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## **China's radical new property laws**

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**9<sup>th</sup> March, 2007**

## THE ARTICLE

### **China's radical new property laws**

The Chinese government is set to introduce a highly controversial law designed to protect private property. The news is welcomed by China's increasingly affluent middle class, but has sent ripples of disapproval among the majority of the country's rural and urban poor. The proposed law shows how far China has moved away from its strictly communist agenda of the twentieth century. Beijing lawmakers sounded more like American attorneys on Thursday as they stated that legal safeguards were necessary to protect personal wealth. Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the national legislature stressed the importance of the new measures: "As the economy reforms and opens up, people's living standards have improved. They urgently require effective protection of their own lawful property, accumulated through their own enterprise and hard work."

There are many influential opponents of the bill who say it betrays China's socialist principles. Professor Gong Xiantian from the Beijing University called it unconstitutional, on the grounds that it contravened the Chinese constitution, which stipulates: "Socialist public property is sacred and inviolable". He attacked the bill for being heavily biased in favour of a small minority of wealthy people. He said lawmakers had become victims of globalization and predicted the capitalist nature of the new laws would lead the country down a dangerous path. Greedy local officials have already seized thousands of houses and farmland from the poor, hoping to cash in on the new property boom. This has left an increasing number of dispossessed and discontented poor who might one day come back to haunt the property developers.

## WARM-UPS

**1. GOOGLE CHINA:** Brainstorm different themes about China. Each group of students takes a theme. Alone, each student walks around the classroom and gathers information about their theme from other students (who are Google search engines). Students sit according to their theme and share their information. Students then break out and tell students in other groups what they found out.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Chinese government / controversial laws / private property / middle classes / living standards / socialism / globalization / greedy people / property booms*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. PRIVATE PROPERTY:** With your partner(s), discuss the merits of buying the following kinds of property. Which three would you consider buying? Which three would you never consider buying?

- a luxurious jungle hideaway
- a 78<sup>th</sup> floor studio in Siberia
- a houseboat in London
- a Japanese castle
- a palace in Saudi Arabia
- a small cottage in a Sydney suburb
- a converted lighthouse on Sumatra
- a normal house in Rio de Janeiro

**4. MINI CHINA ROLE PLAYS:** Walk around the classroom. When your teacher claps his/her hands, become one of the roles written on the board and greet a partner. Talk about the future of China, your country.

farmer                      middle class                      property developer                      factory worker  
local government official                      communist party member                      builder                      teacher

**5. TWO-MINUTE DEBATES:** Have these fun debates with your partners. Students A agree with the first argument; students B, the second. Change partners and topics every two minutes.

- a. Capitalism is best. Vs. Communism is best.
- b. China will overtake the USA. Vs. The US will always be stronger than China.
- c. Everyone should be give a house. Vs. People must buy their own home.
- d. Communism will collapse in China. Vs. China will always be communist.
- e. Property developers are good people. Vs. Property developers are bad people.
- f. China's poor should protest. Vs. China's poor should work to become rich.

**6. PROPERTY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with property. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. China will soon pass laws that impose a ban on private property. T / F
- b. The majority of China's poor are happy with the new measures. T / F
- c. Chinese lawmakers asked US lawyers to make the new safeguards. T / F
- d. A top Chinese official stressed enterprise needed to be protected. T / F
- e. A Chinese professor said the new law was unconstitutional. T / F
- f. The new bill is heavily weighted in favour of the poor. T / F
- g. Greedy officials have taken away farmland to fill their own pockets. T / F
- h. Large numbers of Chinese property developers are seeing ghosts. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| a. controversial | never to be broken |
| b. affluent      | initiative         |
| c. attorneys     | double-crosses     |
| d. accumulated   | wealthy            |
| e. enterprise    | specifies          |
| f. betrays       | disputed           |
| g. contravened   | torment            |
| h. stipulates    | built up           |
| i. inviolable    | broke              |
| j. haunt         | lawyers            |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a. The Chinese government is set | of globalization                        |
| b. has sent ripples              | enterprise and hard work                |
| c. China has moved away from     | opponents of the bill                   |
| d. legal safeguards were         | that it contravened ...                 |
| e. accumulated through their own | its strictly communist agenda           |
| f. There are many influential    | in favour of a small minority           |
| g. on the grounds                | to introduce a highly controversial law |
| h. heavily biased                | necessary to protect personal wealth    |
| i. lawmakers had become victims  | to haunt the property developers        |
| j. come back                     | of disapproval                          |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

