Of Time, Leadership, and Governance:

Elite Incentives and Stability Maintenance in China

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Abstract

China's system of Party-controlled elite appointment system has been praised for contributing to growth and order in recent decades. Inspired by Olson's insight into elite incentives and governance, we examine how the Chinese practices of elite management affect the character of governance using unique survey and interview data on township leaders and social contention. We find that, first, externally-appointed party secretaries experience more petitions and mass incidents during their tenure and are more likely to use coercion to deal with petitions than internally appointed secretaries. Second, these tendencies are moderated when externally-appointed party secretaries are paired with internally appointed township heads We explore the implications of such behavioral differences and suggest our findings are of broad significance for understanding governance in China.

Key Words: China, nomenclature, stability maintenance, accountability system, local governance

1. Introduction

In his influential article "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development", the late Mancur Olson (1993) used the metaphors of roving vs stationary bandits to illuminate the logic behind the divergences in elite behavior in different types of governance systems and the implications of such divergent behavior for economic growth and human welfare. In a few simple strokes, he sketched the picture of how roving bandits would be motivated to settle down and provide order, thereby laying the foundations for government as well as for increases in output. In his inimitable style, Olson declares: "History until relatively recent times has been mostly a story of the gradual progress of civilization under stationery bandits interrupted by occasional episodes of roving banditry (Olson 1993, 569)."

A key dimension in considering the nature of such "banditry" is time horizon. An autocrat (stationery bandit) with no reason to consider the future has the same incentives as the roving bandit. The shouts of "Long Live the King" are thus more than mere lip service and carry important implications for dynastic succession and expectations about the future from the perspective of rulers and subjects alike (Olson 1993). In contrast, the idea of a Chairman Mao without a hereditary heir (his elder and healthy son was killed in the Korean War) stirs ominous thoughts about Mao's behavior as China's ruler.

While Olson's dichotomous categories of roving vs stationary bandits serve to differentiate between two polar opposites, we believe the dimension of time horizon inherent in the Olsonian framework needs not be dichotomous and can be considered as a continuous spectrum. We suggest that political agents possessing substantially different time horizons may behave in predictably different manners and apply this insight to our examination of elite behavior China's local governance.

Historically China of the imperial era was not only dynastic but is known for the adoption of Confucian teachings and ritual in governance (Elman 1991). The emperor governed with the support of a cadre of scholar-officials selected through a system of Confucian civil service examinations (Elman 1991). Yet the ruling dynasties adopted various institutions and mechanisms to enhance imperial control over local officials,

including the Censorate and other forms of supervision and surveillance, such as that between the governor-general and the governor. Most prominently, the avoidance rule prohibiting the appointment of an official to his hometown was strictly followed and officials also were regularly moved around rather than being allowed to sink roots in one place.

Following the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, the post-Mao Chinese leadership has made sustained efforts to rebuild and strengthen China's elite management by combining the Soviet-style nomenclature system with regular civil service examinations sans Confucianism (Burns 1989; Manion 1985). Some features of the current system, particularly top-down appointments, avoidance, and rotation, are reminiscent of imperial practices (Zheng 2009).

Whereas Chinese contemporary organizational practices are designed to strengthen top-down control, they also generate unexpected and even pernicious effects in governance. Taking inspiration from Olson's insight on the significance of time horizons on elite behavior, we suggest Chinese local elites can be considered to resemble "stationary" bandits with significant variations in their time horizons and investigate whether and how variations in the time horizons of local officials have affected the nature of Chinese governance in the localities.

While Chinese leaders have emphasized order in the pursuit of economic development, the hyper-growth decade of the 2000s was accompanied by a "high tide" of petitioning and mass incidents (Li, Liu, and O'Brien 2012; Yang 2004). The "high tide" of petitioning in Beijing raised the question of whether the Chinese party-state might be losing its grip over society. In response, Chinese leadership steadily enhanced the stability maintenance regime, making the preservation of stability a top priority in assessing the performance of local officials (Minzner and Wang 2015; Yang 2016). Yet local authorities in quest of stability responded to societal demands differently (Cai 2008a; Paik 2012).

Previous work on contentious politics in China has focused on how individual characteristics affect their propensity to participate in collective actions and examined local governments' rationale for making different responses to popular resistance in

China (Cai 2010; Chen 2012). Another strand of the literature has linked the structure of the Chinese political system to the types of collective protests, such as rightful resistance (O'Brien and Li 2006). Our study departs from the extant literature and seeks to explore how patterns of local leadership affect the onset and resolution of protests and petitions. Why do some local authorities succeed in maintaining social stability while others fail？ Why do some local leaders resort to suppression while others seem more capable of peaceful settlement? We argue that invocation of the concept of time horizon in examining local elite behavior in China's hierarchy comprised of multiple layers of territorial administrations offers insights into the variations in local approaches toward the management of social stability, especially in dealing with petitions and mass incidents. We address these issues by utilizing data from national surveys conducted between 2000 to 2008.

As part of the official nomenklatura system, local leaders are not popularly elected but are appointed through an elaborate system of cadre management. Our focus is on the leaders of towns/townships (hereafter only township is used for ease of exposition).[1] We hypothesize the nature of appointments made through this system bears on the character of local governance. More specifically, the township leaders' career path and prospective time horizon affects their access to resources and their relations with the local communities and thus their strategies for and effectiveness in dealing with issues of social stability.

We classify township leaders into two types, those appointees who come from outside the community and thus are externally appointed ("outsiders") and those who come from within the township ("internally appointed" or "locals"). Township Party Secretaries who are externally appointed are usually from the county-level Party/government administration and are significantly more likely to leave for other posts elsewhere, including in higher levels of the Party/government hierarchy, than

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[1] The National Bureau of Statistics reports that as of 2008 China had 40,828 towns/townships/neighborhoods, including 19,234 towns and 15,067 townships. Towns and townships are differentiated by the degree of urbanization but we use them interchangeably in this study.

those who come from within the locality. We hypothesize that the differences in time horizons between the two types of officials, the externally appointed vs locals, will lead to meaningful variations in their career time horizons and their attitudes toward petitions/protests. Compared with the locals, the externally appointed secretaries are more short-term oriented and will be more likely to adopt measures that make the problem disappear out of sight, even if the adopted measures are Band-Aid ones that don't solve the problem at hand and may even engender long-term negative consequences.

