

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN CHINA

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Executive Summary

1. Political participation is about how ordinary citizens influence political decision-making and policy implementation.
2. In addition to state-sponsored elections, Chinese citizens have various means of participation, ranging from engaging leaders, writing to the government and to the media, to submitting petitions and mobilising collective protests.
3. Three waves of public opinion surveys find that the majority of Chinese citizens have been involved in political participation. Nevertheless, only a small proportion has engaged in more than one type of participation.
4. Collective protests have been on the rise. A few resemble what has been characterised as social movements.
5. However, Chinese citizens' political participation and protests are still limited to the pursuit of personal and particular interests, instead of civic and political rights.
6. Many local governments have been promoting "deliberative democracy", by selectively and limitedly allowing citizens to participate in certain policy discussions and evaluations.
7. To address rising demands of participation and protests, the Chinese government has established a comprehensive system of "maintaining social stability".
8. Methods to maintain social stability have become increasingly more diverse, ranging from traditional coercions, to flexible and non-coercive means.
9. Beijing will face increasing pressure to improve channels of political participation in order to satisfy rising demands of the citizens.