The Development and Limitations of China’s Tobacco Control Policy:  
A Reluctant Tobacco Control Movement

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Abstract  
China is not only a country with a large tobacco industry, but also the country with the largest population of smokers. The popularity of smoking in China and its social consequences have had a damaging impact on China’s public health and even on its social development. Based on a review of literature, this article examines the development of tobacco control policy in China and its current status; argues that tobacco control movement in China has been a reluctant movement; identifies the reasons why control of smoking has been weak in China; and proposes some policy options for an effective tobacco control movement in China.

Keywords: tobacco control movement, tobacco control policy, policy actor, policy subsystem, China

China is the world’s largest producer as well as consumer of tobacco, accounting for 37.1% of the tobacco grown, and 40.5% of cigarettes manufactured, worldwide. (1) The country’s 300 million smokers make up one-third of the world’s total population of smokers. One out of every three cigarettes consumed worldwide is smoked in China. (2) It is estimated that more than 540 million people in China are threatened by passive smoking. (3) About 3000 people die every day in China because of smoking. (2) Therefore, tobacco control is not only important to public health in China, but also crucial for tobacco control movement the world over. However, the tobacco control policy in China has never been scientifically studied so far.

The objective of this article is to examine the development of tobacco control policy in China and its current status. It is argued that tobacco control movement in China has been a reluctant movement. From the perspective of public health policy, this article identifies the reasons why control of smoking has been weak in China and proposes some policy options to strengthen the movement. The basic conclusion is

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that lack of consensus among policy-makers on smoking and tobacco control, tardy legislation, and ineffective policy instruments have led to the failure of tobacco control movement in China, and if the movement is to be energized, the issue of smoking needs to be redefined and the country's tobacco control policy reconstructed.

**Development of Tobacco Control Movement in China: From Expert Control to Government Control**

Between 1949 and the 1960s, smoking by the youth was addressed only once, in the Regulations for Primary and Middle School Students by the Ministry of Education, and harmful effects of tobacco were included in a research project on diseases of the respiratory system by the Ministry of Health. However, tobacco control was never part of the government’s agenda until, on 28 February 1979, the Ministry of Health, together with the ministries of Finance, Agriculture, and Light Industry, announced the publication of *Harm of Smoking and Tobacco Control* (4), the first official document on tobacco control in China, which heralded the entry of tobacco control on the government’s agenda.

However, for a long time after that, the government brought forward no concrete measures to control tobacco. Tobacco control remained a concern only of experts. Yang Gonghuan, deputy director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention and vice chairman of the Chinese Association on Tobacco Control, divides the development of tobacco control movement in China into two stages, namely expert control and government control, the year 1999 marking the boundary between the two, the year in which China joined the negotiations of FCTC. (5) The separate stages do not necessarily imply that the experts or the government were the only actors at that stage. Instead, at each stage, the experts and the government, each to a different extent, directly or indirectly, influenced the tobacco control movement. The only difference lies in which actor plays the dominant role in the movement.

**Expert control: from 1949 to 1999**

From 1949 to 1999, the Chinese government was engaged in designing the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). At this stage, tobacco control movement was dominated mainly by experts. The WHO was the primary player in advocating and promoting tobacco control policy and movement. The influence of experts can be found at each stage of the tobacco control movement: they not only participated in formulating the policy agenda but also facilitated policy implementation and assessment, demanded action on tobacco control from the government, promoted the issue of control on the government’s agenda, raised policy proposal, mobilized social pressure to implement the tobacco control policy by drawing on their resources, contributed professional knowledge and advice, enlisted support from scholars and assessed the movement as a research project.

Breakthroughs in research on smoking, progress of tobacco control movement worldwide, and the problem of China’s worsening public health because of smoking
spurred the interest of Chinese medical experts in tobacco control. In 1978, such renowned medical experts as Weng Xinzhi and Ye Gongshao wrote to Qian Xinzhong, the Minister of Health, urging for measures to control tobacco. In 1983, the two experts, along with 13 others, drew up a document, namely the ‘Proposal of Enhancement of Smoking Control’, which was welcomed by Chinese society at large and attracted the attention of the Ministry of Health.

