

Institutionalized corruption: power overconcentration of the First-in-Command in China

Ren Jianming · Du Zhizhou

© Springer Science + Business Media B.V. 2007

Abstract Among various kinds of corruption in China, corruption of the First-in-Command (FIC) is most pernicious, threatening the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and the stability of the state. This paper examines several specific institutional arrangements under China's current political structure, including the people's congress, the ruling party system, and the collective leadership team system, to see how they have contributed to power overconcentration in the hands of FICs. This is done in a two-round process: first through the collective leadership team and then by the gestating decision-making rule. The paper also assesses four institutional innovations designed to prevent FIC corruption.

Introduction

“Collective leadership” has long been a key organizational principle and policy making mechanism for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). It means shared responsibility for running and guiding an institution according to established norms. Collective leadership is aimed at promoting institutional cohesion, concord and effectiveness. The principles of collective leadership are, accordingly, stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Constitution of the Communist Party of China (CCP), and other specific statutes. According to the Party Constitution, Party committees at all levels must operate on the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility based on

R. Jianming (✉)

Anti-corruption and Governance Research Centre School of Public Policy and Management,
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
e-mail: renjm@tsinghua.edu.cn

D. Zhizhou

School of Public Policy and Management,
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
e-mail: duzz@tsinghua.edu.cn

division of labor. All major issues shall be decided upon by the Party committees after discussion in accordance with the principle of collective leadership.¹ When discussing and making decisions on any matter, Party organizations must follow the principle of subordination of the minority to the majority. “A vote must be taken when major issues are decided on. ... No leader is allowed to make arbitrary decisions or to place himself/herself above the Party organization.”² Since 1996, the CCP Central Commission for Discipline Inspection has reiterated repeatedly that all Party institutions must “conscientiously implement the principle of democratic centralism, and leadership cohesion and collective leadership.” Other Party’s regulations also specify that major policy decisions such as key personnel appointments, big construction projects and the use of large amounts of money must be made collectively.³

If these rules and principals were faithfully enacted, it would have been less likely to see power manipulation and abuse. However, the reality is far less rosy than what the Party envisioned. In fact, the Chinese political system is characterized by overconcentration of power into the hands of the First-in-Command (FIC, or *yibaoshou* in Chinese), which has contributed to the prevalence of corruption among leading Party and state officials in the country. The first-in-command corruption in China provides strong evidence in support of the famous Lord Action adage (1887) that “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”⁴ It is also in line with Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu’s observation that “any man who has power is led to abuse it; he continues until he finds limits.”⁵

FIC corruption has caught the attention of many scholars in China. He Zengke points out, for instance, that “the prevalence of FIC corruption reveals the overcentralization of power and deficiency of the current leadership system.” [7]. Scholars agree in general that political power in China tends to concentrate into one position, thereby resulting in FIC corruption. In their research, however, overcentralization of power remains as a vague concept without clear definitions; nor are there convincing interpretations on the process and degree of overconcentration. Consequently, some important questions are left unanswered. What characterizes first-in-command corruption? Why is an FIC capable of dominating almost everything in the government including personnel, finance and public affairs? How can FIC corruption be prevented? These questions merit in-depth analyses.

This paper aims to unravel the mystery surrounding FIC corruption by examining a number of institutional characteristics of China’s political system. It argues that power concentration, and the resultant FIC corruption, is a deeply-rooted problem in China’s current institutional setting. The paper also looks into the possible political institutional innovations for containing FIC corruption.

¹ See Article 10, Chapter 2 of the new Constitution of the Communist Party of China adopted at 16th National Congress of Communist Party of China in 2002.

² See Article 16, Chapter 2 of the new Constitution of the Communist Party of China.

³ Regulations made at the 6th session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP in January, 1996.

⁴ Cited from *Confronting corruption: The elements of a national integrity system. TI Source Book 2000*. Retrieved April 13, 2007, from TI Website: <http://www.transparency.org> [17].

⁵ Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Law*, (Shanghai: the Commercial Press, 1963) [5].

The intensification of First-in-Command corruption

First-in-Command is a special term in China's political system. Though different definitions of FIC exist in the Chinese academic community,⁶ there is no question that FICs stand at the core of the current Chinese political system with almost all major powers in their hands. The term FIC in this paper refers to the top leaders of the government at different levels, namely the Secretary of a CCP committee. According to the latest statistics on China's administrative institutions (up to 31 December 2005), the numbers of official positions as FIC in the central, provincial, deputy-provincial⁷, municipal, county and township governments were 1, 31, 15, 333, 2862, 41636 respectively, with a total of 44878.⁸ This paper focuses on the 3,243 official positions of FICs at the five levels of governments from the central to the county, excluding the township governments due to the unavailability of relevant data.

