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From Two Heads to One: The Short-Run Effects of the Recentralization of Political Power in Rural China

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Abstract: The consequences of granting democratic rights to citizens in otherwise authoritarian regimes has been extensively studied. Much less is know about the implications of retracting these rights when a government wants to recentralize power. Autonomous governance in rural China, introduced in the 1980s, has declined over the past two decades. In 2018, the Communist Party promoted a "one head" policy, replacing the dual governance of village chief and party secretary with a single office-holder. We examine the short-term impacts of this policy on voting behavior and political perceptions using a nationally representative survey and election timing as an instrument. Our findings reveal a significant decrease in election turnout in "one head" villages due to reduced competition. However, villagers' perceptions improve: they report less corruption and greater confidence in local government. This suggests that recentralization was achieved at the cost of electoral involvment but without negative backlash on institutional quality perceptions.

Keywords: Recentralization, dual office-holding, election turnout, political perceptions, rural China

JEL Codes: D72, D73, H77, P3, R28

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1 Introduction

Around the globe, decentralized[1] and democratic[2] processes have declined and even reversed in many countries since their height in the 1980s. The underlying causes of this trend are multifaceted, encompassing factors such as the failure to achieve reform intentions, the reclamation of charismatic authority, and governments' reactive responses to macro crises.[3] Elections adopted by authoritarian regimes, which were once considered indicative of power devolution and a transition toward democracy, are now commonly deemed as a strategic policy tool within governance dynamics (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009), which explains why elections are subsequently undermined or even abrogated when autocrats are able to maintain vertical controls through, for example, increased bureaucratic capacity (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022).

While the impact of granting democratic rights to citizens has been extensively studied,[4] far less is known about the consequences of a gradual erosion or withdrawal of these rights during attempts to recentralize power. In this paper, we provide evidence on the short-run consequences of a recentralization policy in rural China, specifically of an intervention to the democratic institutions intended to strengthen the Communist Party's influence. In our context, predicting the consequences of a recentralization is not straightforward. We cannot expect that the positive or negative effects attributed to the introduction of democracy simply reverse because as time has elapsed upper-level bureaucratic capacity and efficiency have increased (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022).

In particular, we focus on voting behavior (election turnout) and political perceptions (perception of rural cadres' corruption and confidence in the local government). Individuals' political perceptions are cornerstone characteristics of well-functioning governance and hence political legitimacy and stability of the regime (Acemoglu et al., 2020; Guriev et al., 2021; Martinez-Bravo and Sanz, 2022). Studying subjective perceptions can thus be especially beneficial when the real output of local governance (e.g., infrastructure) in the short-run is less clear or less likely to manifest in just one specific way, especially in situations involving a variety of administrative duties (Bertrand et al., 2020).

[1] Examples of (de facto) recentralization include the restriction of subnational fiscal power in developing countries like Brazil and South Africa (Dickovick, 2011), the proliferation of administrative units in Uganda (Grossman and Lewis, 2014), the abolition of elected councils in Vietnam (Malesky et al., 2014), and the substitution of elected mayors with appointed ones in Russia (Beazer and Reuter, 2019).

[2] Carothers and O'Donohue (2019) describe in detail a fact of the democratic crisis. Also see Magaloni and Kricheli (2010) for a historical distribution of democratic, autocratic, and other regimes from 1950 to 2006. The support for democracy is more vulnerable than commonly assumed due to the polarization of partisan and policy preferences (Graham and Svolik, 2020; Carey et al., 2022), coupled with public perceptual bias (Krishnarajan, 2023). Meanwhile, utilizing responses from the World Values Survey, Foa and Mounk (2017) show that the authoritarian orientation has been on the rise in many countries over time.

[3] The second chapter of López-Murcia (2022) thoroughly reviews the various causes behind recentralization cases worldwide.

[4] See Section 2.