After publication, in 1979, of the document mentioned earlier, the government, led by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, began to play increasingly important role in the matter. Smoking by primary and middle-school students was banned as part of the Regulations for Primary and Middle School Students issued by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Health, in association with other related ministries and commissions, announced a ban on smoking in public places. The State Council, through Regulations on Control of Advertisements, forbade cigarette advertisements. At this stage, experts not only assisted the government in implementing controls on smoking (for example, the Capital University of Medical Sciences successfully lowered the proportion of smokers in its students from 30% in 1988 to 5% in 1998 by emphasizing the issue in orientation programs for fresh entrants and carrying out Group Intervention on Smoking Cessation, (6) but also formulated proposals to control tobacco by various means including the media. (For example, Zang Yingnian, a well-known expert on tobacco control, advocated appropriate legislation and higher taxes.) (7).

In 1996, supported by the Ministry of Health, some health experts succeeded in getting the World Bank to extend loans, which helped in surveying the risk factors associated with smoking. This survey included an investigation of the implementation of tobacco control measures in China. The investigation systematically and objectively reviewed the effect of control measures adopted by the government during the 1980s and 1990s in China.

**Government control since 2000**

In the 1990s, tobacco control earned a place in the global policy agenda. The WHO’s advocacy facilitated the transition of tobacco control movement in China from experts to the government. In 1995, the 48th World Health Assembly (WHA) mooted the idea of FCTC and later initiated the process of formulation and negotiation. The negotiations and the formulation of FCTC reawakened the tobacco control movement in China, an initiative that has brought both opportunities and challenges to China. As one of the founding nations of the WHO, China was actively engaged in the negotiations related to and the design of FCTC, signaling the change of hands: the initiative had moved from experts to the government.

In 1999, a Chinese delegation participated in the first meeting of the working group of FCTC. The delegation comprised officials from twelve government bodies, an indication of how complicated tobacco control was in China. This meeting resulted
in a concrete plan and a schedule, as well as a draft, which was submitted to the executive board of the WHO (8). In 2003, the 56th WHA unanimously approved the FCTC, and Wang Guangya, permanent representative of China to the UN, subscribed to the FCTC on behalf of the Chinese government. China became the 77th nation the WHO has enlisted as signatory to the convention. In 2005, the convention was ratified by the 17th assembly of the 10th Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. The FCTC finally came into effect in China in 2006.

The FCTC listed many tobacco control measures, requested the signatories to take concrete action to control the use of tobacco, and served as a guiding document to all signatories. China, as one of the signatories, was certainly expected to fulfill requests by the FCTC. In other words, the FCTC became a force behind the tobacco control movement in China. In order to comply with the FCTC’s requests, the Chinese government implemented a series of measures.

To accelerate the movement, the Chinese government set up two government bodies focusing on tobacco control: the National Tobacco Control Office was set up in 2002 under the Ministry of Health and, to facilitate implementation of the FCTC, an inter-ministerial body, namely the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Mechanism for Performance of Convention, was set up in 2007. (9)

Concrete measures to control tobacco adopted by the government since 1999 include legislation to ban smoking by the youth and selling cigarettes to them, participation in the World No-Tobacco Day, a series of publicity campaigns and educational activities to emphasize that smoking is hazardous to health, and so on. However, as far as controlling smoking in public places, banning cigarette advertising, and so on, control measures initiated by the government are relatively weak—it has a long way to go before the requirements spelt out by the FCTC become a reality. So far, China has no special law or act that bans smoking in public places; most of the regulations pertinent to tobacco are simply a part of other relevant laws or statutes.

The government cannot yet compel manufacturers to insert a statutory pictorial health warning covering one-third displaying area of cigarette pack, more than half the cities lack appropriate legislation to control the use of tobacco; regulation regarding ban on smoking in public places is ambiguous, and the mass media are yet to find their role in tobacco control. As to the means of control, the government tends to choose legislation, mobilization of public opinion, publicity, and education to emphasize the fact that smoking is hazardous to health.