We test our hypothesis by looking at two key moments: when the petitions/protests (unrest from the official perspective) occur and when local leaders tackle these events. Based on analyses of panel data from national surveys, we find that, first, townships with externally appointed party secretaries tend to have more cases of protests/petitions, and townships with local township heads appear to be more effective in curbing social unrest. Second, externally appointed secretaries tend to resort to more coercive measures and are more reluctant to settle petitions compared with township heads who are locals. Our findings offer more nuanced insights into the political dynamics of stability maintenance and by extension the nature of governance in authoritarian China.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the background on petitions and social protest in China in the 2000s and introduces our analytical framework. Section 3 presents our empirical strategy by describing the data and variables used and the models for empirical analyses. Section 4 presents the main results of our analyses. Section 5 discusses the implications of our findings and conclusions.

2. Background and Analytical Framework
2.1 Context

Central to the resilience of the Chinese Party-state is the nomenklatura system, which enables the Chinese leadership to make key personnel appointments in a multi-level hierarchy with layers of territorial administrations (Chan 2004; Naughton and

Yang 2004). This hierarchical system also enables the Chines Party leadership to bring much pressure to bear on lower-ranked officials such that Chinese scholars have developed the concept of top-down pressure system to characterize the system (Yang 2012). Beginning in the early 1990s, the Chinese leadership gradually adopted top-down accountability in a growing number of domains and have assessed the performance of local officials on a growing list of performance metrics. While economic indicators held pride of place previously, concerns about social stability assumed increasing importance as the number of petitions and protests grew and a stability maintenance regime has become firmly established (Yang 2016).

The emphasis on cadre responsibility provides strong incentives for local officials. Promotion-seeking cadres are incentivized to signal their competence to their superiors through strategic activities, such as by increasing tangible fiscal revenues or by achieving priority goals set by the national leadership. Lü and Liu (2013) found that the cadre management system engenders different immediate career trajectories for county party secretaries and magistrates and the incentives structure has in turn affected the level and distribution of education spending in the counties.

Under the stability maintenance responsibility system, cadres who perform poorly on social stability may be disqualified from receiving performance awards and may face demotions and even dismissals (Liu, Hou, and Tao 2013). Two types of incidents affecting stability are considered serious and are likely to lead to punishment for local magistrates (Cai 2013). First are incidents that result in certain types of consequences, such as severe casualties, that pose serious threat to social stability and/or regime legitimacy. Second are social conflicts that are directly caused by the actions or inactions of local officials.

To avoid being penalized for poor performance in stability maintenance, local officials resort to all sorts of tactics to preserve stability or the appearance of it. Deng and O'Brien (2013) record how localities investigated activists' social ties and implemented "relational repression" to demobilize protesters and halt popular action. Cai (2008b) finds that granting conditional autonomy to lower-level authorities helps to prevent excessive repression and concessions, and has allowed the party-state to

maintain social stability amid numerous social unrest events. The stability imperative has also resulted in various excesses (Biddulph 2015).

Yet the incidence of petitions and protests has waxed and waned with national policies. A high tide of petitioning Beijing took place between 2003 and 2006 when petitioners felt encouraged by national leaders (Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao) with a number of populist policies. But the tide of petitioners rushing into Beijing prompted the Chinese leadership to tighten controls on petitioning and reinforce the stability maintenance regime (Li, Liu, and O'Brien 2012).

Insert Figure 1 About Here

Figure 1 plots the number of petitions and mass incidents using data from our panel survey (more later) for the 2000-2008 period. It shows a steady increase in the number of petitions and mass incidents in the early 2000s. But the number of petitions plunged drastically after 2005, when the central government took strict measures against large-scale petitions lodged with higher levels of government. The first-increasing-then-decreasing pattern is consistent with Paik (2011)'s findings..

Yet Figure 1 also shows the number of mass incidents for our survey sample almost tripling between 2005 and 2006, a development that is again consistent with the nation trend.[2] The divergence in the trends of petitions and mass incidents appears to be related to the enforcement of national regulations aimed at putting a lid on petitions. To meet the demands of the national authorities, local officials adopted many measures, including severely repressive ones, to stem the tide of petitioners, especially those who went to or wanted to go to Beijing and thus posed a threat to the interests of the local officials who would be held responsible for such petitioning.

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[2] The number of "mass incidents" that had been recorded surged from 12,100 in 1993 (Tanner 2004), to about 90,000 in 2006 (Keidel 2006), and rocketed to 180,000 in 2010 (http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-26/china-tops-india-as-asian-country-most-likely-to-maintain-economic-growth.html).

Repression often begot resistance, leading to the occurrence of mass incidents (Yang 2016).

We suspect the efforts by local officials to deal with issues of social stability may also vary significantly for various reasons. Even for the same individual in the same position, his/her attention to the preservation of social stability may also vary, depending on a host of factors such as demands from above and his/her own expectations about the future. An official getting close to being promoted may be especially preoccupied with keeping the appearance of stability, and may resort to unorthodox tactics in doing so, for fear that "disturbances" may disrupt his/her rise on the ladder of bureaucratic success.

2.1 Analytical Framework.

China's headlong rush for rapid development has been associated with a variety of injuries to and abuses of rights (Yang 2006). Especially prominent among the cases of petitions has been the taking of land in rural areas for industrial and commercial purposes without adequate compensation to rural residents (Cui et al 2015; Guo 2001; Hsing 2010). Until recently most of China's population were residents in rural areas governed through towns/townships, it is thus not surprising that town/township officials have been key players in the drama of development as well as in the management of social stability.

