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Choosing Democracy in China? Explaining Why Local Officials Allow Electoral Uncertainty in the Chinese Village Committee Elections

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Abstract: We argue that the choice of electoral rules in Chinese villages results from the incentives that rural party elites face in their efforts to control electoral results. Using the rationalist approach, we propose four conditions under which they will adopt an institution that allows for electoral uncertainty: a large proportion of revenue from village-owned enterprises (VOEs), a large size of electorate, the presence of strong social groups, and frequent upper level government interventions. We use the 2011 Wukan incident to illustrate our argument. The cross-sectional analysis of survey data of 961 villages provides some evidence for the hypotheses: A larger number of labor force and frequent inspections by the upper-level government are significantly correlated with an increase of the likelihood that a village party leader allows villagers to freely nominate candidates. Theoretical and policy implications will be discussed in the end of this paper.

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Introduction

In 1987, China adopted the Organic Law of the Villagers Committees (Organic Law), stipulating that villages have to hold village committee elections and allow rural residents to elect their village committee members and village head. The so-called grassroots political reform has been widely viewed as rural democratization. Yet, because the Organic Law does not clearly specify the operational rules for village party officials to implement rural elections,¹ a variety of electoral rules have emerged. With discretion to decide what electoral rules would govern their elections, some village party leaders decided to open electoral competition while others chose to strictly control candidate nomination and electoral outcomes. This raises a question: what are the factors that incentivize rural Communist Party leaders to select a set of electoral institutions that would lead them to lose dominant control of the local committee?

In this paper, we propose a theoretical framework to explain this puzzle. We argue that the different choices of electoral rules can be linked to the cost/benefit calculations of rural party elites and the strategic responses of rural party elites in the interaction between party and non-party elites. Specifically, the argument is grounded in a rational choice explanation: When local party elites do not expect controlling elections to be beneficial but instead rather costly, they will choose electoral rules that allow electoral uncertainty. Furthermore, the decision to allow for electoral uncertainty is associated with the interaction between party elites and non-party elites: If both sides have an incentive to select an institution that allows for electoral uncertainty, then those institutions will be adopted.

Based on the theoretical argument, we identify several factors that are conceived of as determinants of electoral rules in rural China. First, greater local economic resources should increase the incentive of party elites to control elections because that control provides them with control over the allocation of benefits of local economic growth. Second, a larger electorate will decrease the probability of the presence of free elections, given the high costs for buying off local supporters. Third, we argue that social cohesiveness will push party elites to give up control of village elections since it reduces the cost for local non-party elites to oppose the dominant control of local benefits by party officials. Finally, stronger control by higher authorities over village affairs is expected to motivate party elites to abandon their dominance in rural elections because they might incur costly punishments from higher levels of government, should they have to crack down on dissidents. In addition to the illustrative case study, the arguments are tested using survey-based data, and they receive some empirical support. The empirical evidence implies that the cost of local patronage may be the main

concern of local party elites' choice between competitive versus non-competitive elections.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, we review existing research on elections in authoritarian China to identify how this study can contribute to existing knowledge. Second, we will introduce a theory to explain the choices of party elites between competitive vs. noncompetitive electoral rules. Then we derive testable hypotheses. Third, we present the data and variables employed in the analysis. In the fourth section, we will discuss the empirical results and the potential caveats in the statistical analysis. The last section provides conclusions and discussions about some theoretical implications for future study.

The Choice of Electoral Institutions in Authoritarian Countries and China

Elections in Authoritarian Countries

A growing body of literature has highlighted the prevalence of elections in authoritarian regimes, yet there is a lack of explanation for the paths and choices that authoritarian regimes make between the variety of electoral rules available to them. Political scientists have made great contributions, through cross-national or case study analysis, to understanding why elections exist in authoritarian countries.² Elections, they argue, serve to stabilize incumbents' rule by showing the power of incumbents, co-opting the opponents, providing information or helping lower the cost of democratic transition.³ Within the study of authoritarian election, the question of how authoritarian elections vary remains underexplored. As Gandhi and Lust-Okar⁴ have insightfully pointed out, scholars rarely identify the variance in electoral rules under authoritarianism.

Studying the variety of Chinese rural elections provides an opportunity to fill this theoretical gap. The variety of electoral institutions in rural China exhibits a natural experiment on political elites and their institutional choices. Without political challengers to the power of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), when the local Communist Party elites decide to hold elections, their best choice presumably should be to fully rig elections to avoid losing control over local affairs. However, the variety of electoral rules implies that under certain conditions, local party elites choose some other set of electoral institutions that allow political competition or, at least, electoral uncertainty concerning the outcome of the election. Studying the variety of electoral rules in rural China enriches the authoritarian election research by revealing the conditions under which authoritarian incumbents (in this case, CCP officials) manipulate election rules in ways that allow them to demonstrate a greater willingness to share power. Moreover, the existing literature on authoritarian elections mostly looks at only the national level. The literature on electoral issues at the local level is relatively sparse. This study contributes to this field by

accounting for how local elections can vary with different incentives facing local elites.

Village Elections in Rural China

Village government is the lowest level of political unit in rural China used to be governed by village Communist Party branch. Before the central government allowed village committee elections, village committee members were appointed by rural party branches to implement CCP policies such as the one-child policy and taxation. After 1987, village committee elections authorized village committee members to cope with village affairs with village Communist Party branch,⁵ creating a dual power structure. According to Organic Law, village committees are self-governing units that should be produced through villagers' voting in competitive, free and fair elections. Many China watchers have praised the allowance of rural elections as the beginning of the creation of Chinese rural democracy.

It should be noted, however, that holding village committee elections is a survival strategy of the CCP central leadership to solve the issues emerging from rural governance in 1980s.⁶ Since the economic reform liberalized the movement of peasants and brought considerable job opportunities in the market, the rural area has become unstable. An official report shows that, after 1979, the Party had difficulty recruiting members and in 1992 a government document revealed that about 30 percent of the CCP cells in the countryside were reported as "collapsed."⁷ The rural elections therefore are designed to recruit new leadership through popular voting in the hope of dealing with the political turbulence and rejuvenating local Party organizations. Elections also can help the central authority to assess the popularity of their rural cadres. Failure to be elected to the village committees signals the unpopularity of officials, according to which the CCP can effectively manage its cadres.⁸ Case studies find elections do facilitate the implementation of difficult policies such as one child program and taxation.⁹

Moreover, though backed by the CCP central leadership, holding competitive elections receives little supports from local officials in the onset of electoral reform since 1987. Local officials, especially the village and township cadres, were reluctant to implement competitive elections.¹⁰ Although the institution of village elections was codified in the constitution, provinces established their own rules and ordered township governments and village party branches to implement elections.¹¹ As administrators, village party officials manipulate these rules to prevent unfavorable results.¹² Field research has identified many types of electoral manipulation in rural areas. For example, village officials monitored the voting process by not using a secret ballot, monopolizing the nomination of candidates, using roving boxes to only engage supporters in election, or directly calling off elections.¹³

