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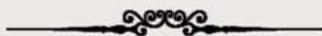
Elections *and* Governance

REVIEW

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ELECTORAL INNOVATIONS AND EXPERIMENTS



Searching for a Direction after Two Decades
of Local Democratic Experiments in China

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Dear Readers:

The decade from 1998-2008 was an opportunity for political reform in China to take flight on the heels of a great economic transformation. Yet although there were in fact many important experiments in electoral reform during the past ten years, the great promise for expanded democratization in China is unfulfilled. Thus, we begin this review in an unorthodox way: with our conclusions. It is our hope that by reading the following pages, the reader will be drawn to make his/her own determinations and to question, analyze and challenge ours.

The role of village elections

Competitive village elections created a ground swell and led many reform-minded officials to adopt similar measures in the election of officials at higher levels of the government. Following the bold Buyun direct election in 1998, if the top leadership of the Communist Party had vision and courage, they could have followed in the footsteps of Deng Xiaoping, Wan Li, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, recognizing Buyun as the “Xiaogang” of political reform. Not only did they back away from such a decision, officials at the lower levels, who saw competitive elections as a threat to their comfortable positions, managed to convince the Chinese leadership reform efforts were unconstitutional and illegal.

The trajectory misunderstood

The initial prediction that China had made a plan to begin direct and competitive elections at the bottom and slowly move elections up the chain is incorrect. What Peng Zhen said in the mid 1980s and what Wen Jiabao has repeated more recently are not backed up by any concrete plan. In order to believe the sincerity of Chinese leadership, we have to see a tangible timetable and an action plan.

Fear of the West undermines homegrown reform efforts

As early as 2001, Jiang Zemin voiced the concern that westerners’ interest in village elections in China was probably underlined by an attempt to force China to adopt western style democracy wholesale. The current Chinese leadership has an even deeper fear of such penetration because of what happened in Central Asian countries and the Bush Administration’s worldwide effort to promote democratization. The tragic consequence of this linkage is that by seeing a black hand behind China’s own genuine efforts at reform, the leadership is blind to the fact that Chinese people and many Chinese officials are reform oriented and want to promote competitive elections within the framework of the Chinese law. The anti-West argument also serves the need of many corrupt and incompetent officials who avoid being held accountable by associating social agitation and political protests with western conspiracies.

Democratization still finding a way

It may also be incorrect to say that China is at a total standstill regarding democratization. China will face much tougher challenges ahead if it does not adopt measures to curtail

corruption, reduce popular anger, enhance its legitimacy, and allow people the opportunity to participate in public and political affairs. In this context, both the Qingxian model and the Guiyang experiment seem to be innovative ways of moving forward. While the Qingxian model's applicability and legality are questionable, Guiyang seems to be more significant and necessary. Either way, procedures must be standardized and a system must be adopted on a selective basis throughout the country.

Call for change

Following intra-Party democratization, which may take a decade or more to accomplish, it will be time to implement open direct elections of township/town people's congress deputies. While China does not need to use western style democracy, China needs to trust her people and allow them to elect whom they are entitled to elect in accordance with the law. The Party should focus on the preparation of strong and able candidates who can gain popular support on their own merits.

These are the issues this second installment of the *China Elections and Governance Review* has addressed. We welcome contributions from our readers for the next issue of this online report, which focuses on the role of the internet in China's social and political transformation. Please send submissions no later than June 30, 2009 to cc.chinascope@gmail.com.

Yawei Liu
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Searching for a Direction after Two Decades of Local Democratic Experiments in China

By *Lisheng Dong*



Prior to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2007, a heated debate was under way among officials and scholars on the general orientation of the ‘Reform and Opening Up Drive’ that would reach its 30th anniversary in late 2008. Some argued that the reforms deviated too far from the bottom line a communist state should tolerate. The expanding private sector and shrinking public sector were eroding the socialist state. Therefore more political and economic control should be re-imposed by the party-state. Their adversaries called for major political reform, noting that the current tension in society manifesting in the gap between the rich and poor, between the coastal areas in the east and the hinterland, and between the demands for greater resources for development and the deteriorating environment could only be alleviated through further reforms. According to them, the situation was such that market-oriented reform could not move any further without, on the one hand, political openness in order to allow expression of different interests and, on the other, recognition of private ownership. The debate

became particularly intense when the National People’s Congress examined the draft Law on Property Rights, which included clauses on protecting private property. The central leadership put an end to this debate a year or so before the Congress. In an article in the People’s Daily by Premier Wen in February 2007, a rare political move in recent Chinese politics, the official line was expressed, repeating the Party’s stand of twenty years earlier: its work and its focus would remain on economic development, based on the two pillars of keeping a tight lid on political reform while furthering the “Reform and Opening Up” drive.¹

The 17th National Party Congress ushered in General Secretary Hu Jintao’s second and last five-year term. Expectations were high at home and abroad for his delivery of strong policies now that he seemed to have better control at the political centre. Addressing the conference marking the 30th anniversary of the initiation of the reform and opening up drive on Dec. 18, 2008, Mr. Hu declared “never to take the old road of closeness nor go astray by altering the banner,”² basically iterating what Mr. Wen expressed earlier. What

clues can we obtain from these messages to judge the fate of political reform?

An all-round view on Chinese politics needs to shift from a focus on leadership to a focus on society. Despite official statements made by top leaders, disputes have persisted among officials and scholars around the “universal values of freedom, equality, human rights and democracy.” Those who claim that universal values are a US trademark have expressed the view that the existing Chinese political system shows its advantages under the current international financial crisis and there is no need to reform it.³ Wang Changjiang terms such opinions as “the syndrome of insensitivity toward political reform.”⁴ Zhou Qiren concurs with Yang Xiaokai that the advantages enjoyed by the late developing countries may make politicians neglect the need for political reform and when problems accumulate to crisis level historical opportunity is lost.⁵

According to Wu Jinglian, since the early 1980s, China’s economic reform is incremental in nature, i.e., the economic portion under the traditional planning mechanism is retained while the market mechanism is applied to develop the private sector and both Chinese and foreign joint ventures. The latter is much credited for China’s rapid growth but is also the cause of a number of negative outcomes, which can be summed up as the collusion between power and business or rent-setting and rent-seeking by officials.⁶ Is the in-

cremental approach workable for political reform?

Since the late 1980s China has implemented direct elections at the village level. Some scholars believe village elections will help maintain one-party rule while others hold that it will bring about radical revolution or all-around political reform. Has the Chinese leadership’s assessment of the Villagers’ Committee elections changed? If so, what are the reasons?

In policy implementation, the Chinese leaders have taken either a bottom-up, top-down or combination approach. When direct elections at the village level were introduced in the 1980s, the veteran Party leader Peng Zhen envisaged a bottom-up development of direct elections up to the county or even provincial levels.⁷ Is this feasible as

judged by the two decades of experiments? What kind of decision is weighing on the Chinese leadership?

This paper will explore the answers to these questions by reviewing reform developments over the past two decades.

Developments to Date

Since the introduction of the Villagers’ Committee elections nationwide in 1987, China has seen varied local initiative in experimenting on the residents’ political participation and selection of local officials. For the former, deliberative democracy has been applied to the budget formulation and approval process of some town governments. Wenling City, Zhe-

“An all-round view on Chinese politics needs to shift from a focus on leadership to a focus on society”

jiang Province took the lead on such a move in 2001 when local residents and officials were brought together to discuss local affairs, especially government budget formulation and the implementation of major public works and services.⁸ In fact, many county and city governments have used the annual public assessment to evaluate the performance of government departments or officials. In Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province, an annual public assessment of the municipal government departments resulted in the leaders of the two lowest rating bureaus removed from office.⁹

For the latter, village elections were expanded to cover elections of their urban counterparts, the neighborhood committees, in 1998.¹⁰

The direct elections of the village autonomous organizations have spilled over to the elections of the village Party Branch with the invention of the two-ballot system in Hequ County, Shanxi Province. The new method involves ordinary villagers who cast votes in opinion polls of the candidates. Then the Party members elect the Party Branch with the list decided by the result of the popular vote.¹¹ Direct elections have been upgraded from the non-governmental villagers' autonomous organization to the lowest government level at township. Various forms of indirect elections have been used to select Party and government leaders up to the prefectural level. Experimental competitive elections have also taken place to select deputies to the People's Congresses at the township and county levels. The signi-

“Direct village and township elections are the most significant as new steps in democratization”

ficance of these more competitive elections is that although the law has required the deputies at these two levels to be directly elected since as early as 1982, in most cases the elections are organized perfunctorily with low intensity of competition or none at all.¹²

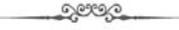
In 2002 the 16th National Party Congress adopted the approach of “using intra-party democracy to promote the people’s democracy.”¹³ Innovations in intra-party democracy cover the competitive elections

of the deputies to the town and county Party Congresses; the annual session of the Party Congresses instead of once every five years; and decisions of important matters, especially the personnel appointments, by the full Party Committee instead of

its Standing Committee. In 2006 direct town elections were categorically forbidden. This point will be considered further in a following section. In 2008 public nomination and public selection was resumed in Guiyang City for the district and deputy municipal leaders.¹⁴ The difference between direct election and public nomination and public selection lies in that the former is open to all eligible voters but the latter brings together local elites only.

Of all these types of experiments, direct village and township elections are the most significant as new steps in democratization. They present real choices to voters and candidates compete with their own platforms or promises to voters.

