



Lecture two -- Opinion expression and opinion collection in Chinese government process

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C O N T E N T S

- 1** **Opinion expression in Chinese government process**
- 2** **Opinion collection in Chinese government process**
- 3** **Classic case: Democratic dialogue in Wenling, Zhejiang Province**

PART 01

Opinion expression in Chinese government process



1.1 Main parties in the expression of opinions

1.1.1 Opinion-Expressing Individuals

01 General opinions

- The expressers of general opinions are only part of the entire body of citizens.
 - The proportion of citizens expressing general opinions is higher in the cities than in the countryside.
 - More citizens with a higher educational levels than those with a lower levels.
 - More citizens who have more contact with politics than those with less.
- There are more and more citizens who have the intention to express their opinions.

02 Specialized opinions

- Delegates of the CPC congress at various level
- Deputies of the people's congress at various level
 - When a people's congress is not in session its representatives still have the opportunity to express opinions.
- Members of the CPPCC committees at various levels and representatives of the congresses of non-Communist parties at various levels
- Other delegates or deputies
 - members of the youth league congress
 - members of the employees' congress/trade union
 - members of the women's congress

1.1 Main parties in the expression of opinions

03 The method of specialized opinion expression

A. Delegates of the CPC congress at various level

- To discuss and adopt the reports submitted by the CPC committees of the same level
 - An important opinion-expressing step in China's central government process
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B. Deputies of the people's congress at various level

- Studying the work reports submitted by the government and the standing committees of the people's congresses
 - Proposing motions, suggestions and opinions
 - Examining and approving the government's economic and social development programs and the budget and final settlement
 - Raising proposals for addressing inquiries made to administrative organs and their functional departments
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C. Members of the CPPCC committees at various levels and representatives of the congresses of non-Communist parties at various levels

- Deliberation of the work report of the standing committee of the CPPCC National Committee
- Proposal of motions and delivering of speeches at the conference
- Sitting in on the plenary sessions of the NPC to learn about and discuss government work reports

1.1 Main parties in the expression of opinions

1.1.2 Opinion-Expressing Organizations

Institutional opinion-expressing parties

- Refer to social groups and political institutions that belong to the basic component parts of China's political system.
Eg. the non-Communist parties, trade unions, youth leagues, women's federations and the military.
- Undertake extensive social functions & possess the function of expressing opinion

Structural opinion-expressing parties

- Refer to people's organizations or social groups in general.
Eg. the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, China Association for Science and Technology, and China Disabled Persons' Federation.....
- Main duties:
 - a) Represent certain areas of the Chinese society and some part of the masses
 - b) Reflect the specific interest and requirements of certain social interest groups

Functional opinion-expressing parties

- Refer to social groups that:
 - *Perform some opinion-expressing functions and have a certain social influence*
 - *Do not belong to component parts of the state political system*
 - *Do not specifically reflect the opinions and suggestions of a particular part of the people or certain social interest groups*
- The method of opinion expression: By appearing as "social public opinion"
- One relatively typical and mature type of such organization: The press

1.1 Main parties in the expression of opinions

Summary



Individual expression of opinions are in the process of development and expansion.



Different status of various organizations in the expression of opinions

- a) The institutional opinion-expressing entities: dominate party & large in number & of a high status
- b) Structural and functional opinion-expressing parties: a relatively small number

1.2 Main characteristics of the expression of opinions

1.2.1 Main characteristics of opinion-expressing individuals

- Individual expression of opinions is encouraged both in policy and in theory.
- However, individual expression of opinions are relatively inadequate.
 - There is a lack of channels for the expression of opinion in China's democratic and legal system building.
 - a) The socialist democratic system has been practiced only for a very short period of time*
 - b) The economic and cultural development conditions are not ideal*
 - Chinese citizens do not have a strong awareness of individual participation.
- Chinese citizens express their opinions through (incorporated in) the community where they work or live.
 - Unlike people in Western countries have to associate with certain pressure groups to express their opinions.
 - The community where they work or live will organize their members to discuss, summarize, and report the opinions that people have expressed to superior entities.

