

# *Study on the Emergence and Development of Public Administrative Participation in Contemporary China*

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**Abstract:** Establishing a law-based government is a major proposition of the administrative management system with Chinese characteristics. With the gradual advancement of administrative rule of law construction in China, public administrative participation has developed to some degree. Since the founding of China, external factors from the international environment and internal factors from domestic reform have jointly contributed to the development of public administrative participation. Having gone through the stages of germination, exploration and development, in the process of realizing Chinese modernization today, public administrative participation should be guided by the principles of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress and explore a development path that can adapt to the new situation.

## 1. Background

Public administrative participation in administration refers to all activities in which the general public, based on public rationality, exerts influence on national administrative organs and their public administrative activities through certain channels and channels in the context of modern democratic politics and democratic administration, striving to intervene in the formulation and implementation of public policies, making them more in line with the requirements of public interests. Discussions, debates, communication, and other forms of discourse communication jointly formulate public policies, Behavior patterns for solving public problems. Public administrative participation in contemporary Chinese administration originated in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, It has gone through a process of growing from scratch, from germination to rise, from high-level exclusion to later absorption. Like other countries in the world, the contemporary Chinese government administrative model has experienced the decline of the mainstream administrative model of Bureaucracy to the rise of the public governance model, Gradually improving and standardizing the design and arrangement of government related systems for public administrative participation. Protecting the public's right to participate in administration is an important basis for promoting the construction of the rule of law in China and a law-based government. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress emphasizes: the government will

improve the system of institutions through which the people run the country, encourage the people's orderly participation in political affairs and guarantee their ability to engage in democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management, and oversight in accordance with the law. The government will inspire the people's motivation, initiative, and creativity, so as to consolidate and develop a lively, stable, and united political atmosphere. This has provided the direction for the healthy and orderly development of public administrative participation in China in the next stage[1].

## **2. The Motivation for the Emergence of Public Administrative Participation in China**

### **2.1 The advancement of global-democratic administration is the external driving force.**

Since the 1970s, governments all over the world have started the reform of governance one after another. The transformation of government functions, returning power to the people, public participation and deregulation have continuously promoted public administrative participation and the process of democratic administration. New public management and government reform movements emphasize changing the traditional public administration system, advocate strengthening the direct responsibility of government to citizens and responding to citizens' demands, stress the transparency of public policies, encourage and guarantee citizens' participation, implement decentralization and devolution, and reconfigure the relationship between government and market, government and society, etc [2]. These propositions fully reflect the tendency of democratization and promote citizens' participation and management of public affairs. Public administrative participation has gradually become a mainstream of public administration reform in the world today. Democratic administration, as a prominent administrative model in the West, is becoming the mainstream of public administration reform in the world today. Under such conditions, China's public administration will inevitably be deeply influenced by it.

### **2.2 The construction of socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics is the internal driving force.**

The construction of socialist democratic politics in China is an inherent factor in the rise of democratic administration. The essence and core of socialist democratic politics is that the people are the masters of the country. All power belongs to the people. The state guarantees the basic rights of the people by establishing the basic political system of the people's congress and specific operating mechanisms such as Democratic centralism. China's democratic administration is based on the principle of guaranteeing citizens' basic right to participate directly in the management of state and social public affairs and focuses on the combination of top-level and primary-level institutional design. The institutions of regional ethnic autonomy, special administrative regions, residents' committees, and villagers' committees are the animate embodiments of China's democratic practice. The social management model established by the 18th CPC National Congress, which is "a law-based social management system featuring Party committee leadership, government execution, nongovernmental support and public participation", essentially requires strengthening public participation, realizing equal communication, consultation and cooperation between the government and the public, transforming various management subjects into a partnership by means of consultation rather than coercion, establishing a good cooperation and benign interaction mechanism, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of good governance.

### **3. The Development of Public Administrative Participation in Contemporary China**

#### **3.1 Germination**

This stage began from the early stage of the founding of the country and lasted until the early 1990s. In China, the practice of public participatory governance first rose in the early founding of the country, in the form of primary-level self-governance. By the early 1990s, public administrative participation in a formal sense first appeared in Shenzhen, in the form of price-decision hearings. Before setting and adjusting the prices of goods and services with government guidance or government pricing, the department in charge of prices organized all sectors of society, especially business operators and consumers, to demonstrate the necessity and feasibility of setting and adjusting prices. The mainstream administration, which has always taken Bureaucracy as the basic model, takes the regulatory administration as the basic feature, and believes that the compulsion of administrative power is the basis for the existence of administrative activities. Therefore, the theoretical research of the administrative academia naturally starts with "compulsion" as the major premise. The mainstream administration believes that all administrative activities of the government are realized through the operation of administrative power. After the 1970s, social transformation intensified, and a knowledge-based society driven mainly by innovation emerged. The social environment on which bureaucratic administration relied for survival underwent significant changes, and new social forms posed new challenges to public administration. Under the traditional bureaucratic administrative model, regulated and compulsory administration cannot respond to social needs and has gradually declined[3]. Administrative research has started from its opposite, fully exploring the flexible factors such as non regulated and non compulsory in public administration, and striving to explore management methods that are more suitable for modern administrative requirements.

