Exploring China's Whole-Process People's Democracy through the lens of the Double Reductions policy

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1. Introduction

On December 9-10, 2021, the U.S. government held the Summits for Democracy, with a theme centered on the contrast between democratic and autocratic systems of governance (Biden 2021). China's response was swift when it learned that it was not invited to the event. On December 1, the China Public Diplomacy Association organized a seminar titled "A Dialog on Democracy: What is democracy and who defines it?" (CISS 2021). On December 4, China's State Council Information Office published a white paper titled "China: Democracy That Works" (State Council Information Office 2021). On December 5, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a report titled "The State of Democracy in the United States." (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021)

China's swift response suggests that it has long been prepared to assert that it has a superior form of democracy. In 2019, Xi Jinping first referred to China's "people's democracy" as a type of "whole-process democracy." (Zhang 2019) In 2021, during a speech on the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China (hereinafter CCP)'s founding, he called for the development of "Whole-Process People's Democracy" (Xi 2021) (hereinafter WPPD). The term itself suggests that China's version of democracy emphasizes people's rule throughout the democratic process. Chinese government officials and pro-China scholars have provided some descriptions and rationales for WPPD, as seen in the reports and seminar mentioned above. However, it is not yet clear what the practical implications of WPPD are (Linda 2021).

In July 2021, the central government of China, i.e., the General Office of the Central Committee of the CCP and the General Office of the State Council, released a policy titled "Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Compulsory Education Students," colloquially known as the "double reductions" (hereinafter DR) policy (Ministry of Education, China 2021). To put it simply, the first reduction means a reduction in the overall amount of homework assigned to primary and middle school students, and the second reduction means a decrease in the burden of after-school tutoring for students and their families. This policy was released around the same time as the concept of WPPD was proposed and promoted by the Chinese government and therefore should exemplify the WPPD at work. The purpose of this study is to understand what China's WPPD means in practice by examining the content and development of the DR policy.

In the following, we will first provide an overview of the meaning and core features of China's WPPD as outlined in official documents and as interpreted by pro-China scholars. We will then proceed to examine the specific details of the DR policy and how it aligns with China's WPPD. Additionally, we will raise some critiques on whether the DR policy can truly be considered a result of democratic decision-making. Finally, we will offer some suggestions of how the Chinese authorities could better align their policies with the principles laid out in WPPD.
2. The key distinctions between American democracy and China’s WPPD

Democracy is considered “an essentially contested concept” that can mean different things to different people (Crick 2002). Both the U.S. and China claim to be democratic, but their understandings and practices of democracy differ significantly. According to Chinese government officials and pro-China scholars, the following are three key advantages of China’s democracy compared to American democracy:

First, in the U.S., democracy is primarily a system in which people elect their leaders to serve for a specific term in the government, and if people are not satisfied with their leaders in the government, they can vote them out in the next election. In contrast, Chinese government officials and pro-China scholars argue that elections can be subject to manipulation. Examples such as gerrymandering (Wang 2013) and the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Wylie 2019) are often mentioned in China to indicate the vulnerability of electoral democracy. Fundamentally, pro-China scholars argue that the role of money in elections can undermine the principle of “one person, one vote” in Western democracies (Cagé 2020; Carnes 2020).

China’s democracy, on the other hand, is said to be characterized as not being based on formal election processes, despite the existence of local elections that allow ordinary citizens to cast their votes (Nagao and Kennedy 2021). In China, the CCP is the only ruling party, and there are no other parties for people to choose to form government (Guo 2020). The pro-China scholars attending the seminar “A Dialog on Democracy: What is democracy and who defines it?” argued that instead of focusing on competitive multiparty elections, people should focus on the results that a responsible government delivers for them. The CCP often emphasizes that under its leadership, China has experienced significant development. In a speech marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CCP in 2021, Xi Jinping declared that “we have realized the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.” Additionally, he urged the CCP and the Chinese people to work toward achieving the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” which he described as the greatest dream of the Chinese people since the advent of modern times (Xi 2021; Berkofsky 2016). According to the CCP’s own descriptions, the essence of China’s approach to democracy appears to center on an authoritarian government efficiently achieving goals that have the support of the majority of its people.