Generally speaking, the party secretary in a territorial jurisdiction in China is the top leader of that locality, in a role that is similar to that of executive chairman while the governor or the mayor or the township head acts like the general manager or CEO. However, the interaction between these two local leaders is not clearly demarcated as it appears and tends to be a function of their relative political influence. When the two officials cannot get along, intervention from upper levels may be needed.

At the bottom of the Chinese territorial state are more than 40,000 towns/townships. Townships are each headed by a party secretary and a township head. Whereas the party secretary is usually the top leader, an experienced township head with strong political backing may overshadow the party secretary in some cases.

The township is officially the lowest-ranked government bureaucracy but in practice the influence of the Party-state extends into the villages in spite of the adoption of competitive elections for village heads (Sun, Warner, Yang, and Liu 2013).

Officials in China's multitude of localities are incentivized to maintain and promote social stability, but there exist some rough divisions of labor for the township leaders. In his ethnographic work, Hillman finds that the township party secretary tends to assume primary responsibility for maintaining stability while the township head focuses more of his energy on economic development. But their roles vary greatly across townships: some township secretaries are ambitious and aim for higher positions outside of the township and thus tend to be also actively involved in local economic activities. Some others township secretaries may have little prospect of being promoted for various reasons and their main preoccupation is to avoid anything risky that might jeopardize their retirement (Hillman 2014).

Our research begins with the recognition that the nature of the system of elite management affects the political resources available to and shapes the career concerns and strategies of the appointed officeholders in China. In recent decades, the Party has devised elaborate rules to rotate officials cum civil servants through different posts (Bo 2004). These appointment rules and practices are designed to enhance the discretion and control of superior levels acting on behalf of the Communist Party and also allow appointees to gain greater exposure and experience over a range of functions and jurisdictions. As a consequence, however, appointees, such as municipal party secretaries and mayors, serve relatively short stints in their positions, often do not finish their regular terms, and tend to aspire to higher-ranked postings. Pierre Landry finds that the average length of time municipal mayors served in their posts declined steadily in the 1990s from a little over three years to less than two and half years (Landry 2008). This is similar to what our data reveal about the tenure of township leaders. The short stays and frequent turnovers of local officials, at between two to four years, are expected to affect the time horizons of the appointees as well as their leadership strategies. In their investigation of local cadres' performance in implementing environmental policies, Eaton and Kostka (2014) find

that appointed officials with short time horizons are more likely to seek quick fixes to environmental issues in Shanxi province.

We hypothesize that externally appointed township secretaries, those who receive their township appointments following service in county governments are likely to possess more political resources and aspire to be promoted to higher-ranked leadership positions in the county or beyond, and hence they have   shorter time horizon than their counterparts without such resources and aspirations.[3] Therefore, they may tend to be aggressive in promoting development projects that require land requisition,and pay less attention to their potentially adverse consequences. Meanwhile in tackling issues of social stability on their watch, they are more likely to take measures that appear to be effective on their watch in the township even when these measures may leave behind negative consequences further down the road. For instance, they may prefer outright suppression of protests even though harsh treatment does not alleviate and may actually exacerbate the underlying tensions behind the protests and merely kick the can down the road. We refer to these township secretaries as "outsiders".

In contrast, we hypothesize that township heads who are promoted from positions in the same townships, whom we'll refer to as "locals", will be more willing to adopt measures that are effective in the long-term even if the measures are costly in the short run, particularly because township heads are very likely to be promoted to secretary position in the same township . Therefore, they expect to stay longer in the town under their jurisdiction, and have a longer time horizon than township secretaries. Under the formal arrangement of the Party-state systems in China, the township head, usually the vice party secretary, is nominally subordinate to the secretary in the same township. But internally appointed township heads may be more knowledgeable about the local situation and more tied to local social networks. Therefore, it is still possible for an internally appointed township head to challenge

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[3] We calculated the actual term of office for the internally appointed secretaries and the externally appointed secretaries. Of all 132 secretaries with term of expiry, the term of office for the 71 internally appointed secretaries averaged 3.41 years, roughly 20% longer than that for the 61 externally appointed secretaries (statistically significant at the significance level of 0.043).

the policies initiated by an outsider secretaries if the policies are unfavorable to local interests. An internally appointed township head is thus likely to help moderate the outsider secretary's tendency toward short-term fixes.

The politics of claim making is interactive (Tilly and Tarrow 2015). Settlements made by township leaders-cum-predecessors can have a significant influence on the incidence of petitions and mass incidents later on. The actions of current leaders will affect public expectations about the likely actions of subsequent government officials and shape the level of public trust in the local government. Seeking short-term and expedient solutions to difficult situations, such as by making big payments to select petitioners who protest the loudest, may lead to a vicious cycle in which township leaders make concessions in the first round of negotiations to calm the unruly petitioners, only to find petitioners asking for even more in future rounds. In contrast, severe crackdowns on petitioners may simply drive the petitioners to look for other opportunities to lodge their complaints and seek redress. If petitioners are fairly treated by local officials through well-designed and transparent process, local residents can observe the outcome of petitions and be more reasonable in making demands.

Yet local authorities, including not only townships but also especially superordinate municipal and county authorities, are not disinterested referees in local development. Armed with regulations that favor governing authorities, they are strongly motivated to obtain land from rural communities cheaply (Cao, Feng, and Tao 2008; Chan 2003; Ding 2007). It would therefore be hard to expect Chinese local authorities to behave as if they were part of a limited government and to promote fair and long-term solutions to contentious issues brought by petitioners aggrieved by inadequate compensation for land takings (Cui et al. 2015).