1.2 Main characteristics of the expression of opinions

1.2.2 Main characteristics of opinion-expressing organizations

- China practices a multiparty cooperation system under the leadership of the CPC.
- Various types of basic opinion-expressing organizations formed on the basis of various social interest groups are not pressure groups.
 - Having the various non-Communist parties and people's organizations as their main component, and reflect the requirements and opinions of a certain section of the people they represent.
 - The main purpose of expressing opinions is not to exert pressure.
 - Participate in both opinion expression and collection.
- The relationship between various social groups and the CPC Central Committee
 - A relationship of cooperation and collaboration
 - A relationship of mutual restriction

Disscussion 1

What are the main parties of opinion expression in your country?

What are the main methods of opinion expression?



PART 02

Opinion collection in Chinese government process



2.1 The meaning of opinion collection



A. Carried out on the basis of "opinion expression"



B. A process of gathering together the political opinions expressed by various circles.



C. Forming certain policy choices as a result of the interaction between various related political forces.

2.2 Main opinion-collection parties

2.2.1 Stratification of opinion collection

■ The **primary type** of main opinion-collection party

- The various national representative bodies and the supreme leadership institutions of the CPC are the most basic type of the main opinion-collection parties.
- Has the control over political authorities that adjust the opinion collection activities of other main opinion-collection parties.
- Has the higher hierarchical status over other main opinion-collection parties in China.

■ The **secondary type** of main opinion-collection parties

- **The eight non-Communist parties and All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, trade unions, youth league and women's federation** take responsibility for opinion collection on behalf of their members.
- The CPC and political authorities of various provincial regions are responsible for the opinion collection work within their administrative zones.

2.2 Main opinion-collection parties

2.2.1 Stratification of opinion collection

■ The **auxiliary type** of main opinion-collection parties: Social groups and communities

- Social groups and communities with higher or lower degrees of organization undertake certain opinion-collection work within the framework of the socialist legal system.
- *Eg. Science and technology associations, the circle of social sciences, the press and the business community.*
- Their contribution to the macro opinion-collection process is made through the channels of the CPC or of the government.
 - A. The channels of the CPC, such as a CPC branch established in an entity
 - B. The channels of the government, such as the governmental department that a group is attached to.
- The role that they play in opinion collection is smaller than their role in expression of opinion.
- The CPC' s political views influence the degree and manner of opinion expression and collection of these groups.

2.2 Main opinion-collection parties

2.2.2 System of the main opinion-collection parties

- The main opinion-collection parties of the above three levels form the complete system of the main opinion-collection parties centered round the CPC Central Committee.
↓
- Through orderly expression and collection of opinion within these organizations, the CPC makes preparations for the final decision making and avoids partiality in decision making.
↓
- The existence of such a political status and organization system basically ensures:
 - a) *the expression of opinion in various circles nationwide*
 - b) *the initial processing of such opinion-expressing can be gathered continuously at various important meeting of the CPC.*

The status of the CPC Central Committee in the process of opinion collection is mainly caused by two factors.

A. The prevailing Constitution affirms:

- a) the leadership role of the CPC in state political life
- b) the CPC is the supreme representative of the common will of the people of various ethnic groups throughout China.

B. The CPC has its own rigid organization systems & effective organization connections in various opinion-expression and collection parties.

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.1 Democracy inside the CPC

- The opinion-collection process led by the CPC Central Committee is based on the CPC' s democratic activities.
- The principles of democracy inside the CPC form three important requirements
 - a) An individual obeys the organization, the minority obeys the majority, the subordinate obeys the superior, and the entire party obeys the CPC Central Committee.
 - b) A leading organ with the power to make decisions must be elected.
 - c) Major issues need to be discussed and decided collectively by a committee.
- The principles of democracy inside the CPC includes two basic forms
 - a) At various meetings of the CPC, discussion and study are made carefully and earnestly to fully exchange opinions as far as possible until a vote is taken.
 - b) Under the guidance of the CPC Central Committee, the Party members carry out discussion and study on important issues within the entire party.
- Due to the democratic centralism practiced by the CPC, the opinions that submitted to discuss, are all:
 - Centralized opinions & considered as opinions with a certain basis of decision making
 - Consistent with the function of summarizing the opinions of a ruling party

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.2 Influence of authority



- The leading group of the CPC Central Committee, particularly the top leaders, can always play critical role of concentrating the wisdom of the CPC and the people in the process of opinion collection.

