

Supplementary Material for

Bribery as a Third Path to Power?

by

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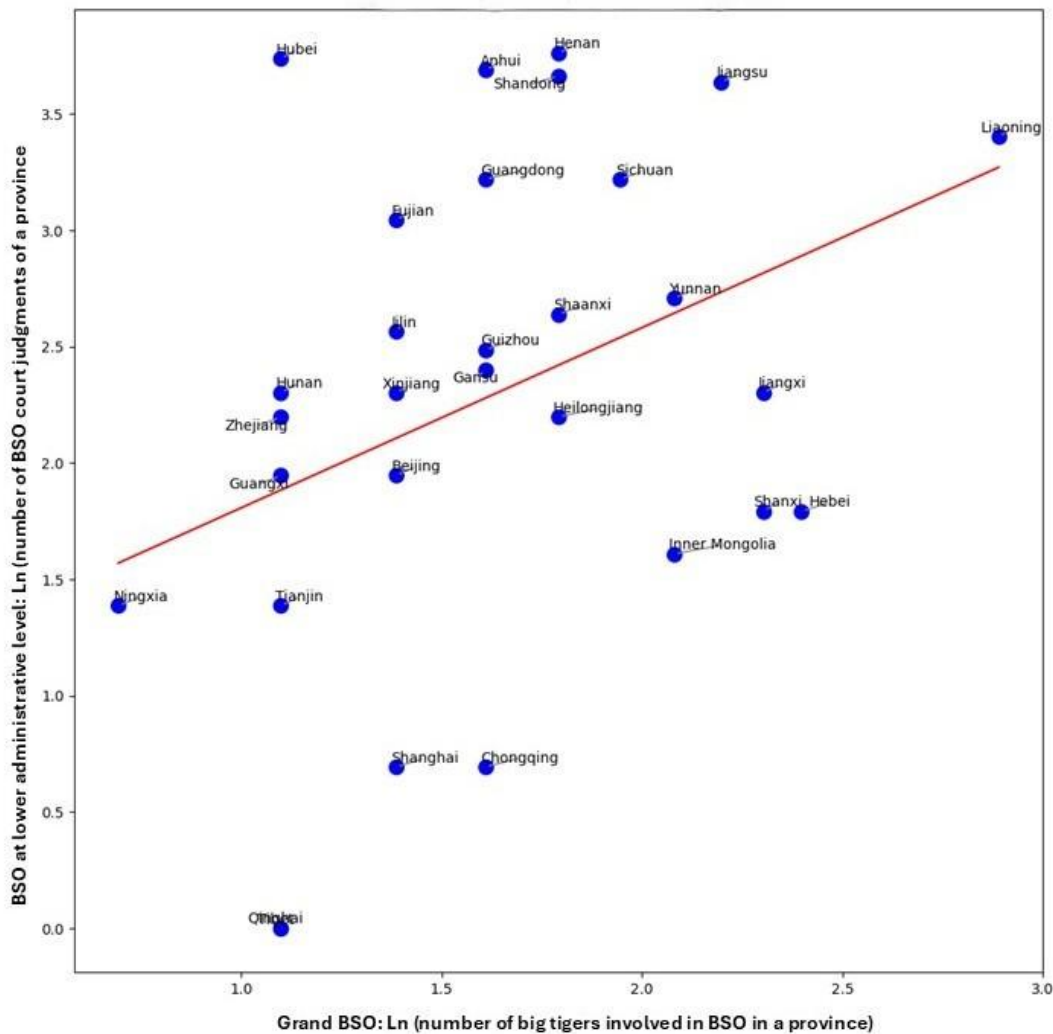
Bribery: A Third Path to Power in China?

Online Appendix

Appendix A. Court Transparency in Personnel Corruption Cases

I conducted a simple Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to examine the relationship between personnel corruption at higher and lower administrative levels. The results are presented in Figure A.1.

