**The national People’s congress**

The National People’s Congress (NPC) is China’s unicameral legislative body and, according to the constitution, the ultimate power of the Chinese government. Its approximately 3,000 deputies meet annually for about 15 days to officially set government policy and select China’s leadership. In part because of the short duration of its sessions and despite the stature accorded to the NPC in China’s constitution, analysts have generally regarded the NPC as having very little political power. The NPC is not China’s sole legislative body, but is it is the uppermost layer of a nation-wide system of “people’s congresses” at various levels of government in the PRC. These congresses are loosely linked together in process and function. The NPC’s deputies are not popularly elected, but instead are selected for five-year terms by the next lower tier of “people’s congresses”— deputies at the provincial and municipal level, as well as by members of the armed forces. The candidate pool for these elections is a list of candidates approved by the Party, and the entire process being overseen by CCP “election committees.” Deputies in the people’s congresses at the provincial and municipal levels, in turn, are selected by people’s congress deputies at the county and township level. Deputies for the lowest level of people’s congresses are directly elected. Candidates for the lower levels of people’s congresses are also subject to approval by party officials. The full NPC officially selects the PRC’s President, Premier, and cabinet-level officials, allowing the PRC government to assert that these officials have been vetted through “elections” by representatives of the Chinese people. For much of its existence, the NPC has simply “rubberstamped” leadership decisions made earlier and in secret by senior Party officials after a lengthy process of negotiation and maneuvering. Although this is largely still true in many respects—an outright NPC rejection of a candidate at this level, for instance, would be unthinkable—NPC delegates and the various people’s congresses in recent years have become more assertive and independent. This trend is most noticeable at local and provincial levels, where officially sanctioned candidates indeed, occasionally, have been rejected.

**Functions and Powers**

The NPC exercises the following functions and powers:

(1) to amend the Constitution;

The amendment of the Constitution shall be proposed by the Standing Committee of the NPC or more than one-fifth of the deputies to the NPC and can only be adopted by a majority of no less than two-thirds of the deputies to the NPC.

(2) to supervise the enforcement of the Constitution;

(3) to enact and amend basic laws governing criminal offences, civil affairs, the state organs and other matters;

(4) to elect the President and the Vice President of the People's Republic of China;

(5) to decide on the choice of the Premier of the State Council upon nomination by the President, and on the choice of the Vice Premiers, State Councilors, Ministers in charge of ministries or commissions, the Auditor-General and the Secretary-general of the State Council upon nomination by the Premier;

(6) to elect the Chairman of the Central Military commission and, upon nomination by the Chairman, to decide on the choice of all other members of the Central Military Commission;

(7) to elect the President of the Supreme People's Court;

(8) to elect the Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate;

(9) to examine and approve the plan for national economic and social development and the report on its implementation;

(10) to examine and approve the state budget and the report on its implementation;

(11) to alter or annul inappropriate decisions of the Standing Committee of the NPC;

(12) to approve the establishment of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the Central Government;

(13) to decide on the establishment of special administrative regions and the systems to be instituted there;

(14) to decide on questions of war and peace;

(15) to exercise such other functions and powers as the highest organ of state power should exercise.

(16) The NPC has the right to remove the following functionaries:

1) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the People's Republic of China;

2) The Premier of the State Council, the Vice Premiers, State Councilors, Ministers in charge of the ministries or commissions, the Auditor-General and the Secretary-general of the State Council;

3) The Chairman, Vice Chairman and other members of the Central Military Commission;

4) The President of the Supreme People's Court;

5) The Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.