

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Youth Policy in The Processes of Modernization in China

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## Abstract

The article discusses the features of the youth policy of the People's Republic of China, as well as the work of the party in this direction. The problems in the implementation of China's youth policy are revealed. The main directions of youth policy and measures taken by the country's leadership to address this issue are also analyzed. The article analyzes the economic factors that have had and are having an impact on the evolution of the youth policy of the People's Republic of China. An assessment of the results of the CPC leadership's policy regarding the implementation of youth policy is presented. The role of youth organizations in modern Chinese society and its impact on public life is considered.

## KEYWORDS

Youth policy, demographic policy, the People's Political Consultative Conference of China, the Union of Communist Youth of China, the Youth of China in a new era.

## INTRODUCTION

In China, modernization processes manifested as a unique phenomenon, harmonizing the basic principles of the traditional socialist model with the global conditions of a market economy and technological progress. Since the late 1970s, Chinese society has undergone a profound transformation. This process not only radically changed the country's economic landscape but also significantly impacted the political system and social structure. These changes were initiated based on the political modernization and "open-door policy" promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), signaling a transition from the "Cultural Revolution" era to a strategic direction aimed at fundamental reforms.

The political aspect of China's modernization process is inextricably linked to the evolution of the Communist Party's role as the main institution of state power. The party serves as a crucial political mechanism ensuring stability in the

country and determining the direction of reforms. The concept of "socialist modernization," developed by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, emphasized the need to renew Chinese political thinking, abandon dogmatic interpretations of socialism, and integrate market mechanisms within the planned economy system. In China, the social aspects of modernization are characterized by significant changes in the structure of society and the field of education [1].

In China, modernization processes are interpreted not only as economic-industrial and technological transformation but also as a sustainable restructuring of the socio-political system and a strategic model of national development. While reforms implemented since the late 20th century served to integrate China into the global economic system, in the 21st century, this course has been reinforced by state policies aimed at enhancing the country's innovative capacity, social

management effectiveness, and human capital quality. In this process, demographic factors, urbanization, education system reforms, and issues of spiritual and ideological stability are manifested as integral parts of state modernization.

The youth segment is of particular importance as a social foundation for this transformation. In modern China, young people have emerged as the necessary talent pool for the innovative economy, the primary bearers of digital culture, and the most dynamic segment of social mobility. At the same time, youth represent a sensitive social stratum in any modernization project. Increased competition in the labor market, high educational demands, psychological pressures of urban lifestyles, and rapidly changing values make them the central focus of social policy [2; p. 124]. For this reason, the Chinese state approaches youth policy not only as a socio-educational task but also as a strategic direction ensuring political stability and long-term development.

Through youth policy, the state strengthens the social foundations of modernization using tools such as education, employment, social integration, ideological education, and control in the digital environment [2; p. 19]. The Chinese leadership considers the younger generation as the main reserve for the country's prosperity and pays great attention to implementing various domestic policy programs in this direction. However, in recent years, several problems have emerged in China's youth policy. Specifically, youth policy in China is an integral part of the country's overall development strategy, reflecting the government's efforts to shape the future generation. It encompasses various initiatives and measures aimed at meeting the needs of the young population.

State policy in this area is becoming one of the most important aspects of the Communist Party of China's internal policy. The main administrative and financial resources are directed towards addressing the socio-economic and lifestyle issues of young people [3]. To broadly implement the Chinese Communist Party's guidelines, the government has developed comprehensive measures and programs aimed at solving youth-related problems. The main legislative document enshrining the principles of youth support and providing measures to address urgent issues in the lives of Chinese youth is the Law "On Chinese Youth" [9].

Chinese youth are under immense pressure due to a highly competitive and expensive education system. Over 46.55 million students are enrolled in higher educational institutions,

including universities, colleges, and vocational schools. In China, the higher education enrollment rate for youth is approximately 60% [7]. The growing number of college and university graduates, along with the transition from traditional economic sectors to a service-oriented economy, is intensifying labor market challenges for young people. Despite efforts to create new jobs, youth unemployment remains a pressing issue in China.

In turn, economic disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as differences among various regions, are affecting the socio-economic opportunities of young people. Youth migrating to cities in search of better prospects face challenges with social adaptation and experience a sense of social stratification. Addressing these issues requires a rational approach and policies that prioritize the well-being, education, and economic opportunities of Chinese youth. This includes implementing social support aimed at tackling inequality and fostering a favorable environment for the positive development of the younger generation. Income inequality is hindering social mobility and access to quality education and healthcare services. Particularly in large cities, rising housing prices are becoming a serious obstacle for young people planning to marry and start families.

Rapid modernization and globalization are leading to dramatic cultural and moral shifts as traditional values clash with new ideas and lifestyles. Despite progress in promoting gender equality, Chinese society still grapples with gender inequality in education, employment, and leadership positions. Gender stereotypes continue to limit opportunities for young women.