From the perspective of public policy, smoking and its harmful effects are important issues, while tobacco control policies are also of great importance. In China, tobacco control policy was supposed to have been part of public policy from the late 1970s. Since then, tobacco control has been increasingly significant in the policy
agenda of the government. Some key actors have been engaged in formulating and implementing policy. Gradually, a framework of tobacco control policy has emerged.

**Key actors in policy-making**

Policy study emphasizes the key functions of different actors who greatly influence the policy process and outcomes. Policy formulation involves many actors, who interact with one another and also seek to further their own interests in different ways—public policy is supposed to be the net result of such interactions. However, these actors are seldom completely autonomous or independent of each other, because they must interact within the confines of established social relationships and policy ideas, which determine their behaviors. Therefore, the key to understand the policy process lies in understanding the activities and interactions of major actors in policy-making. Major actors in tobacco control in China include the Ministry of Health, the National Development and Reform Commission, the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (China tobacco Corporation), local governments, the Chinese Association on Tobacco Control, and experts with the WHO, which supports tobacco control.

**The Ministry of Health**

The Ministry of Health is part of the State Council, China’s cabinet, and is responsible for national health affairs. The ministry can research and formulate laws, acts, guidelines, and policies related to health affairs; carry out prevention-based guidelines; mount national-level educational campaigns about health; develop plans related to prevention and cure of serious diseases; and so on. The Bureau of Disease Control and Prevention (Office of the National Patriotic Health Campaign Committee), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Health, is responsible for researching and formulating drafts laws, statutes, and policy proposals concerning prevention and control of diseases and mounting health campaigns; formulating national plans and measures for prevention and control of serious diseases; intervening as appropriate in matters that concern public health; developing and implementing plans and programs for the prevention and control of serious diseases; coordinating the programs that serve these objectives; and so on.

The Ministry of Health, with responsibility to improve national health, always claims to actively pursue tobacco control in China. The National Tobacco Control Office (NTCO), established in 2002, is the agency inside the Ministry of Health responsible for tobacco control. NTCO affiliates itself with the National Center for Chronic and Non-communicable Disease Control and Prevention (NCNCD) under the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDCP). NTCO, as the national professional agency to control harmful effects of tobacco, led by the Ministry, is the national technically operational direction center. After 2005, when the Standing Committee of the 10th National People’s Congress adopted the FCTC, the Ministry of Health set up the Office of Leading Group for FCTC Performance in October 2006. On 29 May 2007, this office released the first official report about tobacco control in
China, titled *Report on Tobacco Control of China, 2007.*

**National Development and Reform Commission**

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) is a macroeconomic management agency under the State Council, which studies and formulates policies for economic and social development, maintains a balance of economic aggregates, and guides the overall economic reforms. Specifically, NDRC is in charge of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration. In addition, the Inter-Ministerial Leading Group of FCTC Performance is set up as part of the Bureau of Economic Operations under NDRC. The team leader is the Vice Chairman of NDRC; the deputy team leaders are the deputy minister for health and the deputy minister for foreign affairs; and members include appropriate representatives of the Ministry of Finance, General Administration of China Customs, State Administration for Industry and Commerce, General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, as well as the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration. The roles of this leading group include energizing the fulfillment of the FCTC and examining the strategies, performance, plans, and policies related to tobacco control.

NDRC is not only a macroeconomic management agency, but also an agency that formulates policies for social development. The commission’s dual role demands that NDRC should balance the different voices and interests surrounding tobacco control policy. As a result, NDRC, on the one hand, claims to promote tobacco control (for example, in 2006, it claimed to distribute a special fund to control tobacco in 5 years), on the other hand, it cannot stand as firm as the Ministry of Health on tobacco control movement. The reasons behind come from 10% government revenue levied from tobacco industry and the livelihood of 60 million of people directly or indirectly relying on tobacco industry. (10)