Figure A.1. Correlation between buying and selling offices (BSO) in Datasets A and B

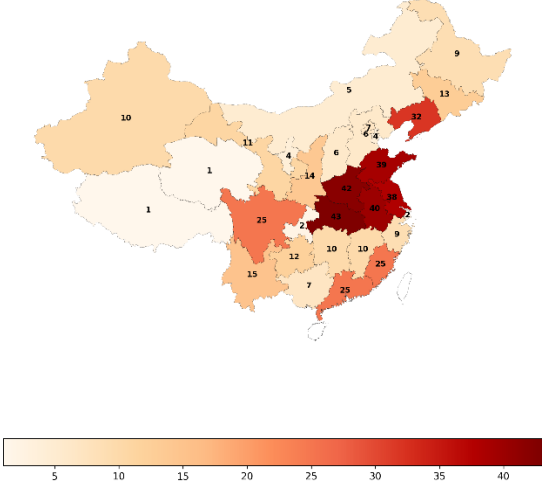
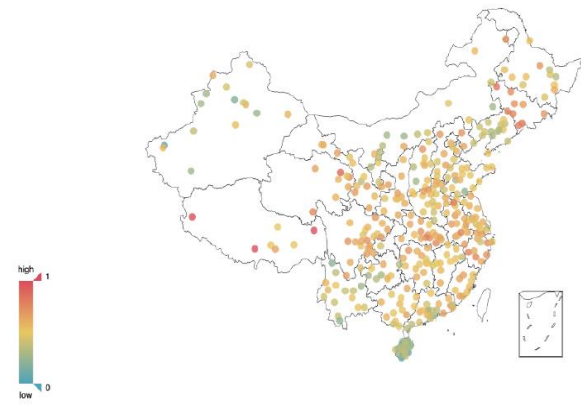
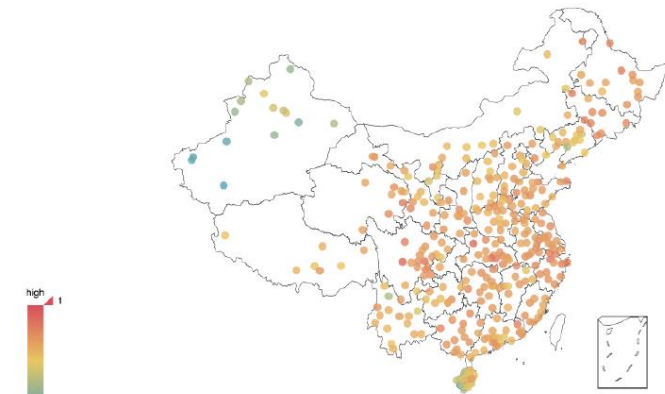


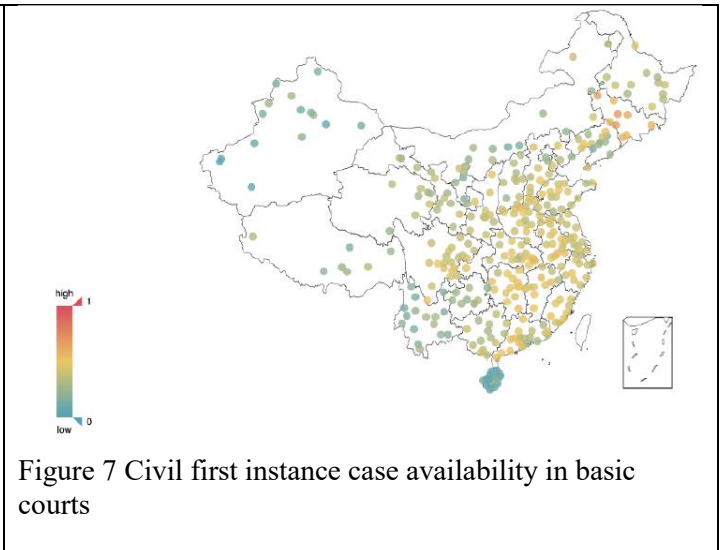
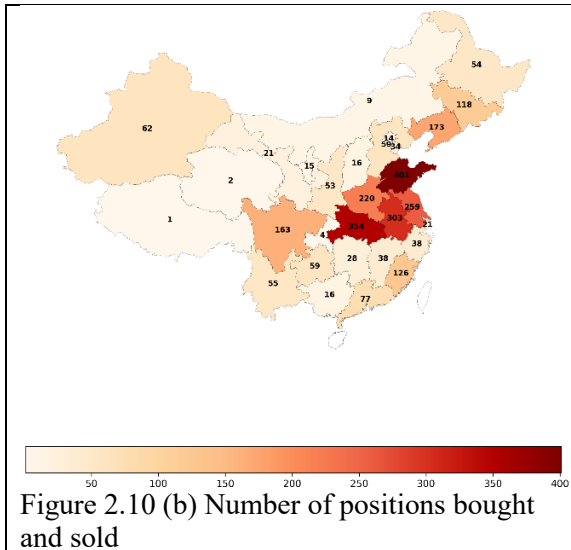
Note: Ln values are used to normalize the data distribution. The coefficient of grand BSO is 0.77, with a statistical significance of 0.05. Hainan province overlaps with Qinghai province in the lower-left corner of the figure.

