

From government-centric to people-centered government: A Reform of the Administrative Services in Zhejiang Province, China (1992-2018)

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ABSTRACT—: The government plays a critical role in providing public services and serving the interests of the public. However, the traditional government-centric mentality tends to prioritize what the government can do rather than considering the needs of the public. This article aims to explore the transformation of the Chinese government from a government-centric approach to a people-centric approach and evaluates the reform efforts. Based on a content analysis of both Chinese and English literature, this study reveals that the Zhejiang government has been engaged in a continuous administrative reform process since 1992, consisting of five distinct phases, leading to a gradual transformation into a citizen-centric government. The recent administrative service reform, known as the “Visit Once at Most”, initiated by the Zhejiang government and implemented nationwide, can most demonstrate the people-centered approach adopted by the government. The reform places significant emphasis on meeting the public’s needs, enhancing satisfaction, and ensuring a sense of gain as fundamental principles for delivering efficient services. The study also finds that administrative decentralization and the establishment of performance legitimacy within the Chinese political and governance system have played crucial roles in facilitating such a transformation. The study concludes with a discussion of the success factors and challenges associated with the ongoing reform efforts.

Keywords : people-centered, government, administrative reform, Zhejiang, China

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Introduction

China, like many countries around the world, has sought to transition from a “government-centric” approach to a “people-centric” service delivery model. This transition is aligned with the global trend of governance. From the Traditional Public Administration in 1887, where the government was overwhelmingly the center of public service delivery, it has evolved into the New Public Management in the late 20th century, where the private sector was involved. Currently, it is the era of post-New Public Management where multi-sectoral governance is required and people is the center of governance for public administration. Since the opening and reform of China in 1978, the Chinese government has continuously reformed public service delivery. The emphasis on the people-centric approach is evident in the increasing use of the word “people” in official reports of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which has increased from 39 times in 1977 to 206 times in 2017 (Guo 2019).

It is widely recognized that China has become a global power in many aspects in a relatively short time. Governmental reform has played a crucial role in China’s rapid development and its emergence as a global power (Yu 2018). The reform process has empowered local governments and the administrative system through fiscal and administrative decentralization (Bai and Liu 2020). This decentralization has improved economic growth by granting more decision-making authority to local governments (Gong, Liu, and Wu 2021; Yu and Gao 2013). The administrative examination and approval system has been a key focus of government reform in China, serving as a mechanism for decentralization of power and tasks. Over the years, the Chinese government, particularly the Zhejiang government, has implemented a series of reforms to create a business-friendly environment, attract investment, and enhance the convenience of public services. These reforms have involved adjusting and decentralizing administrative examination and approval items, as well as innovating, simplifying, and optimizing their functions and processes. As a result, the quality and efficiency of government services have improved

Zhejiang province is one of the leading local governments in China, known for being a highly developed and innovative government. Several of its locally piloted policies have been adopted nationwide, such as the establishment of one-stop service in 1999, the Visit Once at Most reform in 2017, etc. Zhejiang, located in the Yangtze River Delta on the eastern coast of China, consists of 11 prefecture-level cities, 37 municipal districts, 20 county-level cities, 33 counties (including one autonomous county), 618 towns, 258 townships, and 488 streets (The People's Government of Zhejiang Province 2020). Hangzhou, as its capital city, has hosted several international events such as the 11th G20 summit in 2016 and the Asian Games in 2022. It covers a total area of 101,800 square kilometers, ranking eighth in size in the country. The terrain consists of 23.2% plain areas, 70.4% mountains and hills, and 6.4% lakes. With a population of 64.6 million, Zhejiang ranks fourth in terms of economic size among Chinese provinces (Office of the Leading Group for the Seventh National Census of the State Council 2021). In general, China's administrative structure comprises of central government and four tiers of local government. This includes 34 provincial-level governments (23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities, and 2 special administrative regions), 333 cities, 2,843 counties, and 38,602 townships (National Bureau of Statistics 2022).