We particularly study the governance of rural villages in China. Each village has two political organizations: the village party branch of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), headed by the village party secretary (PS), who is selected with great discretion of the upper levels of government, and the village committee, headed by the village chief (VC), who is elected by the villagers.[5] The village committee is, according to the "Organic Law of the Village Committees" (hereinafter, the Organic Law), entrusted with administrative responsibilities, while the village party branch assumes a core leadership role in supporting and securing villagers' self-governance. However, ambiguity often exists in the relationship between the two organizations and about which one is responsible for which concrete task. Since 2018, in line with the publication of the "Rural Revitalization Strategy (2018–2022)" (hereinafter, the Strategy), the central government has promoted the practice of the PS running for the position of the VC, with the expectation that the same person will hold both positions. This practice, known as "*yijiantiao*," refers to the act of carrying both the work of PS and VC on one shoulder.

We employ an instrumental variable (IV) strategy to examine the causal effects of the one-head policy by exploiting the exogeneity of election years following a fixed tenure specification. Dual office-holding is accomplished exclusively through elections, either by electing the PS as the VC or by appointing the VC as the PS. We use data from two waves (2017 and 2019) of a nationally representative survey, the China Rural Household Panel Survey (CRHPS), covering exactly the time before and after the policy was implemented.

Villages conducting elections in and after 2018 show a 19% higher likelihood of adopting this policy, from a baseline level of 35%. The magnitude of our IV intensity observed in this micro survey aligns closely with the province-level evidence, as we find that provinces with a greater proportion of villages that have held elections since 2018 also exhibit a higher ratio of dual office-holding, based on our analysis of data manually collected from the annual "China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook." To further validate our IV approach, we utilize an event plot to demonstrate that the positive impact of specific election years on dual office-holding sharply increases starting only in the election year of 2018, while there is no discernible trend before. Meanwhile, baseline village characteristics, including outcome variables of interest, do not predict holding an election in 2018 or 2019. We find no apparent manipulation of when elections are held in villages that previously had two separate heads or those once instructed by the upper-level governments to adopt dual office-holding. Regarding the short-term impacts of the policy, our IV estimates indicate that dual office-holding strongly reduces election turnout while changing the perceptions of the villagers, causing them to perceive less corruption and have greater confidence in the local government.

[5]In addition to the central government, there are four levels of local government in China: province, prefecture, county, and township. A rural village (and an urban community) is considered the basic level autonomy rather than another level of government.

Specifically, we first show that when a village implements dual office-holding, election turnout is reduced by approximately 20%. We attribute this large decrease in turnout to a decline in electoral competition. The prevailing practice of village elections and discretionary power to determine the PS prompts local governments to adopt specific strategies to meet the requirement of a certain ratio of dual office-holding set by the Strategy and upper-level governments (DeLisle and Yang, 2022).[6] These strategies may influence the candidate slate through negotiation, vetting, or increasing voluntary dropout, resulting in the exclusion of some competitive candidates. Consequently, existing candidates[7] are less engaged in vote solicitation, and villagers are less motivated to vote when certain election outcomes are expected. We provide two stylized facts that support this argument. We utilize the birth year of both the PS and VC across different waves to identify turnover patterns. Our results reveal that dual office-holding is more likely to increase the likelihood of a former PS becoming the new VC than the other way around. This indicates a stronger preference among local governments for individuals previously holding the position of PS to assume the sole leadership role in the village. Meanwhile, we also find that dual office-holding significantly lowers villagers' perception of bribery in elections, thereby discouraging practices like vote buying. This effect is likely due to increased party intervention, which creates less opportunity for bribery during the election process. Overall, our evidence suggests that lower turnout results from changes in the benefits of casting a vote, such as reduced bribery from selling a vote and indifferent candidate preferences. However, we do not observe that average democratic orientation among villagers (proxied by higher past democratic participation) in a village is one of the potential voting motivations leading to the turnout results.

In the second part of our analysis, we document a pronounced change in political perceptions under a one-head power structure: villagers' perception of corruption in rural cadres decreases and their confidence in the local government increases. This improvement stays at a similar magnitude even when controlling for perceptions of bribery during elections. Our preferred explanation for the political perceptions results stems from an organizational perspective.[8] Over time, the advantages of village autonomy eroded, while the disadvantages of a dual power structure have become increasingly pronounced, including power struggles and ambiguous responsibility between the two heads leading to coordination costs, as well as failures surrounding elections due to frequently observed vote buying, electoral fraud and violence, and elite capture (Shi, 1999a; Oi and Rozelle, 2000; O'Brien and Han, 2009; Tan, 2010; DeLisle and Yang, 2022). In this sense, duality

[6]Detailed cases can be found in Section 4.3.

