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The Impact of Elections on the Village Structure of Power: the relations between the village committees and the Party branches

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Village committee elections are one of the major innovations of the reform era. Electoral processes have elicited much scholarly and public attention. Less attention has been devoted to studying the impact of this innovation on the relations between the elected village committee chair persons and the appointed Party secretaries. This article shows that conflicts can arise between the two because the basis of their legitimacy and authority differs. A concrete instance of conflict is control over collective economic resources and financial decisions. The field research on which much of this article is based was done in southern Guangdong, where villages tend to be quite industrialized and wealthy. In these villages, control had hitherto been vested in the secretaries. Now, town leaders had to adjudicate jurisdictional disputes between village committees and the Party branches. Often they preferred to side with the latter, since secretaries were likely to be more responsive to their superiors than elected village chiefs. A solution to these conflicts that is now being widely adopted in rural China is to require that Party secretaries run for the post of village committee chair, thereby in effect merging the two institutions.

Introduction

Village elections have rightly aroused much attention among scholars within and without China. A substantial literature examines the electoral process—its fairness, openness, and competitiveness.[1] Increasing attention is also being devoted to the

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1. For an excellent overview of research on these topics, see the special issue of *China Quarterly*, (162), 'Elections and democracy in Greater China', (June 2000).

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longer-term impact of the elections on rural politics. Survey research by Li Lianjiang, for instance, shows that where elections are fair, elected leaders come under greater pressure from their constituents to act on behalf of their interests.[2] This article seeks to contribute to our understanding of the impact of elections by focusing on the relations between the elected village committees (VC) and the village Party branch (VPB), particularly those between the VC chairperson and the Party branch secretary. This is also an issue that is now receiving some attention in the literature.[3]

The introduction of direct elections of the village committees and of the establishment of the village assemblies or representative assemblies (VRA) implied the diversification or pluralization of formal political power in the villages. Power was now based on two different sources of authority. The VC chair was elected 'from below' (*zi xia erh shang*). His/her authority was based on the consent of the governed, the voting citizenry. The Party secretary's source of authority was his/her status as an agent of the Chinese Communist Party as a whole. He/she was chosen from above (*zi shang erh xia*) by the superior Party committee and his/her selection was ratified by the branch members who constituted only a small fraction of the adult population. Because a VC chair was elected by the entire population, he/she was likely to enjoy greater legitimacy among villagers and to enjoy their trust to a greater extent than the appointed VPB secretary. The major, underlying question is whether and to what extent the elections posed a challenge to the power and legitimacy of the CCP's primacy in rural areas and if so, what the regime could do about this.

Before the introduction of direct elections, the village Party secretary had been the undisputed boss of the village (*yibashou*). Now, power was supposed to be shared. To be sure, the 'Organic Law on the Organization of Villager Committees' (henceforth, Organic Law) specified that the Party should be the 'leadership core'.[4] It should exercise leadership 'over important matters' while the VC should take charge of specific issues. But so ambiguous a formula said little about concrete jurisdictional issues and the division of labor between the two leaders. Chinese scholars and officials devoted much attention to the question of how to distinguish the two roles but usually only reiterated the general principle of Party primacy.[5]

This analysis of the VC–VPB relationships is based on fieldwork by scholars from Guangzhou's Zhongshan University, chiefly Guo Zhenglin, supplemented by findings from Guo's research in Hunan and Jiangsu carried out between 1995 and 1998. The research was done in Southern Guangdong in the form of periodic investigations in villages in three Guangdong municipalities, Zhongshan, Xinhui and Nanhai, in the period from February to September 1999. In September 1999, Thomas Bernstein joined in the fieldwork. This included interviews with town and

2. Li Lianjiang, 'Elections and popular resistance in China', *China Information* XV(2), (2001), pp. 1–19.
3. See, for instance, John James Kennedy, 'The face of 'grassroots democracy' in rural China: real vs. cosmetic elections', *Asian Survey* XLII(3), (May/June 2002), pp. 456–482.
4. *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Cunmin Weiyuanhui Zuzhi Fa* (Beijing: Falu Chubanshe, 1989).
5. See for instance, Xu Yong, 'Lun cunmin zizhi beijing xia dang zuzhi yu zizhi de xietiao' ['On coordinating party and self-governing organizations against the background of villager autonomy'], *Xuexi yu Luntan* (1), (1998), pp. 89–92.

village cadres, and villagers' representatives. Part of the research involved participation in an investigation of 'villagers' self-government and rural transition' in February and March 1999 by departments of Zhongshan municipality, which covered 25 villages in 12 towns. From April to June, formal and informal interviews were conducted with cadres in the towns and villages of Pingzhou and Nanzhuang. In September, in Xinhui, with the help of the Xinhui city Youth League, research was done in three towns and three villages, which included six meetings with cadres from the towns and villages. Topics studied included village elections, the relationship between the VPBs and the VCs, and villagers' burdens.

The field research was done at a crucial period of time. Unlike other provinces Guangdong did not hold village elections until 1998–1999. Until then, there had been a system of rural administrative districts (*nongcun guanli qu*), whose cadres were appointed by the towns and who had no independent authority but were simply the agents of their superiors.[6] Beginning in 1998 and through the first half of 1999, rural reform in Guangdong aimed at replacing the administrative districts with elected VCs in order to implement villagers' self-government.[7] After the elections, the issue of allocation of authority in the villages arose and caused substantial conflict. How did this conflict work itself out? We begin by briefly examining Party leadership in the countryside, followed by case studies of conflict from several villages, an analysis of the role of the towns and higher authority in these conflicts, and an analysis of the emerging return to one-person leadership, albeit under new conditions.

The crisis in the rural Party

The social and economic changes that swept through rural China beginning with decollectivization had, as is well known, a deleterious impact on village Party branches. As of 2001, there were 1,357,000 rural grass roots branches with a membership of 29.5 million. From 1994 to 2000, 356,000 were rectified because they were 'weak, listless', paralyzed, or because they presided over backward or poverty-stricken villages. The goal was to revitalize them, raise their level of competence, recruit new, younger members, and, to instill in the branch members 'democratic' consciousness and methods. The Party secretaries and the branch members were to be educated to make village affairs public (*cunwu gongkai*) and to practice democratic politics, including village elections.[8]

Traditionally, as noted, village Party secretaries monopolized village-level power. They allocated tasks according to the principle that 'the Party secretary is

6. On the power relations between the administrative districts and town Party-governments, see Guo Zhenglin, 'Chinese Party and government relationship in transition: the reform of Guangdong rural power structure', paper delivered at the 5th Annual Conference of the David C. Lam Institute for East–West Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University and the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies at Lund University, Lund, Sweden, 18–20 October 1999.