FICs have been the officials most susceptible to corruption. A good number of FICs have been punished or investigated in recent years (see [Appendix](#)). During the past 10 years, 4 FICs of the 31 provincial governments and 3 FICs of the 15 deputy-provincial governments were punished or investigated on corruption charges. There were more cases of corruption among FICs in the 333 municipal governments and 2,862 county governments though only a few are included in the [Appendix](#). Due to the difficulty in discovering and investigating corruption, the number of the punished corrupt FICs is just the tip of the iceberg. Compared with other official position holders, FICs are more likely to escape punishment, as it is difficult to investigate allegations of the misconduct of those who sit at the top of the power pyramid.

Corruption exists in different forms in China. However, FIC corruption is more detrimental to the ruling status of the CCP and the stability of the state than other types of corruption. China's leaders have openly and frequently warned of the de-stabilizing effect of FIC corruption that could lead to the subversion of the Party and the state. Deng Xiaoping once said, for example, "the Party is at risk of failure for sure unless we punish corruption, especially corruption at the high levels of the Party." [6]. Jiang Zemin, the former CCP chief, talked about the problem even more often. "Corruption is the cancer in the body of the Party and the state. If we let it be, our Party, our political power and our socialist modernization cause will be doomed." [8]. He also suggested that "If we do not firmly punish corruption, the flesh-and-blood ties between the Party and the mass would be ruined; the Party would be in danger of losing its ruling status and the Party would suffer self-destruction." [9].

⁶ Some scholars believe that FIC is the Secretary of a CCP committee. For instance, Tan Jian points out that FIC is the principal member of the collective leadership of government at each level [A study of supervision on the power of FIC. *Discussion on Theory*, 2002(5)]. Other scholars regard FIC as the principal member of an administrative department or even of a non-government organization. For example, Cao Guiqian holds that FIC is the principal member of the collective leadership who plays a key role in an administrative department, a district or a non-government organization.

⁷ The deputy-provincial government, as a new government level, was established as a result of urbanization and economic development in China in the 1980s. The leaders of a deputy-provincial government have the deputy-provincial administrative rank. Financially, these governments do not depend on the corresponding provincial governments but on the central budget allocation. There are now 15 deputy-provincial governments such as Shenzhen, Ningbo, Chengdu, Wuhan and Dalian, etc.

⁸ See China Administrative Division Net, http://www.xzqh.cn/zlzx_1.asp. Two Special Administrative Regions (Hongkong and Macao) and Taiwan are not included.

FIC plays a decisive role in cadre appointment. Consequently, the sale of official positions becomes the primary means of FIC corruption. Most of the corrupt FICs in the [Appendix](#) were involved in office selling. For example, Du Baoqian in his 5 years' tenure as the Secretary of the Lushi County Committee of CCP "sold" 650 positions when handling cadre promotion and redeployment.⁹ When Du Baoqian was under investigation, his case implicated 80 other country officials, among whom were a member of the Standing Committee of the CCP's County Committee and deputy-executive of the county, all the Party secretaries and chief executive officers in the county's 19 townships.¹⁰ As a result, the entire county government collapsed. The case about Ma De is another example. Ma, the former Secretary of the Suihua Municipal Committee of CCP, Heilongjiang Province, not only sold but also bought official positions. Implicated in his wrongdoing, several provincial leading officials such as the Deputy Chairman of Heilongjiang People's Political Consultative Conference and Director of the Organization Department of the Heilongjiang Provincial Committee of CCP and more than 10 county officials in Suihua City were sacked.¹¹ As illustrated by these cases, the corruption of just one person, the FIC, can implicate many other officials, pollute a government, and paralyze the entire institution. It is therefore safe to say that no other corruption in public office can bring more damage to the whole cadre corps than FIC corruption.

Power overconcentration and FIC corruption

While FIC corruption represents the most destructive kind of corruption, it is probably also one of the most difficult forms of corruption to tackle. FIC corruption is not just a personal malady. A probe into the causes of FIC corruption reveals the defects of China's political institutions, both formal and informal ones.

The major defect is the overconcentration of power into the hands of FICs. This was corroborated by the statements of quite a few fallen FICs. Hu Jianxue, the former Secretary of the Tai'an Municipal Committee of CCP, Shandong Province, said such "famous" words: "Nobody can supervise us who have been elevated to the position of Party Secretary." Indeed, in China's current political system, as long as someone is in an FIC position, it will be more difficult to supervise him than non-FICs. Yang Songquan, the former Secretary of the Shangcai County Committee of CCP, Henan Province, claimed repeatedly in public: "The County Committee of CCP provides leadership in everything; the secretary as FIC controls everything." Yang Yupei, the former Secretary of the Yingshan County Committee of CCP and Secretary of the Gaoping District Committee of CCP, Nanchong City, Sichuan Province, declared that as FIC, he was naturally the number one man and the boss who possessed absolute power. "What I say counts and what decision I make counts." "What I say is policy, which has to be unconditionally implemented." He had a "three-not-policy" of cadre appointment: all the decisions made by him were not subject to review by the party organization; cadres appointed by him were not going through performance appraisals; and his personnel decisions did not need consultation with the CCP commission for discipline

⁹ Lu Shi (2005). "Stepping Out of the Shadow of Du Baoqian." *Time of Tide*, 8, retrieved from a secondary source: <http://www.pepole.com.cn>

¹⁰ It was disclosed in *China Youth* (19 December 2001) that the Party Secretary of the county used to go out like an emperor; in addition, 80 cadres in the poverty-stricken county bought and sold official positions.