(Continues on Page 5)

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CHRONOLOGY OF ELECTORAL
EXPERIMENTS
AND INNOVATIONS,
1998-2008

December 31, 1998

Buyun Township, Suining Municipality, Sichuan Province: The first direct election of a Township Magistrate

April 18, 1999

Zhuoli Town, Linyi County, Shanxi Province: A popular opinion poll, adopted from Hequ County's nationally recognized "two-ballot" system is used to legitimize the candidacy of the Party Secretary, Town Magistrate, and Town People's Congress Chairman.

April 30, 1999

Dapeng Town, Shenzhen Municipality, Guangdong Province: All eligible voters in Dapeng participate in a primary in which one candidate receives the most votes. In accordance with the will of the people, the 45 Town People's Congress Deputies then unanimously elect that candidate to the position of Town Magistrate.

December 31, 2001

Buyun Township, Suining Municipality, Sichuan Province: Leaders in Suining defy the constitutional ban on Buyun-type elections by having the voters directly elect two final candidates as township magistrate instead of selecting the final appointment for the magistrate. The in-

cumbent from the 1998 election is re-elected.

September 4 and 16, 2002

Yangji Town, Jingshan County, Hubei Province: The Party Secretary and Town Magistrate are elected after a primary with all eligible voters. The Town People's Congress Deputies and the Town Party Committee members confirm the selection of the people, electing the candidates who received the most votes in the primary.

April-May 2003

Shenzhen: District People's Congress Deputy Elections take place. The election allows independent candidates. Voters in one district even question the electoral procedure and demand the impeachment of the elected deputy, sparking an investigation, though it is eventually silenced.

August 2003

Pingba Town, Chengkou County, Chongqing Municipality: The Party Secretary plans a direct election of the Party Secretary and Town Magistrate. He does not seek approval from the higher up and is stopped by the County Party Committee. He is then put under house arrest for 15 days and stripped of his titles.

December 10, 2003

Beijing: Independent candidates are allowed to run in the district people's congress deputy election. Several Beijing residents and over a dozen college students announce they will launch their own campaigns.

April 2004

Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan Province:

The direct nomination and direct election of township/town magistrates in seven townships and towns in Shiping County. The elections were carried out in secret and were not reported by Xinhua until six months later.

April 2, 2005

Zhangguan Town, Yubei District, Chongqing Municipality:

The Yubei District Party Committee trims down a pool of twelve candidates to three. The people of Zhangguan go to the polls, voting directly for their Town Magistrate from the three choices.

July 23, 2008

Xiaohe and Huaxi Districts, Xifeng and Xiuwen Counties, Guiyang Municipality, Guizhou Province:

An elaborate process called, "open nomination and competitive selection" is introduced to make selections for four county-level Party Secretary positions in Guiyang Municipality. Campaign speeches, a leadership capability test, and other means are used to trim down the candidates to a final pool for vote by the Municipal Party Committee.

There are other electoral experiments at various levels of governments in Suqian Municipality and Nanjing Municipality in Jiangsu Province, and across most towns and townships in Sichuan Province. These experiments are known as public nomination and selection (*gongtui gongxuan*) in China and there are too many to list.

(Continued from Page 3)

Changing Assessments of Implications along with the Experiments

Ever since villager self-government was instituted, two different assessments of the move have persisted. Its proponents wanted to resort to it as a way to empower rural residents and initiate the first step in promoting democracy in China with the prospect of upgrading it level by level. They have become more confident of such a prospect with the later developments brought about by the implementation of direct township elections. But its opponents have had no faith in the proper exercise of democratic rights by rural residents and are loathe to weakening the control of the party-state over villages.

With the forceful promotion of direct elections of Villagers' Committees after a few years, a question of their value became apparent. As the Party Branches are the "leadership core" in the villages, no matter how competitive the elections are or how competent and accountable the elected cadres are, the democratic value of such experiments is limited. However, the two-ballot system that opened the positions of the Party Branches to the poll of ordinary villagers has improved the quality of village democracy. Up to that point, it seemed that villager self-government was still viewed positively by the central leadership. It is notable in 1998 that Former President Jiang Zemin praised it as "the third invention" of Chinese farmers following the introduction of the household contract responsibility system and the development of rural enterprises.¹⁵



The end of 1998 saw the first breakthrough in upgrading the direct election to the township level with the experiment of Buyun Township, Suining County, Sichuan Province. Though the immediate official reaction of the central leaders was negative, less competitive elections were still organized in response in several provinces. Later, the emphasis on experiments was placed on the opinion poll of the candidates of the secretaries of the Township Party Committees. Following the decision of the National People's Congress (NPC) in October 2004 on extending the term of office of the town (township) government from three years to five, elections of the deputies to the People's Congresses at the county and township levels were scheduled to happen between July 2006 and December 2007.¹⁶ This would provide opportunities for reformers to make further experiments. However, to the disappointment of some reformers, Mr. Sheng Huaren, Vice-Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, reiterated in August 2006 that direct elections of township government leaders were illegal and warned that "evil foreigners" were using the tool of human rights and democracy against China.¹⁷ As noted previously, no more experiments were made until 2008. (See *"The Color Revolution and the 'Big Chill'"* by Yawei Liu.)

Exploration and Rationale

Direct village and township elections have had many folds of political implications. While they have directly impacted the

lowest level of government, they have also had long-term and strategic influence on China's meso- and macro-politics. Either theoretically or practically, no one can predict the political outcome of the direct elections. This results in differing opinions among the central leaders and a wavering in the development of grassroots democracy.

More specifically, direct village elections have the following political implications on local governance: (1) impact on the

"The end of 1998 saw the first breakthrough in upgrading the direct election to the township level"

status of the village Party branches (strengthening or weakening effect); (2) impact on whether the village elections will produce cadres more inclined to listen to the opinions of villagers and safeguard their interests; (3) impact on whether the

village elections will result in lowering capability of the political control of the township government over the village institutions; and (4) impact on whether the village elections will make the state policies difficult to be implemented in the countryside.

Viewed from the macro-politics perspective, the fundamental question is whether or not village elections are conducive to the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China. The related concern is whether the implementation of direct elections in villages will start a bottom up chain effect on the higher levels of government as the veteran leader Peng Zhen envisaged.

From the very beginning, grassroots democracy was understood as compatible

with strong control by the party-state and elections were designed to increase mass support for the Party. With this understanding, the gradual ascension of elections can be seen as a route to China's democratization. However, the 2000 Taiwan election saw the long-term ruling Kuomintang Party lose power. The series of "color revolutions" in Eastern Europe and Central Asia resulted in the coming to power of pro-Western governments. It was under this background that the Chinese leaders heightened vigilance against the so-called peaceful evolution strategy of the West. Related to this, it is notable that the control over NGOs has tightened. This was followed by the NPC decision to forbid further experiments on direct township elections with the understanding that direct elections may threaten the Party's rule instead of the other way around. If such an analysis holds water, the decision is still in line with the Party's overriding concern of strengthening its governing capability.

It is worthwhile to note what has been proposed for and implemented in the meantime in rural areas. In his government report delivered to the NPC annual session on March 5, 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao put forward specific programs for improving the people's livelihood such as provision of health care, social security packages to all eligible citizens, and efforts at insuring all students admitted by colleges and universities are able to attend through scholarship programs and other financial assistance programs run by the Ministry of Education.¹⁸ All these can be regarded as new concrete measures for "Building the New Countryside" as for-

mulated under the concepts of scientific development and the promotion of a harmonious society advanced by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen. They are an indication of a shift in the focus of government from a one-sided pursuit of GDP onto the provision of public goods and services.

The active publicity of these pro-people policies is in contrast to the discouragement of the experiment on direct elections, a prominent area of recent democratic development in China. Does this mean a re-thinking of the emphasis of local governance and a new understanding of the route for China's political development?

It seems that the Party believes what is preferable are pro-people policies based on maintaining fast economic growth. As Premier Wen recently stressed, while enlarging democracy, improving the legal system and continuously pushing forward political structural reform, the attention is currently focused on spurring economic development, safeguarding the rights and interests of citizens, combating corruption, improving the trust-worthiness and implementation capability of government, and promoting social harmony.¹⁹ In order to improve the provision of public goods and services, efforts are being made at strengthening central power. A notable recent trend is a revival of vertical control. Of course, to the Party all means are acceptable so long as it can prolong its grip on power, no matter if its legitimacy is based on popular active support via regular elections or pas-

"Chinese leaders heightened vigilance against the so-called peaceful evolution strategy of the West"

sive consent resulting from the fact that the Party can still deliver benefits.

A Strategic Choice of the Central Leadership

Experiments to date have proved that China should and can introduce direct elections to lower levels of government, firstly at the township level. A political decision should be made by the top leadership. Support merely by individual central leaders or the central leadership's acquiescence of further experiments on the models created in the past two decades is not advisable. One reason, as prominent local reformer Luo Chongmin has concluded, is that any bottom-up reforms are too costly and not preferred. Luo Chongmin, an official who has promoted comprehensive reforms in many fields, is well-regarded nationwide. When he was the Party Secretary of Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan Province, Mr. Luo undertook the largest scale experiment on direct township elections (planned for the whole prefecture and actually organized in a county). He was also responsible for the merger of the rural and urban residence registration systems and conversions of hospital and media institutions into limited liability companies etc. He believes that all kinds of such reforms should start at the top.²⁰

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CASE REVIEW: DIRECT ELECTIONS IN SHIPING COUNTY, HONGHE PREFECTURE

Melissa Jen

For the first time in April 2004, Honghe Prefecture, an autonomous prefecture in Yunnan Province, China, held direct elections for seven township magistrates in Shiping County. Party Secretary Luo Chongmin initiated this unprecedented move because he saw the need for improvement and reform in the following areas:

1. Obligation of the local people's congress – to ensure that the local people's congress is fulfilling their supervisory obligations
2. Government transparency - Enhancing governing transparency to ensure that the public knows and is able to supervise the decision-making process
3. Political development - Reforming the institutional mechanism to promote political development.