Pro-China scholars argue that China’s achievements in recent decades can partly be attributed to the absence of competitive elections in the country (Song 2012). In a competitive electoral system, parties are primarily focused on fulfilling the promises they make during elections, and they may lack the ability to make long-term plans that benefit the entire nation. Moreover, populist leaders have the potential to fuel negative partisanship and consolidate their power, which could ultimately have detrimental effects on democracy (Masaru 2021). In contrast, it is argued that the CCP does not need to allocate resources to competitive elections and can instead focus on efficiently and continuously working out and implementing plans to develop the country.

Second, Chinese government officials and pro-China scholars argue that not only do American people not have the ability to fairly elect their government leaders based on the principle of “one person, one vote” but also after the election, the government serves the interests of the wealthy who helped them win the election while ignoring the needs and welfare of the general population. These criticisms can be valid, as they have been supported by a variety of studies conducted in Western countries (Page and Gilens 2020; Gilens and Page 2014; Carnes 2013).

In contrast, the CCP and government in China are said to be truly attentive to the needs and demands of the people, placing emphasis on the welfare of ordinary citizens and working to improve their well-being. When Xi Jinping first took office, he stated, “To meet people’s desire for a happy life is our mission.” He also emphasized relieving the suffering of the most disadvantaged in society. Despite potential biases, several studies have found that the CCP’s policies and programs in areas such as poverty reduction have led to measurable improvements in living standards and social outcomes for many Chinese citizens (Graeme 2018; Liu, Gao, and Huang 2020).

Not only does the Chinese government assert that it does not prioritize the interests of wealthy and large corporations, but it also views rich business owners as having a responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the people. In April 2019, when Chinese business magnate Jack Ma commented that the 996 work culture, which refers to working 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, could be a blessing, it triggered widespread public criticism. This criticism included official Chinese media’s response to Xi Jinping’s mention of “tertiary distribution” in August 2021.

As previously mentioned, Xi Jinping later added the word “people” to the “whole-process democracy” concept that he first introduced in 2019. In the discourse of the CCP, when the adjective “people” is used, such as in “people’s government,” “people’s court,” or “People’s Republic of China,” it often means that power and rights are restricted to those who are considered “people” and not to anyone else (Wang 2021). In recent years, the Chinese government has frequently warned against the negative roles played by the market and some unscrupulous business owners. Despite the efforts of large corporations and business magnates to donate in response to Xi Jinping’s mention of “tertiary distribution” in August 2021
(Song 2021), at the end of that year, Xi still warned that "capital" could grow in a disorderly and barbaric fashion (Zhu 2021). Thus, WPPD may include restricting the power of "capital" or business owners to protect people from harm.

Third, representative democracy, as practiced in the U.S. is a system in which citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. After a hectic election in 2021, many Americans felt disconnected from the law and policy-making process of their government (IPSOS 2022). Some argue that this detachment allows for more thoughtful and informed decisions to be made (Plotke 1997). However, there may be concerns that this representative system is not truly democratic, as it does not permit the involvement of regular citizens in the decision-making process more directly.

In contrast, democracy in China is described by Xi Jinping as a “whole process”, and all major laws in China are “made according to procedures and rules, through democratic preparation, made scientifically and democratically” (Zhang 2019). This means that the government is open to engaging with citizens and allowing them to participate in the decision-making process for policies, laws, and other government decisions. In a 2021 speech, while conveying an idealistic tone, Xi Jinping emphasized that “what matters more is whether or not people have the extensive right to participate, rather than just the right to vote” (Xi 2022).

According to Feng (2021), a professor at the Party School of the Central Committee of the CCP, in a socialism with Chinese characteristics, "people's will and needs are the starting point of law making." It is said that not only can Chinese people propose motions and express their concerns or needs through their representatives before annual meetings of representatives, but they also have direct channels to communicate with the government. For example, local legislative outreach offices have been established by the People's Congress for people to propose motions at any time (Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the NPC 2022).

Moreover, the Chinese government indicates that it does not passively wait for citizens to express their concerns and opinions. According to the white paper titled "China: Democracy That Works" (State Council Information Office, 2021), in the initial stages of addressing a specific issue, the government solicits opinions from individuals from various backgrounds. These opinions are then deliberated on by experts, government officials, and members of the public. After rounds of discussion and deliberation, scientifically sound and mature solutions are agreed upon and implemented. In other words, achieving consensus through deliberation is said to be a crucial aspect of WPPD.