¹¹ *Oriental Outlook Weekly*, August 10, 2004

inspection in the county.¹² Yang sold official positions brazenly with his single signature, turning his back upon the decision of the standing committee. Wu Baoan, the former Secretary of the Yicheng County Committee of CCP and his spouse Wang Linfeng sighed with emotion during the trial: “The secretary does differ from the chief executive of a county!”¹³ Zhang Erjiang, the former Secretary of the Tianmen Municipal Committee of CCP, Hubei Province said: “Is there any Party Secretary who never elevated cadres? Is there any elevated cadre who did not give the Secretary some gifts?”¹⁴ Du Baoqian, the former Secretary of the Lushi County Committee of CCP, Henan Province, said: “The county committee of CCP is nothing else but the Party Secretary himself and the Secretary is the personification of the Party’s county committee.”¹⁵ Li Yulin, the former Secretary of the Lianshan District Committee of CCP, Huludao City, Liaoning Province, confessed in the court: “As the Secretary of the District Committee of CCP, I had the power to veto all appointments of town officials. In general, the director of the organization department of the district committee of CCP and the deputy secretary in charge of personnel would nominate someone for my approval. Only with my endorsement, could the issue be brought up for further discussion. Otherwise, the person simply could not become an official. I had the final say on all issues concerning cadre appointments and dismissals.”¹⁶

All these cases point to a simple fact: there is no effective supervision over the words and deeds of FICs. The following case is even more telling about the FIC’s overwhelming political influence. A jobless man in Qihe County, Shandong Province, successfully placed 33 people into government or Party posts with a forged Party Secretary’s signature in 2006. The investigators found that, ironically, other signatures signed after the Party secretary’s were all genuine. This means with the forged FIC signature, the ensuing formalities on recruiting officials went through smoothly and authentically in the concerned departments.¹⁷

FIC corruption may be attributed to a number of factors. In the Chinese academia, some believe that the influence of China’s traditional culture and long history of feudalism society is to blame for the ideas of hierarchy and bureaucratic superiority that are deeply embedded in the mindsets of many officials. These cadres consider themselves superior and regard top-down supervision as being fault-finding and bottom-up supervision as boat-rocking [19]. Many FICs simply do not have the sense of self-discipline and are blind to suggestions and advice [13].

Secondly, opacity of government affairs or absence of transparency incubates corruption [18]. When decision-making is not an open process, external supervision will be difficult or even impossible. FICs themselves make final decisions arbitrarily in spite of disagreement.

¹² It is a common practice to consult the Commission of Discipline Inspection on cadre appointment.

¹³ What she said implies that the secretary has much more power and more corruption opportunities than the chief executive of a county. See, “Wang was arrested for taking bribes of over RMB 5,000,000 Yuan.” *China Youth Daily*, Nov 21, 2005.

¹⁴ Li Congfa, Chen Xinmin, Zhao Hongsong & Zhai ZhiQing (2001). The on-the-spot record of Zhang Erjiang, the secretary of the Tianmen Municipal Committee of CCP, Hubei Province, who committed ‘five vices’. Retrieved August 20, 2007, from <http://news.big5.enorth.com.cn/system/2002/01/30/000257471.shtml>

¹⁵ Yu Yan. “The county committee of CCP is nothing else but the Party secretary himself! How is his conceit produced?” *China Economy Times*, Sept 2001, 28

¹⁶ “Investigation on the case of sales of public official positions: the absolute voice turned into a channel of making fortune.” Retrieved May 21, 2007, from <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/other/news/2006/08-15/773873.shtml>

¹⁷ “A jobless man succeeded in letting 33 persons work in government organs through forged signatures.” *New Beijing Daily*, 15 November 2006.

Sometimes, they conceal what ought to be open to the public in the name of confidentiality and intentionally block the channel for public supervision.

Thirdly, weak supervision further nourishes FIC corruption. The structure of supervision should be shaped as an invert pyramid. The more power a person possesses, the more rigorous supervision he or she should be subject to. Unfortunately, this is not the case in China's current political system, where FICs are largely out of institutional surveillance. The situation is summarized by a vivid saying in China that "supervision from the above is too far, supervision by colleagues is too risky, supervision from below is too weak, and supervision by law always comes too late." [16].

Finally, power is highly concentrated into the hands of FICs. Being the head of a leading team at different levels of the government, an FIC plays a vital role in all governmental affairs without distinctly defined power boundaries. An FIC may impose his authority on everywhere and everybody if he wants to, turning collective leadership into one person's arbitrary power.

Though concurring with the above analyses, we also believe that power concentration in some localities in China developed to such an extent that an autocracy of FIC has been created. This autocracy has little to do with personal attributes. Rather, it results from the specific political institutions of China, as illustrated in Fig. 1.