[7]The Organic Law still stipulates that the number of candidates should exceed that of positions.

[8]Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022) argue that when trying to comprehend local elections in autocracies like China we should focus on an organizational perspective rather than a political standpoint. Introducing elections in rural villages aims to leverage local knowledge in addressing the moral dilemma of local cadres when the state's bureaucratic ability is limited. However, once vertical control becomes viable, local elections may then be de facto undermined.

helps foster unified leadership (combining both authority and responsibility), resulting in heightened conscientiousness and effort and avoidance of confusion and conflicts. As bureaucratic ability improves, the state begins to exert deeper vertical influence in local governance, gradually reclaiming local autonomy.[9] Ultimately, dual office-holding facilitates organizational effectiveness.[10]

We find supporting evidence for this argument in several analyses. First, we analyze the turnover of village cadres. Dual office-holding also increases the PS turnover (albeit, local governments exhibit a higher PS preference aforementioned), partially as a result of institutional constraints regarding election rights and specifications, and thus enhances their accountability. Second, village cadres become less likely to have another job, potentially enabling them to devote more effort to village management. Furthermore, we find that dual office-holding promotes better public involvement in decision-making (as shown by an increase in the frequency of the villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives), improves transparency on public affairs disclosure, and reduces the potential rents imposed on villagers (a decreased probability of villagers transferring cash or noncash to nonrelatives and organizations). We also examine the heterogeneous effects of dual office-holding to further substantiate our argument, based on the idea that these effects should predictably vary depending on differences in the quality of election implementation and governance capacity of local governments. We demonstrate that the effects of dual office-holding are more pronounced under the following conditions: when villagers are less satisfied with the previous election process, when the provinces exhibit stronger economic resources (measured by the proportion of transfer income to disposable income for rural individuals), higher anti-corruption effort, and better mutual relationships between governments and the public.

We rule out some other potential mechanisms that may drive our results. One consideration regards the result of a conscious democratic choice made by villagers. Our findings indicate, however, the opposite: the effects of dual office-holding on political perceptions are attenuated among villagers with stronger democratic values, which we perceive as not aligning with the argument of democratic ideals. We also look into demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of village cadres to test whether there is meritocratic selection by both the government and the villagers. Our analysis reveals limited evidence, such as PSes being younger in one-head villages and VCs more likely to be registered

[9]Numerous recentralization policies have been implemented by higher levels of government over time during this process in China, for instance, the Tax and Fee Reform and account oversight which eliminate village fiscal autonomy, the deployment of college students (students-in-residence) and county officials (cadres-in-residence) to rural areas which strengthens direct supervision, the establishment of responsibility systems and training programs, and the selection of full-time village cadres which tackles with these cadres' disloyalty or incapability. See reviews and details of these policies in Oi et al. (2012), He and Wang (2017), Zhang et al. (2019), and Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022).

[10]The advantages of dual office-holding are also portrayed by the stewardship theory in the field of management, while the opposite theory is the agency theory. See a review of the two classical theories in (Krause et al., 2014).

in the village and a business owner, but less likely to be an employee of enterprises and institutions. No significant difference is found regarding their education levels. That the positive effects on political perceptions persist after controlling for perceived bribery during the election also hints of the minor influence of meritocratic selection. An income effect may also be a mechanism. That is, the reduction in the total number of administrative personnel may lead to an increase in average income, thus decreasing a root cause of corruption. We find no effect of dual office-holding on the salary of PS or VC, and the perception of the reasonableness of their salary for those village cadre respondents.