The incentives structure of the stability maintenance system, of which the petition system is a part, also tempts township officials to seek short-term fixes when confronted with petitions and mass incidents. Higher-level officials (including central authorities) know little about the actual situation of a locality until the petitioners reach them. They assess the performance and meter out punishment based on the

number of "observed" instead of "real" petitions in the localities. Such information asymmetry distorts incentives for local administrators, who may resort to all sorts of measures, including black jails, to keep petitioners from lodging their petitions with higher levels of the Party-state, especially in Beijing (Yang 2016). Instead of taking the effort to find long-term solutions, local leaders thus have powerful incentives to make petitions disappear and this is all the more important for the externally appointed township officials who tend to see their stints in the townships as hardship but necessary postings before they can move up the ladder of bureaucratic success. Officials who are locals, on the other hand, will likely stick around. For them, permanent solutions to thorny issues in social stability, particularly petitioning by those who feel wronged by the local authorities, may be more costly in the short run but will help increase the cumulative stock of social stability and prevent petitions from erupting in the first place. In our modified Olsonian framework (Olson 1993), the township leaders are akin to "stationery bandits" but with different time horizons. Township officials who have risen from within the townships start with greater attachments to their townships than externally appointed ones and are also likely to stay put for longer.

We empirically test our hypotheses by examining the behaviors of the two types of township leaders in dealing with issues of social stability and more specifically by assessing their behaviors at two time points: when a petition or mass incident (event) starts, and when the cadres settle it. Based on the above analysis, we make three predictions: first, townships led by outsiders are likely to experience more incidents of social unrest. Second, when an incident occurs, outsider township leaders are more likely to resort to short-term measures, especially coercion, to suppress petitions and mass incidents. Thirdly, local (internally appointed) heads are likely to moderate the behavior of outsider party secretaries.

3. Empirical Strategy

3.1 Data and Measurement.

This study utilizes a panel dataset for the study of local governance developed under the auspices of the China Center for Agricultural Policy of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The   survey sample covers 120 villages from across 6 provinces chosen through stratified sampling. One province was randomly selected in each of China's six agri-ecological zones. All counties in each selected province were then ranked and categorized into five quintiles according to their per capita gross value of industrial output and one county was randomly selected in each quintile. Sample towns and villages in these counties were then randomly selected. 20 households per village were randomly chosen from the village roster for interviews. The dataset includes data from three rounds of surveys conducted in 2000, 2005 and 2008. Three of the co-authors of this article were involved in the survey project at different times. The survey data are supplemented by our own interviews and observations.

The 2000s saw the number of petitions and mass incidents soar in China and provides researchers with rich data for the study of contentious politics (Tong and Lei 2010). In 2005, the State Council revised its Regulations on Letters and Visits and gave local authorities unprecedented authority to deal with petitions and thus offered room for variations in local behavior. Nearly a decade later, in 2014, clearer and more detailed regulations on dealing with petitions were adopted to regulate local government behavior, including the prohibition of certain kinds of coercive measures such as detaining petitioners in black jails (China Daily 2014). Because the data we analyze were collected in the 2000s, prior to 2014, they are especially suitable for examining the variations in how Chinese local authorities responded to petitions and protests when there was still a high degree of local discretion and a wide range of options local authorities could resort to. In so doing, we can also better understand how the current system works since most of the 2005 regulations remain in place.[4]

We adopted a bottom-up approach to the collection of data on petitions and mass incidents. Petitions are villagers' appeals to the government or government agencies.

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[4] Available online at http://www.gjxfj.gov.cn/2009-11/24/c_133327663.htm.

And mass incidents involve on-site confrontation. In collecting the survey responses, interviewers went to each sample household to record details of every petition and mass incident that the villagers could recall, including the starting and ending years of the event, the highest level of government petitioners sought to reach, the scale of the event, and the grievances that triggered the event. The research team then manually cross-checked every event and eliminated duplicate information[5].

We are interested in two questions: first, does the provenance of township leaders (externally appointed vs. locally promoted) affect the frequency with which petitions and mass incidents occur under their jurisdictions? Second, how do these two types of township leaders deal with the petitions and mass incidents differently? To address these questions, we created two sets of dependent variables. The first concerns the intensity of petitioning/protest at the village level. We counted every petition event (or mass incident) and calculated the number of petition events or mass incidents in each village. We also divided these incidents by categories (collective purpose or personal purpose), scale (number of participants), and appeal level (whether to prefectural government and above or not). The second set of dependent variables covers whether a petition or protest is resolved or not during the period of observation, which would allow us to fit a survival analysis model in analyzing the data (more details below).

The survey data includes various socioeconomic information in the villages as well as information on township leaders, including their age, education level, tenure, and their positions before and after their tenure as township leaders. As discussed earlier, we classify township leaders into two categories. A township party secretary is categorized as "outsider" (=1) if he or she had once held a post of deputy section chief or equivalent (*fukeji*, 副科级) in the county-level government or above before being

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[5] One may be concerned about the mobilizing effect of the three rounds of surveys conducted in different years. Such effect, if any, was mitigated in two ways. First, 20 respondents in each village were randomly selected for every round of the survey and few of them were surveyed more than once in a village with 200 to 500 households. Second, the small number of questions on petitions and mass incidents were part of a larger survey on rural life and production and were unlikely to have attracted outsized attention from the respondents.

appointed the party secretary in a township other than his or her hometown. Otherwise, the variable is 0. The variable of *Local Head* is set at 1 if the township government head worked in the same township before he/she was promoted to the headship, otherwise it is 0.

Covariates (or control variables) include socio-economic conditions at the township and village levels: village average net income per capita and township average net income per capita accordingly. We also control the share of the village rural labor force that had off-farm employment in town (hereafter *Off-farm Employment*) as residents with off-farm jobs have more interactions with the urban world and are likely to gain greater awareness of their rights. We also include the personal characteristics of township leaders and the characteristics of petitions and mass incidents.

For dependent variables, we divide contentious events affecting official concerns with social stability into two types: petitions and mass incidents. Each type is broken down by aim (for collective purpose or not), administrative level of appeal lodged, and scale (number of participants). We further categorize the resolved events into those that are resolved by coercive means and those that are resolved by non-coercive means. The coercive means include forceful interception or detainment of petitioners (such as the petitioner who was kept in custody for five days until he promised to give up making petition) and other forms of violence and pressure that lead respondents to consider the settlements as unfair.