By institutions, we mean both formal and informal ones. The former refers to official institutional arrangements stipulated in the Party Constitution, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (hereafter, the PRC Constitution), or other special laws. The informal institutions in this paper differ from those defined by new institutional economists. The informal institutions in new institutional economics refer to the guidelines established by usage and observed by people during their social life, including values, beliefs, custom, ethics [10, 11]. The informal institutions in this paper, however, mean the nonfigurative institutional arrangements which are not specifically stipulated and might be carried out in different forms due to the differences in leaders' will.

An institutional interpretation of power overconcentration

The key components of China's political system include the People's Congress system, the Pparty system, and the government collective leading team system, as stipulated in the PRC Constitution and the Party Constitution.

The People's Congress system The PRC Constitution stipulates that "[t]he National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China is the highest organ of state power." (Article 57) and that "local people's congresses at various levels are local organs of state power." (Article 96) Deputies to the people's congresses above the country level are elected by the people's congresses at the next lower level, while deputies to the people's congresses below counties are elected directly by their constituencies, according to the Election Act of the National People's Congress and local people's congresses.

Article 85 of the PRC Constitution makes it explicit that the State Council, or the central government, is the executive body of the highest organ of state administration. As stipulated

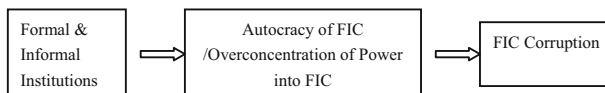


Fig. 1 Institutional cause of FIC corruption

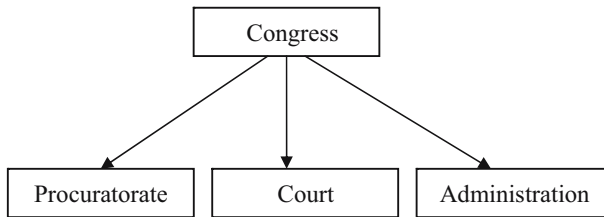


Fig. 2 The organizational structure of the People's Congress system

in Articles 123 and 129, “the people’s courts of the People’s Republic of China are the judicial organs of the state,” and “the people’s procuratorates of the People’s Republic of China are state organs for legal supervision.” Article 133 further states: “The Supreme People’s Procuratorate is responsible to the National People’s Congress and its Standing Committee. People’s procuratorates at various local levels are responsible to the organs of state power which create them and to the people’s procuratorates at higher levels.”

The people’s congresses at different levels elect and appoint the leaders and other leading members of the governments, courts and procuratorates at the corresponding levels. They also have the power to recall incompetent officials.

The organizational structure of the people’s congress system is shown in Fig. 2.¹⁸

The Party system At the core of China’s Party system is the ruling status of the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP’s ruling position is repeatedly accentuated in different sections of both the PRC Constitution and the Party Constitution.

The CCP system, in parallel with the congressional system, includes the Party Congresses at various levels and the Party committees and commissions for discipline inspection elected by the Party congresses. The Party Constitution refers to the National Party Congress and the Central Committee elected by it as the highest leading bodies of the Party, and the local Party congresses and the Party committees elected by them as leading bodies of local Party organizations. Local Party committees are responsible, and report their work, to the Party congresses at their respective levels. Although the Party committees and commissions for discipline inspection at all levels are elected by the Party congresses at the corresponding levels and have the same source of power, they are not equal to each other. The commissions for discipline inspection function under the leadership of the Party committees. According to the Party Constitution, the commissions for discipline inspection operate under the dual leadership of the Party committees at the corresponding levels and the next higher commissions for discipline inspection.

Figure 3 shows the organizational structure of the ruling party system in China.

The CCP’s ruling status is supplemented by the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of Communist Party. In this system, the CCP plays the leading role as the only ruling party, while the eight minor political parties cooperate with the CCP and take part in the decision-making of the government under the CCP’s leadership. Some deputy positions in the state apparatus are taken by representatives from the eight minor political parties, as well as by people from all walks of life, and the CCP consults them on general state policies and crucial political, economic, and social issues. The Political Consultative Conference is the organizational form of multiparty cooperation and political consultation.

¹⁸ It only refers to the organization structure of the people’s congress system of the government at a certain level. The following organization charts are based on the government at a certain level too.