We carefully address concerns related to reporting biases as there is a possibility that local concentration of power might induce more social stigma or fear when villagers indicate their political perceptions in the survey interview. First, the survey provides a safe option for respondents to indicate "do not know," possibly allowing them to hide their true opinion. Although some evidence suggests that more negative individual perceptions are related to a higher village average proportion of respondents selecting this option, we do not find that dual office-holding increases the likelihood of choosing "do not know." Second, we find that villagers with higher risk tolerance and trust in strangers are more likely to express clear perceptions, and higher risk tolerance is also associated with indicating more negative views. But, these two traits do not moderate the effect of dual office-holding. Third, reporting biases are evident when there are cadres present during the respondents' survey interview (this happened only 2.4% of the time in 2017, the only year for which information is available). We find a decrease in the likelihood of a respondent's choosing "do not know" and an increase in expressing more positive perceptions. But, importantly, this bias does not exacerbate under dual office-holding. Fourth, reporting biases causing exaggerated socially acceptable attitudes may arise from greater political connections, that is, respondents and/or their family members are party-affiliated and hold positions as village cadres. Political connections have similar effects on (answering) political perceptions as the presence of cadres during the survey response, and these connections can even reverse the effect of dual office-holding, which is significant in some cases. Last, we show that these political perceptions are formed consistently with economic indicators: more positive perceptions for those respondents are associated with benefiting from popular policies such as government subsidies and being registered as poor households (and thus qualifying for more economic support); conversely, respondents have more negative perceptions when they have experienced unpopular policies, such as land expropriation.

Our results are also robust with respect to concerns for specific parts of our analyses. First, regarding the turnout results, we document no clear pre-trend for election years, and our results remain unchanged when including another wave of data (2015) with available information. Second, in our analysis of political perceptions, we find that the number of observations within a village does not influence our results, and using overall

happiness as a placebo test we observe no effect of dual office-holding. Moreover, we alleviate the concern that our IV identification may just reflect the so-called honeymoon effect, that is, generally more positive views on a newly elected cadre. This concern is particularly relevant since we primarily rely on data from two waves, and we address it by incorporating the time length span since the last election. Although this variable contaminates the precise estimation of our instrument because of collinearity, the effect of dual office-holding on corruption perception still remains. We also deal with several common concerns, such as clustering of standard errors at different administrative levels instead of the village level and keeping conventional intervals (that is, 0, 3, and 4) between election years as provided in the two waves. One potentially confounding factor might be the tenure change for the VC from three years to five years, which took effect by the end of 2018. However, it is unlikely that this change drives our results as we do not find dual office-holding increases the willingness of village cadre respondents to stay longer in their position. Additionally, we still find the same results when we exclude villages holding an election in 2019 — the first to be affected by this change in tenure. Lastly, we document a comparable sudden rise in dual office-holding for urban communities since 2018, which we exploit for a placebo test. Because urban elections involve fewer distributive interests and are designed to be less competitive compared to their rural counterparts, and because residential committees are subordinate to those urban party branches, urban citizens are less responsive to a de jure power structure change. We conduct a similar IV approach, and in line with expectation, we find no effects for urban communities.

We contribute to the broader literature that examines the economic and political consequences of (de)centralization. Although there have been many studies in this area, the findings on the effects of (de)centralization are not uniform; increasingly, they seem to vary across different institutional settings.[11] Yet there is little evidence on the new wave of recentralization policies. The concurrent changes in economic and political factors make it difficult to anticipate the effects of this phenomenon. Malesky et al. (2014) document that the abolition of elected councils in Vietnam has improved public services delivery by lowering elite capture. Beazer and Reuter (2019) find replacing elected officials in Russia with appointed ones results in shifting blame to the ruling party. We focus on the horizontal concentration of power stemming from both upward and downward sources, which differs from the literature that investigates government size (correlated with the number of officials) within a sole power arrangement (Rowley and Schneider, 2004; Amore and Bennedsen, 2013; Diaby and Sylwester, 2014; Bergh et al., 2017).

[11]The literature has inconsistent findings due to the trade-off for a decentralized structure between better accommodating public preferences and incurring higher coordination costs (Oates, 1972; Shleifer and Vishny, 1993). Empirical literature, such as Fisman and Gatti (2002), highlights the pros of decentralization, while its cons can be found in works like Fan et al. (2009). A growing number of studies find the effects are conditional on, for example, the quality of politicians (Hindriks and Lockwood, 2009), the effectiveness of monitoring (Lessmann and Markwardt, 2010), political competition (Albornoz and Cabrales, 2013), and information heterogeneity (Boffa et al., 2016).