7. On the process of the reform, see 'Shishi cunmin zizhi: Guangdong nongcun guanli tizhi de zhuanxing' ['Implementing villagers self-government: the transition of the Guangdong rural administration district system'], in Guo Zhenglin, *Zhongguo Cunzheng Zhidu* [*The Village Political System of China*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Wenlian Chubanshe, 1999), pp. 137–150.

8. *Xinhua*, (14 June 2001), in *FBIS* (614), (16 June 2001).

in command and mobilizes cadres into action' (*shuji guashuai, fenbing bakou*). The monopoly of power, it is important to note, extended to control over village collective economic resources, which in southern Guangdong, an area of highly developed TVEs, was of major significance. Under Guangdong's system of rural administrative districts, Party secretaries often were also the heads of the village economic committees (VEC). Party secretaries usually kept the financial accounts under wraps, a situation that elicited popular distrust and anger.[9]

In national perspective, the monopoly of power had both beneficial and harmful results. In some famous cases, such as Huaxi village in Jiangsu province and Nanjie and Liuzhuang villages in Henan, extraordinarily successful economic development took place under the leadership of powerful secretaries.[10] The resulting high standards of living led to villager contentment and social peace. Some Chinese observers believed that the key to economic development and social stability in the rural areas lay in finding capable and competent VPB secretaries.

But for every success story of effective, developmental leadership by a VPB secretary, a counter example can be cited of tyrannical rule and gross abuse of power. Some secretaries acted as local emperors (*tu huangdi*). Some were said to be more vicious than the worst of the landlords of old. One such tyrant acquired the name Huang Shiren, the notorious landlord in the ballet, 'White Haired Girl'. A famous case is that of Yu Zuomin of Daqiu village in Tianjin city, who led the village's extraordinary economic development, but who frequently defied higher authority and grossly abused his power, including complicity in murder, which eventually landed him in prison.[11] Another such case was that of the secretary of Fenghuo village in Shaanxi, who after the Great Leap Forward managed to become a deputy secretary of the municipal Party committee by means of bragging, cheating, and making use of clan relationships.[12] Of course, most secretaries fell between the two extremes. But the problem of abuse of power and the consequent chronic tensions between cadres and peasants was serious enough to prompt the regime to decide that major remedial measures were needed.

In Southern Guangdong, the rural Party was beset by several serious problems, of which two stood out. One was the deterioration of the Party's image in the eyes of the villagers as a result of corruption. Many farmers said that 'the red caps have the power to engage in corrupt behavior. The more corrupt they are, the more they praise the leadership of the Communist Party'. An official disclosed that in a Zhongshan city village, the inhabitants had submitted a collective petition to the Civil Affairs Bureau, complaining that their VPB had sold land for 100 million RMB, of which villagers only saw 900,000. The rest simply disappeared. The petitioners defiantly said: 'Why do the superiors like to put "red caps" on these blood-suckers? They've ruined land which was passed to us from generation to

9. Interviews, Guangzhou Civil Affairs Bureau, May 1999.

10. For a study about them and their villages, see Feng Zhi, *Zhongguo San Da Cun* [*Three Famous Chinese Villages*] (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1998).

11. See Bruce Gilley, *Model Rebels: The Rise and Fall of China's Richest Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

12. See Lu Yaogang, *Daguo Guomin* [*Great Nation's Populace*] (Beijing: Zhongguo Dianying Chubanshe, 1998).

generation'.[13] Peasants deeply resented such leaders. If villagers were able to elect the VPB secretaries, they wouldn't hesitate to throw such 'exploiters' out. Corruption severely damaged the image of the Party and often resulted in villagers rejecting Party member candidates for the VCs.

The introduction of direct elections created a rival authority that confronted the village Party with the challenge of regaining its authority in the eyes of the people. Many peasants, whose political awareness had grown, felt that the VCs genuinely represented them and hence should be the repositories of their trust. How then could the VPB's authority as the core of the leadership be regained and maintained? This dilemma was behind experiments with subjecting prospective Party secretaries to a test of popular approval, of which the two-ballot system in Huoqu county, Shanxi, is the best know example. Under this system, villagers could recommend which of the Party members they preferred as branch secretary.[14] It differed from the system of concurrent office-holding, which obliged the Party secretary to establish his/her popularity by winning the VC election (cf. last section).

The second problem was lagging recruitment of young people. The rural Party organizations were aging everywhere. In one town in Southern Guangdong, more than half of the 800 Party members were over 60 years of age. Many elderly Party secretaries who had been in office since the Mao era were not qualified to cope with the tasks of modern management, especially of large TVEs. Without the recruitment of younger, capable managers, the Party was in danger of becoming increasingly irrelevant. Now that the VPB had a competitor in the form of the VC, if it was to continue to be a significant player in village affairs, it had to have the managerial capacities to do so.

An investigation report by a municipal Party committee pointed out that fewer and fewer of the talented emerging social and economic elites were applying to join the Party. Opportunities to make money reduced the incentive to join the Party. As one village cadre, a VC secretary, observed, 'Now what is most useful is a bank note (*chapiao*), not a Party card. Soon our VPB will become a "white haired branch" '.[15] Conversely, where there were fewer opportunities for individual advancement, joining remained an attractive option for young opportunists. 'I think I'll first join the Young Pioneers, then the Communist Youth League and finally the Communist Party. I will go to work in a Party committee after graduation. With power, things can easily be done, such as getting jobs for your children'; and, 'we all want to join the Party. This is because you can get promoted when you are a Party member. You can have power when you are promoted. And with power you can become rich. None of the Party members in our village are now poor'.[16]

Party branches were told to concentrate their energies on the recruitment and training of new members so as to rejuvenate and reinvigorate the membership. At

13. Interview with official of Guangdong's Civil Affairs Bureau, May 1999.

14. See Li Lianjiang, 'The two-ballot system of Shanxi: subjecting village party secretaries to a popular vote', *China Journal* (42), (July 1999), pp. 103–118.