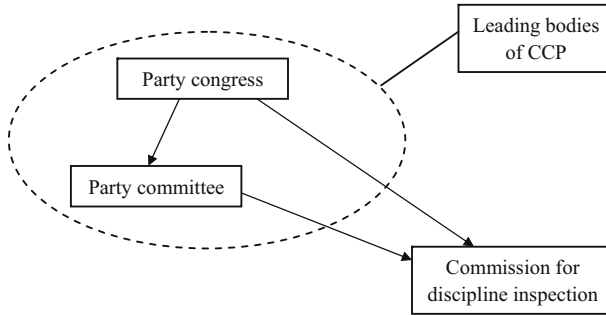


Fig. 3 The organizational structure of CCP

The collective leading team system A collective leading team is formed in the government at each level. The team involves a very small number of people with its membership confined to the CCP only. At the central level, the collective leading team consists of the standing members of the CCP Politburo, while at the local levels the teams are composed of members of local standing committees of the CCP. The collective leading team system is an important institutional arrangement based on the Leninist principle of democratic centralism. The CCP adopted this principle in her founding years and wrote it into the China's Constitution. However, democratic centralism is merely a nonfigurative principle because there exists great flexibility or uncertainty in implementing the doctrine.¹⁹ The collective leading team system founded on the principle of democratic centralism is an informal institution, which changes greatly in practice, often due to the different leadership styles of individual leading cadres. However, the system serves the purpose of centralizing the power of the Party and the state into the hands of a small number of high-level cadres who are on the leading team first and then FICs.

Figure 4 illustrates the process of power centralization. As it shows, the courts and the administrative systems are supervised by and accountable to the people's congresses. At the same time, however, the people's congresses, the administrative organs and the people's political consultative conferences all function under the CCP's sole leadership. The key to understanding how the leadership is exercised in such a complex system is the collective leading team system. A collective leading team consists of the major leaders of the Party committee, the People's Congress, the administrative organ and the people's political consultative conference. This structure grants the collective leading team the absolute power over the parties (CCP and eight more different political parties) and legislative, administrative and judicatory organs.

Take the collective leading team in the central government as an example. In 2002, the First Plenary Session of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CCP elected a nine-member Standing Committee. Among them, Hu Jintao is the CCP General Secretary. Other members come from the Central Committee of the CCP, the State Council, the National People's Congress, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP respectively. The collective leading teams of local governments have the same structure as that of the central government. Because the collective leading team includes the principals of all the important Party and state organs, the first round of power centralization is done at this point to allow the leading team to exercise all-inclusive authority over any institutions.

¹⁹ See the following two articles: Dai Qingliang (2001). "Research on Democratic Centralism." *Academics in China*, 1, 189–191; Li Maolin (1992). "On the Formation, Development and Essence of Leninist Democratic Centralism." *Yin Shan Academic Journal*, 4, 66.

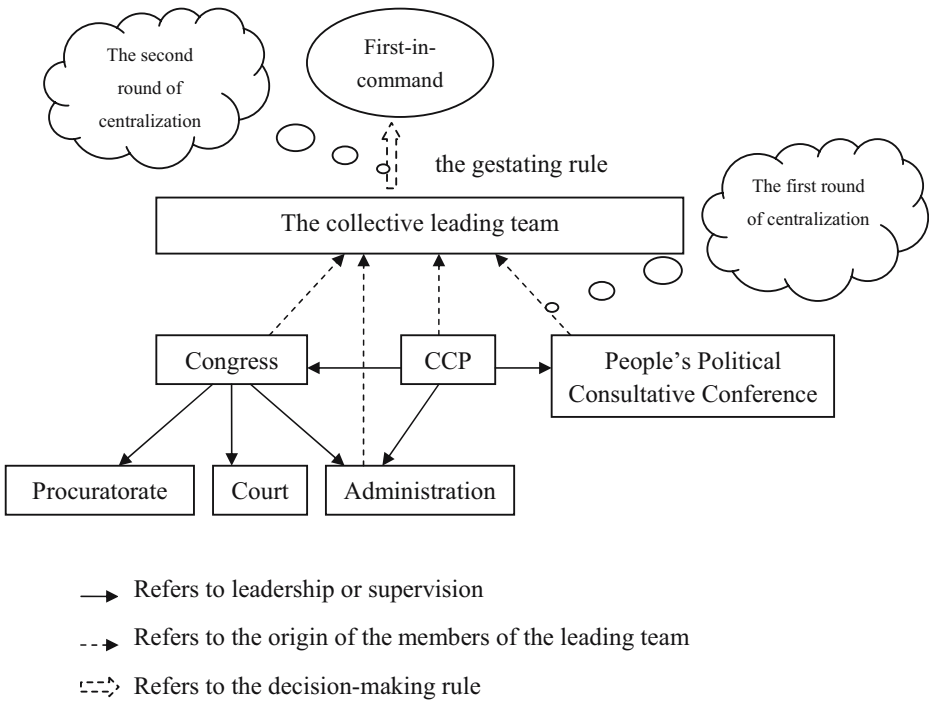


Fig. 4 How power gets concentrated?

Then comes the second round of power concentration where the power of the collective leading team gets centralized into the FIC’s hands. It is done through some decision-making procedures in favor of those in the top positions. There are generally two decision-making methods: one is by vote, namely the democratic rule (or the vote-deciding rule in this paper), and the other is called the “gestating rule” which is more common in China’s current political context. Ideally, under a collective leadership system, important decisions should be made under the vote-deciding rule. If it is put into practice, the vote of the FIC carries the same weight as that of the other members of the leading team.

However, this vote-deciding rule is not practiced by most collective leading teams. They use the “gestating rule” instead. When a vote is taken, the vote cast by the Party Secretary turns into a “golden” one, which weighs more than the rest of the team. Table 1 shows a comparison between the two decision-making methods [12].