The administrative reform efforts in Zhejiang province provide a notable example of the progressive shift from a government-centric to a people-centered approach. The reform process began in 1992 and gained momentum with the nationwide adoption of the recent reform of "Visit Once at Most" (VOM) or "最多跑一次" (*zuì duō pǎo yī cì*) in 2018, which signifies the evolving prioritization of meeting the needs and expectations of the people in the Chinese governance system. The VOM introduced by the Zhejiang government in 2017 and implemented nationwide a year later, has been a significant driver of change in public service delivery in China since the country's reform and opening-up period beginning in 1978 (Yu 2018; Lang and Shu 2018). This reform has quickly spread across China, showcasing the experiences and practices that have been widely adopted. Therefore, this study

focuses on the administrative service and approval system reform in Zhejiang province, with a special focus on the VOM reform, to illustrate the transformation of the Chinese government's service delivery from a government-centric to a people-oriented approach. The research aims to address two main objectives: firstly, to investigate the transition in public service delivery from a government-centric to a people-centric perspective through the examination and approval system reform in Zhejiang province; and secondly, to assess the factors contributing to the reform's success and the challenges it faces moving forward.

Literature Review

China is one of the most decentralized countries, especially in terms of fiscal and administrative decentralization, albeit with limitations on political decentralization. Regional decentralization drives economic development by incentivizing local governments to be innovative and competitive (Xu 2011). The decentralization in China began in the 1980s when Deng Xiaoping initiated the Reform and Opening Up policy in 1978. Before this, China was highly centralized. Fiscal reforms changed how local governments at the county level and below collected revenue, incentivizing local governments to pursue economic growth from rural industrialization (Oi 1992). A key feature was the tax responsibility system, which gave local governments a fixed revenue target allowing them to retain earnings beyond contracted amounts for local use. As central government revenues dropped, local revenues rose, creating regional disparities. To recentralize control, reforms in 1994 reclassified central, local, and shared taxes intending to increase revenue for the central government. While decentralization remains complex, local governments were incentivized to manage fiscal revenues, shaping economic development (Jin, Qian, and Weingast 2005).

The administrative decentralization in China after 1978 resulted in a significant transfer of administrative power from the central government to local governments. With this devo-

lution of power, local governments have been granted the autonomy to implement economic policies and tailor services to the specific conditions and needs of their localities (Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden 2005). As a result, local governments have been able to experiment with innovative mechanisms for delivering public services, leading to increased efficiency and effectiveness (Malesky and London 2014). However, administrative reform can also contribute to regional disparities in public service delivery. The lack of effective institutionalization of the intergovernmental fiscal system has allowed wealthier regions to provide better public services compared to poorer regions, limiting the development of service-oriented governments (Wong 2009). Furthermore, the absence of clear accountability mechanisms at the local level can give rise to corruption and the misuse of power and public funds (Tsai 2007). Despite the autonomy granted to local governments in making policy decisions, the central government maintains strict control over the personnel system, ensuring that local policies align with the ideology and policies of the central government. Consequently, the central government continues to exert significant influence over administrative decentralization through the centralized personnel system

Administrative reform in China has been driven by the need to maintain social and political stability and adapt to globalization (Q. Wang 2010). These reforms have been relatively coherent and incremental, primarily focused on addressing socioeconomic issues. The early reforms in the 1980s to the mid-1990s focused on restructuring governmental organizations and decentralization, granting local governments more autonomy to experiment with policies that promote rural development. During the 1990s-2000s, the reform shifted towards restraining bureaucratic behavior, streamlining and downsizing bureaucracy to improve efficiency, and introducing performance evaluation systems. In the 2000s, digitization and e-government projects gained prominence, with the central government initiating the Online Government Project (OGP) in 1999 (T. Chen et al. 2023) This transformation aimed to enhance governance, pub-

lic service delivery, citizen-government interactions, and transparency. One notable reform was the Fang Guan Fu reform in 2015, which focused on streamlining administration, delegating power to local governments, strengthening regulation, and improving public service delivery (Ma 2023). Administrative decentralization played a crucial role in this reform, allowing local governments to implement policies tailored to their specific contexts. In recent years, administrative reform has increasingly focused on strengthening state capacity, improving governance and accountability, and combating corruption.

