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# A REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW MECHANISMS IN CHINA: BALANCING AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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## Abstract

Administrative law plays an essential role in modern governance, particularly in regulating the actions and decisions of public authorities. The balance between governmental authority and accountability is crucial for successful administration and preserving individual rights in China, as the state has substantial influence over many areas. The review examines China's administrative law system's procedures to preserve this equilibrium, providing insights into the nation's changing legal landscape. The principal-agent model is a framework used to understand the relationship between two parties: the principal (the state or the public) and the agent (the administrators or officials). It investigates how administrators maintain their responsibility and are under observation using both judicial and non-judicial processes, acting as agents of political principles. The review system highlights the role of local governments as subsidiary bodies of the federal government and how administrative law governs their operations by contrasting China's approach to standing in administrative litigation law, administrative procedure law, and state compensation law with that of other one-dominated states. The result revealed that judicial and non-judicial methods are used in China to resolve disputes and hold officials accountable. The review study emphasizes the difficulty of updating government actions through various channels. It concludes that although political theory contributes to understanding some aspects of this system, China's particular legal and political structures necessitate a more sophisticated comprehension of the relationship between authority and accountability.

**Keywords:** Administrative Law, Mechanism, China, Authority, Accountability

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## **Introduction**

Administrative law is a vital framework that regulates the activities of public administration. It assures that government organizations follow the law's message and essence while maintaining accountability and transparency (Agama et al., 2021). In democratic societies, building public trust and advancing efficient government depend on balancing power and accountability. The laws, rules, and regulations that regulate the operations of administrative agencies are collectively referred to as administrative law (Vallejo, 2021). The enforcement of laws approved by the legislature is within the authority of that organization. Conversely, administrative agencies wield substantial power in sectors such as labor, social welfare, environment, and health due to their role as the public's initial point of communication with the government (Musaev et al., 2020).

Administrative agencies play a crucial role in executing government policies, and their enormous powers in labor, health, social welfare, and environmental management require precise legal mechanisms to prevent abuse and citizen handling (Tang, 2021). The review examines the structure of administrative law in China, focusing on its mechanisms to balance authority and accountability, ensuring a fair and just legal environment while protecting citizen rights and promoting justice in China's complex society (Li & Jin, 2023).

## **Problem Statement**

China's administrative law has profoundly transformed economic reforms in the 20th century from political tools to accountability and transparency in governance. The balance between authority and accountability is challenging, with questions about the effectiveness of judicial evaluation and administrative complaints in promoting transparency, citizen rights, public trust, and central-local governance interaction.

## **Aim and Contribution**

This review is focused on exploring the mechanisms in Chinese administrative law, explicitly examining authority balance and accountability. Examining legal practices, the power of administrative authorities, and judicial and non-judicial mechanisms by linking the role these play in providing governance transparency to estimate how far the given processes help the effectiveness in citizen rights protection against improper use of powers. It further analyzes the issues created by central-local dynamics and then suggests ways to improve the accountability of administrative law practice.

## **Methodology**

This review investigated numerous existing research. It was reviewed to an appropriate depth to understand how the law of administration came about in China, its structures, and case laws, among other historical aspects. It has also been used for principal-agent analysis of government and administrative agencies concerning administrative law's accountability mechanisms and control role toward governmental actions. This model provides a lens to assess the delegation of authority and the congruence between the interests of the intermediary (administrative bodies) and the principal (government).

## **Historical Context and Evolution**

Administrative law in China, originating from ancient governance, has significantly transformed since 1949, with the People's Republic of China centralized power and administrative acts as political extensions rather than public accountability measures. In the late 1970s, economic reforms necessitated an administrative structure to regulate activities and protect citizens' rights, with Chinese law allowing reconsideration of decisions deemed unjustified (Wang et al., 2020). Administrative law in China now includes judicial review, allowing citizens to hold administrative entities accountable through court charges under administrative litigation law (Liebman et al., 2020). This enhances governance transparency besides checking administrative entities' powers (Ding et al., 2022).