Luo exercised four measures to ensure the success of his reforms. He insured the leadership of the local Party Committees, made sure that the reform had proper legitimacy, fully mobilized the public and guaranteed democratic participation, and lastly, prescribed detailed rules and procedures to prevent unfair competition.

The unprecedented nature of the election of the seven township magistrates in Shiping County, Honghe, did not occur without controversy. According to the Chinese Constitution and the Organic Law of

Local Government, only Town's People's Congress deputies have the privilege of electing Township Magistrates. Furthermore, these Town's People's Congress deputies are elected by individual voters. Only after the election of Congress deputies could Congress deputies elect the Township Magistrates - essentially on behalf of the individual voters. Historically, the candidates for Township Magistrate positions were already predetermined by superior Party Committees, and Township Deputies could only select their candidates from this predetermined list.

For reformers like Party Secretary Luo Chongmin, it was critical for the implementation of this unprecedented election to stay in accordance with the Constitution and other applicable laws. After careful deliberation, Luo Chongmin masterfully resolved this problem by requiring the direct elections of township magistrates to be moderated and supervised by the township people's congress deputies.

According to the electoral regulation, any individual "between 25 to 45 years old, possesses a high-school diploma or the equivalent, has the ability to manage basic economic and social affairs, is a legal resident in the township where one intends to run, and is nominated by at least 30 voters" could become a preliminary candidate for a magistrate position. The complete list of preliminary candidates totaled 66 nominated individuals.

Once these candidates were determined, voter representatives, villagers' committee members, and members of the standing committee of the Township People's Congress formed a joint committee to vote anonymously for two candidates to make the final cut. Those two final

candidates, decided by majority votes, then toured each precinct in the township to deliver speeches to the public. After all speeches were completed, township voters then cast individual ballots to choose their candidate of choice. By the time that the head of Niujie Township - Zhang Qiang - learned that he had been elected as a township magistrate, he had made more than 10 campaign speeches and answered over 80 questions from the voters.

Among all registered voters, 103,513 actually voted, making the voter turnout an amazing 97%. When all this was completed, the Town's People's congresses reconvened to verify the legitimacy of the elections, elected deputy magistrates, and announced the composition of the new town/township government.

During this experiment, villagers in underdeveloped villages were paid 5 RMB each as compensation to attend the rallies where candidates delivered campaign speeches. On Election Day, every village set up polling sites for the voters. In some remote villages and busy farming fields, election committee staff carried portable ballot boxes to collect votes. Not only did the voter turnout rate surprise the county, but it also pleasantly surprised the prefecture governments.

However, it came as no surprise that the seven elected town magistrates were all the originally appointed deputy town magistrates, who would have been assigned the magistrates' position if not for the direct election experiment. Through the direct election experiment, the elected candidates demonstrated their competence and experience, and just as importantly, their knowledge of the township affairs and management. Not only are

the elected magistrates responsible to the government superiors, but they have also received the responsibility of responding to the villagers who elected them.

Concerning the implementation side of the election, the entire election process took a total of 40 days to complete for Shiping County, with a population total of 27,000. The total cost came out to 190,310 RMB (~18,832 USD in 4/04). The breakdown of these expenses are as follows: 13,500 RMB for training meetings for cadres and mobilizing voters; 3,101 for election related meetings; 33,000 for villagers' committee funding; 30,690 for old CCP member, cadres, and villagers representative meetings; 2,150 for township joint committee meetings; 6,900 for printing flyers and other documents; 11,755 for funding arts performance and other publicities; 4,756 for ballots, ballot boxes, and identifications; 7,344 for election related travels; 20,283 for Town's People's Congress sessions; 3,000 for reception; 5,120 for the housing of outside election participants; 33,050 for transportation; 12,500 for awards; and 3,200 for incidental expenses. The majority of the expenses were funded by Honghe Prefecture's Department of Finance.

In efforts to maintain the legality of the direct election experiment, the Honghe government produced 25 circulars prescribing the election procedures. The Town's People's congress convened before the election to pass resolutions for the direct elections; and reconvened after the election to certify the election results, confirm the deputy town magistrates nominated by elected town magistrates.

Every step of the election process was made sure to fall in line with relevant laws and regulations.

The purpose of the Shiping experiment was not to create a standard, "one-size fits all" election model for all counties, but to demonstrate that direct election is applicable and effective at the county level. The scope, voter turnout, results and impact of the Shiping experiment are certainly helpful in dealing with any skepticism regarding democracy at the county level. Direct elections can actually have the ability to enhance the governing capacity of the CCP and improve the election process. By placing more trust and responsibility in the public's hands, and cultivating governing capabilities, this form of direct election is a process that follows in line with China's fundamental national political regime.



(Continued from Page 8) The other reason is that the various forms of public nomination and public selection are too complicated in procedure. The frequent separate elections of various positions are not only burdensome in terms of inputs in both human and material resources, but also may lead to the premature apathy of elections among ordinary voters.

In those areas most active in promoting local democracy, too many kinds of elections are organized separately, including elections of (1) Villagers' Committee; (2) Village Party Branch; (3) Township Gov-

ernment Leader; (4) Township Party Secretary and Party Committee Members; and (5) Deputies to the County and Township People's Congresses. If all these elections are conducted separately and according to the electoral rules and procedures, each category of elections may require more than one round of voting, as primaries are normally required. The number of elections will become a political burden on citizens, not conducive to the fostering of a sound electoral and political culture.

An experiment has been made on combining some categories of elections. A project titled "Support to Township Competitive Elections" that I helped to set up was carried out in Ya'an Municipality, Sichuan Province from 2004 to 2006.²¹ Four townships organized direct elections of the candidates for the Party and government leaders as well as deputies to the Township People's Congress on the same day in April 2006. The experiment was successful in the sense of combination of different elections and in improving competitiveness. However, the complicated procedures under the existing relevant Party rules and local electoral laws and regulations could not be avoided.

A review of the whole process of the experiment reveals a conspicuous drawback. Procedures of the competitive elections of township Party and government leaders are too complicated as they have to abide by the existing prevalent Chinese electoral rules while trying to adopt those basic

procedures of elections as widely used in the world.

The prevalent Chinese procedure of deciding the candidates of township Party and government leaders includes the following steps:

- A) Opinion poll by the county party organization department;
- B) Nomination by the relevant department or leaders;
- C) Putting forward a list of primary candidates by the party organization department after a survey;
- D) Decision by the county party standing committee and full committee;
- E) Official nomination of candidates by the township party committee or PC presidium;
- F) Initiation of election procedure as prescribed by law.

By comparison, the procedure of the public nomination of township party and government leaders is more complicated:

- A) Set up a leading group for public nomination;
- B) Publicity and training activities;
- C) Registration of candidates;
- D) Screening of registered candidates by county leading group;
- E) Screening of registered candidates by county party committee;

"The complicated procedures under the existing relevant Party rules and local electoral laws and regulations could not be avoided"

- F) Publishing of list of registered candidates;
- G) Campaigning by registered candidates;
- H) Vote by all eligible voters;
- I) Announcement of the election results;
- J) Endorsement of the election results by the county party committee;
- K) Publishing of the list of official candidates;
- L) Initiation of the election procedure as prescribed by law. (This means the People's Congress deputies vote for and the People's Congress presidium appoints the township government leaders.)

From the above, it is obvious that the procedure of public nomination includes all of the elements and steps of the traditional method of deciding the candidates as well as the international standards used for open and competitive election. One of the expressed reservations at immediately introducing competitive election to the township level is that the organization of elections is financially too costly. However, the cost will be reduced if direct election is adopted as this will simplify the procedure. The direct election will remove the possible different outcomes between the popular vote and vote by People's Congress deputies. This requires a political decision at the top. It is beneficial to both the Party and the people if decisive competitive election is used before the introduction of the direct election. Decisive competitive election means that the results of the popular vote will be binding or final. The Township People's Congress should

normally endorse the results of the popular vote. Otherwise the electorate can recall the PC deputies. The qualification of candidates should be gained through a public servant training system when the current several rounds of screening are abolished. This will ensure the implementation of the Party policy and state law at the lower levels of government after the introduction of direct elections.

Conclusion

The efforts at denigrating the idea of universal values means there are forces that carry political weight in the country against democratization of Chinese politics. But as the Hu-Wen leadership recently reiterated, the move towards the rule of law and democracy is endorsed in the Party's political platforms. Therefore the general direction is likely to be maintained. However, facing such vocal opposition, local reformers may be more cautious in considering more experiments. Greater challenge is placed before the central leadership; there is a race between the pace of corruption and reform, which brings about another race between the reform and revolution.²² A more realistic option, it seems, is to design the reform for democratization that will make local officials accountable to the public but will not immediately weaken central control.

The answer to the applicability of the incremental approach in political reform seems to be negative. As shown in the case of experiments on increasing the competition in township elections, keeping the existing cadre appointment procedures makes all kinds of experiments too

complicated and the reform elements are watered down. Indeed, different from the economic sphere, it is unthinkable to create a new polity alongside the existing one. There is only one government leadership at any level, so incremental can only mean instilling more competition into the procedure of its selection rather than ignoring the existing system while creating a new one. The effect, however, is questionable due to the cumbersome procedures that test the voters' endurance.