Holding competitive elections has drastically improved rural governance.¹⁴ Competitive elections have made rural officials accountable in policy imple-

mentation,¹⁵ implanted democratic values into rural culture,¹⁶ and increased public expenditures and public good provision by rural governments.¹⁷ Despite the importance of competitive electoral rules in rural area, there has been little systematic analysis and theory building on why rural officials decide to allow electoral competition.¹⁸

The Variety of Village Electoral Institutions

For the causes leading to the variety of election implementation, previous works suggest two factors: economic incentives and social forces. Each argument has received inconsistent support. Economic incentive explanation proposes that economic growth could be a force that liberalizes rural elections. O'Brien reports that economic development fueled village party officials' desire to remain in power and equipped them with increasing financial resources to do so.¹⁹ Similarly, Niou reports that competitive elections (*cha'e xuanju*) occur more frequently in rich villagers than in poor ones.²⁰ Hu also finds a positive effect of rural industrialization on the implementation of competitive elections.²¹ However, Epstein has observed another pattern that medium-level economic development provinces have fiercer electoral competition than others.²² This point has been further demonstrated by Shi,²³ who uses data from a nationally representative survey and reports that low and high levels of economic growth are associated with increased low likelihood that the elections will be run by multiple candidates, while most competitive elections located in the middle-developed villages. Oi also reports a negative relationship between economic growth and electoral competitiveness, arguing that wealthy villagers are busy at business activities and have no motivations to partake in elections, which lowers the pressure for rural democratization.²⁴ On the contrary, agricultural economy-oriented villages will see intense competition in elections because farmers and their families' demands were highly involved in land use and the village committees control the irrigation facilities and fertilizer resources.

Scholars also find social forces, such as rural kinship groups or clans, matter in the implementation of elections. Economic reform helped to revive village kinship networks that the Communist Party tried to destroy in the Maoist era. Although scholars find the resurgences of traditional social groups can positively promote local industrialization²⁵, their political role is more complex. According to a comparison of two villages by Yu,²⁶ a strong clan that is able to allocate local resources may decrease competitiveness in village elections. Similarly, Manion reports that clan dominance is negatively related to the prospects of democratic elections.²⁷ She finds that multiple clans can water down the single clan dominance and lead to healthy competition in elections. Also, Lu systematically analyzed survey data in 2002 and 2005 and argues that having competing clans is associated with the quality of elections, measured by whether the elections followed the democratic

rules stipulated by the Organic Law.²⁸ However, a strong clan may help villagers to resist the undemocratic practices of rural officials. For instance, scholars find that if village leaders come from the dominant clan, they are more willing to provide public goods, such as roads, schools, and hospitals, to ordinary villagers.²⁹ According to a systematic analysis, Xiao reports that the presence of clan can help enhance the fairness of elections.³⁰

While existing research has built a tradition to look for competition in rural elections, there has been no scholarly agreement on when local officials will be willing to give up electoral control. As many scholars have noticed, the evidence in rural elections may be too ample to be conclusive.³¹ To explain the variation of electoral institutions, a causal theory concerning party officials' decision-making is necessary. This paper tries to fill this gap by proposing a rationalist framework to explain the incentives local officials face to loosen electoral control. In light of existing research, we build a rational explanation that helps us specify (1) what incentivizes rural party officials to give up electoral control, and (2) what are the causal mechanisms behind party officials' concession.

Rural Party Elites' Rational Choice of Electoral Rule

This study addresses the question of why local party elites in rural China choose different electoral rules even if they may lose dominant control over village affairs. As a rational actor, the decisions that political elites are determined by two features: self-interest incentives and external constraints. The self-interest factor—the benefits/cost calculation of local party elites—propose that elites' goal is to maximize the benefits in choice of electoral rules. Since it is party elites in rural China who decide electoral rules for their jurisdiction, their cost/benefit calculation apparently determines the choice to control or to liberalize elections. The external constraints involve strategic interaction between party and nonparty officials: The party elites' perception of how local non-party elites will react in reaping local benefits through elections is important as well. By nonparty elites, we mean those social or economic elites, such as successful businessmen or lineage group leaders, that have emerged from economic reform and have the capacity to pursue political power and economic resources in the village.³² The interaction between local non-party elites, particularly the elites from clans or other social organizations, and party elites, is imperative to understanding the dynamics of Chinese rural elections.³³ We model this in the second half of the theory.

Economic Interest and Governing Cost

There is no doubt that rural party elites³⁴ set up the rules of election with their own self-interest in mind, particularly when electoral outcomes will affect these party elites' control over valuable village assets, especially village collective enterprises. When rural party officials choose to control elections, they thus not allow

competition for these resources, which means their role in the village will remain the same as the past, a provider of goods and services. But when they are open elections to the villagers or other elites, they can recruit the able persons (*neng ren*) to help implement policies or offer resources for village governance, with a cost to share the existing economic resources of the village. As a rational leader, a party official calculates the benefits and cost before deciding whether elections should be open. We specify the situation below.

For two reasons, we use nomination rules to identify the differences among electoral rules. First, the nomination process is one of the most important institutions to determine election results. If party elites do not allow individuals other than party officials to nominate candidates, the electoral outcome is predetermined by party elites. We call this rule *party nomination process*. On the other hand, if the election is run through a public nomination process, by which every villager is entitled to nominate candidates, the presence of potential competitors will increase uncertainty surrounding election results. In rural China, an institution that maximizes the number of candidates is called *primary nomination process* (*Hai Xuen*).³⁵ The two nomination processes represent the choice between the lowest level of electoral uncertainty (party nomination) and the highest level of electoral uncertainty (primary nomination) in the following analyses.