3. “Double Reductions” policy

The “Opinions on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-Campus Training for Compulsory Education Students” issued by the central government of China stipulates three regulations. First, it stipulates that schools and their teachers at the compulsory education level (primary and middle school) decrease the overall volume of homework assigned. Second, it stipulates that schools enhance the quality of after-school services to cater to students’ various needs instead of solely focusing on academic subjects. Last, it enforces strict regulations on the private education industry that provides academic courses to primary and middle school students.

The first regulation, often referred to as the "first reduction," has been in place for years (Liu 2017). The second regulation, which is sometimes overlooked by the public, is an improvement rather than a reduction. The third regulation, or the "second reduction," is the most contentious. It stipulates that all existing institutions providing curriculum-based off-campus tutoring courses must be converted into nonprofit organizations and that no new institutions of this kind will be approved by the local governments. Furthermore, all online curriculum-based tutoring institutions must obtain government approval and meet specific guidelines. One such regulation stipulates that each online session must not exceed 30 minutes to protect students’ eyesight. Curriculum-based tutoring institutions are also prohibited from raising funds from private capital markets, using national holidays, weekends, or winter/summer breaks to organize tutoring programs, enticing teachers away from public schools through improper means, and advertising on mainstream media platforms. In essence, the third regulation is a ban on the private education industry’s ability to provide academic courses to primary and middle school students, rather than a “reduction.”

The DR regulations can be met with resistance from many Chinese citizens. This is because in Chinese culture, studying hard is seen as essential for children to develop their morality and knowledge. A popular Chinese saying, "jade unpolished will be of no use; a person uneducated will be of no merit.", reflects this belief. Additionally, Chinese parents are expected to support their children's education, as it is considered fulfilling their duty as parents. From an individualist perspective, the social class reproduction resulting from parents' commitment to their children's education may be viewed as questionable. However, in East Asian culture, this phenomenon is often considered acceptable and even commendable, as it strengthens the ties between generations. It is likely that the DR policy would not be popular among the general public if there were a referendum on the matter in China. This is supported by an example from South Korea, where a law prohibiting students from attending tutoring schools was deemed unconstitutional following a series of civic protests in 2000 (Lee et al 2010).

4. Why may the DR policy align with the "whole process people's democracy"?
Although the recent implementation of the DR policy may not enjoy widespread popular support in China, it can still be seen as consistent with the three core features of China’s WPPD that have been outlined above.

First, the DR policy was implemented by the Chinese government to achieve long-term goals toward the rejuvenation of China. According to the Ministry of Education of China, the DR policy was launched by the Party Central Committee of the CCP with the goal of "realizing the Chinese nation’s great rejuvenation on a strategic level" (Cao 2021). As the policy has only recently been implemented, it is too early to assess its long-term effects in China. For now, after studying the policy documents and opinions of experts with government backgrounds, we think the DR policy is related to the goal of China's rejuvenation through its potential impact on the quality and quantity of future generations of the Chinese workforce.

To be more specific, the Chinese government is concerned about the negative effects of heavy workloads and lack of playtime on students' physical and mental health. Particularly, students may grow up lacking the development of creativity, ingenuity, and teamwork skills. Without these crucial qualities, the future workforce of China may not be able to compete on a global level and contribute to the country's economic growth, and the goal of China's rejuvenation may be unattainable. Observers also suggest that the implementation of the DR policy could be intended to address the issue of low birth rates in China (Smith 2021). Although birth control has been gradually loosened in recent years and Chinese citizens are now allowed to have up to 3 children starting in 2021, birth rates have remained stagnant. According to the China Statistical Yearbook of 2021, the birth rate was 0.0852% in 2020, the lowest since 1978; in 2021, the birth rate was another record-breaking low of 0.0752%, with only 10,620,000 newborns (Peng 2022). A low birth rate can lead to a shortage of labor in the future, even if the quality of labor is not a concern. One major factor contributing to low birth rates is the high cost of raising children. A survey in 2021 suggests that the high cost of raising children is the number one reason why parents do not plan to have children, followed by lack of time for child-rearing and concerns about children's success in a hypercompetitive educational system (Zhilanzhaopin 2022). By implementing the DR policy, the Chinese government may be trying to tell couples that they do not need to worry too much about the cost of raising children, thus encouraging them to have more children.