15. Village survey of Zhongshui, Hunan, January 1996.

16. Stanley Rosen, 'The Chinese Communist Party and Chinese society: popular attitudes toward party membership and party image', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* (24), (July 1990), pp. 51–92.

the same time, subjecting the Party branches to implicit or explicit competition by the VCs would also, it was hoped, provide an incentive to them to raise their capabilities.

VC challenges to the Party branches after the elections

Initially, the elections caused a great deal of confusion and uncertainty over the delimitation of authority both among the Party secretaries who wore the 'red cap' and the VC chairmen who wore the 'yellow cap'. Bewildered Party secretaries asked their superiors what use it was to have elected chairpersons as long as there was the core leadership by the Party? By the same token, the village chairs were also perplexed: if the leadership of the Party must be adhered to, why bother with elections in the first place? For their part, the superior town officials worried whether the elected VCs would fully carry out the instructions of the towns in the same way as when cadres had been appointed.

Conflicts over VPB refusal to surrender power to the VC were common in Guangdong. One source was financial control. As an official of the Guangdong Civil Affairs Bureau put it 'the major complaint in the replacement of the administrative districts with village governments is that the original rural cadres refused to hand over control over financial and other affairs to the VCs'. In addition to economic power, the right of appointment of cadres also caused disputes. The following four cases, based on records of meetings with village Party secretaries and VC chairpersons convened by town Party committees, provide vivid illustrations of conflicts that arose when VCs sought to assert their new power.

1. Daling village, Huoju town, Zhongshan city

The VC's newly elected chairman, not a Party member, had been the manager of a factory under the village corporation (*gongsi*) and naturally had always obeyed the secretary's orders. Once elected to the new office, however, he sought to take charge of the finances of the village collective assets, as stipulated in the Organic Law, leaving the secretary only with the 'hammer and sickle'—his seal of office—but without economic power. Yet, the same law, as noted, stipulated that the VPB was the 'core' leadership which should decide 'important matters'. The Party secretary, a man in his fifties, was confused and indignant: was this not an attempt by people outside the Party to seize power? What the 'leadership core is supposed to mean is beyond my comprehension', he said, noting that 'there are seven or eight articles in the Law which prescribe the functions of VCs, and they are very concrete and specific', reinforcing his impression that his power had been drained of substance. If important decisions were to be confirmed by our Party branch, then what was the use of the Villagers' Representatives Assembly (VRA), he complained. He stubbornly insisted 'that since the Party's leadership is predominant everywhere, your VC cannot be exempted'. The VC director responded:

> I do not mean to oppose the leadership of the Party branch, which must be conducted in accordance with the Law. But it stipulates that the VC chairman is the legal

> representative of the village economic collective and is supposed to take charge of village accounts, money and personnel. Furthermore, if there is any mistake with village affairs, the villagers will not accuse your VPB but the VC. How can it be possible that you wield the 'the big power' and I bear the responsibility?[17]

Complying with higher-level demands, the Party secretary handed over the account books and the seals, leaving him with little to do, while the VC chairman became an extremely busy man. He chaired the VC meeting at which tasks were allocated among the members. He worked out procedures for the VC, he posted data on village affairs, he settled villager disputes, received superior officials, and he devoted himself to planning the village's future development. The VC member in charge of economic affairs dealt with the management of the village enterprises, was responsible for enterprise safety and the supply of water and electricity, and supervised enterprise operation. The committee member in charge of security ran the village security team and coordinated activities with the town public security office. Another member was in charge of villagers family planning and assisted the town in the administration of migrant populations and their birth control.

Nominally, the Party secretary was still in control as the *yibashou.* He continued to chair meetings on issues which required joint action by both the secretary and VC chairman, such as comprehensive management of security and family planning. The 'responsibility' documents (*ziren shu*) on security and family planning also required both signatures, because the superiors wanted to make sure that both leaders were bound to them.

Without economic power, the secretary felt that these functions were useless. He was often absent, playing mahjong, and left other VPB members free to do as they wished. The superiors regarded this kind of branch as weak and paralyzed. In the two months after the village elections, from December 1998 to January 1999, around 10% of the VPBs in Zhongshan city were in the same situation as the Daling village branch. However, by March 1999, we were told that most of them had been 'readjusted' and had now reached the 'four standards' with regard to 'revolutionization', proper age distribution, educational attainments and professionalism. In these villages, the weakened conditions of the VPBs was apparently a temporary one.

2. Zhangjia village, Zhongshan

In Zhangjia village, Zhongshan, conflict also arose over control of economic assets. The village economic development company had assets of over 50 million RMB and a net annual income of over 5 million. Half of the 9,000 villagers were shareholders and only they were entitled to its welfare distribution. Under the district administration system, the Party secretary had concurrently served as the head of the board of directors, while the head of the administrative district was the general manager, but it was the secretary who held the decision-making power. The newly elected village chairman was in his thirties. He had studied economics in college as a self-financed student and then returned to the village. The Party

17. Interviews, Zhongshan, March 1999.

secretary had employed him as his assistant. In late 1998, he was nominated as one of the candidates for VC chair and elected by a wide margin, apparently because of his competence.

From then on his good personal relations with the Party secretary soured over the issue of control. As in the preceding case, if the Party secretary continued to be in control while the VC chairman held the overall responsibility, an intolerable situation would arise. But if the VC chair were to take over, he would in effect be openly seizing power from the veteran secretary, in the process deeply offending his old mentor. After giving the matter some thought, the VC chairman did officially claim his legal rights. The Party secretary thereupon cursed him, accusing him of 'pulling down the bridge after crossing the river', i.e. of ingratitude.

3. Shabian village, Zhongshan

In Shabian village, also in Zhongshan, the Party secretary was an old cadre first recruited during land reform. Having worked assiduously for the villagers for so many years and having contributed so much to the booming collective economy, he felt he deserved people's respect and saw no reason why villagers would oppose him. Nevertheless, a conflict arose over the question of auditing accounts, a crucial issue for villagers. The old secretary complained that the villagers did not show gratitude even though he had been an honest and incorruptible cadre. He said:

> There are always some troublemakers (*pingtan gaoshou*) in the village, who are not satisfied with whatever cadres do and constantly look for pretexts to find fault with them.[18] They like to file complaints with higher-level authorities even though they don't have evidence of wrongdoing and inflict great pain on the cadres. There are troublemakers among the villagers' representatives. In my village, the 18 elected 'clear-accounts representatives' viewed us as enemies. They arbitrarily demanded that the deputy Party secretary hand over the account books of the village economic committee. But he refused, pending my return from the town. Since they couldn't find the books, they broke the windows of the branch office and detained the deputy secretary, whom they told to confess as if he were a landlord under interrogation. The town police and I arrived with a video camera, but the villagers surrounded us and blocked the car for nine hours. Troublemakers make a storm out of a teacup. Does the law on village organization entitle them to take illegal actions and ignore Party leadership?