Why would cost-benefit calculation determine local officials' decision in choosing electoral rules? First, elective office is a profitable position for elites. The Organic Law clearly specifies that village committee members and heads have the power to participate in, decide, and distribute the benefits resulting from decisions involving village assets, including village-run business, village land, and other assets (Article 5, Organic Law of the Villagers Committees). Thus, being an elected village committee member means having access to valuable village economic resources. Additionally, rural electoral politics has been characterized as pork-barrel politics.³⁶ Party elites distribute certain amounts of money and redistributive resources as patronage or private goods payoffs to residents in exchange for their political supports in elections. The essence of patronage politics is crucial to the survival of political elites and dominant political regimes.³⁷ Therefore, electoral politics is not cost-free for rural party elites; it requires that elites buy off social consent. This characterizes politics in rural China. Nonparty elites also look for political opportunities to share the benefits. For instance, reports have shown that in elections, candidates will publicly or privately claim they will give material benefits to villagers if they win. They do so by reaping returns from participating in village economic affairs after winning positions in village committees.³⁸

Based on the conditions spelled out above, we specify a simple utility function for party elites in rural China: $U = \text{Pr}(w)(B-P)$, in which $\text{Pr}(w)$ is the probability of winning elections; B is the benefits party elites will receive from winning, and P is the amount of patronage or cost party elites must pay to buy political supports. According to this formula, higher value of $(B-P)$ should be associated

with higher probability that rational party elites will choose the electoral rules that promise that they or their agents will be elected. When profits are high, party elites will hope $\Pr(w) = 1$ to reduce uncertainty and maintain all benefits, ($U = B - P$). On the contrary, when $(B - P)$ is low and even negative, party elites will have less incentive to control the elections and otherwise will choose primary nomination to neutralize the high costs ($U = 0$). Consequently, the conditions that determine costs and benefits in elections explain party elites' motivations in choosing electoral rules. Hence, considering the economic resources and patronage politics in rural China provide explanations for party elites' decision to control elections or allow nominations by non-party members.

First, after agricultural reform in 1978, rural industries sprouted. Villages and township governments established their own collective business (Township and Village Enterprises, TVEs or Village-owned enterprises, VOs).³⁹ These village-owned enterprises not only grew rural economy and help merchandize village lands, mines, or other natural resources; they also provide revenue and financial resources to rural governments by generating revenues that village officials can distribute as benefits. Since VOs are owned by the village, namely the collective, both village party branches and village committee members have the power to run village corporations. It gives party elites incentives to control village elections because if the village head and committee members are not from the local party elites' camp, competition over local resources takes place, and the party's dominance over the use of local economic resources will vanish. Indeed, the conflicts between village committees and party branches frequently occurred when the two leaderships are competing economic resources. Guo and Bernstein documented several conflicts and find that financial decisions on VOs and the use of land are sources of political impasse in villages, which eventually require mediation by the township government⁴⁰. Thus, to maintain control over resources, party elites would prefer to predetermine the electoral outcome in their own favor. Using party nomination procedure thus should be observed in villages with higher value stocks of village economic resources, such as a well-developed village-run business. One famous case is the richest village in China, Huaxi village in Jiangsu. The village party secretary Wu has been in a leadership position of both the village party branch and the village committee for more than 20 years, and the purpose of this is to control the village enterprises that have a market value in the billions:

H1: Villages with VOs that generate high amounts of revenue will be more likely to run elections by the party nomination process, while villages with lower revenue from VOs will be more likely to run elections by the primary nomination process, all else being equal.

To decide between the two alternative sets of election rules, party officials need to be able to estimate the cost of winning office (P), which can be viewed as the patronage costs to buy off local support. This patronage cost can simply

be identified as the size of the local electorate. The logic is simple: If there is a large electorate in a village, there will be large demands that party elites have to meet.⁴¹ Indeed, although village cadres can arbitrarily decide the use of economic resources, they are responsible for multiple tasks as well. They must provide infrastructure, administer difficult directives from the central authorities (such as implementation of one child policy), and levy taxes and fees.⁴² In addition, after economic reform, village party elites face larger pressure from the society. The life in rural area has been greatly improved, which increases the willingness of ordinary villagers to actively participate in elections. Affluent villagers or successful businessmen have challenged the local CCP by asking to run for offices in village committees. To maintain the CCP control thus becomes considerably costly. When the local electorate is large, the cost to pay naturally increases and village party elites' incentives to buy off political supports accordingly decrease.⁴³

H2: Villages with a larger electorate are more likely to run elections by primary nomination process, while villages with a smaller electorate are more likely to run elections by party nomination process, all else being equal.

External Pressure from Social Groups and Upper Authority

As previous studies have pointed out, in deciding electoral rules, rural party elites also need to strategically consider other political actors, such as social groups, clans or even upper-level authorities.⁴⁴ O'Brien and Han contend that village elections are embedded in a situation where social forces can exercise their powers to influence elections, while they have not identified how the interaction with these players influences village party officials' choice of which election system to implement.⁴⁵ In this section, we model this interaction to account for the factors that may encourage rural party elites to allow electoral competition.

In this strategic game model, the choice between party elites and non-party elites is determined by three elements: the amount of patronage, the cost of opposition, and the cost of repression, which lead to two major choices of electoral rules: party nomination and primary nomination. Simply put, according to the game, the equilibrium outcomes suggest the following: As the opposition cost for social forces decreases and as the repression cost for the government increases, village party officials run competitive election (in this case, elections with primary nomination) to avoid social conflicts.

To construct a patronage game model of the interaction among local elites in rural China, we employ an extensive form of a strategic game, which can appropriately show the historical development of institutional choice by village party elites. Although local non-party elites in China do not have the power to influence party elites' final choice on electoral institutions, they could employ other instruments, such as organized protests, complaints, or disobedience to affect the

electoral choices of party elites. Village non-party elites might impose political pressure on party elites to force party officials to offer other institutional alternatives, besides those which the party controls completely. In rural China, social stability is one of the most important political tasks that village party officials must achieve, and officials failing to maintain stability are usually removed from office by township or county governments.

For an extensive game, we consider that there is a historical process of the development of electoral institution choices in rural China. Party elites make the first move by either choosing the party dominant nomination system or the primary nomination (again, the party dominant nomination allows only party branches to nominate candidates while the primary nomination allow all villagers to nominate candidates, including non-party members). In the second move, village non-party elites, such as heads of clans or businessmen, choose either acceptance of the party elites' choice, or rejection of it. If there is no consensus between party and non-party elites after the second move, party elites make a final decision about which nomination institution to adopt.

Before spelling out the model, it should be noted that this game relies on several assumptions. First, we assume that local party elites and non-party elites are the principal actors in rural politics. This means that we do not consider the potential roles of all ordinary villagers in this patronage game. The second assumption is that party elites and local non-party elites have differing goals in choosing electoral institutions. Although non-party elites may be ideologically consistent to party elites, their preference regarding election rules is not in line with party elites' preference since non-party elites want the same benefits from rural elections that party elites want. For instance, village businessmen and clan leaders always have incentives to control over the village resource for their own use, which means they do not really pursue any type of democratization but tend to take over village managerial power through opposing party officials' monopoly of the village businesses.⁴⁶ Finally, we assume that party elites' resources for patronage are fixed, which allows simplification for this game by only considering the relationships between patronage and the costs paid by non-party elites and party elites.

With these assumptions, several elements affect the strategic choices of party elites and local non-party elites in the game. First, suppose α is a fixed amount of resources possessed by party elites and k is the spending totals for buying off local elites. Second, because this game develops through histories, both sets of actors decide the move by evaluating the decisions made by other players. When party elites decide to repress nonparty elites' choice, they face repression cost, denoted by s ; when nonparty elites decide to oppose party elites' decision, they incurs costs, c , a cost paid by everyone who puts in effort against the government's decision. For example, if party elites choose X, local elites choose Y, the cost for party elites is s and for local elites is c . In the third move, if party elites choose X which is opposite to Y, both parties suffer double costs.