### **Structure of Administrative Law in China**

This legal document explains how administrative organizations may make decisions and the rights explicated in such acts (Ding, 2022). By enabling the challenge of administrative acts, judicial mechanisms such as administrative litigation promote accountability through judicial review (Ying, 2023).

Administrative agencies in China are crucial for enforcing laws, rules, and policies at municipal, provincial, and federal levels. They ensure rules are made, inspections are conducted, and laws are enforced (Zhao et al., 2022). The organization oversees justice, economic growth, and public safety; it ensures administrative efficacy, service delivery, and policy implementation to regulations (Zhang & Liu, 2023).

### **Mechanisms of Authority**

In China, administrative frames utilize legal and institutional processes to enforce regulations and fines, form laws, and award licenses as a mechanism of authority.

### **Powers of Administrative Authorities**

China grants extensive powers to government agencies for implementing laws, rules, and policies, necessitating extensive knowledge of these capacities for examining authority use and accountability implications (Li et al., 2020). The following categories pertain to administrative authorities' fundamental powers.

**Regulatory Powers:** Administrative agencies' rulemaking authorities can establish comprehensive regulations, operationalize legislative mandates, and establish standards for environmental protection, public health, and safety to achieve national objectives (Yu & Li, 2020).

**Enforcement Powers:** Administrative authorities can investigate, monitor, and impose penalties for violations, including suspending or revoking licenses and permits, to ensure regulation compliance (Xiang & van Gevelt, 2020).

**Discretionary Powers:** Administrative authorities make decisions based on their judgment, balancing regulations, justice, and contextual considerations, but often struggle to make the best course of action (Zhang et al., 2022).

### **Corporate Governance Mechanisms**

China's corporate governance combines regulatory framework, board structure, and internal control design to improve accountability and transparency (de Villiers & Dimes, 2021). Key components include company law, shareholder rights protection, and compliance with financial reporting standards by the Chinese Securities Regulatory Commission (Kang, 2020).

### **Legal Practices in China's Central-Local Dynamics**

The China constitution explains the intricate relationship between national and local administrations, integrating executive and legislative branches into central and local state organs, reflecting China's broader governance philosophy (Wang, 2021; Jiang et al., 2024). The analysis highlights the effects of central-local relations by examining how these two organs operate jointly. The framework addresses challenges in policy enactment, legislation monitoring, and local government impact on national laws, emphasizing connections and joint interactions to determine legal practices and responses (Chen & Greitens, 2022).

### **Mechanisms of Accountability**

Chinese administrative law ensures safety, public confidence, and rights by requiring accountability for officials, government agencies, and administrative agencies, balancing their extensive powers (Zhao & Feng, 2021).

### **Judicial Review and Role in Accountability**

Judicial review is crucial for accountability and transparency in China's administrative law system. (Lin, 2020) It allows citizens to challenge unlawful actions through litigation, ensuring government decisions comply with legal standards (Cafaggi & Iamiceli, 2021). However, public indifference and judicial independence limit its effectiveness. Establishing judicial

review procedures can improve accountability by ensuring administrative agencies operate within the law (Islam & Xin, 2020).

**Administrative Litigation:** People or groups can bring legal action against the administration's actions that they believe are illegal (Schneider, 2021). Courts can overturn or amend the ruling, keeping administrative agencies responsible.

**Interpretation of Law:** Courts impact how laws and regulations are interpreted and applied and whether administrative entities act legally (Walker & MacGuidwin, 2023).

**Supervisory Role of Higher Courts:** Higher courts possess the authority to examine subordinate courts' rulings to ensure uniformity and equity in the administration of justice (Akhtar, 2022).

### **Administrative Complaints and Appeals Process**

Chinese citizens could use administrative complaints and appeals mechanisms to formally register complaints and challenge government activities that they consider discriminatory or illegal (Wei et al., 2024).

**Administrative Complaints:** Citizens can file complaints directly with the relevant administrative authority regarding specific actions or decisions (Huang & Lyu, 2024).