He then bitterly recounted how the elected representatives collected the account books and posted three guards to keep watch over them. Ten or so people spent days examining them. Their leader went so far as to duplicate data from them, which he posted and sent to the municipal anti-corruption bureau, accusing the village cadres of embezzlement. The municipal authorities responded that this method of checking the accounts was wrong. Villagers, however, invoked the 'Law on Village Organization', claiming that it was up to the VRA to decide whether or

18. '*Pingtan gaoshou*' is the equivalent of '*diaomin*', troublemakers. Cf. Li Lianjiang and Kevin O'Brien, 'Villages and popular resistance in contemporary China', *Modern China* XXII(1), (January 1996), pp. 30–47.

not to examine the accounts. The VRA indeed voted to continue examining the accounts. The Party secretary complained, 'I cannot understand who is the boss, the villagers or the superiors. If even the superior leaders can be disobeyed on issues such as the examination of the accounts, what will be next? Will the affairs of our Party branch also be decided by taking a vote?'[19]

4. Da'ao village, Huidong county

When corruption was not just suspected but real, conflict became even more acute. In Da'ao village all the cadres of the original administrative district lost the elections. Villagers called them a 'swarm of locusts', charging that the Party secretary who had replaced the old corrupt one in 1997, had learned nothing from his predecessor's fate, but was even more blatantly engaged in selling collectively owned land and embezzling collective funds. The havoc wreaked by these worthies was such that only some 20 mu of farmland remained of the original 200 mu. The ten million RMB which the village received for the land sales was wasted or embezzled, leaving the village without resources. The new VC had to borrow 2,000 yuan from the town government before it could even begin to check the books. Yet, the Party secretary, who resented his loss of the elections, adamantly refused to hand over the account books and other records despite repeated requests by the VC chairman and the urgings of town cadres. As he put it,

> Huang Tengzhu (the elected chairman) and his men are not Party members. They are poorly educated and their quality is low. Some have been subjected to reform through labor. They are unqualified as cadres and are not entitled to lay down the law to the Party branch or to govern the masses. They have not prepared the VC's plan. How can I transfer power to them?

Most likely, the Party secretary was afraid that his misdeeds would be exposed.

The power of appointments also became a source of friction. The Party branches had always controlled appointments of village cadres. Now, the VCs threatened to take this away from them as well. For example, after the elections in Jiangwei village of Huoju town, Zhongshan, the VC chairman fired the Youth League secretary and the head of the village militia without consulting the Party secretary, and he also prepared to remove some department managers of the village-owned company. His intent was to solidify the power of the VC. Moreover, the director felt that it was unreasonable for the village collective to pay the wages of the Youth League secretary. As for the militia head, if his subsidy was to be paid out of the village budget, the VC or VRA would have to decide how much it should be. Of course, the Party secretary could not tolerate this affront and he immediately petitioned the town Party secretary, who told the VC director to correct his mistakes at once. The VC director replied: 'This was a VRA decision which cannot be rescinded unless the VRA is reconvened'. It seems that the

19. Interviews, Zhongshan, March 1999.

traditional Party control over cadres was now to be replaced by elections and democratic decisions.

Another Party secretary, also full of indignation, complained that in his village, 'the VC suspended the subsidies for the Youth League secretary and the head of the militia, arguing that they should ask the Party secretary for their salary because the Party branch appointed them. But now, the chairperson controlled village finances so the Party branch had to ask the VC for money with which to pay them. Doesn't this leave us in an intolerably embarrassing situation?'

These cases are instructive in several ways. They show how elections brought to the surface latent villager resentment at boss rule, especially when corruption was involved. They demonstrate that elections are important in developed villages and not just in poorer ones, as several scholars have argued.[20] They illustrate the importance of personal relations, but they also show the salience of formal rules. Party secretaries were quick to take advantage of the provision on Party leadership in the Organic Law so as to enable them to retain power. By the same token, the Law was also invoked by VC chairpersons who insisted on their prerogatives. As one chairman commented in an interview: 'curb the CCP's power by using the CCP's law'.[21]

Refusal by Party secretaries to transfer power over village affairs after elections was a problem not only in rural Guangdong, where villager self-government had only recently been implemented, but also in villages in other parts of China which had years of experience with elections. It existed even in such national demonstration counties for village self-government as that of Zhao county in Hebei. According to an investigation carried out by a graduate student at Beijing University, the villages that he studied had some kind of village representative organization, but unless the Party secretary was open-minded, it would not be able to make decisions. In each of these villages financial power and administrative seals remained in the hands of the Party secretaries, except when a secretary's wife or relative acted on his behalf. No VC chairperson was able to take charge. Some villages were fortunate to have honest and upright Party secretaries, but most were stuck with secretaries who sought to enrich themselves, bully the timid, or abuse their power to the point of beating and handcuffing people. The researcher wondered how a demonstration county could be so lacking in the spirit of self-government.[22]

20. See Jean C. Oi, 'Economic development, stability and democratic village self-governance', in Maurice Brosseau *et al.*, eds, *China Review 1996* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1996), pp. 125–144; and Tianjian Shi, 'Economic development and village elections in rural China', *Journal of Contemporary China* 8(22), (November 1999), pp. 425–442.

21. Interview, Nanhai, April 1999.

22. Research carried out in July 1997, by Yang Zili, reported on the website of *Beimei Ziyou Luntan,* (February 1999). On Zhao county, see also Susan V. Lawrence, 'Village representative assemblies, Chinese style', *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* (32), (July 1994), pp. 61–68; and see Yang Aimin, 'Hebei Zhao xian de di shixing cunmin daibiaohuiyi zhidu de sikao' ['Reflections on VRAs in Zhao xian of Hebei and other rural areas'], in Wang Zhongtian and Zhang Chengfu, eds, *Xiangcun Zhengzhi-Zhongguo Cunmin Zizhi de Diaocha yu Sikao* [*Rural Politics: Investigations and Reflections on Villagers' Self-Government in China*] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1999), pp. 265–275.