It may be too early to claim that there has been a re-thinking of the bottom-up strategy of democratization. Even if it proves to be the case, it is actually consistent to China's basic approach to reform as set by Deng Xiaoping, which focuses on implementing market-oriented economic reform while keeping a lid on political reform. But three decades of fast economic growth have been accompanied by enlarging gaps between the different regions and different social strata. Social tension has exerted pressure that tests the Party's governing ability. The pro-people policies and call for building a harmonious society have been put forward as a response to such social tension. If it has been proved that economic growth will not automatically solve social problems, it needs to be proven that the new pro-people policies can be effectively implemented. There has been an increasing consensus among Chinese officials and scholars that it is high time to introduce substantive and major political reform. The lowering implementation capability of

“The achievements made to date can only be consolidated with the momentum of sustained development”

the party-state bureaucracy and especially local governments are manifested by widespread corruption and internal inertia. Placing them under the supervision of the public is necessary more than ever before.

After two decades of competitive elections as carried out at village and township levels, major decisions need to be made on the categories of elections and simplified procedures. Mere repetition of various previous experiments is not advisable as there are too many categories and methods of elections and their procedures are too complicated. The achievements made to date can only be consolidated with the momentum of sustained development. The consequence of no progress is regression. With the suspension of direct township elections two years ago, the quality of the recently held Villagers' Committee elections

has deteriorated. Contrary to the practice in the recent past, the Chinese media has currently reported little on village elections. In this sense, if competitive elections will be permitted again as a showcase, they will not serve this purpose well without enlarged room for manoeuvre.

Consideration should be given to officially organizing the election of township Party and government leaders simultaneously with that of the People's Congress deputies. Reduction of the qualifications of candidates to the minimum can be directed to many elements. For example, aged above 18, literate, (if for the Party positions,) being a Party member. The

primary election should be open to more voters if not require the attendance of all voters. At least two kinds of “ticket systems” can be used. (1) The Party secretary and government head form a ticket; or (2) The government head selects the deputy leaders. Candidates should be permitted to conduct campaigns and be supported by volunteers. The means of the campaign (such as funds and use of media) should be specified in the campaign rules or regulations. The assembly of Party members and the People’s Congress must respect the will of the voters and endorse the result of a popular poll.

In short, more meaningful experiments require political decisions at the top. Sporadic piece-meal reforms are unlikely to contribute significantly to democratization.

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The Elections of Township Magistrates in Buyun, Dapeng and Linyi, 1998-1999

By Yanwei Liu



December 31 was the Election Day. 6,236 voters cast votes in eleven polling stations in the drizzling rain. 5,113 voters either did not come back from other places to vote or abstained from voting. Around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the public address system announced the election results. Tan Xiaoqiu got 3,130 votes (50.19%), Cai Xunhui received 1,995 votes, and Zhou Xingyi received 1,013 votes. On January 4, 1999, the 14th People’s Congress of Buyun Township passed a resolution, recognizing the electoral procedure and the election of the magistrate as valid and legal.¹ Tan took his oath and became the first township magistrate directly elected by the voters in China.²

Buyun, a small town of 16,000 residents, is under the jurisdiction of the Central City District in Suining Municipality, Sichuan Province. The Central City District has a population of 1.37 million and encompasses 37 townships. In 1998, reform-minded district Party leaders decided to experiment with new ways of selecting leaders at the township level. It is still unknown whether the idea was an outside suggestion or came from inside the District Party Committee. There was one report suggesting that Buyun township lead-

ers took the initiative and sought approval from the District government.³ According to *Southern Weekend* magazine, it was quite difficult for the District Party Committee members to give the go-ahead order since this could easily jeopardize their political careers. Yet, regardless of the source and considerations of this decision, Party leaders carried out the direct election of the township magistrate.

District Party leaders prepared an elaborate defense of their decision to launch a direct election. First, they claimed it was mandated by the Constitution because the Constitution made it clear that all political power belonged to the people. Second, at the 15th National Congress of the Party, Jiang Zemin called on the Party to perfect electoral methods at grassroots governments and self-governing organizations. Commenting on the motivation of taking this political risk, a district official said: “to expand grassroots democratization, direct election of township magistrates will be introduced sooner or later. If it was successful, we could create a model that others may follow. If it ended in failure, it could be a lesson for others to learn.”⁴

The final decision to have a direct election in Buyun was made on November 2, 1998. Buyun’s 10 villages had 11,349 registered voters.⁵ On November 27, “The Notice of

Directly Electing the Magistrate in Buyun Township” was broadcast on the closed-circuit public address system in the form of “Circular No.100 (1998) of the Central City District Government.” 6,000 letters were sent out to Buyun residents who were working elsewhere in the country, asking them to come back to participate in the election.⁶ Determined to proceed with the election, the Committee did not seek approval from higher authorities until two days before the election.⁷

As the first to experiment with a popular election of this scale, officials from the District worked together with the township government to establish the rules of the game. A Joint Election Precincts Steering Committee was formed to handle the nomination process, supervise the campaign, administer the election, and mediate any possible disputes. The Steering Committee subsequently decided not to use the *haixuan* or “sea selection” method for initial nomination. Instead, the Committee gave itself the authority to nominate final candidates after a primary that would be attended by a selective group of electors. Political parties and other mass organizations could also nominate candidates. Their candidates would enter the final stage of the election automatically. Individuals could nominate themselves or others but to be-

“To expand grassroots democratization, direct election of township magistrates will be introduced sooner or later”

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come a formal candidate required 30 signatures of endorsement. A limited primary would be used to whittle down the number of candidates.



[Zhang Jinming, promoter of the Buyun election]

There were 15 initial candidates who came from very diverse social and political backgrounds. The limited primary was conducted on December 15 to determine the final two candidates. The public interest was so high that the police had to set up a cordon to keep order. All 15 candidates were allowed to give a 20-minute speech and had 10 minutes to answer questions from township officials, village leaders, village small group leaders and three villager representatives from each village, totaling 162. This elite group then cast ballots to determine the final two candidates. The result was a shock even to the electors themselves. The entire township cadre corps of five candidates was

wiped out. A middle-school chemistry teacher, Zhou Xingyi, got 75 votes and Villager Committee Chair Cai Yunhui received 58 votes.

Tan Xiaoqiu, deputy Party secretary of Buyun and the township Party Committee's nominee got into the final round automatically.

With the final candidates determined, the campaign began. Initially, the open debates were characterized by angry complaints of everything that had impacted Buyun's life, including the exorbitant hog tax, the lack of roads, excessive fee collection, environmental pollution, an increasing education tax, tough family planning, and cadre corruption. The candidates had to endure voters who took advantage of this opportunity to show their discontent. In the latter half of the campaign, the attention of the voters shifted to whom, among the three candidates, was most qualified to lead Buyun out of poverty. Tan gradually emerged as a favorite among voters because of his sincerity, connections, and desire to serve Buyun and its people.

The official response to the Buyun election was mixed and it is still unclear where China's top leadership stands on the issue

Aftermath

The official response to the Buyun election was mixed and it is still unclear where China's top leadership stands on the issue. The first salvo came from the *Legal Daily* on January 15, 1999. In an editorial entitled "Democracy Cannot Overstep the Law," the author, Cha Qingjiu, accused the Buyun election of violating China's

Constitution and declared that it was incorrect to regard the election as a symbol that the Chinese people were capable of building socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics. He warned, however, “we cannot be too critical of the Buyun election... because the election demonstrated sharp democratic awareness of the people and this awareness should be protected by all means.” He also made a daring claim that the Buyun election shows that “democracy is not a patented product from the West.”

“Significant changes often take place in the countryside quietly”

Cha’s analysis of the Buyun election was not only interesting, but subtly argued. Democracy could not overstep the law, he wrote, because China had just undertaken the great cause of the rule of law. While the Constitution and the laws were not permanent, people should abide by the rule of law and engage in activities only once the Constitution and the laws are amended.⁸ Secondly, the current problem with China’s democracy was not that there were no direct elections, but that the people never took the direct elections at the township and county level seriously. He therefore recommended that the best approach to democratization was not to seek new paths, but to conduct people’s congress elections at all levels according to the law, and to strictly prevent any attempt to take these elections as a formality. He also emphasized that all efforts should be made to prohibit any violation or deprivation of voters’ democratic rights.