However, the institution exerting significance over the administrative system is the ruling party of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The CPC holds the primary authority in governing Chinese society and the administrative system (Shambaugh 2008). Party leadership is the key element of the Chinese governance system. Party officials generally hold important positions in the administrative system and play vital roles in policy implementation. This unique feature of the Chinese political system, known as the party-state dichotomy, places the party above the state or the administrative system (Bai and Liu 2020). The promotion of cadres within the party is based on their performance, which is closely tied to the party's ideology and principles. The performance assessment system reinforces the effectiveness of party governance as promoted cadres remain committed to the party (Whiting 2017). Consequently, the administrative structure facilitates the top-down implementation of party policies and directives (Heilmann 2018). The ideology of the CPC, based on various guiding principles from Marxism-Leninism to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, shapes the objectives and principles of China's administrative system, guiding decision-making processes, policy formulation, and implementation (Heilmann 2018). Thus, the administrative structure in China is closely influenced by party leadership, the performance assessment system, and the ideology of maintaining economic development and social stability.

In terms of governance, decentralization has been a key

tool in driving social and economic development in China since the 1980s. The national government continues to delegate administrative power while ensuring the alignment of local policies with national policies through a centralized personnel system. However, the implementation of administrative reforms varies across regions due to cross-regional disparities. Each province has been given autonomy to pilot and experiment with innovative policies (Wang, 2010). Considering the importance of administrative reform, it is intriguing to examine how leading local governments, such as Zhejiang, have implemented these reforms, and the impact they have had on governance and public service delivery.

Research Methodology

This study employs the qualitative methodology of content analysis to investigate the transformation of the Chinese government into a people-centric government through the reforms of administrative services in Zhejiang province, with a special focus on the VOM. Due to the rarity and significance of this reform, it serves as a crucial starting point for comprehending the evolution of the Chinese administrative reform. It then traces back to the historical reform of administrative services in China which began in 1992 until the current reform in 2018. To ensure a comprehensive review of the literature, this study examines both Chinese and English peer-reviewed publications. The researcher accesses relevant scholarly articles through two databases: Google Scholar and the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). These databases are recognized for their extensive coverage of academic literature from various disciplines. Finally, literature on the development of administrative services and examination and approval system reform are included and used for further content analysis.

Five Phases of Administrative Service Reforms in Zhejiang Province

The examination and approval system in Zhejiang province underwent a series of reforms starting in 1992, with a focus on adopting a people-centric approach. This shift in perspective aligns with the country's development plan, which transitioned from an emphasis on economic growth to people and social development in the 2000s (Fewsmith and Gao 2014). At the core of this transformation is administrative decentralization, which granted local governments autonomy to pilot local policies throughout the reform process (Wu, Ramesh, and Yu 2017). Local governments showing superior performance were given additional autonomy, otherwise, they were given additional support and capacity building to assume more responsibility. The reform in Zhejiang province progressed through five phases, culminating in a shift from a government-oriented approach to a people-centered perspective (Lang and Shu 2018). These phases were initiated after Deng Xiaoping's Southern tour in 1992 and aimed to transition from a government-centric to a people-centered government (Yu 2018). The five phases of reform included reconstructing vertical administrative power, exploring a centralized examination and approval system, integrating functions and reengineering administrative processes, redefining and limiting government power, and ultimately transitioning to a people-centered government through the VOM reform in 2016.

Phase 1: Reconstructing the vertical administrative power of local government (1992-1998)

The first phase involved reconstructing the vertical administrative power of local government, which is aligned with the administrative reform directions of the central government. This was achieved through the “Strengthening the Power of the Strong County” to “Expanding the Power to Strengthen the County” reform, where higher-tier governments (provinces and cities) devolved socio-economic approval power to lower-tier governments (counties) (Yu 2018). This decentralization aimed

to strengthen county governments, enabling them to adapt and respond more effectively to socio-economic changes in rapidly developing regions. The decentralization of power began in 1980, with special economic zones (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen) receiving administrative approval authority similar to provincial-level authorities. The hierarchical administrative decentralization was as follows: Special Economic Zone, Economic and Technological Development Zone, Coastal Opening-up City, Coastal Economic and Technological Development Zone, and Mainland regions, respectively. The extent of decentralization varied, based on regional and administrative structure factors, with different levels of government gaining varying degrees of autonomy.

In Zhejiang province, the decentralization of power not only occurred but also deepened through the “expanding the power to strengthen the county” reforms in 2002, 2006, and 2008. This expanded the devolution of power to empower every county government, rather than exclusively focusing on strong counties. As a result, certain counties gained approval authority comparable to that of cities, leading to provincial-level management of the county system and the empowerment of county governments (Yu 2018). Effectively, the county governments, the backbone of policy implementation agents, were empowered.