The role of town Party leaders

Town Party committees came under pressure to adjudicate between the VCs and the VPBs. They were not, however, impartial but tended to favor the Party secretaries, who, in their view, were more likely to be obedient. According to the Organic Law, the relations between the town (or township) governments and the VCs, which legally were mass organizations and formally part of the government, was one of 'guidance' (*zhidao*) rather than 'leadership' (*lingdao*), meaning that the VC could not simply be ordered around. Just as the Law left the relations between VPBs and the VCs in an ambiguous state, so it stipulated that VCs were expected to comply with and implement government policies and to abide by laws and regulations even as it defined the VCs as self-governing or autonomous (*zizhi*) mass organizations. During the debates over adoption of the Law, worries were expressed that the 'guidance' relationship would permit the VCs to defy higher-level directives and become bastions of independence (*tubaowei*).[23] It is not surprising that many township officials feared that free elections would make it difficult to control the VCs, especially if 'troublemakers' were elected.[24] Even if that did not happen, how to comply with the Law yet carry on normal business became a source of anxiety. In one town in Zhongshan city, for example, after the elections, the leaders worried that if they sent documents (*wenjian*) directly to the VCs for implementation, they would be creating a leadership relationship, thereby violating the Law. Although afraid to leave the VCs in ignorance of its documents, they did not send any to the VCs for over a month. Zhongshan city officials confirmed that other towns were acting in a similar way.

Such problems did not in principle exist in the relationship between the town Party committees and the VPBs, which, under the rules of democratic centralism, was one of direct subordination. It is therefore not surprising that township authorities, anxious to fulfill their duties, preferred to work through the VPBs than through the VCs even after the elections.[25] According to a report by Zhongshan municipality, 'Many towns' sent down documents requiring that after the abolition of the administrative districts, the Party secretaries should 'temporarily' assume the directorships of the village economic committees. In response, more than half of the VC chairs went to the towns and demanded their rights. Due to the prevalent dissatisfaction, the towns revoked these documents and re-appointed the village chairmen as VEC directors.

23. For analysis of these debates, see Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, 'Accommodating "democracy" in a one-party state: introducing village elections in China', *China Quarterly* (162), (June 2000), pp. 465–489.

24. See Tong Zhihui, 'Shaanxi sheng, Jinbian xian, Huangjiamao, Yingdiliang cun "xiangzheng cunzhi" guanxi de shizheng fenxi' ['Empirical analysis of the relations between the township administration and village governance in Huangjiamao and Yingdiliang villages of Jinbian county, Shaanxi province'] and, 'Minzhu de zaoyu jiqi fansi-Shaanxi sheng, Jinbian xian, Maotuan cun cunweihui xuanju shizheng fenxi' ['The confrontation of democracy and reflection on it: empirical analysis of VC elections in Maotuan village, Jinbian county, Shaanxi province'], both in Wang Zhongtian and Zhang Chengfu, eds, *Xiangcun Zhengzhi*, pp. 79–89, pp. 217–237. For a contrasting report on Zhao county, Hebei, see Sylvia Chan, 'Villager self-government and civil society', in Joseph Y. S. Cheng, ed., *China Review* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1998), pp. 235–258.

25. Interview, Zhongshan, March 1999. Li Lianjiang also found that some township officials have begun to depend on appointed VPB secretaries to implement local policies. See Li Lianjiang, 'Elections and popular resistance in rural China'.

The villagers' democratic pressure resulted in this change. Similarly, in Fengtai village of Zhongshan city, immediately after the election, the VC expressly demanded that it assume control over the village economy. The Party secretary appealed to his superiors, who replied that he was to be the economic chief. No sooner had the decision reached the village than the VC convened a VRA and told the Party secretary to attend and to hand over economic power on the spot. Fearing that the villagers would organize a collective visit to the higher levels (*jiti shangfang*), which would make them look bad, the town leaders rescinded their order and power was transferred.[26]

After the elections, the towns thus depended more and more on the VPBs. Some town leaders were highly supportive when secretaries asked for instructions but cold-shouldered the village chairmen, one of whom said indignantly: 'The town shows so much preference for the Party members. Are we bred by step mothers?' One town stipulated that with regard to eight questions, only the signature of the Party secretary could validate village decisions. Over half of the VC chairpersons joined in sending up written objections, obliging the town to rescind its order. Another town even went so far as to prescribe that the VPB secretaries should receive full-time salaries while the VC chairmen should be paid according to the subsidy system of reimbursement for time worked. If enforced, this would have been an unreasonable and unlawful local policy (*tu zhengce*). It was promptly rejected by the VC chairpersons after consideration by the VRAs.

The result of these pro-VPB interventions deepened the conflict between the VPBs and the VCs. The town leaders hoped that the use of administrative power would keep the VCs under control, hence enabling them to continue to enforce 'local policies' that violated policies and laws and often were highly injurious to peasant interests and threatened to provoke resistance.[27]

The Zhongshan city Party committee responded by reassuring the village Party secretaries that they were the top leaders even while telling them that the elections were here to stay and that they had to adapt to the new situation. At a meeting convened by a town Party committee at which village secretaries complained that the VCs were challenging their 'magic weapon' (*fabao*) as the core of village leadership, a cadre from the city Party committee explained:

> The municipal Party committee leaders call for upholding Party leadership but also for promoting of villager self-government. You first-line cadres harbor doubts, so do the higher levels. However, it is clear that in Zhongshan, whatever happens, irrespective of village elections and villager self-government, you village secretaries will be the top leaders. Without Party leadership, there would be anarchy. The situation described by village secretaries indicates that there are already sprouts of anarchy. A Party secretary and his deputy in a village of Dayong town, stopped going to work for three months after the elections, so that the village lost the leadership core. I have also read in a report that some village Party secretaries said that village elections were useless and

26. Investigation report by Zhongshan city, 'Guanyu lishun nongcun guanli tongzhi de ruogan wenti de diaocha baogao' ['Investigation report on questions of facilitating rural management systems'], unpublished, (1999), p. 8.