I further utilize this correlation to infer court transparency in personnel corruption cases. Cases involving personnel corruption, or buying and selling of offices, are politically sensitive criminal cases, for which local courts are given considerable discretion to decide whether to publicize court judgments. Therefore, court transparency levels may affect findings regarding the regional distribution of personnel corruption intensity when using cases drawn from China Judgment Online

(CJO). I compare my findings in Figure 2.10 with those of Wu et al. (2022), “Augmenting Serialized Bureaucratic Data: The Case of Chinese Courts,” to examine whether the regional distribution pattern of personnel corruption in Figure 2.10 is simply a function of CJO transparency across regions. I present my Figure 2.10 and Figures 5 to 7 in Wu et al. (2022) side by side in Table A.1 for easy comparison.

Table A.1. Comparison of figures between two studies.

Zhu (2025)	Wu et al (2022), p. 20
 <p data-bbox="204 999 756 1093">Figure 2.10 (a) Number of personnel corruption cases at lower administrative levels based on CJO data</p>	 <p data-bbox="802 931 1469 999">Figure 5 Administrative first instance case availability in basic courts</p>
	 <p data-bbox="802 1514 1469 1581">Figure 6 Criminal first instance case availability in basic courts</p>



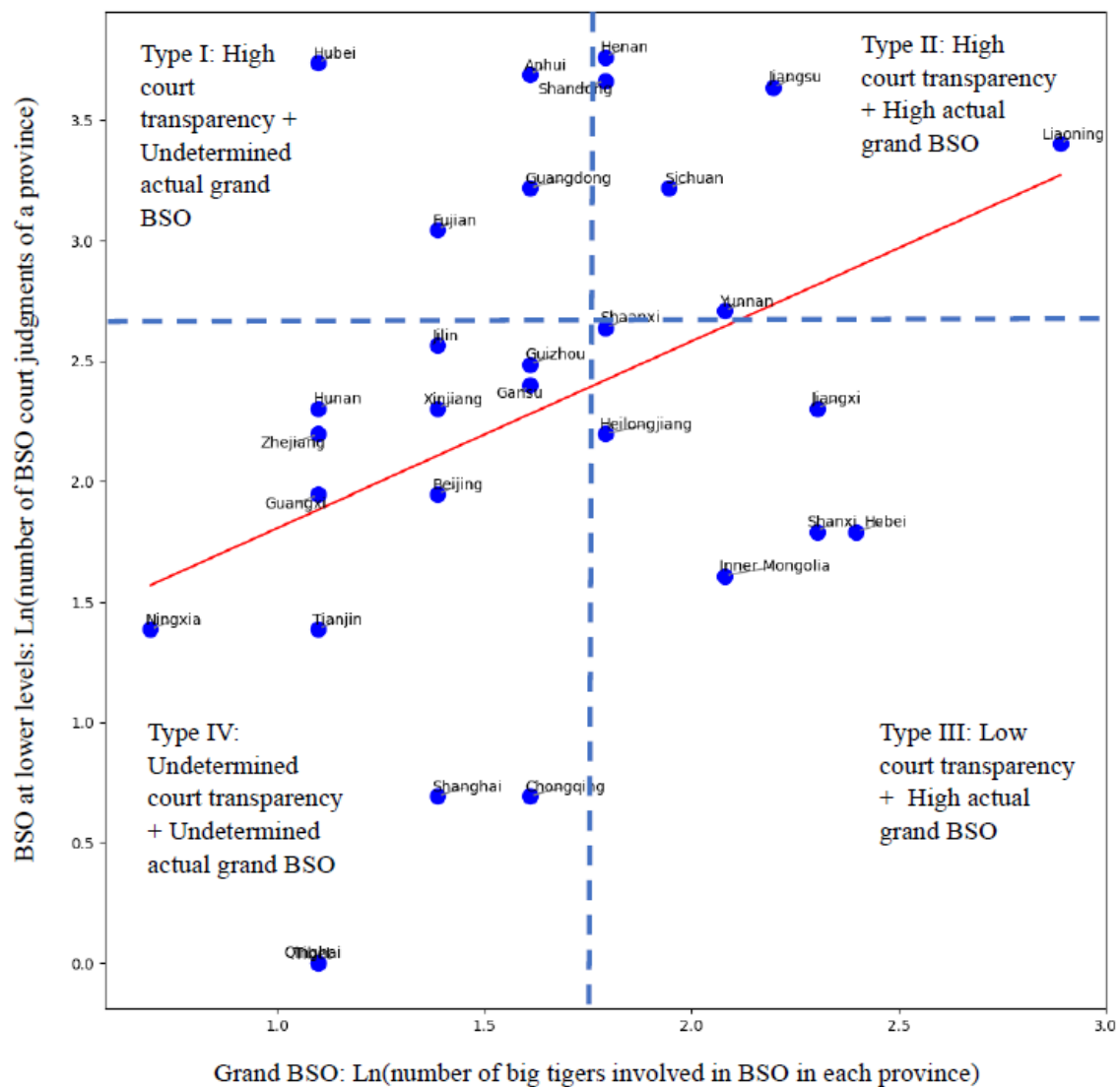
As Wu et al. (2022) show, among the three types of cases, criminal cases have the highest overall disclosure rates across regions; administrative cases are the most politically sensitive and their disclosure rates show the greatest variation by court/locality; and civil cases have the lowest upload rates, due to privacy concerns. Personnel corruption cases are categorized as criminal cases but show a high level of political sensitivity; therefore, we can refer to both Figures 5 and 6 in Wu et al. (2022) to examine whether the regional distribution pattern of such cases shown in Figure 2.10 simply mirrors local court transparency.