### China's radical new property laws

The Chinese government is \_\_\_\_\_ to introduce a highly controversial law designed to protect private property. The news is welcomed by China's increasingly \_\_\_\_\_ middle class, but has sent \_\_\_\_\_ of disapproval among the majority of the country's rural and urban poor. The proposed law shows how far China has moved away from its strictly communist \_\_\_\_\_ of the twentieth century. Beijing lawmakers sounded more like American \_\_\_\_\_ on Thursday as they stated that legal safeguards were necessary to protect personal wealth. Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the national legislature stressed the importance of the new \_\_\_\_\_: "As the economy reforms and opens up, people's living standards have improved. They urgently require \_\_\_\_\_ protection of their own lawful property, accumulated through their own \_\_\_\_\_ and hard work."

*agenda*  
*effective*  
*affluent*  
*measures*  
*attorneys*  
*set*  
*enterprise*  
*ripples*

There are many \_\_\_\_\_ opponents of the bill who say it betrays China's socialist principles. Professor Gong Xiantian from the Beijing University called it unconstitutional, on the \_\_\_\_\_ that it contravened the Chinese constitution, which stipulates: "Socialist public property is \_\_\_\_\_ and inviolable". He attacked the bill for being heavily \_\_\_\_\_ in favour of a small minority of wealthy people. He said lawmakers had become \_\_\_\_\_ of globalization and predicted the capitalist nature of the new laws would lead the country down a dangerous path. \_\_\_\_\_ local officials have already seized thousands of houses and farmland from the poor, hoping to \_\_\_\_\_ in on the new property boom. This has left an increasing number of dispossessed and discontented poor who might one day come back to \_\_\_\_\_ the property developers.

*victims*  
*sacred*  
*haunt*  
*grounds*  
*greedy*  
*cash*  
*influential*  
*biased*

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### China's radical new property laws

The Chinese government \_\_\_\_\_ a highly controversial law designed to protect private property. The news is welcomed by China's \_\_\_\_\_ middle class, but has sent \_\_\_\_\_ among the majority of the country's rural and urban poor. The proposed law shows how far China has moved away from its \_\_\_\_\_ of the twentieth century. Beijing lawmakers sounded more like American attorneys on Thursday as they stated that legal safeguards were necessary to protect personal wealth. Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the \_\_\_\_\_ stressed the importance of the new measures: "As the economy reforms and opens up, people's living standards have improved. They urgently \_\_\_\_\_ of their own lawful property, accumulated through their own enterprise and hard work."

There are many \_\_\_\_\_ the bill who say it betrays China's socialist principles. Professor Gong Xiantian from the Beijing University called it unconstitutional, \_\_\_\_\_ it contravened the Chinese constitution, which stipulates: "Socialist public property \_\_\_\_\_". He attacked the bill for being \_\_\_\_\_ a small minority of wealthy people. He said lawmakers had become victims of globalization and predicted the capitalist nature of the new laws would lead the country down a dangerous path. Greedy local officials have already seized thousands of houses and farmland from the poor, \_\_\_\_\_ the new property boom. This has left an increasing number of dispossessed and discontented poor who might one day \_\_\_\_\_ the property developers.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'private' and 'property'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "PRIVATE PROPERTY" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about home ownership.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• set</li><li>• affluent</li><li>• agenda</li><li>• attorneys</li><li>• opens up</li><li>• accumulated</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• betrays</li><li>• grounds</li><li>• heavily</li><li>• path</li><li>• cash</li><li>• haunt</li></ul>
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## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) Are you surprised China is shedding its communist skin?
- c) Do you think China will be like the USA one day?
- d) What do you think the poor people should do?
- e) What would happen to the world if there was another communist revolution in China?
- f) What happens when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer?
- g) Do you think it's necessary for China to have the legal safeguards to protect private property?
- h) What effect do you think property developers have on an economy?
- i) Do you like China's new direction, or do you prefer China of old?
- j) Do you think China is only protecting the rich?