We also contribute to literature on local governance in autocratic regimes. We propose that the coexistence of a democratic institution and a party apparatus results in frictions that can hinder organizational effectiveness. We extend the arguments of Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022) to investigate the governing effects in a context in which self-autonomy is gradually undermined and upper-level government's bureaucratic capacity increases. This particular setting may account for different findings compared to previous studies on a singular power structure.[12] Importantly, our identification strategy uses an IV approach to address endogeneity, which has not been adequately addressed in prior research.

Finally, our paper builds upon existing research on multiple factors that drive voter turnout.[13] While high turnout is crucial for establishing legitimacy in democracies (Gentzkow, 2006; Marx et al., 2021), it does not guarantee good choices when uninformed voters are mobilized (Hodler et al., 2015; Hoffman et al., 2017) or when elections are corrupt or captured by elites (Mueller and Stratmann, 2003; Malesky et al., 2014). We explore how party influence in elections impacts turnout, arguably through altering election competition and thereby the importance of a marginal vote. Note the drop in election turnout that we find is the immediate response to the first election held after the policy implementation. Thus, our results do not imply that the change in political perceptions occurring in the subsequent legislation period will not further influence voting behavior in subsequent elections.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides background information on the one-head policy. Section 3 describes the primary survey data, main variables, and empirical strategy. Section 4 and Section 5 present the results for turnout and political perceptions, respectively, along with tests for robustness and potential mechanisms. In Section 6 we conduct a placebo test using urban communities. Finally, we conclude in Section 7.

2 Background

2.1 Local elections and governance in Chinese villages

The governance of Chinese villages is shared by two bodies with two respective heads: the village party branch of the Chinese Communist Party led by the village party secretary

[12] Wu and Ma (2010) find no significant influence of dual office-holding on village public goods provision. Xu and Yao (2015) do not find enough evidence that having one person be both the PS and VC brings about more public investment. Cai and Sun (2018) find that when village committees hold substantial power (compared with village party branches holding substantial power including dual office-holding) the villagers' interests are better represented during land expropriation.

[13] These factors include individual factors such as income and employment (Charles and Stephens Jr., 2013), institutional factors such as compulsory voting (Jaitman, 2013), postal voting (Hodler et al., 2015), concurrent elections (Garmann, 2016), and social factors such as media (Gentzkow, 2006; Gentzkow et al., 2011) and violence (Condra et al., 2018).

and the village committee with the village chief as its chairman. In 1987, China enacted the first version of the Organic Law, which introduced local elections for the members of the village committee.[14] As local governments were often still exerting influential control over the electoral procedure (Wong et al., 2017), the Organic Law was revised in 1998 to ensure more electoral openness and competition. For example, it stipulated that the number of candidates should exceed the number of positions, and the election result is only deemed valid when turnout exceeds 50% and the winning candidate secures over 50% of the vote share. The election reform was rolled out across villages guided by mandates from their respective provincial governments, causing persistent differences in election timing that can be argued to be exogenous within provinces (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022). As a result, a dual power structure has gradually been introduced throughout rural China.

In China, the village party branch of the CCP operates under strict subordination and accountability to higher party organizations. The PS is either appointed by the higher-level party organizations or, more commonly, elected by the village party members, with higher-level party organizations retaining the authority to approve or dismiss the PS (Sun et al., 2013). The responsibilities of the basic-level party organization include propagating and implementing the policies set by higher authorities, supporting and securing the effective operation of village self-governance, and discussing and deciding important issues related to economic construction and social development in the village (Guo and Bernstein, 2004; Sun et al., 2013). Meanwhile, the village committee is the organization through which villagers exercise autonomy, and takes direct responsibility for all administrative duties within the village. This includes managing public affairs and collective resources (e.g., land), mediating disputes among villagers and helping maintain public order, as well as conveying villagers' opinions and demands and providing suggestions to upper echelons of government. As its members are elected by all eligible adult villagers, the village committee is accountable to villagers.

Allowing for more autonomy at the village level through elections facilitates the incorporation of local informational advantages, which is in theory especially beneficial if the bureaucratic capacity at higher levels is weak (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022). Empirically, a number of studies have related the introduction of local elections in Chinese villages to positive effects on the provision of public goods (Zhang et al., 2004; Luo et al., 2007; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022), the quality of infrastructure (Wong et al., 2017), and reductions in income inequality (Shen and Yao, 2008). But there is also evidence that, over time, local elections had negative effects on, for example, corruption, fraud, violence, and elite capture (Shi, 1999a; DeLisle and Yang, 2022), as well on the quality of the elected VC (Shi, 1999a).