Table A.1 shows that the findings reported in Figure 2.10 in my research only partially overlap with the levels of court transparency found by Wu et al (2022). The top five provinces with the most personnel corruption cases—Shandong, Henan, Hunan, Jiangsu, and Anhui—also show relatively high court transparency in Wu et al. (2022). However, several other provinces with comparable court transparency in Wu et al. (2022), e.g., wealthier eastern provinces, do not have a similarly large number of corruption cases in my study (Figure 2.10). Moreover, provinces with relatively large numbers of BSO cases, such as Liaoning, Sichuan, and Yunan, show relatively low court transparency in Wu et al. (2022). These differences demonstrate that the regional distribution of personnel corruption found in my research is not simply a function of differing levels of CJO transparency across regions found in previous research.

Thus, how transparent are local courts with BSO cases? Taking advantage of the positive correlation between “grand BSO” and “BSO at lower administrative levels” shown in Figure A.1, I draw some inferences regarding local court transparency in personnel corruption cases. I use the average number of “grand BSO” cases in each province (six cases) and the average number of court judgments in each province (15 cases), as rough cut-off points. Their intersection categorizes cases according to four combinations (see Figure A.2). Type I provinces have relatively few grand BSO cases but large numbers of BSO cases at lower levels. It is impossible to determine whether the small number of grand BSO cases reflects sparse office sales at higher levels in reality or is attributable to the fact that these provinces are not the central government’s anticorruption locus. Either way, these provinces are unlikely to be subject to heavy political pressure to expose many local personnel corruption cases. Therefore, the large number of local cases in CJO in Type I provinces indicates that local courts in these provinces are comparatively transparent, as they upload more cases than they are strictly required to.