Insert Table 1 Here

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics. 49 percent of the township party secretaries are external appointees while 32 percent of the township heads are promoted from within. On average, towns/townships governed by outsider party secretaries are more likely to experience petitions and mass incidents than those that are governed by local party secretaries (Table 1). And initial evidence indicates that the difference in social contention is unlikely to be due to different social and economic conditions because the village average per capita net income and off-farm employment ratios across the two types of townships are quite similar.

Table 2 provides preliminary evidence for our predictions. In Panel A, townships governed by Local Secretary + Local Head have the fewest petitions, while those governed by Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head see the most petitions. The townships with only one outsider leader are in between. Panel B shows similar patterns for coercive settlement, implying that outsider leaders are associated with greater resort to coercion in settling petitions/mass incidents.

Insert Table 2 Here

3.2 Model Specifications and Strategy.

We first seek to identify and estimate the effect of township leader types on the incidence of contentious events (the number of petition cases or mass incidents). The equation below represents a model for village petition cases or mass incidents as a function of township leader type and socio-economic conditions.

(1) $NUM_{ijt} = POWER_{it}\alpha + X_{ijt}\beta + \mu_j + \omega_t + v_{ijt}$

Where NUM_{ijt} is the number of petitions or mass incidents in year t organized by rural residents from village i of town j, $POWER_{it}$ is a binary variable that measures the presences or absences of outsider party secretary (or local township head) in year t and town j, and α is the main parameter of interest, which can be interpreted as the marginal effect of the type of township official on the incidence. X is a matrix that contains a constant, and a set of socio-economic variables such as the share of off-farm employment and village average income per capita. μ_j is the township fixed effects, which may be correlated with X and will absorb time-invariant factors, such as political and cultural characteristics of the villages that influence the likelihood of local social contention . ω_t is year fixed effect. It captures the shocks common to all villages, such as reforms to the agricultural tax system. The standard error is clustered at the township level to account for serial correlation of dependent variable across years.

Our second step is to identify and estimate the effect of township leader type on the incidence and resolution of contentious events. Given the nature of the data and

our research interest in understanding the patterns of township leader strategies in dealing with social contention and promoting stability, we utilize hazard analysis. The hazard for the event of interest is expressed as the underlying hazard function and covariates in the multiplicative hazards model:

(2) $\lambda(t \mid X) = \lambda_0(t) \exp(X^T \beta + \varepsilon)$

Where $\lambda_0(t)$ is the baseline hazard function, X is a matrix of explanatory covariates, β is the effect parameters, describing how the hazard varies in response to explanatory covariates and ε denotes an individual and risk-specific heterogeneous component unobservable to econometricians, assumed to be independently distributed from X. In our case, $\lambda(t \mid X)$ indicates whether the petition event is resolved (at risk) at year t, X includes the type of township leader (externally appointed vs. local).

In the basic survival model, petition events have two "states": continuing (type A) or resolved (type B). To test the robustness of the model, we take both forms of the baseline hazard function: the exponential and the Weibull function. The estimates in the two models are similar in sign and magnitude, so we only report the results with the Weibull hazard function in the empirical section. We use a competing risk model to capture the effect of cases solved by coercive means as competing events to cases solved by non-coercive means. We follow the method proposed by Fine and Gray (1999) to address the problem of data censoring.

4. Empirical Results

4.1 Leadership Type/Structure and Social Contention.

We first consider the effect of having an externally appointed (outsider) township party secretary on the occurrence and resolution of petitions (Table 3). There were more petitions in townships led by externally appointed party secretaries overall, especially petitions that had more than 30 participants and were appealed to the preferential level of authorities. In contrast to Paik (2011), who argued that

economic development drove up petitions, our findings show that income levels in the villages and townships are not statistically significant when various about the type of township party secretaries are taken into account. Our findings lend support to our original hypothesis even though we cannot be sure of the direction of causation.

Insert Table 3 Here

Thus far we have only considered the type of township party secretaries (externally appointed vs locally promoted). As noted earlier, at the township level the party secretary is the top leader and ranks above the township head. Now we consider pairing the township party secretary with the township head (externally appointed vs local). Given the possible combinations of the two top township officials, our second model includes an interaction term of outsider township party secretary + local township head to test for whether having a local township head working with an externally appointed party secretary moderates the effect of having an outsider secretary on social contention. The results are shown in Table 4, which includes three types of townships: those governed by an outsider party secretary and a locally promoted township head; those governed by outsider party secretary and an outsider township head; and those governed by a local party secretary (the comparison group).

Insert Table 4 Here

The results in Table 4 show that when an outsider party secretary is paired with a locally promoted township head, the coefficient estimates are statistically *not* significant on the incident of petitions for all five models. This result suggests that having a locally promoted township head does indeed counter the effect of having an externally appointed party secretary. In contrast, when an outsider township party secretary is paired with an outsider township head, the coefficients are statistically significant and positive, i.e., they are associated with more petitions.

Insert Tables 5 and 6 here

Tables   and 6 substitute "mass incidents" for "petitions", and the results are broadly similar (to conserve space, we have omitted the control variables from the tables; none of them is statistically significant; full version are in the appendix). Having an externally appointed township party secretary with an externally appointed

township head is associated with the occurrence of more mass incidents (except for those with 50-plus participants). The pairing of a local township head with an externally appointed township party secretary is also associated with more mass incidents of a smaller size but the coefficients for mass incidents involving more than 30 people are not statistically significant.