Strangely enough, on January 23, 1999 the *Legal Daily* seemingly reversed itself. In a short commentary on current affairs on the second page of the paper, there appeared the following passage:

Significant changes often take place in the countryside quietly. History has remembered Xiaogang Village that started the household responsibility system twenty years ago. By the same token, history will also remember Buyun Township for its effort to promote direct election of township magistrates. Xiaogang Village was the prelude of China’s economic reform. Will Buyun become a landmark of China’s political reform?⁹

Most officials who spoke with Western journalists seemed to embrace the Buyun election. A longtime observer of political reform in Beijing told a *Washington Post* correspondent, “Did the elections exceed the rules? Maybe—but if there are no breakthroughs, there is no reform. Everybody recognizes that in China.” A senior Chinese official who has been involved from the outset in the country’s tentative experiment with democratization stated: “This is the high-point of 10 years of democratic development.” A high-ranking Party official said he did not think that the Buyun election would be overturned or its participants arrested: “this is reform within the system; the opposition party was outside the system. It is not the same.”¹⁰

When asked of his opinion of the constitutionality of the Buyun election, Chen Sixi, an official from China’s National People’s Congress (NPC), the body which supervises all Chinese elections above the

village level, said, “Although it [the Buyun election] has some areas that do not completely coincide with the current law, it does seem to coincide with the spirit of the regulations.” The Buyun election brought up “a new question for discussion” in lawmakers’ efforts to “adapt to the common people’s demands for democracy.”¹¹ On February 26, Chinese Central Television (CCTV) broadcasted an extended news report praising the Buyun election. The announcer commented that the Buyun election “is another step forward in the process of deepening rural reform” and that there was “no need to analyze who first brought up the idea.” A senior official who has worked to promote democracy in the countryside told the *Washington Post* correspondent that the broadcast of the Buyun election by CCTV was an indication of the Chinese leaders’ endorsement of this act.¹²

“Linyi County, Shanxi Province, decided to introduce an element of popular choice in determining leading township officials”

This may be too optimistic. According to a report in Singapore’s *United Morning Daily*, the decision of the central Government in response to the Buyun election remains “to criticize but not to overturn.” While Tan Xiaoqiu is still serving Buyun as its first elected magistrate, the planned rerun of the Buyun election program on CCTV was abruptly cancelled. The Sichuan People’s Congress adopted a four-point decision on the Buyun election, which was approved by the NPC. The four decisions were delineated as the following: “the election in Buyun was unconstitutional; the election violated the organizational procedure of the Party be-

cause there was no request made to the appropriate provincial leaders for approval; the newly elected magistrate was the candidate endorsed by the District organization department, therefore the election result was recognized; and any secret experiment of this nature should be strictly prohibited in the future.”¹³

Considerations and other electoral developments

The Buyun experience has not been fully duplicated thus far and there is concern among some Chinese democracy strategists that it may be too big a leap for the top leadership to condone at present.

However, in the wake of the highly secretive but widely publicized Buyun election, local officials in Shanxi and Guangdong provinces conducted two experiments of elections at the township level with official endorsement and observation. With encouragement from the provincial government and assistance from Chinese scholars of elections, Linyi County, Shanxi Province, decided to introduce an element of popular choice in determining leading township officials. As a national model county in promoting villager self-government, county leaders were fully aware of the benefits of allowing farmers to exercise their democratic rights.¹⁴

Moreover, Linyi’s neighbor, Hequ County, became nationally known for a unique two-ballot system. Having tasted the fruit of direct elections of villager committees,

Moreover, Linyi’s neighbor, Hequ County, became nationally known for a unique two-ballot system. Having tasted the fruit of direct elections of villager committees,

villagers in Hequ began to question why village Party branch members were not subject to the same popular scrutiny and choice. Under pressure from rural voters and based on a successful trial in one village, in 1992 Hequ county decided that when it was time for the village Party branch to change term, Party members would subject themselves to an opinion poll by all eligible voters in the village. If the approval rating for any Party member fell below 50 percent, his or her candidacy for the Party branch would be automatically stripped.¹⁵

Linyi County leaders decided to apply Hequ's two-ballot system at the township level. The operation plan was that before each township was to have its people's congress and Party congress, the three leading officials of the township, the magistrate, Party secretary and the chairman of the Standing Committee of the Town People's Congress (TPC), should receive a confidence vote from all eligible voters in the township. This procedure would be performed at the same time that voters were electing TPC deputies. Officials receiving an 85% or higher approval rating would be praised in a written notice distributed countywide, and automatically granted the candidacy for the position they were running for. For those officials whose approval rating fell between 60%-70%, the county would launch an investigation of their performance, but this would not affect their candidacy. If candidates' approval rating dropped below 60%, they would be warned and asked to have a private meeting with senior county leaders. Those who had less than 50% approval rating would lose their candidacy and be

removed from their current leadership positions.¹⁶

In early April of 1999, Zhuoli, a township with a population of 13,271, was picked to be the pilot. Zhuoli has eight villages with an average income of \$300 per capita. Villages in Zhuoli had had four rounds of villager committee elections and voters were believed to be well versed in political participation. The Party secretary, Sun Jianguo, the magistrate, Yang Yanu, and the TPC chairman, Wang Zhenguo, all felt confident that they would survive the public evaluation. Yet, despite their confidence, all three made great efforts from April 12 to 15 to contact voters, air their achievements and deficiencies, and talk about what they would do if reelected. On April 16, more than 1,000 representatives, who represented the township administration, village Party branches, villagers' committees and villagers attended the meeting to hear their work reports. The county television station televised the meeting and an estimated 8,000 villagers saw the live broadcast.¹⁷

April 18 was the Election Day. The Zhuoli Township election leadership committee set up 17 polling stations with secret ballot booths. In addition to casting ballots for TPC deputies, voters were given a separate ballot to evaluate the current township leaders according to a three-tier scale: "confident," "relatively confident," and "not confident." The turnout rate was unprecedented. Of the 9,445 eligible voters in Zhuoli, 9,240 cast ballots. All three passed the test with flying colors. Sun, the Party secretary, received a 90.02 percent approval rating, Yang, the magistrate,

88.84 percent, and Wang, the TPC chairman, 88.17 percent.¹⁸

Some observers called the ballot system of injecting popular choice a failure because the officials went on to become the only candidates for the positions they were running for. Despite the intensive publicity campaign for the three involved in the poll, many voters still did not know who they were and what they had accomplished.¹⁹ However, many observers of the poll felt this was a breakthrough that, if implemented on a wider scale, would fundamentally change the CCP's personnel system and make the promotion procedure much more open and transparent.²⁰

A few days after the Linyi experiment, Dapeng, a township in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, conducted its own version of the two-ballot system. On the morning of April 30, 1999, Li Weiwen, a 48-year old government official, was unanimously elected by forty-five deputies of the Dapeng TPC and became the first township magistrate elected through "people's nomination" or *minxuan*.

The April 30 election, in fact, was just a confirmation of the result of an all-out primary that involved all eligible voters in Dapeng.²¹ To a certain extent, the Dapeng experiment was the Buyun election repeated with a conservative twist. Dapeng has a population of 6,900 with about 5,300 eligible voters. Like Buyun, Dapeng was chosen because it has a small population. It also had ideal conditions for the

experiment, such as a cohesive leadership corps and less aggressive farmers. According to Yang Chengyong, director of the Section of Liaison, Shenzhen People's Congress, it would be hard for things to get out of control in Dapeng.²²

In January 1999, the election leadership committee (ELC) of Dapeng announced that all eligible voters could nominate candidates for the position of township magistrate through a secret ballot in seventeen polling stations in the township. The whole nomination process lasted seven days, from January 21 to 27. A total of 5,048 voters participated in the nomination, a turnout rate of 97 percent. Seventy-six candidates were

“Officials at various levels, including the National People’s Congress, have keenly observed this election”

nominated with Li Weiwen receiving 3,323 votes. There were five other candidates who received more than 100 votes. According to the nomination procedure, those with more than 100

votes would enter a primary to determine the final candidates after an eligibility check by the ELC. The ELC dropped one candidate from the pool for reasons unknown to outsiders. The primary was held in a local theater with 1,068 electors, made up of local officials and household representatives. After hearing campaign speeches delivered by the five candidates, the electors voted to pick the final candidates. Li Weiwen received 813 ballots in this round. The ELC then submitted Li as the final and only candidate for the position of magistrate to the TPC.²³

From conversations with Chinese officials and a few newspaper accounts, it is un-

derstood that officials at various levels, including the National People's Congress, have keenly observed this election. The media was gearing for a full-scale blitz with more than nineteen domestic and overseas media agencies dispatching journalists to report the election.²⁴ This attempt was shut down when The "Guangzhou Evening News" ran a banner headline on April 28, declaring that the Party committee was withdrawing from the nomination process and that the two-ballot system would produce the first popularly nominated magistrate.

"Guangzhou Evening News," under attack from the Party's Propaganda Department, was forced to make an "important

correction" on the front page the next day. Editors of the News wrote that it had made a mistake in the previous day's reporting and would like to clarify the nomination procedure. The statement said that candidates were first nominated but final choice was made by the township Party committee and submitted to the District Party committee for approval.²⁵ This forced reversal clearly indicated the nervousness of the Party at the municipal and possibly higher, levels about loosening up the tight control on the nomination of candidates for executive positions. Both the Buyun and Dapeng elections posed a

direct challenge to the long-running tradition of the Party making all key decisions on personnel changes and promotions.

Since the "Guangzhou Evening News" episode not a single domestic media agency reported the story again. Even the usually active Hong Kong media became very quiet on the issue. It is important to note Dapeng did not propose this bold electoral experiment on its own. Rather, it was a pilot project for Shenzhen Municipality, which

had a strong desire to take the lead in local direct elections but did not want to repeat what was labeled as unconstitutional.

Shenzhen

officials must

have felt upset by the high drama in Buyun as it was the first municipal government that had requested the NPC to approve trial direct election of township magistrates. They decided to observe the Law, sending the popularly nominated and semi-directly chosen candidate to the TPC for final election. Ji Zhilong, secretary of the Dapeng Party committee, commented that if it was legal and good to have farmers directly elect their committee chairs, it was only pertinent for them to also nominate and elect township magistrates.²⁶



[Dapeng Township Magistrate election. Source: Southern Metropolis Daily]

Notes

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The Case of Yangji: Lessons from Township-level Success

By Nadir Shams



In August 2002, Jingshan County of Hubei Province initiated a pilot experiment for the direct elections of two positions in the town of Yangji: the Town Party Committee Secretary and the Town Magistrate.