#### **3.2 Exploration**

This period lasted from the mid-90s to the beginning of the 21st century. In 1992, the 14th CPC National Congress included villagers' committees, residents' committees and workers' congresses into the scope of primary-level democracy for the first time, thus recognizing and strengthening primary-level democratic autonomy on the level of policy and empowering the primary-level public to participate in the management of public affairs. The practice of public administrative participation was first implemented at the primary level. Since then, from the 15th CPC National Congress to the 18th CPC National Congress, the state council had been expanding primary-level democracy, adjusting the scope of primary-level democracy, and empowering and increasing the rights of primary-level people to exercise democracy and management. From organizational form to institutional design and arrangement, there had been a trend of decentralization and expansion of rights, making the connotation and extension of primary-level democracy more reasonable, scientific, and perfect. The unremitting exploration of local governments in China is another important factor in promoting the development of public participation in administration during this period. After the implementation of price hearings in the forefront of reform and opening up in Shenzhen, the exploration of public participation in administration continued to expand in the late 1990s. Decision hearings were another important form of public decision-making, including local governments in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and other places introducing citizen participation in decision-making seminars to witness the entire process of government decision-making.

#### **3.3 Development**

This stage began at the beginning of the 21st century and has been continuing today. During this

period, public administrative participation in China has been gradually put into massive practice after arduous exploration, which is manifested in three aspects. First, both the central and local governments have recognized the importance of public administrative participation on an institutional level and continuously improved their basic institution design. Second, the administrative management practices from the central to local governments have shown a diversified trend, especially the practice of engaging public participation in the decision-making process by local governments. Third, public administrative participation in some regions has gradually brought social benefits, providing good references and experience for other regions. Most crucially, at the legislative level, legislations such as the Administrative License Law, the Administrative Punishment Law, the Administrative Compulsory Law, the Administrative Reconsideration Law, the Administrative Procedure Law, the State Compensation Law, etc. have all clearly prescribed active or passive public administrative participation. In terms of government transparency, in 2005 and beyond, the central government continuously issued opinions and suggestions to further promote government transparency, promoting the development of government transparency in depth. The content of government transparency at all levels of government agencies is more extensive, the operation of power is more transparent, and the public awareness is gradually increasing[4]. With the development of Internet technology, new forms of public administrative participation continue to emerge, including citizens' comments on the government, Internet public forums, online politics, government blogs, etc. These have indeed promoted citizens' participation in administration to a certain extent, widened the channels for the masses to participate in the discussion of government affairs, strengthened the supervision of government administrative behavior, promoted the administration according to law, strengthened the relationship between cadres and the masses, and promoted the building of a diligent and clean government, Obtaining public recognition and support.

#### **4. Optimizing the Path of Public Administrative Participation in China**

##### **4.1 Promote the construction of law-based government.**

Strengthening the construction of a law-based government is the fundamental guarantee for establishing and improving public administrative participation. The law-based government administration is the fundamental way to guarantee public administrative participation. The cultivation of public rationality is an important prerequisite for participating in democratic institution construction. It is required to set the boundary of the government's administrative power, guarantee the full exercise of citizens' power, and effectively protect citizens' rights of consultation, participation, statement, defense, information, oversight, and remedy in the process of the government's implementation of administrative acts, in an effort to guarantee public administrative participation with both substantive law and procedural law. At the same time, the construction of a responsive government has become an important part of the process of administrative rule of law, and the responsiveness of the government is a core term in the theoretical essence of democratic administration. The government's response to society is an important indicator of its level of democracy and rule of law.

##### **4.2 Strengthen the construction of the public administrative participation institution.**

The institution is the solid guarantee of the right. To build the institution of public administrative participation, first of all, it is needed to establish a mutually supporting administrative institution according to the legal framework and to apply specific and feasible regulations on various aspects of public administrative participation, such as the overall requirements, rule of each procedure, restraint of participatory behavior and guarantee of participation rights. The relevant supporting system should include an information disclosure system, participation organization

system, decision-making procedure system, consultation procedure system, supervision and accountability system, etc. At the same time, procedural justice is also indispensable, and procedural regulations should also be improved. The basic rights of public participation in China mainly include the right to know, the right to participate, the right to supervise, the right to express, and the right to remedy[5]. These five rights are closely linked and indispensable, and together constitute the right system of public participation. Therefore, the institutional system of public administrative participation should be closely built around the public's right to know, participation, supervision, expression, and relief.

### 4.3 Gradually improve the ecological environment of public administrative participation.

The ecological environment of public administrative participation in China mainly includes the political environment, economic environment, cultural environment, and social environment. The focus of political environment construction is on strengthening the administration of the primary-level government, improving the democratic consciousness and rights awareness of the primary-level government, and increasing the administrative cost of closed decision-making. There is an obvious positive correlation between socioeconomic modernization and public administrative participation. Therefore, it is essential to promote stable and healthy economic development at the economic level and provide necessary financial support for public administrative participation. In the cultural environment, the influence of mainstream political culture on public administrative participation can never be ignored. The State should promote the core socialist values, hold high the principles of democracy, rule of law, respect for civil rights, putting people first, stability and harmony, and create a fair and just political environment. At the level of social environment, the State should promote the construction of civil society and play the active role of self-government mass organizations and organizations of workers, youth, and women in guiding public administrative participation. It is particularly important to emphasize the need to improve the material basis for vulnerable groups to exercise their administrative participation rights[6]. A solid economic foundation means that vulnerable groups do not have to worry about the high cost and inability to bear it in the process of public administration participation, which can effectively enhance their enthusiasm and enthusiasm for participation. If necessary, the government can also provide direct material support for vulnerable groups to participate in administrative decision-making and processes through economic means.

Although public administrative participation in China has achieved results, it still faces many challenges and difficulties. Looking ahead to the 21st century, the development of public administrative participation in China cannot be narrowly excluded or blindly followed. The further development of public participation in the field of administrative management must be in line with China's national conditions and achieve localization.

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