One concern about our argument is the direction of causality. It is possible that county leaders sometimes assign cadres from the county government to certain towns/townships to help solve existing problems of social stability. Extensive field interviews by our research team suggest that this is unlikely to be the rule and the revealed patterns from our data also suggest otherwise. If external appointments are designed to promote social stability, the number of petitions and mass incidents are expected to decrease, which is clearly not the case. In fact, we show below that the presence of externally appointed party secretaries make the settlement of legacy or inherited cases less likely. Another concern is the use of petitions per village as the unit of analysis in the absence of village-level political characteristics. At the suggestion of a reviewer, we replicated Tables 3-6 using aggregate township data for petitions. The results are highly consistent with Tables 3-6.[6]

4.2 Patterns of Petition Settlement.

We now consider how the contentious events (petitions and mass incidents) are handled and why. We begin by distinguishing between event initiation and event settlement. It goes without saying local officials may precipitate petitions/mass incidents in multiple ways but cannot settle the contentious events unilaterally and face various constraints in their interactions with those who are aggrieved. Petitioners and protesters in turn vary in their leadership, organization, and tactics while they take into account the national political climate and local politics (Cai 2010; Chen 2012; Chen 2016; Heurlin 2016). As was noted earlier, local officials face powerful pressures to meet the demands of superiors at higher levels of the party-state and have

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[6] Detailed results of these robustness checks are not presented due to space limitation.

strong incentives to make developments that may hurt their career prospects go away. For many officials, dealing with petitions and mass incidents by coercion is an inviting choice even though settlement by coercion is essentially a "beggar thy successor" policy and often only compounds the grievances that cause petitions in the first place.

Insert Table 7

We use survival analysis to explore the determinants of petition settlement and the findings are presented in Tables 6 and 7. In these tables, a variable that is statistically significant and negative means that settlement less likely (and vice versa). Table 7 reveals that having an externally appointed township party secretary had no effect on petition settlement when all petition cases are included; in other words, externally appointed township party secretaries are no more likely than locally promoted secretaries to settle petitions even though they deal with more petition cases. However, when we restrict attention to legacy petition cases, namely those that had started before the current township party secretary' tenure (Table 7, Column 2), the coefficient for "outsider township party secretary" is negative and significant. Thus externally appointed party secretaries are either unable and/or unwilling to resolve petitions inherited from their predecessors. Our interviews suggest that, compared with locally promoted secretaries, the externally appointed party secretaries tend to lack nuanced knowledge about the legacy cases and are reluctant to take ownership of them ("not their fault"). In contrast, the locally promoted township party secretary would have more knowledge of the petition cases as well as a greater sense of responsibility for resolving them.

What happens when we pair an externally appointed township party secretary with a locally promoted township head? How does such a combination of township leaders compare with pairing an externally appointed secretary with an externally appointed township head? In Table 7, our analyses show that there are no statistically significant differences between such pairs on the settlement of petitions.

So far we have not touched on the means by which local officials seek to deal with petitions/mass incidents. On the basis of our fieldwork, we classify the measures

for resolving petition cases into two types: coercive (Type A) and non-coercive (Type B). Resolving a petition by coercive even mafia-like tactics may be quick (and dirty) and effective in the short run, but it only suppresses the case and may be counterproductive in the long run. Our analytical framework leads us to expect that externally appointed local officials expecting to stay not for long in their assigned localities are more likely to resort to suppression while locally promoted officials should be more inclined toward non-coercive measures.

We repeat the Table 7 regressions using competing risk estimation to analyze the relationship between the composition of township leadership and the patterns of petition settlement. This analysis allows us to compare Type A events (coercive) with the competing Type B events (non-coercive). The results of this exercise are shown in Table 8, where positive and statistically significant coefficients indicate greater tendency to resort to coercive means when settling petitions.

Insert Table 8 Here

As expected, Table 8 shows that outsider or externally appointed township party secretaries are more likely to use coercion to settle petitions than locally promoted secretaries (Table 8, Column 1). This pattern is even stronger when both the party secretary and the township head are externally appointed outsiders (the interaction term of Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head). Both of these results lent strong evidence to our hypothesis that externally appointed local leaders anticipating relatively limited durations of stays in the localities are more prone to use coercion and suppression to end petition events even though in doing so they may sow the seeds of discontent and put long-term social stability in jeopardy.

In contrast, the coefficient becomes statistically insignificant when the township leadership is comprised of an externally appointed party secretary and a locally promoted township head (Outsider Secretary + Local Head); in other words, the combination of an externally appointed township party secretary paired with a locally promoted township head, is no more likely to use coercive measures to settle petitions than locally promoted township party secretaries. The presence of locally promoted township heads appears to effectively either constrain or counterbalance the externally

appointed township party secretaries when it comes to the use of coercion in settling petitions.

Consistent with the findings in Table 7, externally appointed township party secretaries are no more likely than locally promoted township party secretaries to use coercive means to resolve petition cases that started during their predecessor's tenure (Table 8, Column 2).

5. Conclusions and Implications

China's post-Mao leadership has worked hard to maintain Communist Party rule while promoting economic growth. Central to the Chinese system—the world's largest and most elaborate hierarchical system for control and mobilization—is the CCP-controlled elite management system. Some scholars argue that this system blends top-down control with meritocracy and has provided a major institutional underpinning for the China Model of development (Bell 2015).

Yet by emphasizing top-down control to the neglect of bottom-up accountability, the Chinese system also generates various unexpected and even pernicious effects in governance (Pei 2016). One of the most salient features is the constant rotation of officials like chess pieces (Bo 2002).

Taking inspiration from Mancur Olson, we have investigated whether and how variations in the time horizons and thus expectations of local officials have affected the nature of Chinese local governance. We have shown that, in dealing with petitions, there are statistically significant patterns in local elite behavior. In particular, externally appointed township party secretaries are prone to taking repressive measures to deal with petitions; they also tend to be either unwilling or unable to resolve legacy petition cases. These behavioral patterns suggest that the emphasis on top-down control through the dispatch of officials to the townships, and preoccupation with stability lead officials to create the appearance of stability through coercion.

Our findings not only concern the multitude of townships that make up the base of China's multi-level hierarchy of territorial administration but also speak to the larger picture of Chinese governance because officials in the provinces, municipalities

and counties are subject to the same system of appointments and promotions as the township leaders. We hypothesize that some of the effects we have uncovered may also apply for higher ranked officials and call for further research.