The significance of this political experiment is that it marks the first successful direct township election in the town of Yangji. The purpose behind holding this election was to increase intra-party democracy and grassroots democracy at both the village and township levels.

Three factors led to the selection of Yangji as the chosen location for the direct election experiment in Jingshan County. Firstly, the political leadership in Yangji had already been strong and skilled prior to the election, minimizing the possibility of unpredictable risks during the election. Secondly, Yangji's population of approximately 15,000 residents is the smallest town in Jingshan County, reducing the risk of instability among local interests. Thirdly, Yangji is located in a mountainous area with underdeveloped transportation and communication systems, which are characteristics conducive to making the monitoring

process and supervision of the experiment more effective.

The Pre-election Process

In preparation of the historic direct elections on the township level, the Yangji town government produced several articles detailing the actions regarding the implementation of the Yangji experiment.

At the beginning of August 2002, the Jingshan County Party Committee established the "Yangji town and Village Election Leadership Group" as the official group to oversee and lead the implementation of the experiment. The small group consisted of current members of the Town's Party Committee, government, and members of the People's Deputy Congress. Committees under this leadership group performed the tasks of dividing Yangji into 25 election districts, and registering all eligible voters.

To inform the general public of the unprecedented experiment in Yangji, government officials employed methods of all kinds. Information conferences were held, radio broad-

casts were sent over the airwaves, posters and flyers were spread all over town, open letters were published, and surveys were distributed to the public. Additionally, to reach registered Yangji residents living elsewhere, a sizeable part of the campaign concentrated on motivating migrant workers to return home for the election. Team members attempted to contact them through letters, phone calls, and by asking relatives and friends to help locate and inform them. On August 8, 2002, Yangji town Party Committee and the town government sent out announcement letters of the upcoming town elections to a total of 9,469 citizens, including all eligible voters and all party members.

Elections Procedure Overview

The Yangji election followed a three-step process, known as the “two recommendation – one election” (*liangtui yixuan*) model. The three-step process is composed of recommendation, nomination, and the final election. Both elections of the two positions followed this three-step process, but corresponded with separate timelines after the initial step held on August 26, 2002.

On August 26, 2002, the first step was held for both the Town Party Committee Secretary and the Town Magistrate positions. The *haitui* voting style allowed the entire body of eligible voters to cast a vote. *Haitui*, the phrase literally translated as “sea-recommendation” represents the power given to all people to voice their recommendations to the government.

These initial recommendation processes for both positions had loose requirements for

those who were recommended to become candidates. Candidates for the Town Party Committee Secretary position were required to be official members of the CCP with a high degree of political awareness and with the ability to uphold the CCP ideology. Candidates for the post of the Town Magistrate were also required to be eligible voters and possess the qualifications required of a Town Magistrate. For both positions, additional requirements were as follows:

1. Eligible voter or official CCP member;
2. Holder of a junior college degree or higher;
3. 50 years of age or younger for male; 48 years of age or younger for a female;
4. In good health;
5. Working relationship with the town of Yangji;
6. Strong leadership skills.



[Vote counting in Yangji]

Eligible voters recommended their choices for preliminary candidates by casting one vote per position by secret ballot. After polls closed, the ballots were tallied on the spot, and an election official publicly announced the results. 7,727 people (81.6%) out of the 9,469 people eligible to vote participated in the nomination process.

Town Party Committee Secretary Election

For the post of the Town Party Committee Secretary, a list was compiled of eighteen preliminary recommended candidates.

On August 29, 2002, town party members had the chance to further pare down the list of eighteen to create the official nomination list. By voting for the recommended candidates, the two candidates who garnered the most votes became the final nominees for the election. Out of the top eighteen, Yan Tao and Zhou Shubin earned the most votes.

Less than a week later, on September 4th, the final step of the election process was held. Chinese Communist Party Deputies elected the Town Party Committee members who directly elected the Town Party Committee Secretary. Overall, 80 representatives voted and all 80 ballots were valid. As the final part of the election process and before the balloting, both official nominees had an opportunity to present their ideas and policy plans in a speech to the members of Congress. Yan Tao won the position of Town Party Committee Secretary, defeating Zhou Shubin by a vote of 69 to 11.

Town Magistrate Election

After the recommendation step of the election process for the position of Town Magistrate, a list of seventeen recommended candidates was compiled. Those who received the most votes for the position of Town Magistrate were Wan Xiaoping, Chen Weizhong, and Tong Qizhong.

On September 11, 2002, 443 Yangji town villager and urban representatives held an assembly, and chose two official candidates for the post of the Town Magistrate. Wan Xiaoping received 184 votes, Chen Weizhong received 166 votes, and Ton Qizhong only received 91. Consequently, Wan Xiaoping and Chen Weizhong were nominated as the two official candidates for the post of the Town Magistrate.

On September 16, 2002, the official candidates had a final opportunity to present their platforms to People's Congress Deputies in the form of a speech. After listening to both speeches, the 50 People's Congress Deputies voted, and Wan Xiaoping was elected Town Magistrate, beating Chen Weizhong by a vote of 32 to 18.

Higher-level party committees no longer wielded the power to officially nominate candidates for either position.

Implications

The Yangji election of 2002 marked several definitive changes to previous election styles and efforts to democratize and to increase the transparency of the nomination process. From this unprecedented election, higher-level party committees no longer wielded the power to officially nominate candidates for either position. Education-level requirements for nominees were lowered, as was the age to allow more people the opportunity to become candidates. This allowed all candidates to equally gain nominations, and allowed all candidates to participate in the election contest.



The “Color Revolution”, the Big Chill, and New Experiments

By Yawei Liu



By 2005, following the change of regimes in Central Asian countries and the Bush Administration’s call to support democratization in Asia, a big chill had descended upon China. Chinese reporters and scholars began to warn that the wave of the so-called “Color Revolution” would expand to China. An April 4, 2005 article by the *Liaowang News Weekly*, entitled “‘Color Revolution’ Reveals America’s Change of Strategy” warned that Washington was using democracy as a weapon to justify its legitimacy as a global leader and that it planned to work with Japan and South Korea to intensify the democratization assault on Asia.

In the summer of 2005, residents of Taishi Village on the suburbs of Guangzhou initiated a recall of their villager Committee chairman Chen Jinsheng, whom they elected back in April. The cause of the recall was that several plots of village land were graded for business development and most of the villagers had no clue when the deals were struck and who approved them. They filed a complaint with

the Panyu District government but saw no action taken. They then invoked the Organic Law and launched a petition to recall Chen Jinsheng. On August 29, a month after the petition was filed, the District government claimed that the signatures were forged and rejected it. The villagers began a hunger strike and surrounded the villager committee office to prevent any accounting records from being taken away. On September 12, armed police were dispatched and high-pressure water cannons were used to disperse the crowd, mostly old women from the village.

On September 15, an article appeared in the People’s Daily, praising the Taishi villagers’ heroic efforts to recall their leader, calling it “democracy on a pile of rocks.” This is a reference to Feng Qiusheng, leader of the recall effort, who read clauses from the Organic Law on a pile of rocks to villagers who participated in the recall and the blockade of the villager committee office. The article said that after the District government rejected the first petition request with 400 signatures, 5 villager representatives came back with a

new petition that had 800 signatures. When civil affairs officials went down to the village to verify signatures, hundreds of villagers went to the place where the verification was going to take place, including an old woman more than 100 years old. In an earlier article in the now shut-down web site “yannan”, the author, who was believed to be observing the villagers’ agitation in Taishi, called the Taishi recall the “Xiaogang of democratization in China.” This article cited five characteristics of the Taishi agitation. First, it was a combination of obeying the law, defending rights and protecting



[Taishi villager protest]

the constitution. Second, it used the practice of civil disobedience. Third, the hunger strike of limited scale but unlimited time could be used in the future as an effective weapon against an indifference regime. Fourth, it was not just the pursuit of economic rights that united the villagers. They were pursuing their political rights that were guaranteed by the law of the nation. Fifth, the initial success of the Taishi recall was due to the intersection of the small cohesive village with the society at large.

There were outsiders in Taishi. One of them was Lv Banglie, a fired people’s congress deputy from Hubei who was

looking for a job in Guangdong. He heard of the recall in Taishi and went there to provide advice. Guo Feixiong and Yao Lifa were also there. It became a battleground where societal forces and government control clashed. Western reporters learned of the recall and also showed up. One, a reporter from *The Guardian* went to Taishi in a car with Lv Banglie. They were pulled out by a bunch of people of unknown identity. Lv Banglie was severely beaten. The reporter filed a story of Lv having been beaten to death. However, this account was incorrect—Lv was badly injured but survived.

On September 18, Panyu District government held a briefing meeting, claiming that a small ring of thugs instigated the Taishi lawful recall efforts. Due to the unlawful and disruptive behavior of the villagers, the government took action on September 12 to clear out the villagers who participated in the sit-in outside the villager committee office. At the same briefing, an official accused “outside organizations and financial corps of secretly funding the agitation. A satire entitled “The Bush administration is manipulating the Taishi village election” appeared in the famous Chinese social critique web site www.cat898.com on September 20, 2005. Having learned of the

Panyu official accusation that Western agents were involved in the Taishi recall, the author said he could certainly understand why evil Americans chose Taishi—Taishi is a village in Panyu; Panyu is a district in Guangzhou; Guangzhou is the capital city of Guangdong; Guangdong is a province of China. Taishi is located in the Pearl River Delta, a strategic location guarding China’s southern gate. A Dongfeng missile deployed here could hit Australia; Australia is a good ally of Great Britain; Great Britain enjoys good relations with the United States. If one reverses the sequence, the control of Taishi by the United States will easily lead to the American control of China.