An unequal weight distribution between the two decision-making rules can be found in ways the votes are cast. Under the vote-deciding rule, each voter is able to exert his voting right and express his or her real volition in virtue of the complete secrecy of voting. This procedure makes every vote equal, regardless of a voter’s rank or position. The gestating rule is different, though. Because voting is an open process, those who disagree with the Party Secretary would unlikely or even never show their real opinions. Such a decision making rule enables the FIC of the leading team to exercise absolute power.

The above institutional analysis reveals the process of power concentration into the FIC’s hands. It is done first by combining all major powers of the ruling party, legislature, administration, and judiciary into the collective leading team. The power of the collective leading team, then, gets personalized in the role of the Party Secretary. This is exactly what many scholars have referred to as “excessive centralization of power” in China. The institutional

Table 1 A comparison between the gestating rule and the vote-deciding rule

Decision-making rule	Voting methods	Secrecy degree	Weight distribution of votes
Vote-deciding rule	Secret ballot	Back to back, secrecy	Equal
Gestating rule	Oral or hand-count	Face to face, open	Unequal

explanation provided above not only sheds light on the vague concept of “power over-concentration” but also helps trace the roots of the problem in China’s current power structure.

Four countermeasures against FIC corruption: An assessment

Many countermeasures against FIC corruption have been proposed. For example, it is believed that political education should be reinforced to improve the principals’ lawful exertion of power. All government employees are required to abide by the principle of transparency, which is a powerful weapon to contain corruption and to safeguard social justice [15]. These measures may help alleviate the problem of corruption to a large extent and in the long run. However, now that FIC corruption results mainly from flawed political institutions or power system, it is important to repair the institutional defects in search of corruption control. There are four major proposals concerning institutional reform aimed at combating FIC corruption.

The *first* is to cancel the collective leading team system. This is a straightforward countermeasure. Since the autocracy of FICs is attained through the collective leading team system, canceling this institutional arrangement becomes a logical choice. This simple and direct solution may bring about quick results for curbing FIC corruption. However, the sudden removal of the collective leading team system may result in a “power vacuum” and even political instability given China’s long history of centralized rule. To be discreet, the best way may be to carry out experiments in some local governments before dismantling the whole system.

A *second* proposal focuses on reforming or repairing the collective leading team system by adopting democratic decision-making rules. Three democratic rules are suggested. First, all the members of a leading team participate in the decision-making process under the rule of “one vote per person”. Each of them holds an equal vote, so every one plays the same role. This prevents the overweight of the FIC’s decision-making power. Secondly, all the members participate in decision-making but not all of them have the same vote. For instance, members of the leading team except the team head vote first. The team head votes if there is a tie. Thirdly, part of the team members participate in decision-making and the remaining members exercise the veto power. The members on behalf of executive agencies may take part in decision-making while those from non-executive or supervisory agencies do not participate. They take the supervisory responsibility instead. Any of the three democratic decision-making rules may repair the structural defects of power overconcentration. They can prevent FIC corruption by breaking down the power of FICs. In fact, some local governments have already implemented such reforms,²⁰ which have been proved effective in preventing FIC corruption.

This countermeasure is less radical than the first as it helps ensure decision-making efficiency while reducing the risk of FIC corruption. However, there is still the possibility

²⁰ Reforms on democratic decision-making mechanism have been carried out in Jiaojiang District of Taizhou City, Zhejiang Province since 1988. The vote-deciding rule adopted by the Party Committee has proved effective [14].

that the rules are not effectively implemented and therefore fail to achieve the desired goals. Accordingly, more profound measures should be taken to carry out overall reforms of the power structure.

Since the CCP is the core of China's political system, reforms and innovations concerning the ruling party are critical. Creating an inner-Party power balance system is the focus of the *third* proposal. A practical scenario is to reform the current system in which the commissions for discipline inspection are placed under the dual leadership of local Party committees and the discipline inspection organs at the next higher level, because this institutional arrangement does not allow discipline inspection to be effectively exercised over FICs. Only with more autonomy, can the discipline inspection agencies break down the autocracy of FICs and prevent FIC corruption. To achieve this goal, the Party congresses at various levels must function as the highest leading organs in the Party,²¹ which the commissions of discipline inspection report to, rather than functioning under the leadership of the local Party committees.

This proposal separates the powers of decision-making, execution and supervision, thus ensuring the independence of the supervisory power and curbing FIC corruption. In addition, this reform may not meet too much resistance from the officialdom. The authority and independence of the inner-Party supervisory system have in fact improved throughout the CCP history. However, although this measure may help with power diffusion within a party organization, it is not designed to reduce the CCP's overall power. Moreover, this proposal is rather difficult to implement because it requires the amendment of the Party Constitution. A more feasible option may be to enhance the vertical leadership system of discipline inspection by allowing the system to recruit its own corps so as to increase independent discipline inspection.