Phase 2: Exploring the effective use of local government power through the establishment of one-stop administrative service centers (1999-2005)

During the second phase, one-stop administrative service centers were established to address issues such as access difficulties, poor services, staff attitudes, and arbitrary charges during the examination and approval process (Zhao, Xin, and Liangbo 2018). Unlike previous reforms that were top-down and driven by the provincial government, the establishment of administrative service centers was a bottom-up initiative led by cities and counties. The examination and approval process involved multiple departments and complex procedures, resulting in increased

costs and reduced efficiency for the public. To address this, the one-stop administrative service centers physically consolidated the approval functions of various departments into a single service hall, allowing the public to complete multiple administrative tasks in one location. Unlike previous reforms that primarily focused on adjusting administrative power among local governments, the goal of these service centers was to explore the effective use of local government power.

The model of one-stop service reform was first explored by many city and county governments in Zhejiang province in 1999, with Jinhua City taking the lead in establishing the first one-stop service center. This model quickly gained popularity and was applied nationwide. By 2005, Zhejiang province alone had 101 service halls, while a total of 2,912 service centers had been established in 31 provincial-level governments across the country (Yu 2018). More than a thousand administrative licensing and non-administrative licensing approval items have also been reduced through the innovative one-stop service halls (Zhao, Xin, and Liangbo 2018; X. He and Zhang 2018). Physical consolidation was a prominent feature of this early-stage reform.

However, a notable shortcoming of this reform was that it was primarily a simple adjustment of the existing administrative process and did not involve a systematic reconstruction of procedures and powers. Although some service centers proposed the idea of parallel approval, it was not effectively implemented. For instance, the Jinhua Administrative Service Center lacked administrative coordination and supervision despite having service windows for various departments. As a result, it functioned more like a “mailing and receiving room,” providing physical integration of document submission without bringing about substantial changes to the approval system (Yu 2018).

Phase 3: Deepening the integration of examination and approval functions and reengineering the process (2006-2012)

While the one-stop service hall model had initially improved service delivery, it soon encountered limitations as the reform progressed. The lack of approval authority, internal coordination, and supervision hindered the restructuring of administrative authority among different departments and the optimization of administrative procedures, thus failing to reduce costs for the people (Yu 2018). To address these challenges, Zhejiang province intensified the reform of the examination and approval system in two stages (Duan 2018; Yu 2018). The first stage, from 2006 to 2008, aimed to integrate the examination and approval functions of different departments into a true ‘one-stop’ service. However, this stage relied on window staff for preliminary review and material transfer, while specific approval authority still resided with each relevant department, leading to reduced efficiency. In response, Zhejiang province introduced the concept of “Two Integrations and Two in Place” (Yu 2018). Two Integrations involved sorting out examination and approval items within each agency and integrating them at both the departmental and service center levels. Two in Place required each department to ensure that approval items and authority were in place at the service center. This approach streamlined the examination and approval functions, reducing the number of sections from over 150 to 44 in the Fuyang District of Hangzhou City in 2014 (Yu 2018). The service center thus transformed from a centralized mailroom to a centralized service hall for departments.

During the second stage of the reform (2008-2012), Zhejiang province implemented parallel and online examination and approval authority across departments. Parallel approval enabled multi-departmental linkage and co-approval with the aid of digital technologies. This approach, initially used in corporate investment project approval, was extended to citizen-related affairs. Leveraging internet technologies, parallel approval reduced costs, improved administrative efficiency, standardized government operations, and enhanced government accountability to

the public. The Zhejiang government began to use parallel approval as early as 2001, after the central government initiated the Online Government Project (OGP) in 1999. From 2009 onwards, service centers in Zhejiang province adopted parallel and online approval as crucial means to enhance the efficiency of public service delivery.

Phase 4: Self-constraining the power of the local government through the “Four Lists and One Network” reform (2013-2016)

This reform aimed to clarify the statutory powers of local governments, regulate and constrain administrative power, and reconstruct the relationship between the government, market, and society. This is an immediate response to the reform of “Fang Guan Fu” launched by the central government to streamline the administrative service in 2015 (Ma 2023). This reform aimed to delegate power to local governments, strengthen regulation, and improve services. The “Four Lists and One Network” referred to the four lists of government power, government responsibility, corporate investment negative list, and fiscal special fund management list, while the one network referred to the Zhejiang Provincial Government Service Network. The reform required local governments to operate within the authorized powers defined by laws and regulations, curbing excessive interference in the operations of micro-market entities (J. Wang 2018). Only when permitted by laws and regulations could the government intervene in specific micro affairs of the market and society.