**State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (China National Tobacco Corporation)**

China’s tobacco industry adopts a system of unified leadership, vertical management, and monopoly operation. The State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (STMA), which is identical with China National Tobacco Corporation (CNTC), is responsible for centralized management of ‘staff, finance, properties, products, supply, distribution, and domestic and foreign trade’ of the state’s tobacco industry. As a sort of regulative policy, tobacco control policy directly regulates the production and management activities of the tobacco industry, and as a result, the policy becomes a serious threat to STMA and may invite appropriate countermeasures. In fact, the STMA’s attitude to tobacco control issue is ambiguous: on the one hand, it insists that lax control would be harmful to people’s health; on the other hand, it claims that the number of smokers in China is so large that cultivation and sale of tobacco are a source of livelihood and development of millions of people, and tobacco control may affect the stability of society. (11) In practice, as tobacco industry’s supervisory body in China, STMA should assume many more responsibilities including, for example, that of ensuring that cigarette packaging displays the statutory warning. However,
STMA as guardian of the tobacco industry is also powerful enough to decide whether or not it should implement such measures—a power that is a potential obstacle to implementing them.

**Local governments**

The development of tobacco industry will bring in not only substantial revenues to the local government but many employment opportunities. In China’s western provinces, such as Yunnan and Guizhou, tobacco industry is the mainstay of the local economy and contributes a great deal to local revenues. In Yunnan province for example, in just one year (2004), the total sales of cigarettes amounted to 10,249 billion yuan, which brought 7,086 billion yuan in government revenue. Gross profits in cigarettes are more than 20%, and those in leaf tobacco reach nearly 52%. (12) In 2004, the area growing tobacco in Yunnan and its total production were only slightly smaller than that under food crops, vegetables, and fruit. Considering the significance of tobacco industry to the local economy, the attitude of local governments to tobacco control must be multifaceted.

**Chinese Association on Tobacco Control**

The Chinese Association on Tobacco Control (CATC, formerly the Chinese Association on Smoking and Health) was established in February 1990. The association consists of people from different professions and services who participate in a voluntary capacity in tobacco control activities. As a not-for-profit social organization guided, supervised, and run by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the CATC attracts members across the country not only from the academia but also from such diverse fields as education, culture, health, and even the film industry in the form of a few superstars. Wu Jieping, former Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, was the association’s first president. Cao Ronggui, former Deputy Minister for Health, served two consecutive terms as the next president.

Although CATC attracts members from different walks of life, most members have strong government background. It means that CATC, as a government-operated non-governmental organization (GONGO) can mobilize substantial administrative resources. It may also become an ally of the Ministry of Health and the WHO, working with society at large to fight the tobacco lobby. At the same time, the association enjoys considerable technical credibility because many of its members are renowned medical experts in China, whose professional knowledge gives it a significant advantage.

**Experts**

In the development of tobacco control movement in China, experts have played a significant role. They made use of their professional background; made tobacco control part of the government’s agenda and the public aware of the dangers of tobacco; mobilized international resources; and carried out original research.
Generally speaking, medical experts in China are still the front-line troops of tobacco control.

The policy framework of tobacco control in China

Since 28 February 1979, when the Ministry of Health, together with the ministries of Finance, Agriculture, and Light Industry, made a public announcement on tobacco control and the hazards of smoking, the departments of education, health, transportation, culture, sport, and industry and commerce have initiated a series of measures related to tobacco control. The State Council also introduced a few items of administrative legislation forbidding smoking in public places. The general framework of China’s tobacco control policy is described below.

Comprehensive legislations for tobacco control

The announcement mentioned above was the first official document on tobacco control in China. The document made many suggestions including advertisements to warn the public about harmful effects of tobacco, improvement in the production of cigarettes, ban on smoking in public places and on smoking by students, and so on. However, the document did not spell out any concrete measures. Following the publication of this document, different ministries and commissions released their own documents on specific measures for tobacco control within their respective domains.