We do not presume to pass moral judgment on the behavior of township leaders and many of them work hard to bring about change--change that often upsets existing interests. Nonetheless, our findings calls attention to the need for reforms that moderate the tendency toward short-termism and opportunism among officials who are constantly moved around and enhance bottom-up accountability. Yet so far the Chinese leadership has allowed the spread of competitive elections in the villages only and has not been eager, except for isolated instances, to promote township political reforms that enhance popular accountability (Fewsmith 2013; Hou, Tao, and Liu 2016). Our findings reveal, however, that the presence of locally promoted township leaders, who have tended to have served in the local administrations for extended periods, serves to counteract the effects of the externally appointed township party secretaries and thus points to the political benefit of balancing top-down control with local concerns in pairing externally appointed party secretaries with locally promoted leaders in China's territorial administrations.

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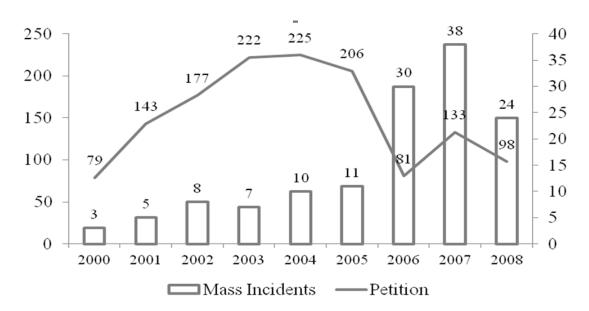Bo, Zhiyue. 2004. "*The Institutionalization of Elite Management in China.*" In *Holding China Together: Diversity and National Integration in the Post-Deng Era*, ed. Barry Naughton and Dali L. Yang. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 70-100.

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Figure 1. Number of Petition Events and Mass Incidents by Year (2000-2008.06)

Note: The data for 2008 are for the first half of the year only.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (2000-2007)

Variables	Total	Township Party Secretary Type	
		Outsider	Local
# of Petitions Per Village	0.60	0.72	0.51
Collective Petition	0.47	0.57	0.39
Appeal to Prefectural Government or Above	0.21	0.29	0.16
Over 30 Participants	0.09	0.11	0.06
Over 50 Participants	0.06	0.07	0.05
# of Mass Incidents Per Village	0.09	0.13	0.06
Over 20 Participants	0.08	0.12	0.05
Over 30 Participants	0.06	0.08	0.04
Over 40 Participants	0.05	0.07	0.04
Over 50 Participants	0.05	0.06	0.03
Village Population (10,000)	0.16	0.17	0.15
Village Income per capita (1,000 Yuan)	3.6	3.6	3.5
Township Income per capita (1,000 yuan)	4.0	4.2	3.8
Off-farm Employment (%)	22.1	22.9	22.0
Age of Township Secretary (Years)	39.3	38.9	39.6
Age of Township Head (Years)	37.9	36.9	38.7
Year in Office (Years)	2.2	2.2	2.3
% Outsider Township Party Secretaries	49.2		
% Local Township Heads	32.1		
% of Townships Governed by Outsider Secretary+ Local Head	17.2		
# of Villages in Sample	115		

Table 2. Township Leadership Composition and Petitions

Panel A: Average Number of Petitions Per Village		
	Local Head	Outsider Head
Local Secretary	0.47	0.61
Outsider Secretary	0.68	0.75
Panel B: Number of Petitioned Settled by Coercive Means		
	Local Head	Outsider Head
Local Secretary	0.17	0.21
Outsider Secretary	0.27	0.44

Table 3. Externally Appointed Township Party Secretaries and the Incidence of Petitions

			Number of Petition Cases		
Variables	All Categories	Collective	Appeal to Prefectural Government or above	Over 30 participants	Over 50 participants
Outsider Party Secretary	0.19* (1.66)	0.15 (1.50)	0.16* (1.95)	0.06* (1.65)	0.05 (1.59)
Age of Party Secretary	-0.01 (-0.77)	-0.01 (-0.74)	0.01 (1.13)	-0.00 (-0.94)	0.00 (-0.48)
Age of Township Head	0.00 (0.06)	0.01 (0.39)	-0.00 (-0.15)	0.01 (1.60)	0.01* (1.65)
Village Population	-4.38*** (-3.34)	-3.02** (-2.26)	-0.48 (-0.41)	-1.36 (-1.31)	-0.65 (-1.34)
Village Income per capita	-0.04 (-1.38)	-0.02 (-0.71)	-0.02 (-0.90)	-0.01 (-1.17)	-0.01 (-1.11)
Township Income per capita	0.05 (0.70)	0.03 (0.42)	0.01 (0.15)	0.00 (0.11)	-0.01 (-0.32)
Off-farm Employment (%)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.03 (-0.16)	-0.02 (-0.10)	-0.07 (-0.98)	-0.02 (-0.25)
Constant	2.44*** (2.67)	1.67* (1.93)	-0.01 (-0.02)	0.04 (0.14)	-0.02 (-0.08)
R-Squared	0.19	0.17	0.19	0.20	0.19

Note: With year and village fixed effects. # of villages =115; total # of observations= 882. Value of t-statistics in parentheses. * Significant at the 10% level. ** Significant at the 5% level. *** Significant at the 1% level. The estimates of dummy variables for village and year fixed effects are omitted in this table.