Second, the DR policy is an effort by the Chinese government to alleviate the suffering of citizens, particularly by protecting citizens from harm inflicted by the profit-oriented private education industry. Upon taking office in 2012, Xi Jinping stated that "our people have an ardent love for life. They desire better education, stable employment, increased income, improved social security, better healthcare and housing, and a better environment." (XI 2012) In this speech, education was emphasized as the top priority among the people's desires. As the holder of a doctoral degree, Xi Jinping obviously recognizes the crucial role education plays in the lives of Chinese citizens and its impact on their overall quality of life.

Much like in ancient times, Chinese children today are expected to excel academically. This pressure has only increased in the 21st century. According to the China Youth and Children Research Center, a government organization, Chinese children spend an average of 8.1 hours at primary school on weekdays and 11 hours a day in high school, with an increasing amount of time spent on off-campus tutoring, particularly on weekends and holidays (Zhang, Sun, and Zhao 2017). Furthermore, a recent report indicated that 37.23% of children surveyed felt moderate to high pressure, and 22.85% reported feelings of depression (Jiandanxinli 2020). This pressure is not limited to children. Many parents work overtime and spend their weekends and holidays tutoring their children, in addition to paying for expensive tutoring courses. A survey conducted in 2020 found that the cost of tutoring can consume up to 10% of a family's income in major Chinese cities, with 28.9% of respondents finding it to be a heavy burden (Shanghai Consumer Council 2020).

The DR policy states that governments at the provincial level should prioritize this policy as a major project to improve "people's welfare" and expects a significant improvement in "people's satisfaction with education." It specifically regulates that it aims to "enhance the welfare of students" by addressing the issue of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for them, and teachers are prohibited from assigning too much homework or using homework as a punishment. The policy also addresses the problem of excessive effort and commitment required of parents regarding their children's academic performance. For instance, it prohibits teachers from expecting parents to assist with students' homework.

The private tutoring industry is also criticized for contributing to the stress faced by students and parents and is targeted by the DR policy. The policy text expresses concern over the negative effects of "capital" or market logic and greedy business owners on the tutoring industry. It describes the services as "expensive," and the level of investment as "excessive." The competition is deemed "unjust" with a "high risk of potential harm". Advertising and marketing tactics are likened to "indiscriminate bombardment." As such, the policy advocates for stricter government regulation of the private education industry to protect individuals from the negative effects of the chaotic market and unscrupulous business practices.

Last, the participation of the public played a significant role in the development of the DR policy. According to the policy text, the DR policy was implemented in response to the "strong repercussions from the public" regarding issues in education. The policy text indicates that the government paid close attention to the opinions and concerns of the public and actively took action to address them. The regulations may appear abrupt to some, but they show the government's determination to take prompt actions in response to public needs and concerns instead of being inactive.

According to the Ministry of Education of China (2021), the development of DR policy underwent a democratic process. The drafting group visited various locations, such as Beijing and Shanghai, to gather first-hand information. They engaged with stakeholders, including educational administrators, school principals, teachers, parents, experts, and
educational training practitioners, through roundtable discussions to address the issue. Additionally, the drafting group conducted a thorough review and evaluation of efforts to reduce school homework in recent years. They analyzed data from 18,600 tutoring institutions, 680,000 students, and 740,000 parents in 100 counties/districts across 10 provinces to determine the causes of the problem within and outside of schools. The process involved multiple agencies working together to identify the chain of causes, responsibilities, and solutions. It seems that the regulations in the DR policy, particularly those involving harsh measures against the expansion of the private education industry, have been thoroughly deliberated and widely considered with input from various perspectives, rather than solely determined by government officials or the CCP. In other words, Xieshang Minzhu, a deliberative democracy with Chinese characteristics, was practiced (Lo 2021).