Experts analyze that the strict demographic policies implemented by the Chinese government have resulted in a potential shortage of working-age population to support the aging population in the future. According to estimates by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, the country's population is expected to decrease by almost half by 2100 [9]. These factors are being analyzed, and a decline in consumer spending is predicted, which will have significant implications for both the Chinese economy and beyond.

In China, new job opportunities and favorable conditions for social growth are being created for the younger generation. People's organizations in China serve as a bridge between the party and government on one side and the population on the other. They are the backbone of state political power and play a crucial role in the democratic life of socialist China. The state holds a decisive position in implementing youth policies,

providing support for specific categories of youth as well as youth in general, and creating conditions for their rapid adaptation to new economic circumstances.

While previously the younger generation in China preferred to work in the commercial sector, now many aspire to work in the public sector and join the Party, as this firstly brings prestige, and secondly, party members are the most respected in society. Young people actively participate in elections, decision-making, governance, and oversight. They contribute proposals on key issues of economic and social development, exercise their democratic rights, and engage in consultations to reach agreements on youth-related matters. A substantial number of young people serve as deputies in People's Assemblies or as members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Today, a renewal of party personnel at various levels is being observed. Young cadres who have passed through the party school are being appointed to important positions in China's large system-forming enterprises. According to data, nearly 24 million Communist Party members were young people under the age of 35, which constitutes 25% of the total membership. Since the 18th Party Congress in 2012, over 80% of newly admitted CCP members each year are young people under 35. China's main youth organization - the Communist Youth League of China - was established as a political youth organization under the party. This organization includes people aged 14-28, with their number reaching 74 million by the end of 2021 [8].

Over 150,000 youth organizations operate under the leadership of the Communist Youth League of China. Through such organizations, young people play a positive role in providing numerous government services, ensuring production discipline, meeting various public needs, leading a socially conscious lifestyle, and promoting dialogue between the population and the government [9].

In its activities, the party emphasizes addressing issues such as raising political, social, and economic awareness. Work is being carried out with young people in the provinces in this direction, and there is an effective fight against unemployment by allocating jobs to youth who have completed vocational training.

In recent years, an increasing number of young people are participating in charity and community work, serving communities, protecting the environment, conducting cultural

programs, and providing care and assistance to the elderly with limited abilities. Playing an important role in influential public organizations, they have also created self-governing bodies.

In recent years, the demand for reforms in Chinese society has been growing. Chinese media are increasingly discussing the disappearing younger generation. At the same time, a decrease in births has been observed over the past two years. According to the Chinese Communist Party, the decline in birth rates and the ideological fragmentation of youth, as well as spiritual decline, are existential threats to the PRC. A decrease in birth rates and anti-government sentiments in society can exacerbate social conflicts.

The main decision on this topic was a document entitled "Chinese Youth in the New Era," adopted by the State Council of the PRC in April 2022 [9]. The document emphasizes that young people are the most active and vital force in Chinese society. It is noted that the hope of the country and the future of the nation are in the hands of its younger generation. Chinese youth have always played a leading role in the revival of the nation.

The main element of the document is the "Chinese Dream," put forward by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, which states, "The Chinese Dream is a dream about history, the present, and the future. Everyone values it, especially young people. The youth of China in the new era will continue on the path of fulfilling the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation with unlimited energy."

All youth organizations in China are united in the Chinese Youth Federation, which is an integrated organization of various youth groups. The Chinese Youth Federation attaches great importance to protecting the legal rights and interests of young people and specializes in education, law, employment opportunities, personal development, and juvenile delinquency prevention. The Chinese Youth Federation is implementing various programs and projects for the development of rural youth working in cities, such as the "Hot Letter" youth advisory service, the "Trustworthy" youth education support program, and the "Red Ribbon" for AIDS prevention [4; p. 103].

From the above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

China's youth policy is rationally formulated and effectively implemented. Special attention is paid to promoting technical and vocational education to increase access to higher

education and employment opportunities, while entrepreneurship and innovation are encouraged. Initiatives are aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs and new enterprises, especially in technological and innovative fields. The government strives to attract talented youth and retain them through opportunities and incentives to contribute to the country's development. The party encourages support for organizations and platforms that represent and protect the interests of young people.

The Chinese government emphasizes the importance of fostering a sense of national identity and patriotism among young people. Education and mass media are used to promote a strong attachment to the country and its values. Within the framework of youth policy, measures are being taken to instill a strong sense of traditional Chinese culture and moral values in young people. It seeks to find a balance between modernization and the preservation of cultural heritage.

The goal of China's youth policy is to ensure the social protection and security of young people. Measures include access to affordable medical services, housing, and social assistance programs for vulnerable youth groups.

Initiatives are being adopted to promote a healthy lifestyle and physical fitness among young people. Engaging in sports and recreational activities that contribute to physical well-being and a balanced lifestyle is encouraged.

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