The *fourth* proposal centers on the development of inner-Party democracy, which will lead to democratic elections of the Party Secretary at various levels.

The democratic election of the Party Secretary should meet the following requirements: it must be a competitive election with at least two candidates; the Secretary must be elected directly by all the Party members; secret ballot must be used in voting; the Secretary, while elected, is mainly responsible for policy execution and serves on a limited term; major members of the executive team may be nominated by the Secretary but must be confirmed by votes of confidence of the delegates; and the Secretary can be removed in a certain process by the delegates or all the Party members.

This last proposal works toward power de-concentration and enables effective supervision over FICs. Undoubtedly, the democratic reform of the ruling party is difficult, time-consuming and full of uncertainty. However, the inner-Party democratic reform should be given priority vis-à-vis other possible remedies.

In sum, all the four countermeasures are aimed at containing the power of FICs, though with different foci. The first two are pertinent to the core institutional arrangement of power concentration - the collective leading team system, while the latter ones focus more on the necessity of inner-Party democracy or reforming the Party system as a whole.

All the four scenarios have certain merits of their own and can be combined together to function in a more progressive way. In the short term, the second countermeasure should be given priority. In the mid-term, the third one can be put into practice. The fourth one may be carried out gradually in the long term. When the long term objective of China's political reform is attained, it will be feasible to abandon the collective leading team system.

²¹ The current CCP Constitution stipulates that the highest leading body of the Party is the National Congress and the Central Committee elected by it. See Article 10 of the Constitution.

Appendix

Table 2 FICs Punished or Investigated in Recent Years

Name	Former positions	Time when “Shuang Gui” ^a and investigation began	Time of punishment	punishment	Major corrupt activities
Secretaries of CCP provincial committees					
Chen Liangyu	Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of CCP; member of the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee	September 2006; –	–	Deposition	
Liu Fangren	Secretary of the Guizhou Provincial Committee of CCP	April 2003	August 2004	Expulsion from the Party; discharge from public employment ^b ; life imprisonment	Bribe-taking and profligate life style
Cheng Weigao	Secretary of the Hebei Provincial Committee of CCP	January 2003	August 2003	Repeal of the provincial position	Connivance at his secretaries' serious corruption and bring pressure to a construction's unfair bidding for projects
Chen Xitong	Secretary of the Beijing Municipal Committee of CCP	April, 1995	August 1998	16-year imprisonment	Embezzlement and negligence of duty
Secretaries of CCP committees of deputy-provincial municipalities					
Du Shicheng	Secretary of the Qingdao Municipal Committee of CCP; Deputy Secretary of the Shandong Provincial Committee of CCP; Member of the Standing Committee of CCP Shandong Provincial Committee	December 2006	–	Deposition	
Shi Zhaobin	Secretary of the Xiamen Municipal Committee of CCP; Deputy Secretary of the Fujian Provincial Committee of CCP	September 2001	March 2002	13-year imprisonment	Taking bribes

Xu Yunhong	Secretary of the Ningbo Municipal Committee of CCP; Member of the Standing Committee of CCP Zhejiang Provincial Committee	-; September, 1999	October 2000	10-year imprisonment	Power abuse
Li Dalun	Secretary of the Chenzhou Municipal Committee of CCP, Hunan Province	June 2006	-	-	Bribe-taking and huge amount of unaccountable property
Zhou Yinxiao	Secretary of the Fushun Municipal Committee of CCP, Liaoning Province	-; November 2005	November 2006	14-year-imprisonment	Selling official positions 5 times and taking bribes
Sun Chuymn	Secretary of the Xiangfan Municipal Committee of CCP, Hubei Province	December 2002	August 2005	17-year imprisonment	Selling official positions, taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property
Ma De	Secretary of the Sulhua Municipal Committee of CCP, Heilongjiang Province	April 2002; June 2003	July 2005	Death sentence with a 2-year reprieve	Selling official positions 13 times and taking bribes
Zhang Erjiang	Secretary of the Tianmen Municipal Committee of CCP, Hubei Province	July 2001	September 2002	Employment; 18-year imprisonment	Selling official positions 8 times, taking bribes, embezzlement and profligate lifestyle
Hu Jianxue	Secretary of the Tai'an Municipal Committee of CCP, Shandong Province	January 1995	June 1996	Death sentence with a 2-year reprieve	Taking bribes
Secretaries of CCP county committees					
Qin Guoming	Secretary of the Teng County Committee of CCP, Guangxi Province	-; September 2006	April 2007 (first instance)	15-year imprisonment	Selling official positions, taking bribes, embezzlement and huge amount of unaccountable property
Yang Songquan	Secretary of the Shangcai County Committee of CCP, Henan Province	April, 2006; May, 2006	-	-	Selling official positions
Chen Jiarong	Secretary of the Pengzhou Municipal Committee of CCP, Sichuan Province	March 2006	January 2007	15-year imprisonment	Taking bribes
Tian Yufei	Secretary of the Jianwei County Committee of CCP, Sichuan Province	April 2005	July 2006	Death sentence with a 2-year reprieve	Taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property
Li Yulin	Secretary of the Lianshan District Committee of CCP, Huludao City, Liaoning Province	April 2005	April 2006	13-year imprisonment	Selling official positions and taking bribes
Yang Jianguo	Secretary of the He County Committee of CCP, Anhui Province	October 2004; September 2005	September 2006	Life imprisonment	Selling official positions, taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property
Wu Baoan	Secretary of the Yicheng County Committee of CCP, Shanxi Province	May 2004	January 2006	15-year imprisonment	Selling official positions, taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property