Eg. Deng Xiaoping: “Southern Tour” & “the general designer of China's reform and opening-up”

- A basic characteristic of the CPC Central Committee’s opinion-collection work.
 - The combination of full democracy inside the CPC with the important decisive opinions of the core leadership group of the CPC Central Committee within the range of collective leadership
 - Consistent with the principle of democratic centralism

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.3 Political consultation

■ The meaning of political consultation:

- Under the leadership of the CPC & take the CPPCC as the organizational base
- Various parties, various people's organizations, personages from ethnic-minority groups and representatives of various social circles hold democratic, equal and candid discussions and consultations on important political issues

■ The main content of political consultation:

the state's important guidelines, policies and arrangements, government work reports, state fiscal budget, economic and social development program (plan), drafts of important laws, state leader candidates nominated by the CPC Central Committee, changes to state and provincial administrative zones, important diplomacy guidelines and policies, important guidelines and policies concerning the reunification of the country.....

■ The main form of political consultation:

the plenary session of the CPPCC National Committee, the meeting of its standing committee, its chairperson's meeting, symposia of its standing committee members, meetings of various special committees, relevant meetings of the NPC that the CPPCC members sit in on upon invitation.

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.3 Political consultation



■ The **difference** between political consultation and expression of opinion

- Opinion expression: the CPC Central Committee has not yet formed a general opinion on the relevant issue.
- Political consultation: the CPC Central Committee has already proposed a systematic draft suggestion.

■ The **function** of political consultation

Helps China's governmental process to progress to the decision-making stage.

- General conceptions proposed by the CPC Central Committee can get recognition and support from the other circles who participate in the consultation.
- These circles will also contribute constructive opinions.

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.4 Completion at meetings

- Making formal decisions through formal meetings.
- The characteristic of completion at meetings: **attach importance to preparations before a meeting**
 - **Meaning:** before a meeting, the issues to be discussed are reported to the participants with consultations and preparations already made.
 - **Purpose:** allow participants to have enough thought and technical preparation & to gradually form an atmosphere favorable to discussion.
- The expansion of the CPC' s international view and the growth of its international influence.

Dispatched vice-ministerial personnel to some key countries and important international organizations:

- a) Communicate the progress of the congress
- b) Communicate the main documents and important decisions adopted by the congress

2.3 Opinion-collection process

Case: the drafting and deliberation of the report of the 14th CPC National Congress

450 modifications to the report and eight successive drafts were made after wide opinion solicitation before the meeting.

B

The ninth draft was discussed and 170 more modifications were made on the plenary session of the CPC Central Committee

D

The first session of the National People's Congress that was to follow the next spring

A

The revised version of the report was adopted at the meeting of the standing committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and the plenary meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee

C

The report was deliberated upon and officially adopted at the 14th CPC National Congress

E

2.3 Opinion-collection process

2.3.5 Political mobilization



- Political mobilization is carried out immediately after the CPC basically completes opinion collection.

Theoretical researchers and the press launch a comprehensive publicity campaign about the congress to:

- publicize the basic lines of the CPC
- win understanding and support from people of all walks of life nationwide on the decisions of the meeting.

- In essence, political mobilization is part of the opinion-collection process under the leadership of the CPC.

- Win the extensive support of various political resources.
- Allow more people to enhance their understanding and recognition of particular opinion-collection plans.
- Make comprehensive preparations for the coming decision-making and decision-implementation process.

Dissscussion 2

What is the process of opinion collection in your country?



PART 03

**Classic case: Democratic dialogue
in Wenling, Zhejiang Province**



3.1 Overview of Wenling, Zhejiang Province

A. Geographical situation

- Located on the southeast coast of Zhejiang province & the southern wing of the Yangtze River Delta region.
- Has a land area of 926 square kilometers & a sea area of 1079 square kilometers
- With 170 islands of all sizes & a coastline of 317 kilometers

B. Administrative situation

- A county-level city & managed by Taizhou City.
- Covering 5 streets, 11 towns, 90 communities (neighborhoods), and 579 administrative villages

C. Economic & social situation *[By the end of 2022]*

- The total registered residence population was 1,211,900
- The per disposable income of the city's permanent residents throughout the year was 61,970 yuan.



3.2 The emergence and development of democratic dialogue

3.2.1 The emergence of democratic dialogue



- The democratic dialogue was born in June 1999 in Songmen Town, Wenling, Zhejiang Province.
- The original form of the democratic dialogue: “Agricultural and Rural Modernization Education Forum”
- Many people spontaneously participated and had an equal dialogue with the leaders of town.
 - The content discussed ranging from village planning to neighborhood disputes and trivial matters.
 - The town leaders also provided detailed on-site responses to the questions raised by villagers.