Consider that there are two major choices: party dominant and primary nomination rules. Under party dominant nomination, party elites can freely choose the candidate they like, thereby paying nothing to buy off local elites and keeping all the resource they have,⁴⁷ in which $k = 0$. On the contrary, if the institutional choice is a primary nomination system, the party has to pay local elites to gain their support for political survival, in which $k > 0$. Thus, if both reach a consensus on the party nomination system, the payoff for party elites and local elites is $(\alpha, 0)$. If both agree on the primary nomination system, the payoff function is $(\alpha - k, k)$. When the two sets of actors reach a different outcome in the first and second move, party elites need to make a final decision in the third period. If party elites accommodate the demands of local non-party elites, the game ends with both parties paying the costs once. If party elites insist on their choice in the first period, the game ends with both parties paying costs twice. Solving this game, the pure-strategy subgame perfect equilibria can well account for the institutional choices. There are several possible subgame perfect equilibria in this game, depending on the relationship among k , s and c (see appendix for the formal solution of this game). The game can be graphed as Fig 1.

Table 1 shows the different outcomes of this game. First, when patronage k is greater than the cost of opposition c and the cost of repression s , there is no incentive for party elites to choose the primary nomination rule in the first place and therefore non-party elites will also choose the party dominant nomination. The subgame perfect equilibrium indicates that the result will be that party elites and non-party elites both choose the party dominant nomination as long as $k > S$.

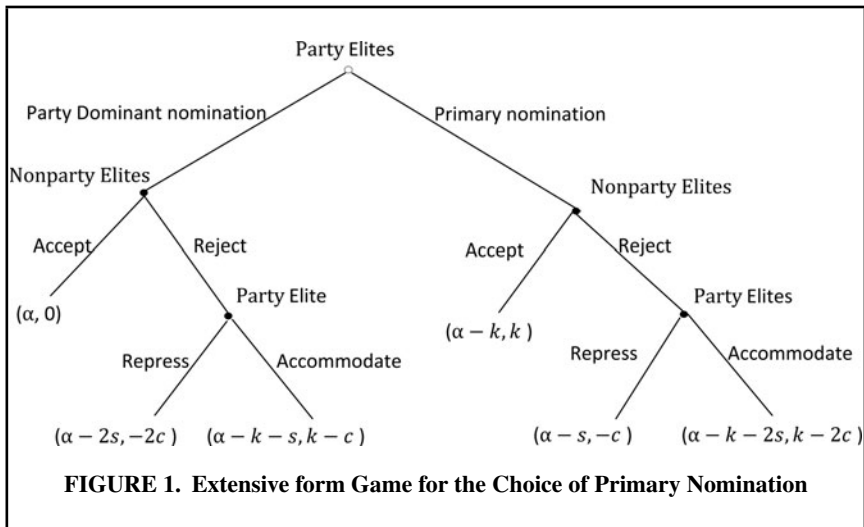


TABLE 1. Summary of Extensive Patronage Game Predicted Outcome.

	$k > s$	$k < s$
$k > c$	Party dominant nomination	Primary nomination
$k < c$	Party dominant nomination	Party dominant nomination

Note: k is the amount of patronage, c is the opposition cost of local elites, s is the repression cost of party elites when facing opposition.

In this game, the choice of the primary nomination system is the equilibrium under the condition that $k > S$ and $k > S$. That is, when repression costs are high and the opposition cost for local non-party elites is relatively low, the best strategy for party elites and non-party elites is to choose primary nomination rule because the payoffs for each is better than other choices. The subgame perfect equilibrium predicts that the outcome as the primary nomination system.

The equilibria of this game between party elites and non-party elites provide some theoretical implications for observing Chinese rural elections. First, when the opposition cost of c is low, to the extent that $k > S$, the probability of the choice of primary nomination process will be higher. This suggests that there are social factors involved in the choice of electoral rules in rural China. The cost of repression also plays a role in determining electoral rules. When the repression cost goes up, the probability of choosing the primary nomination system will be higher.

As far as the interaction between rural party elites and nonparty elites is concerned, the game suggests that village party elites will not always choose to control elections. Instead, a straightforward prediction from the game is that party elites' decision to open elections is facilitated by two conditions: (1) the cost to nonparty elites of opposing party elites is low, and (2) the cost to party elites of repressing nonparty elites' opposition is high. The first one echoes the literatures arguing the positive effect of clans in rural democracy.⁴⁸ There has been a strong consensus that social organizations, such as clans, associations, or unions, can coordinate and mobilize individuals to facilitate collective actions.⁴⁹ Political scientists also argue that social organizations can lower the cost of social movement and improve the quality of democracy.⁵⁰ It thus is not surprising that the presence of clan social organization is a factor that can lower the cost of opposition and thereby increase the chance that rural party elites will allow electoral competition.

H3: The presence of strong social organizations, such as kinship groups, clans or associations, will increase the probability for a village to run elections by the primary nomination process while the lack of strong social organizations will increase the

probability for a village to run elections by the party dominant nomination, all else being equal.

As for the second factor, unlike democratic countries in which politician faces punishment from electors if they repress the public, in China local officials are responsible to upper level authorities. Village party officials will not be punished by the villagers if they repress the local dissent, while they will face serious punishment as township, county or even provincial governments decide to remove them from offices. Therefore, when conflicts between rural officials and villagers occur, a frequent way for villager to “punish” the official is to deliver their complaints to the upper level governments. In some cases, villagers even need to travel a long way to Beijing. As such, the cost of repression for rural party officials mostly comes from how the upper level authorities can monitor local officials. For instance, in the 1980s, township governments were weak in monitoring village officials’ behavior, which made the electoral reform poorly implemented. After 1990, rural issues became major concerns of the CCP and the pressure from upper level governments forced many villages to liberalize elections.⁵¹ Thus, the cost of repression largely comes from the punishment of upper level governments.

H4: Villages closely monitored by upper level governments are more likely to run elections by the primary nomination while villages loosely controlled by upper level governments are more likely to run elections by the party dominant nomination, all else being equal.