5. Why it may fall short as a demonstration of China’s democracy in action

The above analysis may suggest that the rationale and run-up to the implementation of DR policy aligns with the core features of WPPD. However, questions arise upon closer examination. First, reducing homework and after-school tutoring may provide students with more free time; however, this alone does not guarantee that students will reach their full potential or develop holistically. The DR policy calls for schools to improve their services to meet the needs of students beyond academic performance, which represents a significant shift for schools and teachers, who may lack the knowledge and resources to effectively achieve the ambitious educational goal of cultivating a high-quality labor force. On the other hand, implementing a broad ban on private academic course tutoring may make it difficult for students interested in STEM subjects to develop their skills in problem solving and analytical reasoning, thus hindering their potential to grow into engineers and scientists. It is worth noting that in South Korea, as in China, many students rely on private tutoring for better educational and career opportunities, yet this does not prevent South Korea from becoming a developed economy with advanced technology and innovation. If one of the goals of the DR policy is to address China’s low birth rate, it does not seem to work, as the national birth rate in 2022 reached a record low of 6.77 births per 1,000 people (Qi 2023). This dire reality raises doubts about the effectiveness of the DR policy in achieving objectives that contribute to China’s rejuvenation.

The DR policy aims to reduce the stress and financial burden that parents face in helping their children achieve academic success. However, investing time and money in one’s child’s education is a widely accepted norm and virtue among Chinese parents. Even Mencius’ mother is said to have moved three times to provide her son with a better education. While some parents may publicly express complaints about the effort they put into their children’s education, some of these complaints may be a form of “humble bragging” known as “Versailles literature” in China (Lin and Chen 2022). It is not to say that Chinese parents do not experience stress or anxiety regarding their children’s education; however, the capability to access private tutoring is largely a benefit for affluent families in urban areas. On the other hand, low-income parents, especially those in rural regions, face challenges with both time and resources to provide private tutoring for their children. Currently, there are indications that the DR policy has led to a significant reduction in parents’ anxiety (Hao 2021). However, in the future, as parents feel they have less to do to help their children, their culturally ingrained anxieties about fulfilling their obligation on children’s education may return and even increase.

The DR policy holds some tutoring business owners accountable for cashing in on people’s anxieties and causing them distress. However, it is important to note that the private education industry is a fast-growing industry that employs many people. For those who are well educated but have been laid off due to the COVID-19 pandemic, online tutoring offers valuable job opportunities for them to make a living (China Institute for Employment Research 2021). According to the Ministry of Education, in February 2022, only 8% of offline off-campus tutoring institutions and 13% of online tutoring institutions were still in operation (Ministry of Education 2022). The exact number of employees laid off because of the implementation of DR policy is not available, but an article in an officially endorsed newspaper suggests it could be as high as “10 million” (Gan 2021). It is unclear what support the government is providing to those affected by this sudden job cut, in addition to the reminder that they may be eligible for unemployment benefits (Wu 2021).

Third, one of the benefits that WPPD promotes is the ability for citizens to actively engage with the government by expressing their concerns and opinions. However, in the case of the DR policy, there is no evidence that citizens “set the agenda” or directly requested the government to implement strict and immediate regulations such as those in the DR regulations (see Wang 2008). Although admittedly there were quite some complaints on the Internet for years (Lu et al 2023), we cannot be certain whether these complaints represent the majority’s opinion. The policy appears to have been primarily initiated by the government and its advisers and was implemented through a top-down approach, with “a greater reliance on hierarchical steering” (Schubert and Alpermann 2019).

It is reported that when drafting the DR policy, the drafting group made efforts to solicit opinions from a wide range of people. However, information such as the selection criteria, how the citizens were selected to participate in the roundtable discussion, and the opinions of different groups of people, especially opinions of those in the private education sector, is not publicly available. A study of participatory budgeting experiments in certain regions of China found that the participants were more often “local elites” rather than representative of the general population (Frenkel 2021). Regarding the decision-making process, an article published in an official journal of the CCP acknowledges that there are differing opinions on the DR policy and that some of these opinions “do seem to make some sense” (Gao 2021). However, the article states that these opinions

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are "minor rationality" and should be subordinate to "major rationality." Thus, the DR policy does not appear to be a result of voting among members with equal status, and there were some persuasive efforts during the drafting of the policy. However, it is unclear whether the final policy was primarily influenced by persuasion or obedience to authority. Even if rational persuasion played a dominant role in the development of the policy, it is uncertain if the individuals who were persuaded truly represented the views of the broader society.