**Administrative Appeals:** A citizen could file a formal appeal when dissatisfied with the administrative authority's response to their complaint. Frequently, a higher-level administrative build receives this application for review (Wu et al., 2023).

Administrative procedure law (APL) provides standards for considering citizen complaints about administrative activities and gives people the right to file such complaints (Zhang et al., 2024).

Regulations on administrative review: The laws describe the procedure for appealing and (Wollenschlager, 2024) the time frame within which administrative agencies must respond. Table 1 shows the legitimacy of accountability processes.

**Table 1** Legality from accountability procedures (Howell et al., 2020)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Accountability processes</b>
Legitimacy	Claims related to the recognition and acceptance of authority.
Accountability Asset Origin	Foundations of trust and responsibility that support accountability mechanisms.
Initial procedures	Basic processes involved in ensuring accountability.
Secondary Accountability	Advanced mechanisms that enhance accountability beyond initial processes.
Responsible governance	Practices that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in administration.
Professionalism	Upholding standards of competence and conduct in organizational practices.
Attributes (rights, influence)	Core principles that guide the organization's mission and interactions with stakeholders.
Vision reports, Composition	Foundational documents that outline the organization's purpose and governance framework.
Assessment report	Assessments that evaluate financial health and adherence to regulations.
Reports to Donors and Government	Documentation provided to stakeholders detailing organizational performance and funding utilization.
Positive Media Coverage	Favorable reporting by the media enhances the organization's reputation.
Evidence of Expanding Funding	Indicators showing an increase in financial support and resources.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Accountability processes</b>
Evolving accountability and administrative procedure	Initiatives aimed at fostering openness and accountability in operations.
Creating Websites and Organizing Public Events	Establishing an online presence and hosting community events to engage stakeholders.
Joining Professional Bodies	Engaging with professional organizations for networking and access to training.
Receiving Government Assignments	Hosting visits from government officials to showcase operations and achievements.
Founding Frequencies for User Contribution	Creating formal pathways for users to engage in feedback and decision-making processes.

### **Balancing Authority and Accountability**

Effective governance in Chinese administrative law requires a balance between authority and responsibility. Authority ensures efficient decision-making and enforcement, while accountability measures like public monitoring, legal action, and administrative review prevent misuse of authority (Kim & Park, 2024). This equilibrium promotes openness and responsiveness in government operations, building public confidence by preserving the state's authority and administrative effectiveness (Hyun, 2024).

Examining Balance in Administration's Roots: The balance at the foundation of administration is crucial for effective government, influenced by historical supervisory systems, legal structures, checks, and balances. (Wang, 2020). Contemporary administrations protect authority and accountability through judicial reviews, transparency regulations, and public engagement procedures (Sang et al., 2022).

### **Judicial and Non-Judicial Mechanisms of Accountability**

Judicial and non-judicial mechanisms of accountability refer to formal and informal processes through which individuals, organizations, and governments are held accountable for their actions.

#### **Judicial Mechanisms of Accountability**

Judicial mechanisms include using formal legal procedures and institutions, usually courts and tribunals, to hold individuals (Jiménez, 2021) and organizations accountable for violations of law and rights.

Court system: National or international courts adjudicate criminal, civil, or constitutional cases.

Legal procedures: The systems' investigation and prosecutorial tools for infractions are based on accepted laws and legal standards.

Judicial oversight: Courts possess the authority to examine government or business conduct to ensure it abides by the law and human rights.

Examples include criminal trials, civil lawsuits, constitutional courts reviewing legislation, and international courts like the International Criminal Court (ICC).

#### **Non-Judicial Mechanisms of Accountability**

A non-judicial mechanism is processed outside the formal court system; it could be implemented by governments, organizations, or civil society to hold actors accountable (Saloranta, 2021).

Administrative processes: Investigations or reviews conducted by regulatory agencies or commissions.

Ombudsman: An independent authority that investigates complaints of injustice or rights violations.

