

**THE CHINESE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM:
AN UPDATE**

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EAI Background Brief No. 1385

Date of Publication: 6 September 2018

Executive Summary

1. The Chinese civil service has now developed into an integrated personnel management system with a differentiated framework—one for leading cadres and another for ordinary cadres. There is no distinction between cadre personnel and civil service. A cadre will be managed by the respective party committee (core group) or the civil service arm of the agency.
2. The reform experience centred on the Chinese reformers and bureaucrats—the problems identified by Chinese reformers and the measures used by Chinese bureaucrats to address these problems. Core to the endeavour is how far measures can be taken to reduce the power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to allow a state civil service to fully function.
3. China initially defined the problem as excessive concentration of power in the party, but ended up making the problem the solution. Factors could be the broad paths and patterns of China's national conditions, the interrelations among China's administrative and decision-making components, and the way reform problems was defined and the formulation of the solutions.
4. Some reform ideas (such as adopting a bifurcated career in civil service or instilling a political neutral civil service) do not have strong support while others (such as integrating political reality into the law and recruiting talents) are likely to be accepted by most stakeholders due to the high degree of unification of politics and administration in the Chinese political system.
5. The civil service in China showed how reform was steered towards supporting the centrality of the CCP in the Chinese political system, much as reforms elsewhere have been conditioned by the path dependencies operational in their political system. This exerts a significant influence over the choices for reform and the implementation of certain types of reforms.

6. Political will is important in the entire reform experience. Deng Xiaoping supported the idea of separating the party from the government. The drafting team of the 1993 Provisional Regulations of Civil Servants is critical for packaging it to adapt to local conditions, withstand political challenges from all corners and gain support from key stakeholders.
7. Recent Chinese civil service changes show that the Chinese leadership is unlikely in the near future to trigger any fundamental reform which is impactful to the relationship between political leadership and administrative apparatus. Measures are now introduced to address the operational aspects of civil service (example, the contract appointment of a position hiring system).
8. The Chinese civil service is overshadowed by the political concentration of power in the party. Any change to this fundamental nature is not mandated, a reality the party is attuned to.
9. The centrality of party rule presides over the establishment of a Weberian type of civil service. The entire establishment experience is both a legal and political construction, which turns the CCP into a political institution that is the source of both civil service empowerment and control.