The Case of Wukan Village

The case of Wukan event in 2011 highlights the dynamics of a village with non-competitive elections transitioning to a village with competitive elections. Wukan villagers opposed local corrupt cadres and successfully forced local officials to adopt democratic elections. The story began in 2011 September 21, when a group of young people saw a real estate developer surveying a piece of village land, suspecting the local officials were selling village land for their own profits.⁵² The presence of the real estate staffs infuriated villagers, who then accused village party secretary Xue of corruption with businesses and land expropriation. What is more, in September 28, Xue manipulated an election, using roving boxes and fake ballots, and claimed his reelection as village committee chair.⁵³ Shortly the angry villagers, led by several protest leaders, gathered together and stormed in the village committee office. Protestors then argued that village elections of past decades were illegal and illegitimate. Thousands of villagers marched on the upper-level Lufeng city government with banners to ask for the return of land and for democratic elections. The city deputy secretary Tsai showed up in front of the protestors and accepted the petition letter, promising to inspect the case carefully. The next day, reportedly 200 policemen came to crack down on the unrest, and

the confrontation led to injuries among both protestors and local police. Meanwhile villagers elected their own acting council members to represent the village in negotiations with the government.

On November 17, the already-fleeing village party secretary Xue and the village committee chair Chen were deposed from office. But villagers were still discontented with the unanswered issues about land. The protest leaders organized another demonstration directed toward the city government. The deputy mayor promised again to file the case and provide investigation results about village land in the following weeks. However, on December, the city government started to blame the protest activists and arrested five protest leaders, which escalated the conflict. The conflict suddenly became a war-like confrontation with villagers building barricades to keep the official staffs from entering the village, and the police besieged the town to force villagers to yield. The death of one arrested village leader, Xue Jinbo, peaked the riot. The event suddenly was well-known internationally and shocked the CCP central authority. The provincial leader Wang Yang expressed his serious concern and sent his deputy, Zhu, with a work team to the village, directly meeting with village elected leadership to negotiate an agreement. Villagers and the CCP eventually reached an agreement and settled with a widely known “democratic” election on March 2012.

The scene behind the Wukan event helps us identify the conditions in which a competitive election is a final equilibrium under the interaction between local officials and electorate. First, the village party elite Xue controlled and managed village collective assets for decades, particularly land and the village-owned company, Wukan Harbor Industrial Development Corporation. He sold off a considerable amount of village land without consulting villagers, generating huge profits.⁵⁴ Because of the huge economic interests, Xue has no incentives to provide democratic elections for village committees. As one senior villager recalled, the election experience she had is that village party officials carried the ballot box to only few families to collect ballots. In the past, no one would complain because most villagers were working out of town. Therefore, the size of electorate was relatively small and did not impose governance pressure to the village party branch. This situation changed after 1996. Reportedly, from 1996 to 2011, the population grew from 8700 to 13000,⁵⁵ and the demand for land was largely provoked by an increasing electorate. In addition, young villagers who worked outside the village were returning because of the harsh job market in large cities. When they came back and found the sale of land deprive them of opportunities for housing and planting, they expect to receive certain compensation. However, Xue paid a tiny amount of compensation from the considerable sale of collective land⁵⁶. This triggered the protests against the illegal sale of collective assets. From the case, the collective asserts and small size of electorate have incentivized Xue to continue to implement rigged elections. Yet, although the increasing population became a catalyst for electoral reform, the movement will not succeed without the

other two crucial factors: the well-organized collective action and the mounting political risks of instability for local officials.

One factor that forces the CCP to adopt competitive elections in Wukan is the villager's strong organizational capacity. The cost of collective action was sharply decreasing by the use of technology and the village organizations, which scholars have considered a strong civil society.⁵⁷ Early in 2009, a group of Wukan young villagers established an online forum to discuss the corrupt behaviors of village party officials. The number of member joining the forum went up to one thousand in 2011.⁵⁸ This not only facilitated the flow of information but also gave training for protest leaderships. Between 2009 to 2011 the members carefully organized several petitions to Beijing, hoping the central authorities would notice the land expropriation issue in Wukan. The petition ended up fruitless, but these experiences lowered the cost of collective action in the future and provided members with valuable experiences they could apply for the 2011 demonstrations. Other social organizations also offer nonparty elites to mobilize supporters against the government.⁵⁹ For instance, during the standoff of Wukan, village social organizations, such as existing clans, the acting village council, the women's unity association, and the senior villagers' association functioned effectively to mobilize villagers, to organize self-government, and to provide legal advice. For instance, one nonparty elite, Lin Zulian, used clan networks to ask for donations of rice or other food resources from rich villagers when the village was besieged by the police. These organizations eventually constituted a significant force against village party officials' dictatorship.

Another factor is the intervention from upper-level government, particularly the provincial government. In many cases of local disturbance, rural party officials chose to violently repress villagers, sometimes with the assistance of township or county governments. In the Wukan incident, the village government could have repressed the protestors with support from the city deputy secretary Tsai. However, the cost of repression had been raised too high for them to afford when the upper level government intervened. Media is one catalyst for increasing the cost of repression by forcing provincial authorities to intervene in favor of the villagers.⁶⁰ Young villagers sent photos of everyday situations of the conflict to the outside world through the internet. Many foreign reporters, guided by villagers, sneaked into the village. These reporters interviewed villagers, recorded police attacks, and delivered information to the public. Thanks to the internet and social media, the news of the Wukan protest spread throughout the world, including China.⁶¹ This widespread news shocked the central leadership, who decided to intervene in the protest. The village party secretary Xue and village chief Chen were soon demoted by upper-level government right after their own investigation. Monitored by the provincial government, the newly appointed village party officials implemented competitive elections. The Provincial Party secretary Wang Yang also commented that the 2012 election after Wukan protest is not an institutional innovation but an

election strictly following the rules stipulated by the Organic Law. The provincial government even drafted Recommendations for the Re-Election of the Wukan Village Committee to support the implementation of competitive elections.⁶² Obviously, the Wukan case shows that the presence of the upper level government has restricted village officials' discretion to use repression, which could jeopardize their political careers. Under these conditions, village officials needed to make a policy concession to allow competitive elections to villagers.

The case of Wukan illustrates the conditions in which a village party official will or is forced to allow electoral competition. The four factors—village collective assets, the size of electorate, the organization capacity of villagers, and the upper level government control—are particularly highlighted in this case. We next employ village-level survey data to examine whether the argument holds in cross-sectional analysis.

Statistical Analysis

We use the Chinese Household Income Project (CHIP) 2002 data set⁶³ to test above hypotheses. The CHIP 2002 data set is a survey-based cross-sectional data set conducted in 2002, covering individual, household, and village level questionnaires. Within the data set, the Village Administration Data is used to measure the variables of interests. In the CHIP 2002 Village Administration Data, 961 village representatives were interviewed and asked questions about village economic statistics, information on village heads, as well as details regarding their village's organization.

Dependent Variable

We employ the nomination processes—primary nomination or party nomination—to measure the difference in electoral rules. Of the 960 villages that answered this question, 104 villages (10.83%) adopted the party dominant nomination in elections and 856 villages (89.17%) allow their residents to nominate candidates. Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, a logit regression model is utilized to test the hypotheses. In addition, because the data are collected across county governments where there are multiple villages in the same county being surveyed, the expected effects will be correlated with the group for each county. To deal with this correlation, clustered standard error is used to calculate the statistical significance.