Human rights commissions: Independent bodies that oversee and address human rights violations, often through dialogue or recommendations rather than legal penalties.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR): Mechanisms like mediation and arbitration offer conflict resolutions outside the court system.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR): Voluntary commitments by companies to ethical standards and accountability practices.

Non-judicial mechanisms focus on reforms, non-judicial compensation, accountability, and justice in complex areas like human rights, corporate governance, and government transparency rather than formal legal enforcement and sanctions.

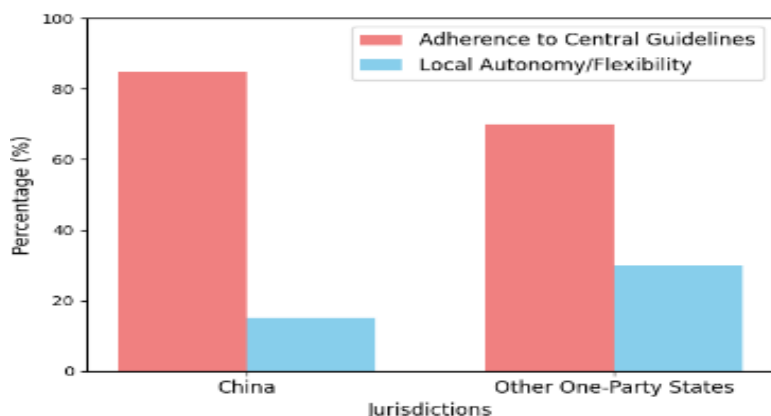
## Research Outcome

This section explains the salient features of the administrative law framework in China, including standing in administrative litigation, administrative procedure law, and state compensation law. It looks at the inadequacies of standing for the individual and organizations in terms of litigation, the centralized character of administrative procedures, and obscurity in state compensation laws. It highlights the role of judicial and non-judicial methods in resolving disputes and guaranteeing accountability under the Chinese legal system.

### Administrative Law Framework

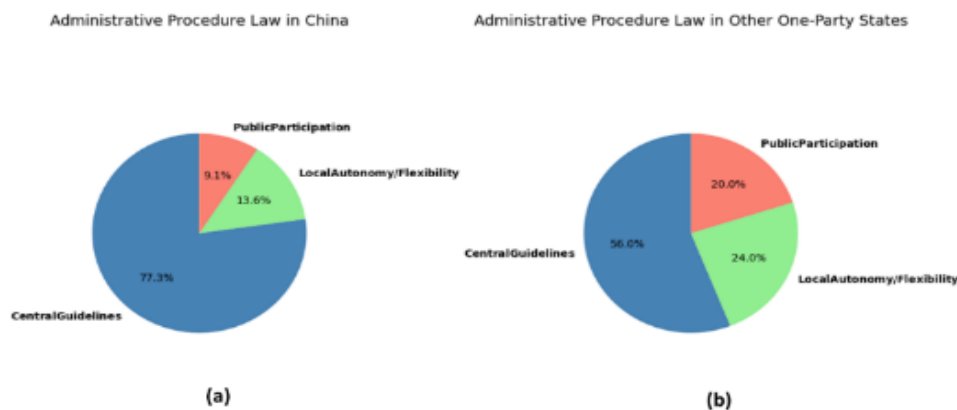
China enforces laws that ensure government accountability, the rule of law, the balance of power, and citizen rights, including administrative procedures, litigation, and state compensation.

Standing in Administrative Litigation Law: Limited standing permits lawsuits against local governments without direct legal interest or injury, with some countries allowing broader public participation interpretations. Figure 1 shows the standing in administrative litigation law.