27. On resistance, see Li Lianjiang and O'Brien, 'Villages and popular resistance in contemporary China'; also Kevin O'Brien and Li Lianjiang, 'The politics of lodging complaints in rural China', *China Quarterly* (143), (September 1995), pp. 756–783.

> could be the first step towards the collapse of the CCP. Their wording may be exaggerated but it shows the great impact of the elections.
>
> But we cannot stop the elections because there are side-effects. I think that you are grumbling too much. The press has described so many advantages of the elections; can you not perceive them at all? Do you feel so much pressure and fear of disaster, that the CCP will collapse? You should be firm in believing that this will never happen.[28]

A 30-year-old town Party secretary who concurrently served as the town's head of government, forcefully reinforced the views of the Zhongshan Party committee. He affirmed that the VC chairman was in fact the legal representative of the VEC, so secretaries should stop fighting over this point. The VCs could not function without any concrete power. As for the VPBs, he said,

> the Party is the core of the leadership of village affairs. The problem is how you play your role as the core. Since the superiors attach importance to villagers' self-government, implementing this must be your main task as well (*zhongxin renwu*). What self-government led by the Party means, as I understand it, is that the Party shall lead and support the villagers in the elections according to law and to guarantee that the VCs implement the policies of the Party and obey state laws. Irrespective of whether VPB members are elected to the VCs, they must actively join in their work and seize the initiative in the village's important decision-making. And, the town has already specified your salaries about which you are concerned, and which requires that you, as the *yibashou*, are in principle one level above the VC chairmen.[29]

Thus the town leader asked the Party secretaries to take the concrete step of handing over economic power to the VC chairs but otherwise left the role divisions unclear.

One Zhongshan city official, instead of vigorously intervening to settle the jurisdictional disputes, essentially side-stepped the issue by suggesting that the VCs bring suit to claim their rights: 'Da'ao village has established a new VC, whose legal representative is Huang Tengzhu. If the former leaders refuse to hand over control over village affairs, the elected director can resort to legal channels by bringing a case before a court of law for the resolution'.[30] But a long-drawn out lawsuit was hardly a solution. Given the realities of Party secretaries' power, the VCs needed strong support from the authorities above the village, otherwise they were likely to continue to be in a subordinate position. Since the towns could not show unprincipled preference for either side, they talked to the VC directors about the importance of respecting the VPB leadership and to the secretaries about the necessity of establishing the system of VCs. This indefinite attitude did not do much to resolve the conflicts.

Was there a possibility that a cooperative system of 'dual power' could sustain itself? Our research yielded only a very few cases in which both VPBs and VCs were strong. One successful example came from a village in Nanhai city, where 'two good brothers (*yige dangjia*) described themselves as seeking to make money

28. Based on notes and a related investigation report, Zhongshan, March 1999.
29. *Ibid*.
30. Lin Weixiong and Liu Haibin, 'Da'ao cun wenti keyi tongguo falu tujing jiejue' ['The problems of Da'ao village can be resolved by legal means'], *Nanfang Nongcun Bao*, (11 April 2000).

separately but settling accounts together'. They jointly promoted the development of the village collective economy and jointly safeguarded the finances. Important issues such as road construction, the building of houses, the establishment of new factories, doing business, and handling the welfare distributions, were decided by the VRA after both committees drafted a joint resolution. The town leader praised this arrangement as adhering to the leadership of the Party while simultaneously implementing villager self-government.

In such a village, the Party secretary was not merely the nominal first man in control but also retained much traditional power, such as nominating village cadres, approving village regulations and responsibility contracts, and presiding over meetings, which were not taken over by the village chairperson, election notwithstanding. There was something of a tacit understanding that in exchange for retaining these powers the secretary gave up his status as the legal representative of the village collective economy.[31]

But such villages were few and far between. Sayings such as 'two donkeys cannot be tied to one tree', 'a village cannot have two Zhu Laozhongs', or, 'there cannot be two suns in the sky' attest to this point. Cooperation required good personal relations between the secretary and the chairperson, but also some kind of institutionalized mechanism for power sharing and cooperation. Without the latter, cooperation floundered when personal relations between the two leaders deteriorated. The rights and obligations of the VPB and VC had to be clearly determined, together with concrete rules of the game and rules for monitoring cadre performance. The following case shows that it was possible to arrive at such an institutionalized solution.

Wanfeng, Shenzhen, was a wealthy village with an annual income of over 30 million yuan, an indicator of the great importance to villagers of regulating the economic power of the cadres. A joint meeting of the VPB and VC drafted rules stipulating the responsibilities of the Party secretary, the village chair, the members of both VPB and VC, and the roles, rights and duties of various organizations. This draft was then submitted to the VRA for discussion. Every villager was entitled to be heard. Once adopted, everyone was obliged to abide by the rules and regulations.

Both secretary and chairperson were given equal authority over the approval of financial expenditures of up to 40,000 yuan at a time, while individually they could only approve expenditures that didn't exceed 1,000 yuan. Expenditures above these levels had to be examined and approved by the village financial chief inspector (*zongjian*), who was chosen by the VRA and therefore had independent authority. He was also not allowed to serve on either the VPB or the VC. This inspector had the right to request that the VC convene a general assembly or to do so directly, bypassing the VC. Thus, in Wancheng, the power of the purse and the administrative power were to some extent separated from the two committees. This restriction on the powers of the two committees was also conducive to the maintenance of a balance of power between VPB and VC.

31. Nanhai investigation, 1999.

While it was not clear whether there were special characteristics other than wealth that enabled Wancheng successfully to divide power, the fact that it was able to come up with institutional innovations highlighted one of the underlying defects in the building of rural democracy in China, namely the apparent absence of clearly specified rules that governed the respective roles of the VPBs and VCs and constrained the behavior of village cadres generally. Such rules were needed not only for intra-village power relations but even more important, in the relations between the village authorities and the towns/townships and counties. The underlying sources of these deficiencies is the regime's systemic unwillingness to recognize the legitimacy of conflicts of interest in Chinese politics and hence the reluctance to recognize that there is a real need for constitutional mechanisms to manage conflict.

The emergence of concurrent office holding

After the turn of the millennium, merger of the VPBs and the VCs seemed to be the answer of choice to the jurisdictional and power conflicts between the two. The main method for achieving this was to oblige the Party secretary to run for the office of VC chair, thereby establishing his/her acceptability to the villagers.