Independent Variables

Hypothesis 1 proposes that a wealth of revenue leads to electoral control—the party dominant nomination process. To operationalize the amount of revenue in a village, we use two economic statistics as the measures for this hypothesis. The

first one is a village's total collective revenue. This variable shows how party elites assess local benefits. The information about total revenues, however, may be not a direct measure for the economic power and resources, which local party elites can access. We use a second measure—a village's collective operating revenue—which indicates the amount of revenue collected by village-owned enterprises. This figure can be compared with the first measure to test the local benefits hypothesis. Both variables are continuous numeric variables calculated in thousand-yuan. The lowest revenue for both variables is 0. The village with the highest total collective revenue is 27,360,000 Yuan, while the village with highest total collective operating revenue is 25,760,000 Yuan. According to Hypothesis 1, a negative relationship between the two explanatory variables and the dependent variable is expected.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that a larger electorate will be associated with higher probability and that primary nomination will be chosen by village party elites. Yet in the data set, there is no measure of the number of eligible voters. We use the size of the labor force as an alternative measure, since laborers are those who are of working age with urgent desires for patronage, such as jobs, salaries, or family benefits. In the sample, the village with the smallest labor force is 42 individuals while the highest is 4,813 individuals. We expect this variable is positively correlated with the adoption of the primary nomination rules.

Hypothesis 3 specifies the mechanism by which social cohesiveness lowers the opposition cost for local nonparty elites and therefore increases the probability that party elites choose primary electoral rules. There is no available information on the number of social organizations in this data set. We thus use a subjective evaluation of the respondents on whether the village government needs to balance the different interests of villager groups when determining village affairs. Using this question, we create a measure that is coded as 1 when respondents answer "no" when being asked if the interests of villager groups are taken into account in decision of village affairs, 2 when the answer is "sometimes," 3 when the answer is "often," and 4 when the answer is "it is required" According to the theory, this variable is expected to increase the probability of the occurrence of primary nomination.

Hypothesis 4 proposes that village party elites will be more likely to choose the primary nomination when they are under powerful control by upper level authorities. We evaluate the extent of upper-level authority control of village affairs by looking at the annual frequency of inspections conducted by upper level government. Should the upper level government closely monitor the village, then the upper level official will frequently inspect the village. This measure is directly derived from the data set, and the lowest number of inspections from upper level government is zero while highest number is 50. The theoretical expectation is that the likelihood of choosing the primary nomination rule would increase as the number of inspections increases.

Control Variables

Several variables will be included in the analysis to control for confounding effects. First, the distance between a village and its township government is controlled. The distance is an important factor for township governments to connect with villages, and it is also frequently used in analyzing village elections.⁶⁴ Second, we use net income per capita (in thousands of yuan) as the measurement to control economic development, with which rural democracy in China is highly associated. The level of village economic development is expected to exert positive influence on the choice of competitive elections.⁶⁵ In addition to controlling for village features, we add three control variables about the personal characteristics of village party elites: age, education level, and monthly salary. Age of village party elites could generate potential generational effects on their political choice. The code rule for age of village party head is: (1): 29 and below; (2): 30–34; (3): 35–39; (4): 40–44; (5): 45–49; (6): 50–54; (7): 55 and above. Educational level of party officials may be associated with their perception and understanding of the Organic Law, which will encourage rural party officials to allow electoral competition. We include educational level in the model to control for the effects of political knowledge. Finally, the monthly salary of village party leaders varies across villages, depending upon their performance in generating village revenues. High salary may discourage party elites to offer electoral competition to the villagers. We control this effect in the model. [Table 2](#) shows the descriptive statistics of the variables.

Results

[Table 3](#) shows the results from the logistic regression. We have hypothesized that the use of primary nomination will be correlated with (1) the values of village owned enterprises, (2) the size of electorate, (3) the presence of social organizations and (4) the monitor by the upper level governments. In the cross-sectional analysis, only the second hypothesis receives strong empirical supports ($P < 0.05$). The model shows that the size of electorate, measured by the size of labor force, exerts significant positive effects on the choice of primary nomination the size of the labor force is positively correlated with the presence of primary nomination, suggesting that a larger electorate is associated with greater willingness of party elites to adopt an electoral institution that allows electoral competition. The predicted probability calculated using the coefficient is shown in [Fig 2](#). The probability is about 87% that a village with a very low labor force is likely to adopt primary nomination. The probability, on the other hand, will increase up to almost 98% when a village has a total of 5000 laborers, holding all other variables at their means. In general, the second hypothesis gains empirical support from the regression analysis.

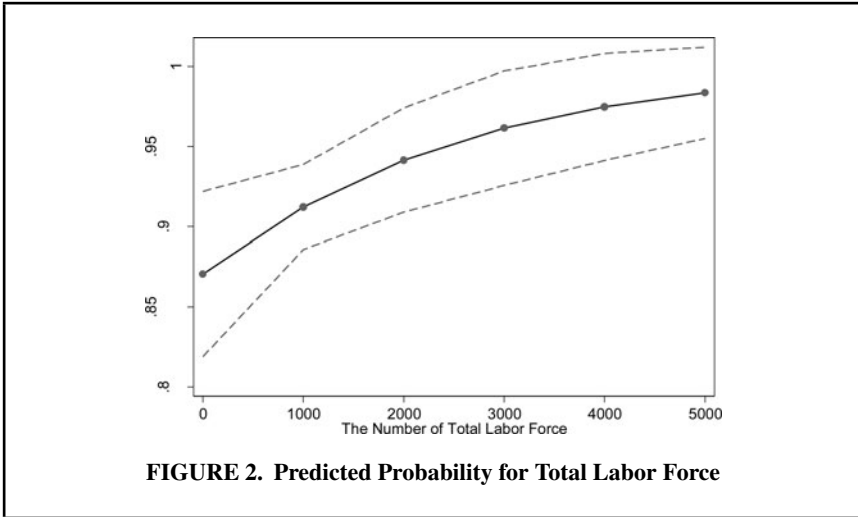
TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable Name	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Nomination Rule	960	.892	.311	0	1
Total Collective Revenue	961	202.484	1157.155	0	27360
Total Collective Revenue from VOEs	961	89.095	1030.989	0	25760
The Number of Labor Force	961	910.721	622.864	42	4813
Village Group Interests	922	3.205	.767	1	4
Frequency of Inspection by Upper Gov.	827	3.161	4.538	0	50
Distance from Township Gov.	953	4.971	5.731	0	100
Income Per Capita	951	2.469	1.49	.118	15
Age of Village Party Head	961	4.86	1.409	1	7
Educational Level of Village Party Head	961	2.583	1.004	1	5
Monthly Salary of Village Party Head	957	344.39	373.691	5.5	4500

TABLE 3. Logit Estimate for Village Nomination Rules.

