Dissent in Digital: the Internet and Dissent in Authoritarian States*. PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) thesis, University of Iowa. Retrieved from [http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2870/Government and Politics in China](http://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/2870/Government_and_Politics_in_China). (2014, 12 12). Retrieved from Polazzo's Page: <http://www.polazzo.com/Reading21.pdf>
- Guangchao Charles Feng, Steve Zhongshi Guo. (2013, November). Tracing the route of China's Internet censorship: An empirical study. *Telematics and Informatics*, 30(4), 335-345.
- House, J. D. (2012). *Internet Censorship in China*. School of International Service. American University. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1961/11051>
- King, Gary, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E Roberts. (2013, May). How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression. *American Political Science Review*, 1-18. doi:10.1017/S0003055413000014
- Measures on Open Environmental Information (for Trial Implementation)*. (2007, 02 08). Retrieved from United States Environmental Protection Agency: [http://www.epa.gov/ogc/china/open\\_environmental.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/ogc/china/open_environmental.pdf)
- Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) (Chinese version)*. (2010, 07 29). Retrieved from The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China: [http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-07/29/content\\_1667143.htm](http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2010-07/29/content_1667143.htm)
- Premier Li, P. (2010). Ordinance of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Computer Information System Security. *Chinese Law & Government*, 43(5), 12. Retrieved from Chinese Law & Government.
- Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Open Government Information (Chinese version)*. (2007, 04 24). Retrieved from The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China: [http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2007-04/24/content\\_592937.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2007-04/24/content_592937.htm)
- Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Open Government Information (English version)*. (2007, 04 05). Retrieved from The China Law Center, Yale Law School: [http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/Intellectual\\_Life/Ch\\_OGI\\_Regualtions\\_Eng\\_Final\\_051607.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/Intellectual_Life/Ch_OGI_Regualtions_Eng_Final_051607.pdf)
- Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China. (2011, 04). *Comparative Political Studies*, 44, 436-467. doi:10.1177/0010414010394773
- Wang, Y. (2005). Corruption and Anti-Corruption Policy in Today's China. *Htotsubashi journal of law and politics*, 33, 1-5.
- Xinqi Wang, Liping Lin. (2010). Analysis of Urban-Rural Education Gap. *Hunan Agricultural Machinery*, 37, 170-172.
- Zhao, Y. (2010). Public Participation in China's EIA Regime: Rhetoric or Reality? *Journal of Environmental Law*, 22(1), 89-123. doi:10.1093/jel/eqp034
- 发展回顾系列报告十二：教育事业实现跨越式发展. (2014, 12 12). Retrieved from China.com.cn: [http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2007-10/08/content\\_9012240\\_2.htm](http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2007-10/08/content_9012240_2.htm)

中国国民教育的历史性跨越. (2014 年 12 月 12 日). 检索来源: Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan: <http://www.china-embassy.or.jp/chn/jyylxsjl/jyfzgj/t174995.htm>