On 29 June 1991, the Standing Committee of the 7th National People’s Congress ratified the Law of The People’s Republic of China on Tobacco Monopoly. According to this law, the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration under the State Council shall be responsible for the nationwide tobacco monopoly; the state and society shall intensify the efforts to publicize, and to educate the public on, the fact that smoking is hazardous to health; forbid or restrict smoking in public transport vehicles and in public places; dissuade teenagers and youngsters from smoking; and forbid primary-school pupils and middle-school students from smoking. The state sets the tar level for cigarettes and cigars. The packaging of cigarettes and cigars shall display the grade of tar content and a warning that smoking is hazardous to health and advertising for tobacco products shall be banned on radio and television networks and in newspapers and periodicals. However, currently no single concrete and comprehensive law on tobacco control exists in China. Given that the authority to supervise the tobacco industry is vested in the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (China National Tobacco Corporation), which, given its interests, its conflicting interest is unfavorable to the formulation and implementation of tobacco control measures.

Legislations on control on smoking by teenagers and youngsters

Chinese legislation has always emphasized controls on smoking by teenagers and youngsters. Following the above-mentioned announcement made in February 1979, the Ministry of Education immediately introduced some regulations related to smoking by primary and middle-school students into already existing rules and
regulations, such as the Regulations for Middle School Students and The Norms for Daily Behavior of the Middle and Primary Schools Students.

Articles 37 and 67 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Minors, adopted in 1991 and amended in 2006, forbid the sale of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks to minors and smoking on stage at any gathering of minors, and Article 15 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, adopted in 1999, states that ‘parents and other guardians of juveniles and schools shall advice juveniles to refrain from smoking and getting drunk. No business place may sell cigarettes or alcoholic drinks to juveniles.’

Legislation on advertisements related to tobacco control

According to Article 19 of the Law of The People’s Republic of China on Tobacco Monopoly, ‘advertising for tobacco products shall be banned on radio and television stations, or in newspapers or periodicals.’ Article 18 of the Advertisement Law of The People’s Republic of China, adopted at the Tenth Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People’s Congress on 27 October 1994, goes one step further by stating that ‘it is prohibited to publish advertisements for tobacco through broadcasting, motion pictures, TV programs, newspapers or periodicals. It is prohibited to put up advertisements for tobacco in any kind of waiting rooms, cinemas, theatres, conference halls, stadiums and gymnasiums or other similar public places. Advertisements for tobacco must display the statutory health warning.

Currently, legislation on the control of advertisements for tobacco in China faces at least two challenges. First, although tobacco advertisement in media and public place is clearly prohibited, the tobacco industry is still using the loophole to advertise their product through promoting their brand name. Secondly, although all relevant regulations make it mandatory for advertisements for tobacco to carry the statutory warning, namely ‘Smoking is harmful to your health’, it is difficult to see how such regulations can work effectively in practice since the standard for such warnings has not been specified and since the authority to supervise tobacco packaging is vested in STMA, and also the China National Tobacco Corporation.

Legislation to ban smoking in public places

After the February 1979 announcement referred to several times earlier, many government agencies such as the Central Patriotic Public health Campaign Committee, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Railways, and Civil Aviation Administration of China, made their own separate announcements prohibiting smoking in public vehicles and restricting smoking in public places. The Ministry of Health released a document titled General Plan for National Health Education and Promotion Work: 2005–2010 on 4 February 2005 and claimed that the goal of controlling the harmful effects of tobacco harm and addiction to tobacco will be achieved, maintaining that ‘by 2010, 90% of primary and middle schools and 90% of hospitals will become
smoke-free areas’ and ‘more than 30% of cities will become cities without tobacco advertising’.

However, there is no national legislation to ban smoking in public places: the country continues to rely on local legislation. By 2007, 88 cities in China had released their own legislation to prohibit smoking in public places. However, given that the total number of cities in China is 661, the coverage of such legislation is limited. Also, ‘public places’ as defined in the legislation are limited to cinemas, bars where singing and dancing are permitted, libraries, and meeting rooms; articles of such legislation are relatively unclear and difficult to enforce in practice; and the definition of ‘executor’ is also confusingly unclear.