Table 4. Township Leadership Structure and the Incidence of Petitions

Variables	All Category	Collective	Appealed to Prefecture or above	Over 30 participants	Over 50 participants
Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head	0.19 (1.23)	0.17 (1.37)	0.17** (2.00)	0.09* (1.92)	0.06* (1.72)
Outsider Secretary + Local Head	0.20 (1.11)	0.11 (0.66)	0.14 (1.17)	-0.00 (-0.03)	0.03 (0.60)
Age of Secretary	-0.01 (-0.77)	-0.01 (-0.71)	0.01 (1.17)	-0.00 (-0.81)	-0.00 (-0.42)
Age of Township Head	0.00 (0.07)	0.01 (0.38)	-0.00 (-0.17)	0.01 (1.62)	0.01* (1.69)
Village Population	-4.38*** (-3.32)	-3.03** (-2.27)	-0.48 (-0.42)	-1.37 (-1.34)	-0.65 (-1.36)
Village Income per capita	-0.04 (-1.36)	-0.02 (-0.66)	-0.01 (-0.84)	-0.01 (-1.01)	-0.01 (-1.03)
Township Income per capita	0.05 (0.70)	0.03 (0.40)	0.01 (0.13)	0.00 (0.06)	-0.01 (-0.34)
Off-farm Employment	0.02 (0.10)	-0.03 (-0.18)	-0.02 (-0.12)	-0.07 (-1.00)	-0.02 (-0.28)
Constant	2.44*** (2.67)	1.67* (1.93)	-0.01 (-0.02)	0.04 (0.12)	-0.02 (-0.09)
R-Squared	0.19	0.18	0.19	0.21	0.19

Note: With year and village fixed effects. # of villages =115; total # of observations= 882.

Table 5. Externally Appointed Township Party Secretaries and the Incidence of Mass Incidents

Variables	All	Over 20 participants	Over 30 participants	Over 40 participants	Over 50 participants
Outsider Secretary	0.09**	0.08***	0.05**	0.04*	0.04
	(2.36)	(2.58)	(1.97)	(1.73)	(1.52)
Constant	-0.42*	-0.40*	-0.16	-0.17	-0.05
	(-1.82)	(-1.69)	(-0.74)	(-0.92)	(-0.30)
R-Squared	0.278	0.279	0.250	0.254	0.250

Note: With year and village fixed effects. # of villages =115; total # of observations= 882.

Table 6. Township Leadership Structure and the Incidence of Mass Incidents

Variables	All	>20 participants	> 30 participants	> 40 participants	> 50 participants
Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head	0.09**	0.08***	0.06**	0.05**	0.05*
	(2.30)	(2.58)	(2.37)	(2.23)	(1.90)
Outsider Secretary + Local Head	0.08*	0.08*	0.02	0.02	0.02
	(1.76)	(1.86)	(0.77)	(0.66)	(0.64)
Constant	-0.42*	-0.40*	-0.16	-0.17	-0.05
	(-1.82)	(-1.69)	(-0.75)	(-0.93)	(-0.31)
R-Squared	0.279	0.279	0.252	0.256	0.251

Note: With year and village fixed effects. # of villages =115; total # of observations= 882.

Table 7. Township Leader Structure and the Settlement of Petition Cases (Survival Analysis)

Variables	All	Started in Preceding Secretaries' Tenure	All
Outsider Township Party Secretary	-0.09	-0.47*	
	(-0.92)	(-1.80)	
Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head			-0.05
			(-0.50)
Outsider Secretary + Local Head			-0.20
			(-1.35)
Characteristics of Township Party Secretaries			
Year in Office	-0.02	-0.34**	-0.03
	(-0.65)	(-2.32)	(-0.84)
Age of Secretary	-0.05***	-0.20***	-0.05***
	(-4.13)	(-5.24)	(-4.13)
Petition Situation			
Within Tenure	1.13***		1.14***
	(7.35)		(7.38)
Accumulated	0.03	0.11	0.03*
	(1.61)	(1.37)	(1.65)
Appeal to Prefectural Government or Above	0.05	0.15	0.06
	(0.53)	(0.60)	(0.57)
Collective	-0.67***	-0.63**	-0.66***
	(-5.65)	(-2.17)	(-5.56)
Socio-Economic Conditions			
Village Population	-1.57***	0.81	-1.60***
	(-3.20)	(0.43)	(-3.27)
Village Income Per Capita	-0.07**	-0.13	-0.07**
	(-2.11)	(-1.64)	(-2.07)
Township Income Per Capita	0.24***	0.31***	0.24***
	(6.24)	(3.22)	(6.23)
Off-farm Employment	-1.06***	-0.58	-1.06***
	(-5.54)	(-1.06)	(-5.52)
Constant	-0.33	0.57	-0.32

	(-0.60)	(0.41)	(-0.59)
# of events	539	111	539
# of event-years	1,183	533	1,183

Table 8. Township Leadership Structure and the Coercive Settlement of Petition Cases (Survival Analysis)

Variables	All	Started in Previous Secretaries' Tenure	All
Outsider Township Party Secretary	0.27**	0.45	
	(2.10)	(1.36)	
Outsider Secretary + Outsider Head			0.32**
			(2.33)
Outsider Secretary + Local Head			0.20
			(1.02)
Characteristics of Township Party Secretaries			
Year in Office	0.09**	0.16	0.09**
	(2.29)	(1.46)	(2.20)
Age of Secretary	-0.03*	-0.19***	-0.03*
	(-1.71)	(-5.30)	(-1.65)
Petition Situation			
Within Tenure	-1.60***		-1.59***
	(-8.71)		(-8.65)
Accumulated	-0.13***	-0.06	-0.13***
	(-4.15)	(-0.84)	(-4.19)
Appeal to Prefectural Government or Above	-0.25*	0.16	-0.25*
	(-1.92)	(0.53)	(-1.87)
Collective	-0.06	-0.61	-0.06
	(-0.39)	(-1.60)	(-0.42)
Socio-Economic Condition			
Village Population	0.57	-1.85	0.51
	(0.92)	(-1.20)	(0.83)
Village Income Per Capita	-0.09*	0.02	-0.09*
	(-1.94)	(0.22)	(-1.92)
Township Income Per Capita	0.08	0.12	0.08
	(1.59)	(1.13)	(1.59)
Off-farm Employment	-0.92***	-2.90***	-0.90***
	(-2.83)	(-4.60)	(-2.79)
# of events	539	539	111
# of event-years	1183	946	533