Table 2 (continued)

Name	Former positions	Time when "Shuang Gui" ^a and investigation began	Time of punishment	Major corrupt activities
Yang Yupei	Secretary of the Yingshan County Committee of CCP; Secretary of the Gaoping District Committee of CCP, Nanchong City, Sichuan Province	November 2003; January 2004	September 2005	17-year imprisonment Selling official positions 61 times, taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property
Chen Zhaofeng	Secretary of the Dingyuan County Committee of CCP, Anhui Province	October 2003; August 2004	September 2006	Life imprisonment Selling official positions 110 times, taking bribes and huge amount of unaccountable property
Lin Longfei	Secretary of the Zhouning County Committee of CCP, Fujian Province	March 2003	December 2004	Death sentence (first instance) Selling official positions, taking bribes, profligate lifestyle, gambling and accumulating wealth by unfair means and huge amount of unaccountable property
Li Tiecheng	Secretary of the Jingyu County Committee of CCP, Jiling Province	September 2002	January 2003	15-year imprisonment Selling official positions and taking bribes
Wang Shibo	Secretary of the Tiandeng County Committee of CCP; Secretary of the Heng County Committee of CCP, Guangxi Province	December 2002	July 2003	11-year imprisonment Profligate lifestyle and taking bribes
Du Baoqian	Secretary of the Lushi County Committee of CCP, Henan Province	June 2001	July 2003	14-year imprisonment Selling official positions, taking bribery, retaliation and persecution whistle-blower
Wang Hulin	Secretary of the Huguang County Committee of CCP; Secretary of the Changzhi County Committee of CCP, Shanxi Province	October 1999; September 2000	January 2001	8-year imprisonment Selling official positions 430 times, taking bribery and huge amount of unaccountable property

Source: Compiled by the authors based on various Chinese media reports

^a It means compulsory detention of alleged officials at a stipulated time and place for further investigation

^b All the guilty officials are expelled from the CCP and discharged from public employment, so this not mentioned in the following cases

References

1. The Central Committee of CCP (2003). *Supervision regulations within CCP*.
2. The Central Committee of CCP (2004, September). *Resolution of Central Committee of CCP on Strengthening the Ruling Capability Construction of the Party*. (Document announced at the 4th Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Beijing).
3. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress in 1982 and amended in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004.
4. The Constitution of Communist Party of China. Adopted at 16th National Congress of Communist Party of China, Nov 2002.
5. de Secondat Montesquieu, C. L. (1963). *The spirit of law [Chinese version]*. Shanghai: The Commercial Press.
6. Xiaoping, D. (1989). Urgent Tasks of China's Third Generation of Collective Leadership. *Anthology of Deng Xiaoping*, 3, 313.
7. Zengke, H. (2001). To impel administrative innovation and perfect the arrangements against corruption. *Marxism and Reality*, 5, 56.
8. Zemin, J. (2006). Speech on the third plenary session of the Central Discipline Inspection. *Anthology of Jiang Zemin*, 1, 319.
9. Zemin, J. (2002). Report on 16th National Congress of Communist Party of China. 8 Dec 2002.
10. North, D. (1994). *The structure and evolution in economic history*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press.
11. North, D. (1995). *The new institutional economics and third world development*. London: Routledge.
12. Jianming, R., & Guan, W. (2006). On the causes for cadre appointment corruption. *Academic World*, 5, 19–26.
13. Chuanliang, S. (2001). Reasons for inefficiency of supervision over FIC and countermeasures. *Journal of Yunnan Administration College*, 5, 67.
14. Yang, S., & Chunhua, X. (2002). Jiao Jiang: 13 years of reform and practice on the vote-deciding rule adopted in cadre appointment. *Journal of Anti-corruption*, 1, 22–25.
15. Zaifu, S. (2004). Openness and transparency—a permanent cure for corruption. *Qiushi*, 4, 28.
16. Fengying, T. (2003). To intensify supervision is a permanent cure for corruption. *Theory Research*, 5, 25.
17. Transparency International (2000). Confronting corruption: The elements of a national integrity system. TI Source Book 2000. Retrieved April 13, 2007, from TI Website: <http://www.transparency.org>.
18. Ying, Y. (2002). On ethics of political institution—to begin with corruption. *Journal of Philosophy*, 10, 6.
19. Xu, Z. (2004). Major reasons for the inefficiency of supervision over FIC and its solution. *Journal of Yunnan Administration College*, 3, 87.