Reluctant Tobacco Control Movement: A Policy Subsystem Perspective

As a result of its efforts over the last 30 years, the Chinese tobacco control movement has succeeded in lowering the proportion of smokers, publicizing the damage to health caused by smoking, and banning tobacco advertisements(13) (Yang, Ma, Liu, and Zhou, 2005). However, the tardy formulation of tobacco control legislation, lack of consensus among policy-makers, and ineffective enforcement indicated the limited effect of the overall tobacco control movement. Based on the concept of a policy subsystem, this article tries to analyze why tobacco control in China has been so weak.

A policy subsystem is a space in which policy-makers and other stakeholders discussing policy issues, persuading others, and bargaining their respective interests (14). A policy subsystem mainly includes two kinds of actors: (1) state actors, which include all kinds of government agencies and government employees who work in these agencies, political leaders, and elected officials and (2) social actors, which include interest groups, mass media, labor unions, and industrial and commercial organizations. Since different actors are motivated by different incentives, policy subsystems are also of different types, and so are the policy alternatives the subsystems adopt. The structure of and activities in a subsystem can also significantly affect agenda-setting and policy formulation, which makes the concept quite helpful in understanding different policy areas. As mentioned above, policy area of tobacco control in China comprises a series of state actors, such as the Ministry of Health, National Development and Reform Commission, State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, and local governments, as well as social actors, such as the Chinese Association on Tobacco Control. At the international level too, there are many actors such as the WHO. In the policy subsystem of tobacco control in China, these actors interact, and the interaction is governed by their respective interests, value orientations, and roles—all of which influence the development of tobacco control in China (Figure 1).

International policy actors, typically the WHO, are the primary external impulses for the development of tobacco control in China. The knowledge, experience,
financial resources, and authority of international policy actors are important attributes that influence the nation-state’s policy process. The clear and tough posture of the WHO exerts enormous external pressure on China. By virtue of its professional expertise, the WHO offers many suggestions and consultations to the Chinese government, which to some extent affects the long-term objective of tobacco control in China. In addition, the WHO influences tobacco control not only in China but also in other countries of the world in many ways, such as proposing a series of activities to observe the World No-Tobacco Day, organizing and coordinating negotiations among states on combating illegal trade of tobacco, and highlighting success stories of tobacco control from other countries. (15)

Central ministries and commissions – including the Ministry of Health and the National Development and Reform Commission – and local governments, the objectives and interests of which may directly affect the development and results of tobacco control, are key forces in influencing tobacco control policy and movement in China. Given their respective domains and jurisdictions, agencies of the State Council and central ministries and commissions wield relatively independent administrative powers in this movement. (16) The major concern of the National Development and Reform Commission is the implications of tobacco control for finance and basic livelihood of people who depend on tobacco cultivation and the tobacco industry, whereas the Ministry of Health is concerned with the positive effect of tobacco control on people’s health. Among many agencies, the Ministry of Health is more active on tobacco control; other central ministries, commissions, and other agencies that are part of the Leading Group for FCTC Performance, are more ambivalent and less enthusiastic on tobacco control. The central decision-makers do not seem particularly enthusiastic either, which may also limit the development and impact of tobacco control movement in China. Other than Jiang Zeming, a former Chinese president, who once gave a speech supporting tobacco control in the 10th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in 1997, no other central political leader has actively supported tobacco control in the last decade. (17) Actually, many government officials, including those who take key posts, are smokers in China.

Because major government departments in charge of tobacco control policy lack a consensus about, and the will to, implement tobacco control, the framework is uneven; legislation has lagged behind; and policy instruments have been ineffective. Even now, there is no national legislation for tobacco control. The basic legal framework of tobacco control consists of a few administrative regulations that apply to special groups, such as young people, and local legislation by a few local governments. Given this piecemeal approach, tobacco control can hardly become a routine policy action of the government, let alone become a norm of behavior for the general public.