3.2 The emergence and development of democratic dialogue

3.2.2 Development history of democratic dialogue

Three phases of democratic dialogue

The first stage is "democratic dialogue" aiming at improving the relationship between cadres and the villagers.

- No specific policy objective
- The forms were relatively flexible
 - Only serving as a channel for people to communicate with town leaders.
 - Eg. town officials dialogued with the public in public places face to face.

The second stage is the emergence and development of the function about "decision-making consultation."

- Listening to people's opinions, paying attention to their thoughts, and understanding their concerns
- Exploring decision-making methods in response to policy issues related to the interests of the people
- On the basis of existing experience, the form of democratic dialogue became more formal
 - Issued regulations
 - The establishment of leading group specifically responsible for carrying out democratic dialogue.


The third stage is the transition from "democratic dialogue" to "democratic hearing".

- focuses on how to further promote the in-depth development of democratic dialogue
- Coordinating and integrating democratic dialogue with the existing systems.
 - The feasibility and path of combining democratic dialogue with local people's congress was considered

3.2 The emergence and development of democratic dialogue

3.2.2 Development history of democratic dialogue

Event history about the development of democratic dialogue

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- 1999
JUN ● "Agricultural and Rural Modernization Education Forum" was held in Songmen Town Government.
 - 2001
JUN ● Wenling Municipal Committee issued documents, naming all kinds of grass-roots democracy innovation as "democratic dialogue", and put forward normative requirements to promote throughout the whole city.
 - 2002
AUG ● The Wenqiao Town Government held the "Democratic Symposium on Adjusting the School Network of Jiangxia School District"; finally made a decision to temporarily suspend the merger of Qingyu Middle School.
 - 2003 ● The woolen sweater industry in Xinhe Town established a collective negotiation system for wages. Through the negotiating with industry associations, the wages of employees were raised year by year.

3.2 The emergence and development of democratic dialogue

3.2.2 Development history of democratic dialogue


Event history about the development of democratic dialogue

- 2004 ● The Municipal Party Committee issued several regulations on democratic dialogue:
 - a) township governments must take democratic dialogue as a necessary procedure in the process of decision-making
 - b) integrate democratic dialogue into the performance evaluation system.
- 2004 ● Wenling "democratic dialogue" won the Chinese Local Governance Innovations Awards in the second session.
- 2005 ● Participatory budget, an another innovation brought by democratic dialogue, was tried out in Xinhe Town.
- 2008 ● The practice of "participatory budget" was extended to the four towns in Wenling.

3.2 The emergence and development of democratic dialogue

3.2.2 Development history of democratic dialogue

Event history about the development of democratic dialogue

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- A vertical grey line serves as a timeline axis, with blue circular markers indicating specific years.
- 2010 ● Participatory budget through democratic dialogue was promoted throughout the Wenling city.
 - 2010 ● "Democratic dialogue" become a candidate of the Chinese Local Governance Innovations Awards
 - 2011 ● "Democratic dialogue" won the Chinese Urban Management Progress Award
 - 2014 ● "Democratic dialogue" was selected as Top 50 Innovative Examples of Chinese Social Governance

3.3 Operating procedures of democratic dialogue



The procedures for the
democratic symposium
in a town

3.4 The Characteristics of democratic dialogue

A. Democratic dialogue is a form of participatory democracy that has developed from grassroots democracy.

- “Wenling Model” realizes democracy through sincere talk, which embodies a kind of participatory rationality.
- The participatory rationality requires policy makers to be open and honest, as well as the fair procedure.

B. The diversity of subjects and forms in democratic dialogue shapes its complex characteristics

- The diversity of subjects: the government and its functional departments, party committees, communities, villagers' autonomous organizations, social organizations, industry associations, and enterprises.
- The diversity of forms:
 - a) Political participation - Hearing the formulation of public policies & participating in soliciting opinions on major decisions & participating in the deliberation and consultation of public budgets.
 - b) Social participation - Resident autonomy & Participation in social affairs activities
 - c) Economic participation - Wage negotiation mechanism of sweater industry in Xinhe Town.

C. Democratic dialogue shows a trend towards legal legitimacy

- Developed a set of mechanisms for decision-making, governance and supervision through citizen participation and public deliberation.

3.5 References

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An aerial, grayscale photograph of a dense urban skyline, likely New York City, featuring numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is used as a background for the top half of the slide.

Thanks

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