In the same month, an international conference of lawyers was held in Beijing. Both Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao met with foreign participants. Both talked about China’s determination to pursue democratization in China. Hu talked about four democracies: democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision. Wen was more specific, indicating a few years after villagers managed to run their villages they would learn how to manage a township. The system would eventually move upward.

On August 30, 2006, in an article that appeared in *Seeking Truth*, the mouthpiece of the Party’s theory apparatus, Sheng Hua-ren, secretary general of the Standing Committee of the NPC, made the warning of the “Color Revolution” official and linked it with China’s own elections. According to Sheng, “Internationally, the

enemy from the West is intensifying its strategic scheme to westernize and divide China. They make a big fuss on ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights and attempt to penetrate China through grassroots elections. These are new issues and new problems that are out there, unavoidable, that should not be neglected and must be handled with the utmost attention.” He asked leaders at all levels to promote voters’ participation and to prevent all outside interference. In Section 6 of the article, Sheng specifically declared that no popular nomination of candidates for township/town magistrates would be tolerated. They must be nominated by the presidium of the township/town people’s congress or by deputies freely associated. In the previous two rounds of elections, there were areas where township/town magistrates were popularly elected. Although they were attempted as democratic experiments, they violated the constitution and other relevant laws. In the upcoming elections, such practices should be strictly prohibited.

“A big chill descended and elections came and went, causing no domestic excitement or international attention”

With Sheng’s article circulated as a mandatory order from the Central government, all innovative practices ceased. A big chill descended and elections came and went, causing no domestic excitement or international attention. Programming and activities by international organizations, particularly those based in the United States were unilaterally terminated by their Chinese partners. There was the typical “waisong neijin” [loose behavior on the out-

side and tight control from the inside] in China.

This was best reflected by the trip memorandum written by John Thornton after his visit to China in late October 2006. Thornton reported that during a 75-minute conversation with Wen Jiabao, he saw the looming emergence of democracy of Chinese characteristics. In Wen's scheme, China's democracy has three important components: "elections, judicial independence, and supervision based on checks and balances." Thornton described Wen's vision as follows:

He could foresee the direct elections currently held at the village level, if successful, gradually moving up to towns, counties, and even provinces. What happens beyond that was left unsaid. As for a judicial system riddled with corruption, Wen emphasized the urgent need for reform in order to assure the judiciary's "dignity, justice, and independence." He explained that the purpose of "supervision" -- a commonly used term in China that is better translated as "ensuring accountability" -- is to restrain official power: "Absolute power, without supervision, corrupts absolutely." Wen called for checks and balances within the Party itself and for greater government accountability to the people. In his view, the media and even the 110 million Internet users in China should also participate "as appropriate" in supervision of the government.

"In Wen's scheme, China's democracy has three important components: elections, judicial independence, and supervision based on checks and balances"

Wen's description of the path of China's political reform seemed to be designed purely for foreign consumption. At the 16th Party Congress, Jiang Zemin referred to the four democracies as part of China's overall political reform efforts. He also said that expanding grassroots elections is fundamental to the development of socialist democracy in China. Toward the end of the section on political reform, Jiang talked about maintaining social stability. Five years later, at the 17th National Congress of the CCP, Hu Jintao spent more time talking about how democracy should be introduced but less on specifics. The most revealing paragraph is as follows:

In deepening political restructuring, we must keep to the correct political orientation. On the basis of ensuring the people's position as masters of the country, we will expand socialist democracy, build

a socialist country under the rule of law and develop socialist political civilization to enhance the vitality of the Party and the state and arouse the initiative of the people. We must uphold the Party's role as the core of leadership in directing the overall situation and coordinating the efforts of all quarters, and improve its capacity for scientific, democratic and law-based governance to ensure that the Party leads the people in effectively governing the country. We must ensure that all power of the state belongs to the people, expand the citizens' orderly participation in political affairs at each level and in every field, and mobilize and organize the

people as extensively as possible to manage state and social affairs as well as economic and cultural programs in accordance with the law.

Hu did say more about grassroots democracy than Jiang Zemin but focused little on how China was going to move fully into a new phase of political reform. There is a very dire lack of vision for political reform and no mention of using elections to deepen such reform. There was a section in Hu's report entitled "Comprehensively Carrying Forward the Great New Undertaking to Build the Party in a Spirit of Reform and Innovation". According to Hu, building up the Party requires intra-Party democracy and one of the methods recommended by him was to introduce a new personnel selection system. Hu said:

Adhering to the principle that the Party is in charge of cadre management, we will establish a scientific mechanism for selecting and appointing cadres on the basis of democracy, openness, competition and merit. We will standardize the cadre nomination system, perfect the cadre assessment system in accordance with the requirements of the Scientific Outlook on Development and a correct view on evaluating cadres' performances, and improve the procedures for open selection, competition for positions and multi-candidate election. We will expand democracy in the work related to cadres and make democratic recommendation and assessment more scientific and authentic. We must enforce stricter oversight over the whole process of selecting and appointing cadres.

A year has passed since Hu's call for innovative measures to democratize the Party. How much has happened? Is the CCP seriously pursuing opening leadership selection at various levels?

Democratization has to begin from the CCP: from the Qingxian model to the Guiyang experiment

Qingxian is under Cangzhou City in Hebei province. Since 2002, a series of governance and electoral experiments were introduced and selectively adopted. These innovative measures gradually became known as the Qingxian Model. In the words of its former Party Secretary, Zhao Chaoying, the Qingxian model is made up of four components: restructuring village governance, enhancing Party leadership, expanding democracy and standardizing village governance in accordance with the law. The current Qingxian model was, to a certain extent, co-opted and remodeled to fit the Party's requirement. Back when the Qingxian experiment was first noticed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, it was largely seen as a way to resolve the growing tension between the villager committee and the Party branch at the village level. Zhao Chaoying once summarized what he was trying to do as "let the Party be in charge of big issues and let the villager committee be responsible for concrete things". When asked to define "big issues" and "concrete things", Zhao said, "big issues" referred to recruiting members and member education and "concrete things" were related to village governance. Zhao's scheme of sidelining the Party at the village level was quickly seen by the officials

from the organization apparatus and they began to put tremendous pressure on him.

If one peels away all the rhetoric regarding the Qingxian model and looks at its core, it is easy to see it is indeed a bold effort to subject the Party to some sort of checks and balances in a way that will not offend the Party. What Zhao Chaoying was trying to do was to restructure the Party branch-villager committee relationship through

“It is indeed a bold effort to subject the Party to some sort of checks and balances in a way that will not offend the Party”

adding a villager representative assembly (VRA). The VRA is not a new development in China’s countryside. What is new in Qingxian is that the incumbent Party branch secretary runs for the speaker position of the VRA as well as the chairperson of the villager committee. If the Party secretary loses in the race, he or she will have to resign and a new Party branch election will be held. To

many scholars, the Qingxian model, if implemented nationwide, could possibly resolve the Party branch-villager committee tension and turn village governance into something truly participatory and democratic. Others question the legality of the VRA since the Organic Law did not make it a legal entity at the village level. Zhao Chaoying himself also said there were three seemingly insurmountable challenges to the Qingxian model. First, there is no legal foundation for the VRA chairmanship. Second, there are not clearly defined VRA member electoral procedures and their responsibilities. Third, there will be inevitable conflict between Qingxian regulations and national laws. Many doubt

its usefulness in actual governance. They believe the Party will never surrender its decision-making supremacy through chairing the VRA. However, Cao Yesong from the Central Party School sees unlimited significance to the Qingxian Model. There are 345 villages in Qingxian and more than 600,000 villages in China. Cao feels if this model could be applied to all villages there will be a vast system of accountability in place. If the system is to be applied at higher levels, it may lead to a new kind of democracy in China. The Qingxian model began long before the 17th Party Congress but it does fit into Hu’s framework of intra-Party democratization at the local level.

On May 28, 2008, the Party Committee of Guiyang Municipality made the decision to introduce a new method to “appoint” the next Party secretaries for four county level positions: Xiaohe District, Huaxi District, Xifeng County and Xiuwen County. On July 23, all four positions were filled after a very elaborate process, fascinating those who have been waiting for China to launch its political reform. Li Jun, Guiyang Party boss, said at the end of the Guiyang pilot that what happened in Guiyang was only a small test. Bigger and more difficult exams lie ahead. He thanked the 81 candidates who tried to win the four open offices and particularly commended the four final candidates who lost to their opponents during the last procedure, a vote among 48 members of the Municipal Party Committee. During his June 30 mobilization speech, Li Jun mentioned the Tian Fengshan and Hanguizhi case in Heilongjiang. He said of several hundred government officials in-

volved in the case, none was chosen through open, transparent and competitive procedures. “To let power operate under the sunshine is effective in preventing the abuse of and mistaken use of power.”

The Guiyang experiment was called “gongtui jinggang”, or open nomination and competitive selection. After the decision to open the process, a total of 82 candidates meeting the initial requirements (a candidate must be at the rank of deputy county magistrate or deputy Party secretary position) were nominated or self-nominated. An initial screening disqualified one candidate. The second procedure was to trim 81 candidates to 5 per county through a small scale primary. There were 275 electors. Except 19 that were ordinary Party members, the rest were all are movers and shakers in the Guiyang officialdom: leading officials from the municipal Party Committee, municipal government, municipal people’s congress and municipal political consultative conference and delegates to the national and provincial Party congresses. It is not clear how these electors got to know candidates or if they were told to vote for a particular set of candidates. After the votes were processed, the pool was trimmed to 20 candidates.