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### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Does the new law betray China's socialist principles?
- c) Do legislators in your country pass unconstitutional laws?
- d) Do you think globalization is good for China?
- e) What kind of dangerous path might China be going down?
- f) What do you think of greedy officials cashing in on poor farmers?
- g) What examples of greed do you see in your country?
- h) Would you cash in on property booms and invest in property?
- i) How important is home ownership to you?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a) What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b) Was there a question you didn't like?
- c) Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d) What did you like talking about?
- e) Which was the most difficult question?



## **SPEAKING**

### **ROLE PLAY:**

A discussion between different people affected by the new property laws.

Team up with classmates who have the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and "strategies" before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players. Discuss your roles after the role play ends.

#### Role A – Local official

Many years ago, your family owned the farmland in your area. It was shared among farmers last century. You want to take it all back and develop it. It is yours. The farmers can rent houses from you.

- *Think of more reasons why you should develop the property.*

#### Role B – Government leader

The world is changing very quickly. China is set to become the strongest economy. The only way to safeguard this progress is by protecting private property to encourage and reward enterprise. Too many people were poor under communism.

- *Think of more reasons why the property laws are necessary.*

#### Role C – Poor farmer

Running your farm is the only way you can eat. If it is taken away, your family will starve. You do not want to move thousands of miles to a city. The government should protect and provide for you. Globalization is destroying the traditional Chinese way of life. You think there will be another revolution in the next ten years.

- *Think of more reasons why China should not change.*

#### Role D – Business person

You have put a lot of work into making your business successful. You are not so rich but you can afford to buy a house. You think home ownership is a great reward for your labour. You think all Chinese people should try and buy a house.

- *Think of more reasons why China should change.*

## LANGUAGE

**CORRECT WORD:** Put the correct words from a-d below in the article.

### China's radical new property laws

The Chinese government is (1) \_\_\_\_\_ to introduce a highly controversial law designed to protect private property. The news is (2) \_\_\_\_\_ by China's increasingly affluent middle class, but has sent ripples of disapproval among the majority of the country's rural and urban (3) \_\_\_\_\_. The proposed law shows how far China has moved away from its strictly communist agenda of the twentieth century. Beijing lawmakers sounded more like American attorneys on Thursday as they stated that legal (4) \_\_\_\_\_ were necessary to protect personal wealth. Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the national legislature stressed the importance of the new (5) \_\_\_\_\_: "As the economy reforms and opens up, people's living standards have improved. They urgently require effective protection of their own lawful property, accumulated through their own (6) \_\_\_\_\_ and hard work."

There are many influential opponents of the bill who say it (7) \_\_\_\_\_ China's socialist principles. Professor Gong Xiantian from the Beijing University called it unconstitutional, on the (8) \_\_\_\_\_ that it contravened the Chinese constitution, which stipulates: "Socialist public property is sacred and inviolable". He attacked the bill for being heavily (9) \_\_\_\_\_ in favour of a small minority of wealthy people. He said lawmakers had become victims of globalization and predicted the capitalist nature of the new laws would lead the country down a dangerous path. (10) \_\_\_\_\_ local officials have already seized thousands of houses and farmland from the poor, hoping to cash in (11) \_\_\_\_\_ the new property boom. This has (12) \_\_\_\_\_ an increasing number of dispossessed and discontented poor who might one day come back to haunt the property developers.