Nomination Rule	Coefficient (SE)
Village Total Revenue	-.0003 (.0003)
Revenue from VOEs	.0007 (.0004)*
The Number of Labor Force	.0004 (.0002)**
Village Group Interests	.176 (.1631)
Upper Level Gov. Inspection Visits	.0868 (.0509)*
Distance from Township Gov.	-.0174 (.017)
Income Per Capita	.0698 (.095)
Age of Village Party Head	-.0063 (.0794)
Educational Level of Village Party Head	.1408 (.163)
Monthly Salary of Village Party Head	-.0005 (.0004)
Constant	.7943 (.9401)
N = 777, Wald chi2(df = 6) = 20.96, Log pseudolikelihood = -246.94089	

Note: Dependent variable: 1: villagers are allowed to nominate candidates; 0: villagers are not allowed to nominate candidates. Robust standard errors clustered on township groups in parenthesis. * $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$



The first two variables *Total Revenue* and *Total Revenue from VOEs* are the measure for the benefits village party elites expect to obtain in controlling elections. They measure their incentives to choose the party nomination system instead of the primary nomination system. The two variables, however, fail to reach .05 significance level in the relationship with the choice of nomination methods. The graph shows two divergent effects of village revenue on the selection of nomination rules. The variable measuring the monitor of the higher-level government—*Upper Level Government Inspection Visits*, and the variable measuring whether party officials concern with social organizations in their village, *Villager Group Interests*, fail to reach .05 significance level too. From the model, other control variables are not statistically significant. This could be due to the constraints of the data, in which village officials usually give positive answers to policy implementation, leading to a small variation of the dependent variable. However, even with the limitation of data, the cross-sectional analysis shows a strong evidence that a large size of electorate is higher associated with village party officials' choice on competitive electoral rules.

Conclusion

The Chinese Communist Party has long pursued a stable society to survive the authoritarian rule. Rural democracy is undoubtedly a strategy to accomplish this goal. Chinese former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in 2012 openly vowed to make village committee elections an authentic channel for villagers' opinion and

claimed that rural democracy is not realized without a democratic electoral procedure. It seems an urgent task for the CCP to understand how and why elections were implemented democratically in rural China.

In this paper, we have analyzed the factors that lead local authoritarian elites to choose electoral rules that allow for competition. We hypothesize that the choice of party elites in setting up electoral rules is influenced by four factors: total village economic output, size of the local electorate, social organizations, and higher-level CCP control. The Wukan's case in 2011 illustrates how the four factors have substantial effects on village officials' decisions in choosing competitive elections, while the cross-sectional evidence shows the most powerful and consistent factor we can conclude is the size of electorate.

The policy implication, according to the theory and empirical evidence in this paper, is that one way that Chinese central authority can improve democratic electoral procedures in rural China is to enlarge village electorate by combining small villages, since the size of electorate consistently exerts a positive impact on village officials' choice of competitive electoral rule. In addition, if social organizations have positive effects as well, combination can help increase the number of social groups in a combined village that help create party elites' incentive to provide competitive elections too. Chinese central government in 2004 has adopted a policy to relocate and combine villages in order to rearrange village economic assets and reconstruct village infrastructures. With this experience, the central government can employ the same strategy to improve village democracies.

Besides structurally influencing the village population, the CCP may also adopt a strict monitoring mechanism on village party officials. It can, on the one hand, scrutinize villages' accounting statistics, and on the other politically pay for more inspections on the village officials. These activities impose pressure on village officials to avoid corruption and repression, which creates a conducive environment to democratic elections.

Theoretically, this topic deserves further sophisticated empirical analysis and theory building. First, the variance in electoral rules in rural China is larger than what we have learned in this paper. The available data do not allow us to depict a full picture of the variety of adopted electoral rules. For the variety, one solution is to look at whether the electoral rule follows Organic Law.⁶⁶ Future works can employ this criterion to refine the data quality. Second, interestingly, anecdotes and reports find that even when village party officials allow electoral competitions, many village party officials are still being elected by villagers into village committees, in which case competition is not equal to power transition. This phenomenon can be compared with what scholars have called "subnational authoritarianism," which national democratization did not cause any local leader turnover, a phenomenon frequently found in Latin America and Post-Communist regimes.⁶⁷ Looking into how the varieties of electoral rules in Chinese villages would influ-

ence the path that rural democratization plunges into subnational authoritarianism could help comparativists identify the institutional obstacles to democratization at local level.

Appendix

Players p_1 Party Elites; p_2 Nonpartisan Elites

Terminal histories The set of all sequences (A_1, A_2, A_3) , where A_1 is the choice of p_1 to either provide party dominant nomination or primary nomination, A_2 is the choice of p_2 to accept or reject, A_3 is the action of p_1 to either repress p_2 or accommodate them when the first proposal of A_1 is rejected by P_2 .

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} (PDN, Accept) (PDN, Reject, Repress) (PDN, Reject, Accommodate) \\ (PN, Accept) (PN, Reject, Repress) (PN, Reject, Accommodate) \end{array} \right\}$$

PDN = party donimant nomination; PN = primary nomination

Player function $P(\emptyset) =$ Party Elites, $P(A_1) =$ Nonpartisan Elites *for all* A_1 , $P(A_1, A_2) =$ Party Elites if $A_2 =$ Reject

Preference Each actor’s preferences depend on the others’ choice. If there is one conflict in both choices, both players need to pay the costs once. If there are two conflicts in both choices, both players need to pay the costs twice. The cost for p_1 is s , for p_2 is c .

p_1 ’s preferences are represented by the payoff function μ_1 for which $u_1(PDN, Accept) = \alpha$,

$$\begin{aligned} u_1(PDN, Reject, Repress) &= \alpha - 2s, u_1(PDN, Reject, Accommodate) \\ &= \alpha - k - s, u_1(PN, Reject, Accommodate) \\ &= \alpha - s, u_1(PN, Reject, Repress) \\ &= \alpha - k - 2s, u_1(PN, Accept) = \alpha - k \end{aligned}$$

p_1 ’s preferences are represented by the payoff function μ_2 for which $u_2(PDN, Accept) = 0$,

$$\begin{aligned} u_2(PDN, Reject, Repress) &= -2c, u_2(PDN, Reject, Accommodate) = k - c \\ u_2(PN, Reject, Accommodate) &= -c, u_2(PN, Reject, Repress) = k - 2c, u_2(PN, Accept) = k \end{aligned}$$

Solutions

First, suppose $k > S$ and $k > c$. In the length 1 which follows p_2 choose *Reject* in the left side, we see that there are two choices for p_1 : *Repress* and *Accommodate*. The payoff for p_1 to choose *Repress* is $\alpha - 2s$, and to choose *Accommodate* is $\alpha - k - s$. Since $k > s$, p_1 will choose *Repress*. Next, consider the right side in

the length 1, $\alpha - s$ is always bigger than $\alpha - k - 2s$, so p_1 will choose *Repress* and the final outcome is Party Dominant Nomination.