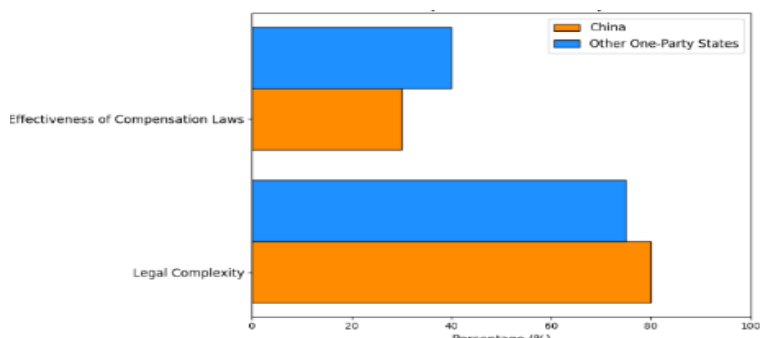
**Figure 1** Standing in Administrative Litigation Law

Administrative Procedure Law: Central authority-prescribed procedures limit local autonomy, making it challenging for local governments to adapt to evolving conditions. However, procedural flexibilities allow for more responsive implementation. Figure 2 shows the administrative procedure law.



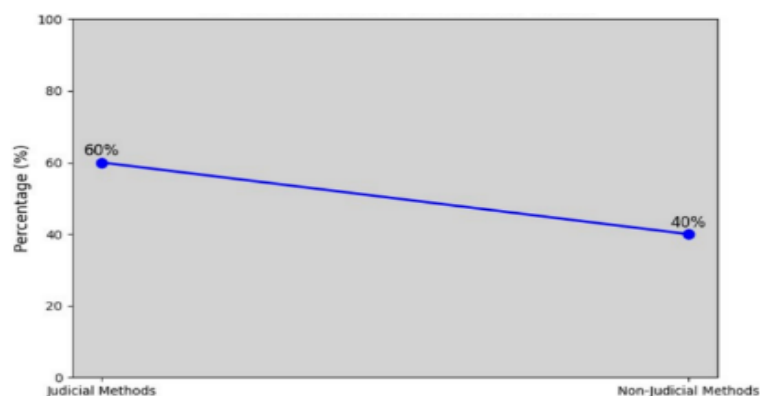
**Figure 2** Administrative procedure laws

State Compensation Law: The legal framework for state compensation and compensation laws can be complex, affecting individuals seeking redress against local government actions. Their effectiveness can vary based on political will and public accountability measures. Figure 3 illustrates the state compensation law.



**Figure 3** State Compensation Law

In China, judicial and non-judicial dispute resolution methods play crucial roles in resolving disputes and ensuring accountability among officials. Figure 4 reveals a preference for judicial and non-judicial dispute resolution methods within the Chinese legal framework, highlighting the complexity of dispute resolution in the country and its implications for social order and governance.



**Figure 4** Dispute resolution methods in China

## Discussion

Administrative law in China balances state authority with citizen rights, evolving since 1949 and prioritizing transparency and public accountability after 1970s economic reforms. The

critical mechanisms through which judicial means achieve their functions lie in administrative litigation and judicial review, which check the spending of administrative agencies and hold them responsible for the actions taken. Since the judicial forms of the mechanism are official, others include administrative complaints and appeals, informal mechanisms through which citizens seek resolution of complaints made against them. There are still barriers to overcome, including restrictions on public participation in administrative litigation and an overly regulatory framework at times that can be limited to local government's responsiveness. China's continued modernization requires strengthening accountability mechanisms in the administrative system to improve governance and consolidate public trust in government action.

## Conclusion

The review discussed how administrative law and its issues emerged in China regarding the balance between state power and individual rights. China's administrative law system regulates decision-making and public officials' actions. The system evaluates the effectiveness of administrative law by understanding the connection between administrators as political agents and accountability through judicial and administrative mechanisms. China has used a combination of administrative and judicial procedures to resolve conflicts and address accountability for public officials. However, transparency and public participation challenges remain despite significant progress in government regulation. Besides, it was demonstrated that though the political theory serves as a framework for understanding these processes, a more sophisticated exploration of the relationship between state authority and accountability is necessary to uncover a deep understanding of China's unique legal and political structures. Maintaining authority in a rapidly changing legal system alongside public rights would be difficult, and literature reflects this reality. China's administrative law would likely continue to advance transparency, enhance citizen participation in governance, improve accountability measures for officials, and incorporate technological innovations into its mechanisms.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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