During the reform, all departments were required to sort out and merge administrative powers under laws and regulations, eliminating administrative powers lacking a legal basis. This resulted in a significant reduction of administrative power. For instance, the administrative power of provincial departments decreased from 12,300 items to 4,236 items (Yu 2018). Municipal and county governments also reduced or delegated administrative power, clarifying the main administrative power of departments at all levels. For example, the administrative power of Fuyang District of Hangzhou City reduced from 7,800+ items

in 2008 to 6,100+ items in 2014 and the common administrative power also reduced from 2,500+ items to 1,534 items (Yu 2018). The reform also introduced a negative list for enterprise project investments, empowering the private sector to engage in any investment project as long as it was not listed. This change reconstructed the relationship between the government, market, and society, reducing the need for government approval in business and enterprise activities and adjusting the scope of government intervention in market operations.

In addition, the Zhejiang Provincial Government Service Network was launched in June 2014. This online platform provided various government services, published the administrative power and procedures of governments at all levels, and ensured the proper exercise of power. Through the government service network, 101 districts and counties, and 42 provincial administrative departments in Zhejiang province announced their respective administrative powers (Yu 2018). This allowed for the simultaneous provision of online and offline public services and laid the solid foundation for the next phase of reform.

Phase 5: Transforming from a “government-centered” to a “people-centered” government through the “Visit Once at Most” reform (2016-present)

Previous reforms in Zhejiang province began in 1992, despite increased efficiency and objectively responding to the economic and social development at different times, had a government-centric focus and failed to translate into a strong sense of gain for the public (Yu 2018; Fan and Chen 2017; X. He and Zhang 2018). To address this issue, the then Vice-Secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial Party Committee and the governor of Zhejiang province, proposed the VOM reform at the Economic Work Conference of the Provincial Party Committee in December 2016, emphasizing a people-centered approach and urging the government to reform based on public experiences, satisfaction, and sense of gain (Yu and Huang 2019). This reform was piloted locally in 2017 before being implemented nationwide in

2018). It required the government to prioritize public requirements rather than focusing solely on what the government could provide, leading to internal reforms at all levels of local government (Zhong 2018). Significantly, the VOM reform utilized digital technologies as the primary tool for transforming the public sector and delivering services, as they proved to be effective and user-friendly (Huang and Yu 2019; Duan 2018). It also transformed the government into a holistic organization better to respond to social and economic development (Yu and Gao 2018). The VOM platform facilitated multi-department collaboration, consultation and complaints, to ensure transparency in governance (S. He and Yang 2018).

Under the VOM reform, the concept of “One Affair” was introduced, which redefined public services based on public definitions. Previously, the one affair for the citizen was understood as various tasks approved by multiple departments. Now, the one affair required government departments to integrate the administrative examination and approval authority. The reform aimed to achieve a one-time visit for completing all necessary procedures either through onsite or online services. Digital technologies and online platforms were utilized to deliver these services conveniently and efficiently. These services were also integrated into frequently used apps like Alipay and WeChat for accessibility purposes (Duan 2018). Besides, physical service centers were optimized with comprehensive service windows and increased staff to minimize the need for multiple visits. Practically, it meant that these services could be completed via the ‘one window acceptance and integrated approval’ service (Fan and Chen 2017). Effectively, online services aimed for zero visits while onsite visits aimed for one visit when all required documents were provided.