Type II provinces also show high court transparency in personnel corruption cases, probably due to the pressure imposed by the government’s investigation of grand BSO in these provinces. The high level of grand BSO in these provinces implies that they are the central government’s anticorruption locus and their actual office sales is dense. In comparison, although many grand BSO cases occur in Type III provinces, the small number of local personnel corruption cases in these provinces in Dataset B suggests that many investigated cases are not uploaded to CJO, reflecting low court transparency. Type IV provinces are the least transparent. We cannot determine whether “double lows” are actually due to sparse actual grand BSO in these provinces or arise mainly because the provinces are not the central government’s anticorruption locus. Similarly, we cannot tell whether the small number of court judgments in Type IV provinces reflects sparse local personnel corruption or arises simply because court transparency in these provinces is low. However, Hainan province, which overlaps with Qinghai province in the figure, very likely has low court transparency, because it publicized no personnel corruption cases despite three grand BSO cases revealed by the central government.

Figure A.2. Inferred court transparency in buying and selling offices (BSO) cases.



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Online Appendix B

Testing the Relationship between Office-selling and Local Economy

I transform the office-selling data in Dataset B into panel data spanning provinces and years. I measure office-selling severity by the number of ongoing cases in each year and province, inferred from the case duration information in court judgments (i.e., the years between when a case first occurs and an arrest).¹ This measure is a proxy of a locality's tendency to rely on the purchase paradigm, or a combination of purchase and connections built on bribery, as discussed in Section 5.3. An alternative measurement of local personnel corruption is the number of arrests by province and year. An additional variable is the number of office-selling syndicates by province and year, as an indicator of a subtype.

I combine these panel data with the replicated data from Landry et al. (2018), which include key information on local Party secretaries and governors at the municipal and county levels between 1999 and 2007. I treat local nighttime light brightness, which is increasingly considered a reliable indicator of economic prosperity, as the dependent variable. I use OLS regressions with fixed effects. Regression results are presented in the following table. Overall, there is a statistically significant negative association between the severity of personnel corruption and local economic prosperity.

Table B. Personnel corruption's relationship with local economy at prefecture and county levels

	<i>Dependent variables</i>					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	Log light brightness (prefecture)	Log light brightness (prefecture)	Log light brightness (county)	Log light brightness (county)	Log light brightness (prefecture)	Log light brightness (county)
Number of ongoing office- selling cases	-0.006** (0.003)		-0.003 (0.002)			
Number of arrested office- selling cases		-0.053** (0.027)		-0.041** (0.017)		
Number of office-					-0.067*** (0.021)	-0.054*** (0.015)

¹ Although using provincial personnel corruption as the measure can lead to a loss of degrees of freedom, it is the best option because grouping the data at the municipal and county levels would result in many zero observations.

selling syndicates						
Log population	-0.684** (0.305)	-0.685** (0.306)	-0.690*** (0.105)	-0.693*** (0.105)	-0.686** (0.306)	-0.693*** (0.105)
Percent of rural population	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
City mayor/county head age	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Party secretary age	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.023)	0.001 (0.018)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)
Year Fixed Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prefecture Fixed Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	10.585** (4.502)	10.619** (4.512)	9.561*** (1.363)	9.586*** (1.366)	10.620** (4.511)	9.595*** (1.366)
Observations	2,536	2,536	11,390	11,390	2,536	11,390
R-squared	0.697	0.696	0.517	0.517	0.696	0.518
Number of local id	333	333	2,206	2,206	333	2,206

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Data source: Office-selling data are from Dataset B, and other data are from Landry et al. (2018).