6. Discussion

The Chinese government advocates for the establishment of a more authentic and improved form of democracy, officially referred to as "Whole process people's democracy". In our opinion, the following are the three core features of this system. First, despite the absence of political party elections, the Chinese government prioritizes delivering results that align with the people's wants and needs, particularly through its ability to implement long-term plans for the nation. Second, the Chinese government places emphasis on the welfare and interests of the people and takes measures to curb unscrupulous market practices. Third, the Chinese government provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the entire process of law or policy-making, rather than leaving it solely to elected representatives or government officials.

The recently implemented Double Reductions policy provides an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of China's "whole process people's democracy" in practice. Based on official policy documents and officially endorsed statements and reports, we find that the policy aims to ensure that future generations of the Chinese workforce of high quality and in sufficient numbers, which aligns with China's goal of national rejuvenation. Additionally, the policy aims to alleviate the stress and burden on students and parents, particularly by restricting the expansion of the private education industry. It is reported that during the drafting stage of the DR policy, individuals from various backgrounds were able to fully express their concerns and opinions. While the above may suggest that the WPPD principles were applied in the creation of the DR policy, we raise doubts as to whether the policy will effectively achieve its intended goals, significantly alleviate the suffering of the people, and if the voices and opinions of all population groups were fairly and rationally considered during the drafting process. Thus, the issue of elite decision-making that neglects the input of ordinary citizens is not exclusive to representative democracies in the West but can also be present in China, where the CCP maintains a dominant role, despite claiming to have a close relationship with the people and be responsive.

Upon examination of the DR policy, it appears that the 'whole process people's democracy' in China has not fully realized its promised ideals. If China continues to adhere to its current political system instead of incorporating elements of liberal and representative democracy in the foreseeable future, we propose that some adjustments be made to enhance the effectiveness of its WPPD. One possible direction for developing WPPD is to utilize advanced IT technologies that have been proven to effectively enhance democracy. As the late leader Deng Xiaoping, who directed China's reform and opening up efforts, famously stated, "The color of the cat does not matter as long as it catches mice.", by which he meant that questions of ideology should be subordinate to the question of overall effectiveness in achieving stated goals. In the case of DR policy, the use of big data analysis was said to have helped to identify the underlying causes and make the policy scientifically sound. In a similar manner, we recommend the adoption of new technologies such as those used for crowdsourcing policy formulation to strengthen democracy in agenda-setting. As demonstrated by the DR policy, agenda-setting in China currently follows a top-down approach, with the government having to "identify public opinion accurately" (Feng 2021). This can be challenging in a complex and rapidly evolving society. New technological advancements can assist democratic governments in identifying and addressing the concerns of their citizens more effectively, regardless of where these technologies originate.

Furthermore, one of the strengths of China's system is its ability to deliver results for its citizens. To secure a prosperous future for the country, it is advisable for governments to investigate the utilization of AI to improve decision-making quality. Scholars (e.g., Hayek 1976) have questioned the limitations of human rationality and challenged the idea of centralized solutions for social and economic issues. However, the advancement of AI technology may offer a path toward finding better balances between efficiency and fairness, reconciling short- and long-term goals, and resolving conflicts between social groups.

Another suggestion pertains to the government's approach to private business owners. In the seminar that we mentioned above, China's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Le Yucheng, stated that democracy in China is for “the majority and the whole of Chinese people.” If the CCP wishes to maintain its leadership role and justify its political system as democratic, it must take into consideration the interests of all population groups before making decisions. In the past, during President Jiang Zemin's era or around year 2000, the CCP set the goal of building a "socialist market economy" and at that time, private business owners were not only considered to be a part of the "people," but were also welcomed to join the CCP. However, in the case of the DR policy, private business owners were harshly criticized and even demonized. A recent development outline issued by the Chinese government in December 2022 stated that the government would encourage and support a variety of educational services provided by the private sector to "expand domestic demand" (Wang 2022). While this may seem like positive news for the private education sector, if business owners, not just those in the private education sector, have uncertainty about their future or doubts about whether they are seen by the CCP as part of the "people," they may become more unscrupulous and opportunistic while their business is still allowed. This can hinder the long-term...
development goals promised by the Chinese government, which partially justifies China’s WPPD. Therefore, it is crucial for the CCP to establish a level of mutual trust with private business owners for China’s WPPD to be effective.

Ethical Considerations

Not Applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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