To begin with, in many provinces, the proportion of Party members in the VCs had long been very high. As of 1996, it was 71% in Liaoning province, 74.3% in Henan province, 81.5% in Hebei province, 77.8% in Beijing, 89.5% in Tianjing, and 91% in Shanghai. The percentage of Party secretaries who were elected to the VC chairmanship varied: it was 36% in Shanghai but only 12.1% in Qingdao, Shandong.[32] In Guangdong, however, as of 1999, 56% of village chairpersons served concurrently as Party secretary. In Xinhui city, over 80% of the two posts were held by one person and in Nanhai, 60%.[33]

In 1999, Liaocheng city, Shandong, adopted a rule requiring Party secretaries to run in the elections. The result was that 77% of the VPB secretaries, 4,933 in all, were elected chairpersons. Those secretaries who lost were replaced by the winner of the VC election. If the latter was not already a Party member, he would quickly be recruited and would eventually be appointed secretary if he maintained a good record. In Liaocheng, 613 secretaries were 'readjusted', thereby raising the concurrence rate to 86.7%. In one town, seven of 38 secretaries lost the VC elections and were replaced by the winners.[34] Concurrent office holding solved the problem of jurisdictional conflict, eliminated duplication as well as power struggles. It also lightened the burdens of the peasants. Excessive taxes and fees were a crucial source of conflict between the state and the peasantry. In large parts of the country, especially those that were agriculture-dependent and lacked access to TVE profits, public goods had to be funded by squeezing the peasants. Part of the locally raised

32. Wang Zhongtian and Zhang Chengfu, *Xiangcun Zhengzhi*, pp. 91 and 95. For discussion of concurrent office holding, see Daniel Kellher, 'The Chinese debate over village self-government', *The China Journal* (37), (January 1997), pp. 63–86.

33. *Yangcheng Wanbao*, (6 May 1999), p. 1; Xinhui investigation, 1999; Nanhai investigation, 1999.

34. *Nongmin Ribao,* (11 December 1999).

funds were required to pay village-level cadres. Merging the posts of Party secretary and VC chair represented a significant saving of direct benefit to villagers. In Liaocheng, 16,089 VC members also served in Party branches, resulting in a reduction in the village cadre force of 26,000 and a saving of 20 million yuan. Reportedly, cadre–mass relations improved significantly.[35]

Concurrent office holding ignored the old political reform goal of separating Party from government. It also in effect restored the role of the top leader in charge, the *yibashou*, now fortified by his/her dual positions, or at least a single group of key leaders. In his study of southern Hebei villages, Bjorg Alpermann found that as before, there was a dominant *lingdao banzi*, a leadership group, which was responsive to the townships rather than to its constituents. In this case, the townships continued to be able to manipulate the elections in most villages.[36] Thus, where elections were not free and fair, a fairly widespread situation in rural China, the potential for gross abuse of concentrated power remained.[37] In contrast, when elections were free and fair, the requirement that a Party secretary had to win the electoral competition for VC office probably did serve as an incentive for him/her to be more responsive to the interests of the constituents. How a Party secretary might respond when these interests ran counter to those of the superior town or township Party committee to whose discipline he/she was subject, is a question for further research.

Concurrent office holding represented official recognition that the CCP had to refurbish its legitimacy and authority in the villages by requiring that its village secretaries and often many or most branch members as well had to seek electoral approval.[38] Requiring the Party secretary to run for election for the VC in order to retain his/her post was something of a break with Leninist principles. It reflected the urgency of the task of improving the tense relations between Party and peasants. In historical perspective, this innovation had its counterpart in the practice of mass participation in the rectification of Party cadres during the Mao era, which also entailed mobilization of pressure from outside the Party, as exemplified by the 'Four Clean' campaign of 1964. As O'Brien and Li found, there is a 'campaign nostalgia' among villagers subjected to the oppression of unaccountable power-holders. Having to run for VC office can be viewed as a more institutionalized substitute for old-style campaigns.[39]

Our September 1999 investigation included the study of three villages in Xinhui city, whose Party secretaries were also VC directors.

35. *Ibid*. For an analysis of the tax burdens, see Thomas P. Bernstein and Xiaobo Lu, *Taxation without Representation in Contemporary Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Chapter 7 of this book examines the role of village committees in burden reduction.

36. Bjorg Alpermann, 'The post-election administration of Chinese villages', *The China Journal* (46), (July 2001), pp. 45–68.

37. For one such case, from Xinjiang, see *Xinhua*, (29 December 2001), *FBIS* (1229), (29 December 2001).

38. See Susan V. Lawrence, 'Village democracy: direct elections are becoming more open in the Chinese countryside, but will those reforms extend to higher levels of government?' *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (27 January 2000), p. 17.

39. See Kevin J. O'Brien and Lienjiang Li, 'Campaign nostalgia in the Chinese countryside', *Asian Survey* 39(3), (1999), pp. 375–394.

1. Sanyi village of Siqian town

In the village elections of the first half of 1999, villagers directly and openly nominated candidates and then elected the village director and six VC members. They chose the Party secretary, age 53, as chairperson. The six VC members were also members of the branch committee, thus achieving full concurrence.

The Siqian town secretary, who was present at the interview, added that the elections were free, since Siqian town practiced 'sea elections' (*haixuan*), in which VPBs and townships were not allowed to nominate candidates, leaving villagers free to do so on their own. Nine Party secretaries were chosen to be village chairmen in the town's 14 villages. They retained their posts as secretaries. In cases where the secretaries failed to be elected, the new chairmen were nominated to be Party secretaries. According to the town secretary, the elected chairpersons enjoyed the trust of the VPBs, the VCs, and of the villagers. The town leaders, he noted, had greater confidence in leaders whom villagers trusted. He added that if villagers elected a non-Party member as chairperson, their decision would be respected. If the chairperson qualified for Party membership, he/she would be recruited. He/she could then run in the next election three years hence. Victory would demonstrate the chair's high reputation among the masses. The town Party committee would then certainly recommend him/her to the branch members as the candidate for Party secretary. But such a situation had not thus far arisen.