The third phase was known as “getting to know the place.” Each candidate was assigned a district and county and went to talk to the officials working in that district or county for three days. They would then

“To let power operate under the sunshine is effective in preventing the abuse of and mistaken use of power”

write a governance report in two days and submit to the “Gongtui Jinggang Leadership Commission” for evaluation. Each report would receive a score to be added to the total points. On Jul 14, all 20 candidates faced a 9-member panel and the same group of electors to defend their governance reports. To avoid any potential conflict of interest, all nine members came from outside Guiyang. One of the members was from the Organization Department of the CCP Central Committee. The defense was televised and transmitted live through the Guiyang television network and the Internet. Following their

presentation, the electors would vote again (a procedure that was not made clear by media reports).

On July 15, all candidates took a leadership capability test on the computer. There were 25 multiple-choice

questions designed by the CCP Organization Committee. The weight for the five procedures was determined to be 2:2:2:3:1 respectively. Based on the final scoring, the top two vote getters for each position became the final candidates and the other three were dropped from the roster. On July 23, the final eight candidates each delivered a campaign speech to 48 members of the Municipal Party Committees. Although the point difference between the final two candidates for each position was quite small, the vote outcome in four races was shockingly lopsided (Xiaohu: 39:9; Huaxi: 42:6; Xiuwen: 46:2 and Xifeng: 47:1). It is hard to believe that the two candidates were so far apart from each

other but we are not certain if this outcome is the result of the Organization Department officials manipulating the voters.

The Guiyang experiment triggered a flurry of media reports in China and in Guiyang, a winner told the reporter from Liaowang, the new greeting in Guiyang is “Have you studied today?” This is a reference to the fact that if one does not have enough knowledge there is no way for him or her to win in the race to be promoted. The same winner also said, “We have made our pledges in front of a big audience through television. We will be scolded if we do not deliver.” *Study Times*, a publication of the Central Party School, ran an article entitled “A political science interpretation of open nomination and open election”. According to the author, similar elections were also conducted in Nanjing but the open positions were for the government, not for the Party. Both the Nanjing model and the Guiyang model reflect the supremacy of the CCP in leadership and governing in that the final procedure is the vote by the members of the municipal Party committee. This approach does not contradict the current ironclad arrangement of the Party making all personnel decisions, but creates a huge space for meaningful democracy within the party to flourish. Although the Party controls the entirety of the procedures, it cannot dictate and manipulate the final outcome. This is what democracy is all about. It transforms rule by men into rule by procedures.



TRANSLATION:
FOUR METHODS OF “OPEN
NOMINATION AND DIRECT ELECTION”

*By Zhang Changjiang and Huang Yongle
Translated by Sean Ding*

The Open Nomination and Direct Election (ONDE) of basic level Party cadres is a more democratic approach to the traditional way of selecting cadres. It is an attempt at implementing democratic governance by changing the rule of cadre selection from “individual centered” to “team centered”. The direct election of basic level Party leadership teams is beneficial to the integrity, accountability, and efficiency of basic-level Party organizations; however, the effectiveness and impact of the elections is subject to the choice of different electoral procedures. This analysis constitutes an effort to assess the effectiveness of ONDE by discussing the pros and cons of the different methods used by Party leadership teams at the township level.

The first method is “bottom-up election”. It means selecting the members of the Party committee, then the secretary and the deputy secretary. This method is appropriate when most of the candidates are from the same town or township.

According to Article 29 of the Party Constitution, the basic level Party committees shall be elected directly by the Party members during the Party convention, but whether the secretary and deputy secretary can be directly elected is not specified.

Nonetheless, conducting bottom-up elections is not against the Party Constitution and the Provisional Regulations on the Grass-Roots Election, because both instruments allow nominating and selecting the secretary and deputy secretary from the directly elected Party Committee members. This method has given the Party members the right to vote directly for the secretary and deputy secretary, and is a breakthrough from the traditional approach in which only committee members have the votes.

However, some problems that deserve attention have emerged from such an approach. First, many out-of-town candidates only want to participate in the race for the secretary and deputy secretary. In the event that they were elected Party Committee members but later failed to win the election for the secretary and deputy secretary, these candidates may not necessarily choose to work in the town in which they ran for office. As a result, it is difficult to hold them accountable for the Party Committee seats they occupy.

Another problem is that since the candidates for the secretary and deputy secretary are nominated simultaneously with the Party Committee members and confirmed before the election, if some of the candidates lose the Committee election, there will be no competition and even not enough candidates in the election for the secretary and deputy secretary. Therefore, from the perspective of procedural design, the “bottom-up” elections have some inherent flaws and need to be put in practice and subjected to more testing.

The second method is “top-down election”—the secretary and deputy secretary will be elected before the Party Committee election. This method is applicable when the candidates have diverse backgrounds and come from different places. As an innovative attempt, the procedures of this method entail the following steps:

First, during the Party convention, candidates for the secretary and deputy secretary deliver speeches and engage in debates, while candidates for the Party Committee only make self introductions; second, 1 Party secretary, 2-3 deputy secretaries and 5 Party Committee members will be directly elected in the Party convention. The dropouts can either withdraw from the election, or participate in the next level of election (Party Committee election). In this case, if the dropouts choose to participate in the next round of elections, the competitiveness of the Party Committee election will increase.

The original article titled “*Gongtui Zhixuan de Sizhong Fangshi*”, was published on *Study Times (Xuexi Shibao)* on January 19, 2009. To read the article in Chinese, please go to: <http://www.xuanju.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=141747>

The “top-down” approach also has a number of disadvantages. One major problem is that it lacks a strong theoretical basis. From an institutional design perspective, because the Party Committee election is held after the secretarial race, candidates for the secretary and deputy secretary will become de facto Party Committee members. While this is acceptable in the routine appointment of Party secretaries, it is improper to do so in an election. From both theoretical and practical standpoints, if Party

Committee elections were held before the race for the secretary and deputy secretary, it is by all means possible that a potential secretarial candidate may lose the Party Committee election and thus lose his or her candidacy for the secretary or deputy secretary.

Moreover, the “top-down” method would create uncertainties for the appointment of lower-level Party cadres, because when out-of-town candidates lose their election for Secretary, it is possible that they will withdraw entirely and not participate in the next round of elections.

The third method is “cross-branch election”. This method entails the coordinated election and cross branch appointment of the three branches (township Party committee, township government, township People’s Congress). It is applicable when there is an oversized bureaucracy and complex relationships between the Party and the government. The 4th Plenary of the 16th Party Congress made the decision that “the scope of appointing Party and governmental leadership members on a cross-branch basis shall be broadened in order to reduce the number of leaders”, thus providing the cross-branch approach sufficient policy support.

With regards to the number of the leaders in the three branches, a total of 9-11 is considered appropriate: 9 for townships with a population of less than 40,000 and 11 for those with a population of more than 40,000. Posts within the three branches should include Party secretary,

township mayor, deputy Party secretary, deputy mayor and People’s Congress chairman. For instance, in a 9-person leadership team, the cross-branch appointment would be: 1 Party secretary who also serves as mayor; 3 deputy Party secretaries, with one in charge of Party affairs and the other two holding the concurrent positions of secretary of Discipline Inspection Commission and deputy mayor; 5 Party Committee members, with one serving concurrently as People’s Congress chairman, and the other 4 as deputy mayors each in charge of Party organization, publicity and the People’s Armed Forces. One or two more deputy posts may be added if a township has an advanced economy, a relatively large population, or a broad geographic span.

Cross-branch elections are conducted by nominating, inspecting and confirming the candidates for the leadership positions for the three branches at the same time. Conventions will then be held. First, township Party Committee leaders will be elected at the Party convention. Second, the township People’s Congress will be convened, where a single-candidate election for township mayor will be held, with the newly elected Party secretary as the sole candidate. The three deputy Party secretaries elected at the Party convention will also participate in the People’s Congress election, where two of them will be elected deputy mayor and chairman of the township People’s Congress. Lastly, 3-5 deputy mayors will be elected from the rest of the newly elected Party Committee members.

If the responsibilities of the three branches are not clear and their duties overlap, the leadership teams will become vulnerable to “buck passing” and the method of “cross-branch election” may lead to the Party replacing the government (*yidang daizheng*).

The fourth method is “secretary-forms-a-cabinet”, meaning that a directly elected township Party secretary will nominate a cabinet after assuming office. The institutional design in some townships has given the secretary elect the right to nominate candidates for the township Party and government leaders. Such experiments are unprecedented and have attracted significant attention. Although this method is capable of reducing internal friction and clarifies responsibility and supervision, several trends need to be prevented. The political and organizational procedures of the cabinet nomination must be carefully studied in order to avoid the dilemma of the Party organization losing control and democracy becoming a mere formality. Second, to some extent, nominating a cabinet is not a development in democracy but rather a step towards further centralization, because the Party secretary has the right to nominate all deputy positions. Third, this method creates problems for the supervision of the top leader, one of the main obstacles in the cadre system reform. If the deputy secretaries and mayors are all nominated by the Party secretary, to whom they are directly responsible, it is difficult for the same-level oversight within the leadership teams and may lead to unchecked and unsupervised power.



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