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Online Appendix C

Major laws related to cadre management in the order of the first adoption year

Law	Type	Issuing authority	Year	Aspects of cadre management under regulation
《关于党内政治生活的若干准则》 Several Guidelines on Political Life within the Party	Party Law	The Fifth Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP	1980	No nepotism during cadre selection and promotion
《中国共产党章程》 Party Constitution of the CCP	Party Constitution	The National Congress of the CCP	Adopted in 1982, 9 th amendment in 2022	Qualifications of cadres, sound criteria in selection, appointment, and promotion of cadres, anticorruption
《党委（党组）讨论决定干部任免事项守则》 Code of Conduct for Discussions and Decisions on the Appointment and Removal of Cadres by Party Committees (Leading Party Groups)	Party Law	COD	Launched in 2001 by COD, amended in 2016	The amendment stipulates specific rules against corruption in recruitment, selection, appointment, and promotion
《党政领导干部选拔任用工作条例》 Regulations on the Selection and Appointment of Party and Government Leading Cadres	Party Law	Party Center	The 1st version adopted in 2002, amended in 2014, 2nd amended in 2019	Selection, appointment, promotion, democratic recommendation, vetting and screening, oversight and discipline, exchange and avoidance, resignation and dismissal
《中国共产党纪律处分条例》 Regulations on Disciplinary Actions of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	Reviewed and approved by the Politburo in 2003, 3rd amendment by the Politburo in 2023	Oversight of selection, appointment, and promotion of cadres
《中华人民共和国公务员法》	State Law	Standing Committee of the National	Adopted in 2005, implemented in 2006, amended in 2018	An overarching law on the administration of civil servants: their qualifications, obligations,

Civil Servants Law of the PRC		People's Congress		rights, posts and ranks, recruitment, assessment, appointment and dismissal, promotion and demotion, rewards, punishments, training, exchange and avoidance, wages, retirement, etc.
《公务员考核规定》 Regulations on the Evaluation of Civil Servants	Regulations	COD	Reviewed and approved by the COD in 2006, amended and released in 2020	Assessment, rewards, punishments
《公务员录用规定》 Regulations on Civil Servants Recruitment	Regulations	COD	Formulated by COD in 2007, formally released in 2019	Recruitment
《中国共产党廉洁自律准则》 Code of Conduct for Clean and Honest Governance of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	2015	Anticorruption
《推进领导干部能上能下规定》 Regulations on Promoting the Ability of Leading Cadres to Move Up and Down	Regulations	The General Office of the CCP Central Committee	Reviewed and approved by the Politburo in 2015, released in 2022	Promotion and demotion
《中国共产党巡视工作条例》 Regulations on Inspection Work of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	Reviewed and approved by the Politburo in 2015, amended in 2024	Enforce the implementation of Party laws and regulations
《关于新形势下党内政治生活的若干准则》 Guidelines on Political Life within the Party under the New Situation	Party Law	The Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CCP	2016	Combat corruption during selection, appointment, and promotion of cadres, oversight of and constraints on political power, anticorruption
《中国共产党问责条例》 Regulations on Accountability of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	Amended in 2016, 2019	Punishment for misconduct in cadre management
《中国共产党党内监督条例》	Party Law	The Sixth Plenary	2016	Against corruption during selection, appointment, and

Regulations of the CCP on Internal Oversight		Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CCP		promotion of cadres, supervision over cadre selection
《中华人民共和国监察法》 Supervision Law of the PRC	State Law	National People's Congress	2018	Oversight, punishment, accountability
《公务员职务与职级并行规定》 (Regulations on the Parallel System of Civil Servant Positions and Ranks)	Regulations	The General Office of the CCP Central Committee	2019	Posts and ranks, promotion and demotion, exchange and avoidance, wage, welfare and insurance
《党政领导干部考核工作条例》 Regulations on the Assessment of Party and Government Leading Cadres	Party Law	The General Office of the CCP Central Committee	2019	Assessment, awards, punishment, and oversight
《中国共产党地方组织选举工作条例》 Regulations on the Election Work of Local Organizations of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	Reviewed and approved by the Politburo in 2020	Emergence of representatives and local Party committees, elections
《中国共产党基层组织选举工作条例》 Regulations on Election Work of Grassroots Organizations of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	2020	Grassroots Party committee elections
《中国共产党组织工作条例》 Regulations on the Organizational Work of the CCP	Party Law	Party Center	Reviewed and approved by the Politburo in 2021	Recruitment, selection, appointment, promotion, rewards