In the length 2 of left side, p_2 knows that p_1 will *Repress*, and her payoff will be $-2c$, therefore she will prefer *Accept* in which the payoff for her is 0. In length 2 of right side, her best choice is *Accept*, because k is larger than $-c$. In the length 3, p_1 makes the first move. Since p_1 knows that p_2 will *Accept* if she chooses *PDN*, *PDN* is the best choice for p_1 because she can keep all resource. Thus, if $k > S$ and $k > c$, the pure-strategy subgame perfect equilibrium is (*PDN Repress, Accept Accept*). And what can account for institutional choice is the terminal history (*PDN, Accept*). The subgame perfect equilibrium will be the same when considering $k > S$, but $k > c$.

Second, suppose $k < s$ and $k > c$. In the length 1 of left side, p_1 is better off by choosing *Accommodate* since $\alpha - k - s > \alpha - 2s$. In the length 1 of right side, p_1 chooses *Accommodate*. Consider the length 2 of left side. Since p_2 knows that p_1 will choose *Accommodate*, she is better off by choosing *Reject* for $k - c > 0$. In the right side, her choice on *Accept* will be always better. Under this condition, in the length 3, p_1 will choose *PN* because of the better payoff $\alpha - k > \alpha - k - s$. Therefore, if $k < s$ and $k > c$, we find that the subgame perfect equilibrium is (*PN Accommodate Accommodate, Reject Accept*), in which prediction is the terminal history (*PN, Accept*), and the final outcome is Primary Nomination.

Finally, suppose $k < s$ and $c < k$. In the length 1 of left side, p_1 will choose *Accommodate* since the payoff $\alpha - k - s > \alpha - 2s$ while on the right side she is always choosing *Accommodate*. In the length 2 of left side, p_2 will choose *Accept* since $k - c < 0$ while on the right side, p_2 always chooses *Accept* as well. Thus, in the length 3, p_1 will choose *PDN* to get a better payoff α instead of $\alpha - k$. Under this situation, the subgame perfect equilibrium will be (*PDN Accommodate Accommodate, Accept Accept*). And the predicted terminal history here is (*PDN, Accept*), so the electoral institution will be Party Dominant Nomination.

NOTES

1. Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," *The China Quarterly* 146 (2000): 465-489.
2. See Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 403-422 for a review of this topic.
3. Ibid; Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies* 40 (2007): 1279-1301; Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Ellen Lust-Okar, "Competitive Clientelism in the Middle East," *Journal of Democracy* 20 (2009): 122-135; Ellen Lust-Okar, *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Joseph Wright and Abel Escribà-Folch, "Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival: Transitions to Democracy and Subsequent Autocracy," *British Journal of Political Science* 42 (2012): 283-309.

4. Gandhi and Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism."
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46. Yusheng Yao, "Village Elections and Their Impact: An Investigative Report on a Northern Chinese Village," *Modern China* 39 (2013): 37–68; Yusheng Yao, "Village Elections and the Rise of Capitalist Entrepreneurs," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21 (2012): 317–332.

47. Note that the patronage for local non-party elites is not the same as the patronage for general rural voters we identify in the first section. The amount of patronage k specifies the exclusive benefits for local non-party elites.

48. Manion, "Democracy, Community, Trust," 301–324; Lu, "Varieties of Electoral Institutions," 482–493.

49. Olson, Mancur. "The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups," in *New York: Schocken*, 1971.

50. Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Mark Irving Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma* (Ann Arbor, MD: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

51. Xu Wang, "Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Grassroots Democracy in Rural China," *World Development* 25 (1997): 1431–1442.

52. Wukan is a relatively affluent coastal village in Guangdong province with around 12,000 in population, but more than half of villagers were working outside the village. Because of its proximity to coastal cities, Wukan was developed and industrialized right after the economic reform.

53. See SinaNewsCenter, "Interviewed Lin Zhulian by Sina News," <http://news.sina.com.cn/sd/2012-06-21/105324633827.shtml> (accessed Feb. 9).

54. In 1993, when the company was established, 2112 acres of land were sold by 700 million RMB. See Shenjing He and Desheng Xue, "Identity Building and Communal Resistance against Landgrabs in Wukan Village, China," *Current Anthropology* 55 (2014): S126–S37.

55. See Chang Lu, "Wu Kan Shi Jian," <http://magazine.caijing.com.cn/sjcontent/79051.shtml> (accessed Feb. 9, 2016).

56. Reportedly, every family received only 550 RMB compensation during the two decades. See Tian Yu Peng, "The Enlightenment of 'Wukan Incident,'" in *Grassroots Democracy in China—2012*, ed. Fan Li (Beijing: The World and China Institute, 2012), 300–310; and Ruoyun Hua, Yuxin Hou, and Guosheng Deng, "Instrumental Civil Rights and Institutionalized Participation in China: A Case Study of Protest in Wukan Village," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27 (2016): 2131–2149.

57. Johan Lagerkvist, "The Wukan Uprising and Chinese State-Society Relations: Toward 'Shadow Civil Society'?" *International Journal of China Studies* 3 (2012): 345.

58. Yanbing Zhang and Zhimin Zeng, "The Building, Consolidation and Collapse of the Government-Business Relationship: Local Government Autonomy and Social Force in the 'Wukan Incident,'" <http://www.sppm.tsinghua.edu.cn/eWebEditor/UploadFile//20150602113144579.pdf> (accessed Feb. 10 2016).

59. Yuxin Hou, "The Role of Religious Force in the Wukan Incident," *The China Nonprofit Review* 5 (2013): 155–175; Yingzi Hu and Yuxin Lan, "Village Organizations and Their Role in the Wukan Incident," *The China Nonprofit Review* 5 (2013): 139–153.

60. Steve Hess, "Foreign Media Coverage and Protest Outcomes in China: The Case of the 2011 Wukan Rebellion," *Modern Asian Studies* (2015): 177–203.

61. The information was censored in China on the heels of the end of the protests.

62. Hua, Hou, and Deng, "Instrumental Civil Rights," 2134.

63. Li Shi, "Chinese Household Income Project, 2002. Icpsr21741-V1" (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 2002).

64. Shi, "Economic Development and Village Elections in Rural China," 425–442.

65. We drop six observations that the net per capita income in a village is zero, because zero may be not accurate information. The results, however, do not change with the dropped observations.

66. Lu, "Varieties of Electoral Institutions in China's Grassroots Democracy," 482–493.

67. Edward L. Gibson, "Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries," *World Politics* 58 (2005): 101–132.