The VOM reform analyzed the priority of services and collected feedback from the public. It identified a hundred high-frequency services such as business registration, investment approval, real estate registration, and social affairs (S. He and Yang 2018). The reform rearranged public resources and updated the one affair list based on public needs (Huang and Yu 2019). Ob-

jectively, the service for one affair was digitally prioritized by the needs of the public. As a result-oriented reform, the citizens and businesses were empowered to voice their user experiences and evaluate the effectiveness of the government reform while the performance of VOM reform was assessed as part of the government performance evaluation (Yu and Gao 2018; Yu and Huang 2019). Feedback mechanisms such as hotlines, online message boards, mobile applications, and surveys were established to optimize services and hold the government accountable (Zhao, Xin, and Liangbo 2018; Yu and Gao 2018). Intelligent management systems utilizing big data and machine learning were employed to monitor real-time data on public behavior and satisfaction. This data helped improve the quality and responsiveness of public services (Huang and Yu 2019). The VOM reform resulted in reduced processing time for complaints and high levels of public satisfaction (Z. He 2018; Li 2018). Li (2018) found that 95.7% of more than 20,000 respondents expressed high satisfaction with the reform.

Overall, the VOM reform in Zhejiang province has achieved significant accomplishments in transforming the government from a government-centered to a people-centered approach. The reform prioritized public needs, utilized digital technologies, collected feedback, and improved the quality of public services, resulting in increased public satisfaction and a greater sense of gain.

Discussion and Conclusion

The transformation from a government-centric mentality to a people-centered government in Zhejiang province aligns with the central government's directions for administrative reforms and builds upon previous administrative reforms implemented since 1992. This transformation has been made possible through the continuation of administrative decentralization and the entrenchment of performance legitimacy in the Chinese po-

litical and governance system.

The recent VOM reform in Zhejiang province exemplifies the shift towards a people-centered government, starting with its local pilot before being implemented nationwide following the endorsement of the central government. The reform can be understood within the context of five distinct phases of administrative service reforms in Zhejiang. The first phase focused on reconstructing administrative power (1992-1998), aligning with the central policy to restructure governmental organizations during the 1980s-1990s (Q. Wang 2010). The second and third phases aimed to restrain bureaucratic behavior through the establishment of one-stop service centers and the reengineering of government functions and processes. In line with the national policy of e-government and digitization in the 2000s, the Zhejiang government utilized online platforms, with significant developments occurring in 2001 and 2009 when parallel and online examination and approval authorities were initiated across departments. During the fourth phase, the Zhejiang government further regulated its own power and integrated online and onsite examination and approval systems. The latest VOM reform most demonstrates a people-centered mentality, prioritizing the needs, satisfaction, and sense of gain of the public as the starting point and outcome of the reform. The localized initiation, piloting, and subsequent nationwide implementation of the reform illustrate a mixed approach combining bottom-up and top-down elements.

Several factors have contributed to the success of the transformation towards a people-centered government. Firstly, it was a top-level policy design led by high-ranking local officials, setting priorities for local governments in Zhejiang province and aligning with the overarching policies of the central government, particularly the Fang Guan Fu reform. Secondly, the gradual shift from a government-based mentality to a people-centered approach was facilitated by administrative decentralization over a period of three decades. This decentralization granted local governments a degree of autonomy to pilot and implement innova-

tive policies that directly addressed the needs and requirements of the public. Moreover, the success of the transformation was supported by the performance legitimacy deeply embedded in China's administrative and political system. Local governments were incentivized to reform in order to drive economic growth and maintain social stability. Additionally, it was also due to the performance evaluation system of the centralized personnel system that balances local policy autonomy and central policy directions. Local governments were forced to adapt to changes and prioritize public needs. Consequently, the experimental policies carried out by local governments were coherent and aligned with the national policy while still allowing room for regional innovation and localized practices. This dual focus on alignment with national policy objectives and flexibility in implementation contribute to the overall success of the people-centered governance reform.

However, the reform faced challenges. Some local governments failed fully to restructure their power or interpret the "people-centered" approach effectively. Some remained stuck in a "duty-oriented" logic, measuring success based on quantitative numbers rather than the quality of services. The implementation of the "one-window acceptance and integrated service" was inconsistent, with different departments still handling the approval process (L. Chen and Tong 2018). Furthermore, the sustainability of the reform is reliant on top leadership commitment, which may change periodically. Establishing mechanisms and systems that can accommodate leadership changes and ensure long-term sustainability is crucial (Yu 2018). Additionally, there is a risk that the local government may prioritize the needs of businesses over the general public, or change the reform priorities over time. A long-term mechanism is needed to maintain a people-centric approach to delivering public services. Despite these challenges, the Chinese government's move towards a people-centered approach and the implementation of reforms contribute not only to economic growth, but also to improving people's quality of life.

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