2. Tianhu village of Luoken town

The Party secretary, named Chen, was only 26 years old and had joined the Party while in the military. Upon demobilization in 1994, the town appointed him as the cashier of the administrative district and in 1997 promoted him to be the vice director and concurrently Party branch committee member of the district. In May 1999, he was elected village chairperson and in July the town Party committee nominated him to serve as secretary, a choice of which the village Party members approved. The seven members of the Party branch were all elected to the VC, thereby establishing a pattern of across-the-board concurrent office holding.

Secretary Chen seemed to be a capable 'first man in charge', judging by his performance. He was empowered by the elections and not just by the superiors, because had he not been elected director, the town Party committee would not have nominated him as VPB secretary. Chen maintained excellent relations with the town. Taihu village was relatively poor. Its collective income in 1998 was only just under 80,000 yuan, whereas that of the entire town was 500 million. Because of this disparity, the town did not extract funds from the village. Villager financial burdens were less than 2% of per capita incomes, none of which went to the town. Moreover, the town leaders decided to help the village implement its blueprint for 'shaking off poverty and becoming rich'. In promoting this cause, Chen must have pleased the town leaders since he opposed the use of funds donated to the village by overseas relatives for the building of an ancestral hall, as village elders had proposed. Chen strongly opposed this idea on the grounds that the fund should be used to build a good primary school. An ancestral hall, no matter how good looking, would be used only a few times a year, whereas the school would be in

constant use. A temple could be built in the future, after the educated children had achieved success. He added, 'the overseas relatives shared my view point which thus prevailed'.

3. Yangmei village of Sanjiang town

Yangmei village of Sanjiang town had 700 families and over 2,000 people, distributed among nine village small groups (*cunmin xiaozu*). Eighty percent were named Rong and the others, Nie, Yu and Chen. The Party secretary, age 56, admitted that his post had always been held by a Rong. He had been in office for nine years and was also a member of the Xinhui municipal people's congress. During his term of office, the villagers' life steadily improved with development. The income of the village now exceeded 3 million yuan and net per capita incomes totaled 4,500 yuan. For several years running, villagers did not have to hand over money or grain, since the village assumed this burden.

Secretary Rong's authority among villagers appeared to us to be rather paternalistic (*fuqin ban de quanwei*) but if so, he clearly enjoyed strong support. In the elections of May 1999, the villagers nominated more than 80 candidates for VC chairman but Party secretary Rong won by a huge margin. He told the visiting researchers:

> Village elections are of course something good in that they can elect a leader whom people think is fair. The ancient saying has it that there are no two suns in the sky. There can only be one head in one village, whether he is called VPB secretary or VC chairman. One person, one head. If there were two heads, he'd be a monster. Villagers elected me because they have confidence in me. According to the needs of the branch, I became secretary. So we have one head of the village rather than a two-headed monster. Should villagers elect another person chairman, I would definitely give up my office. Without a leader, a flock of birds would disperse. Without a core [leader], there would be dissension and villagers would form factions and they would fight among themselves.

In this case, Rong's position as the undisputed leader accepted by both villagers and townships was undoubtedly facilitated by the village's growing prosperity. In poorer, agriculture-dependent villages, he would have come under much greater pressure to balance the demands of the town against those of the villagers, particularly with respect to township claims on scarce village resources. In such circumstances, had he then sided with his constituents, the town leaders might well have rethought their willingness to agree to concurrent office holding.

In this secretary-chairman's case, one may ask, what political institution, in the final analysis, did he identify with, the VC or the VPB? It seems that none of the administrative posts, whether in the production brigade, the administrative district, or the VC, meant much to him. What seemed really to matter were the interests of the village, or more likely, given the dominance of his surname, his clan, which was the source of his paternalistic authority.[40] Village elections were simply a

40. For anthropological studies of authority in village societies, see Wang Mingming, 'Cunluo shiye zhong de jiazu, guojia yu shehui' ['Lineage, state and society on the perspective of village communities'], 'Minjian quanwei, shenghuoshi yu quntidongli' ['Civil authority, ethnography and group motive'], and Luo Hongguang, 'Quanli yu quanwei: Helongtan de fuhao tixi yu zhengzhi pinglun' ['Power and authority: symbolic system and everyday political appraisals in Helongtan village'], all in Wang Mingming and Stephan Feuchtwang, eds, *Xiangtu Shehui de Zhixu, Gongzheng yu Quanwei* [*Order, Justice and Authority in Rural Society*] (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 20–122, 258–315, 333–384.

quantitative symbol of this authority. Informal, village-level authority was much more important for him than his formal posts, the authority of which was that of the political system as a whole. In all these cases, our interviewees regarded joint office holding as a success.

In July 2002, concurrent office holding emerged as the arrangement favored by the Central authorities. The Central Committee and State Council General Offices issued a 'Notice' on the new round of VC elections, now to be held in the light of Jiang Zemin's 'important thinking' on the 'Three Represents', which called for the CCP to represent the most advanced productive forces, advanced culture, and the basic interests of the masses. It recommended (*tichang*) the nomination and election of the leading group of VPBs to the Village Committees, as well as election of Party members to the post of villager small group chief (*cunmin xiaozu zhang)* and also to the VRA. Candidates for VPB secretary should first run in the VC elections. If they received popular recognition, they should then be nominated for the post of secretary. Failure to be elected VC chairperson meant that they should not be nominated for the secretarial post. The 'Notice' also recommended that in large villages with numerous Party members, those elected to the village Party committees be chosen as committee members via intra-party elections. Finally, outstanding non-Party VC members and villager small group heads should be recruited into the Party, 'thereby continuously injecting fresh forces into the rural grass-roots Party organizations'.[41]

The political implications of concurrent office holding are contradictory: on the one hand, in line with the 'Three Represents', the Communist Party is not willing to tolerate autonomous institutions but is determined to bring them under Party control. Those hoping that China will increasingly become pluralized even in its political institutions will be disappointed. On the other hand, Party secretaries cannot simply be appointed from above but must win popular support in regular elections. In principle, this is a step forward in terms of the goal of democratization and of holding officials accountable.

41. 'Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting-Guowuyuan Bangongting fachu tongzhi jinyibu zuo hao cunmin weiyuanhui huanjie xuanju gongzuo' ['The CC and State Council General Offices issue notice on further doing a good job in the next round of elections'], (14 July 2002). A translated version is by *Xinhua*, (18 August 2002), *FBIS* (818), (18 August 2002).