So far, local governments have been the dominant actors in implementing tobacco control policy. Their economic interests have seriously compromised tobacco
control movement in China. As a major industry, tobacco holds an unshakable position in China. In 2004, the industry raked in more than 210 billion yuan, 45 billion yuan more than it did in 2003. At the same time, the revenue of industry and commerce came up to 141.4 billion yuan, increased by 22.5 billion yuan than last year, while profit of industry and commerce came up to 71.8 billion yuan, increased by 46%, which hits a new high.(12) Among the top hundred enterprises ranked by the amount of tax they paid are 35 tobacco companies, and they account for nearly 35% of the total revenue from these 100 enterprises.(18) The revenue and other economic benefits from the tobacco industry have always been important factors that local governments have taken into consideration. In addition, tobacco in China is cultivated mainly in the relatively poor and backward districts, such as Guizhou, Yunnan and Henan, and tobacco control may affect the basic livelihood of common people—a factor that the government must consider while encouraging the tobacco control movement.(11)
Figure 1: Main actors and their relationships in the policy subsystem of tobacco control

- **International organization** (supports tobacco control)
  - Financial support
  - Technical support

- **Ministry of Health** (supports tobacco control)
  - Professional support
  - Financial support
  - Communication
  - Influence

- **STMA** (against tobacco control)
  - Influence

- **NDRC** (supports tobacco control but the support is conditional)
  - Influence
  - Professional support

- **Experts** (support tobacco control)
  - Financial support

- **CATC** (supports tobacco control)

- **Local governments** (support tobacco control but the support is conditional)
  - Assist policy implementation
  - Release command and direction
The State Tobacco Monopoly Administration (China National Tobacco Corporation), as a collective representative of the tobacco industry in China, reserves its opinion on some points and may even be against tobacco control policy. According to FCTC, each party shall, within a period of three years after this Convention comes into force ensure the pictorial health warning shall not cover less than 30% of displaying area of cigarette pack. Each party shall undertake a comprehensive ban of all tobacco advertising within the period of five years after this Convention comes into force for that Party. By 2008, unit packets and packages of tobacco products should carry health warnings on no less than 30% of the principal display areas. However, these articles have not been universally carried out yet. Some tobacco enterprises argued that revenue from tobacco industry is so important for people in remote mountainous areas that we should emphasize the positive effect of tobacco and resist tobacco control movement.

Chinese Association on Tobacco Control is a non-governmental organization supported by the government. As a special major agency in promoting tobacco control, the association is an active force in tobacco control policy and movement in China and may play a relatively important role in education and advocacy of tobacco control and in assisting the policy implementation. However, both its impact and its ability to mobilize resources are limited. Given the lack of consensus on tobacco control among the state players, it is difficult to extend the association’s role any further.

To sum up, in the area of tobacco control policy in China, although state actors may choose to support the control movement under international pressure, the state actors lack a consensus and the will because of their own conflicting interests. On the other hand, although the social actors try hard to promote the movement and relevant policies, they lack the required power to do so. In this kind of policy subsystem, the tobacco control movement, hampered by lack of effective legislation and implementation and low impact, is likely to remain a reluctant movement.

**Conclusion**

Smoking has become a serious health issue in China. However, because the relevant state actors lack a consensus and political will, the tobacco control movement remains a reluctant movement, which has been ineffectual in solving the problem. Therefore, we must reconsider the issue and the relevant policies. On the logic of public policy, we must consider the problem of smoking from the perspective of public health and human well-being instead of the traditional perspective of tobacco economy or revenue. It is also necessary to bring tobacco control policy into the category of social policy and treat it as an important policy area of public health so that we can muster a new force for tobacco control movement. For that, on the one hand, it is necessary to set up an agency with enough authority at the national level to lead the development of tobacco control policy and movement; on the other hand, it is
also necessary to develop more NGOs to support the cause. Only in this way can we transform the reluctant tobacco control movement into a dynamic one. To achieve this goal, the government should also enhance its relevant policy instruments. Specifically, we should (a) speed up legislation at the national level so that we can provide legal and policy support for the movement; (b) provide substantial financial support by such means as expanding the medical insurance program to cover the cost of imposing a ban on smoking; (c) support, by financial means, the transformation of tobacco enterprises and lives of local people who depend on tobacco cultivation; and (4) lower the proportion of smokers in the population through education and publicity about the hazards of smoking.
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