1. (a) settle (b) sets (c) setting (d) set
2. (a) welcomed (b) welcome (c) welcoming (d) welcomes
3. (a) the poor (b) poorly (c) poor (d) poverty
4. (a) guard dogs (b) guards (c) safeguards (d) guardians
5. (a) measures (b) measure (c) measured (d) measurements
6. (a) entry (b) enterprise (c) entrepreneur (d) enterprising
7. (a) traitor (b) betrays (c) betrayal (d) betray
8. (a) fields (b) carpets (c) floors (d) grounds
9. (a) biased (b) bias (c) unbiased (d) basted
10. (a) The greedy (b) Greedily (c) Greed (d) Greedy
11. (a) busy (b) on (c) in (d) an
12. (a) left (b) leave (c) right (d) righted

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information about the new property laws in China and the discussions that surround them. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. CHINA POSTER:** Make a poster showing different aspects of the changes taking place in China. Show your poster to your class in the next lesson. Vote on the best one(s).

**4. MAGAZINE ARTICLE:** Write a magazine article about the impact of globalization on the average Chinese person. Is it good or bad? Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which article was best and why?

**5. LETTER:** You are a poor Chinese farmer. Write a letter to the authorities. Tell them what you think of the new property laws that protect rich people. Give them three warnings of what might happen to China in the future. Ask them three questions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. F      c. F      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| a. controversial | disputed           |
| b. affluent      | wealthy            |
| c. attorneys     | lawyers            |
| d. accumulated   | built up           |
| e. enterprise    | initiative         |
| f. betrays       | double-crosses     |
| g. contravened   | broke              |
| h. stipulates    | specifies          |
| i. inviolable    | never to be broken |
| j. haunt         | torment            |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a. The Chinese government is set | to introduce a highly controversial law |
| b. has sent ripples              | of disapproval                          |
| c. China has moved away from     | its strictly communist agenda           |
| d. legal safeguards were         | necessary to protect personal wealth    |
| e. accumulated through their own | enterprise and hard work                |
| f. There are many influential    | opponents of the bill                   |
| g. on the grounds                | that it contravened ...                 |
| h. heavily biased                | in favour of a small minority           |
| i. lawmakers had become victims  | of globalization                        |
| j. come back                     | to haunt the property developers        |

### GAP FILL:

#### China's radical new property laws

The Chinese government is **set** to introduce a highly controversial law designed to protect private property. The news is welcomed by China's increasingly **affluent** middle class, but has sent **ripples** of disapproval among the majority of the country's rural and urban poor. The proposed law shows how far China has moved away from its strictly communist **agenda** of the twentieth century. Beijing lawmakers sounded more like American **attorneys** on Thursday as they stated that legal safeguards were necessary to protect personal wealth. Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the national legislature stressed the importance of the new **measures**: "As the economy reforms and opens up, people's living standards have improved. They urgently require **effective** protection of their own lawful property, accumulated through their own **enterprise** and hard work."

There are many **influential** opponents of the bill who say it betrays China's socialist principles. Professor Gong Xiantian from the Beijing University called it unconstitutional, on the **grounds** that it contravened the Chinese constitution, which stipulates: "Socialist public property is **sacred** and inviolable". He attacked the bill for being heavily **biased** in favour of a small minority of wealthy people. He said lawmakers had become **victims** of globalization and predicted the capitalist nature of the new laws would lead the country down a dangerous path. **Greedy** local officials have already seized thousands of houses and farmland from the poor, hoping to **cash** in on the new property boom. This has left an increasing number of dispossessed and discontented poor who might one day come back to **haunt** the property developers.

### LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d    2 - a    3 - c    4 - c    5 - a    6 - b    7 - b    8 - d    9 - a    10 - d    11 - b    12 - a