

CENTRAL POLICY UNIT
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SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

A STUDY ON THE PROCESS OF
PUBLIC POLICY DECISION MAKING
AT THE CENTRAL PEOPLE'S GOVERNMENT:
A CASE STUDY ON HEALTH CARE REFORM POLICIES

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Executive Summary

By an in-depth analysis of China's recent healthcare reform (2006-2009), this study seeks to understand how the central government makes its major public policies.

This study reveals that both the **structures** and the **process** of policymaking in China have undergone profound changes. Those changes have in turn renovated China's central policymaking **mechanism**, making it increasingly participatory, consultative and interactive.

Changes in the **structures** of policymaking: China's policy network no longer limits itself to top party/state leaders and officials at various levels, but also includes many new actors (e.g., think tanks, NGOs, special interests, international organizations and public at large). More important, Chinese policy-makers are more willing than ever to solicit comments and suggestions on a range of issues, at different stages of policy formation and through diverse channels, from all circles of the society.

Changes in the **process** of policymaking: As top party/state leaders and officials at various levels no long monopolize policymaking, the policymaking process is consisted of not only interactions among those traditional participants, but also interactions between them and such new participants as policy research institutes, organized interests, and above all, ordinary citizens.

Changes in the **mechanism** of central decision-making: The changes in both the structures and processes of general policymaking have brought about significant transformation of central decision-making mechanism in China. Rather than old-style "personal decision-making" or merely "collective decision-making", China's central decision-making has become increasingly "public". While allowing more actors to take part in policy deliberation, debate, and negotiation, however, top leaders retain the authority to make sure, through multiple devices of coordination, that the final decisions are consistent with their objective of "ruling for the people".

The above-mentioned changes in the structure and process of policymaking have compelled departmental decision-makers to be more attentive to pressures from all sides and strengthened central decision-makers' overall steering capacity, both of which help reduce the likelihood of "fragmented authoritarianism" and improve the responsiveness of China's political system to meet people's immediate and long-term needs and wants.