[14] Before that, local governments (such as the county and township) would appoint village committee members (Wong et al., 2017).

The dual power system is sometimes seen as a cause of ineffective local governance. Although the Organic Law stresses the leadership role of the party branch, the VC often believes that the village committee has a status equal to that of the party branch, with popular support from villagers. The power allocation between the PS and the VC is often ambiguous and can vary greatly across villages. This variation may stem from the strength of pressure from higher party levels, the influence of villagers, the representativeness of election methods (Sun et al., 2013), the openness of the local economy, the importance of the agricultural sector (Oi and Rozelle, 2000), and the fiscal dependence of the village on higher-level local governments (Cai and Sun, 2018). As a result, historical tensions and disagreements between the PS and VC about the control of collective resources and financial decision-making were not uncommon (Guo and Bernstein, 2004; O'Brien and Han, 2009; Tan, 2010). The two-head system could also result in either or both leaders shirking their responsibilities, leaving their village in a vulnerable and inefficient state (DeLisle and Yang, 2022).

2.2 Evolution of dual office-holding advocacy

With the stated aims of mitigating some of the shortcomings of the dual power arrangement and of saving administrative costs, some local authorities started adopting a "one head" system around the turn of the century (Guo and Bernstein, 2004). There were two ways, originating from local practices, to implement dual office-holding. The "*Weihai* way" refers to the higher-level party organizations nominating the VC as the PS when the elected VC is already party-affiliated. The "*Shunde* way" refers to the higher levels asking the PS to be a candidate in the VC election (O'Brien and Han, 2009).[15]

In 2002, for the first time dual office-holding was officially recommended (*tichang*) by the CCP Central Committee through a circular and reiterated in the following years.[16] As these circulars were not legally binding, the introduction of dual office-holding depended on how provincial and local governments interpreted the policy's recommendation and acted accordingly by issuing implementation regulations (Huhe and Tang, 2017). As a result, a substantial variation in the provincial dual office-holding ratio developed. By the end of 2017, the average ratio of dual office-holding across provinces was 28.3%, with a standard deviation of 25%, ranging from 2.5% for Chongqing City (a provincial-level municipality) to 86.9% for Hainan Province.[17]

In 2018, robust central promotion of dual office-holding began, aligning with a pro-

[15] Weihai is a city in Shandong Province while Shunde is a district in Foshan City, Guangdong Province.

[16] The first document can be found on the central government's website http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2002/content_61679.htm (in Chinese). Please also refer to the document published in 2009, as an example of the following ones, on http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2009/content_1331159.htm (in Chinese).

[17] The statistics are calculated based on the China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook using data from 29 out of the 31 provinces in mainland China, consistent with the sample provinces in the CRHPS.

posed strategy to revitalize rural China.[18] on October 18, 2017, during the 19th National Congress of the CCP, the concept of rural revitalization was mentioned for the first time, without specific policy details. On January 2, 2018, China released its annual "1st Central Document,"[19] which provided guidance on rural revitalization and suggested to promote (*tuidong*) that PS concurrently holds the position of VC through elections (not the other way round). Later on, the CCP officially released the Rural Revitalization Strategy (2018–2022).[20] In this document, the central government employed an even stronger tone as it stated that dual office-holding should be "vigorously promoted" (*dali tichang*). Specifically it set targets for the national ratio of dual office-holding to increase from 30% in 2016 to 35% in 2020 and 50% in 2022. In 2017, the ratios of 21 out of our 29 sample provinces were lower than 35%. Thus, the importance attached to promoting dual office-holding increased especially for those provinces with a relatively low ratio. However, achieving this threshold within four years, in which there is usually just one village election cycle, is difficult in that the election of village party branch typically precedes the election of village committee (Cheng and Shi, 2019), and the chosen party secretary still needs to undergo the formal VC election process, reflecting villagers' choices. The aforementioned institutional constraints, including the specifications of multiple candidates and minimum turnout and vote share, increases the uncertainty of promoting the one-head system. Thus, to promote the one-head system, certain strategies must be implemented, which will discuss later.

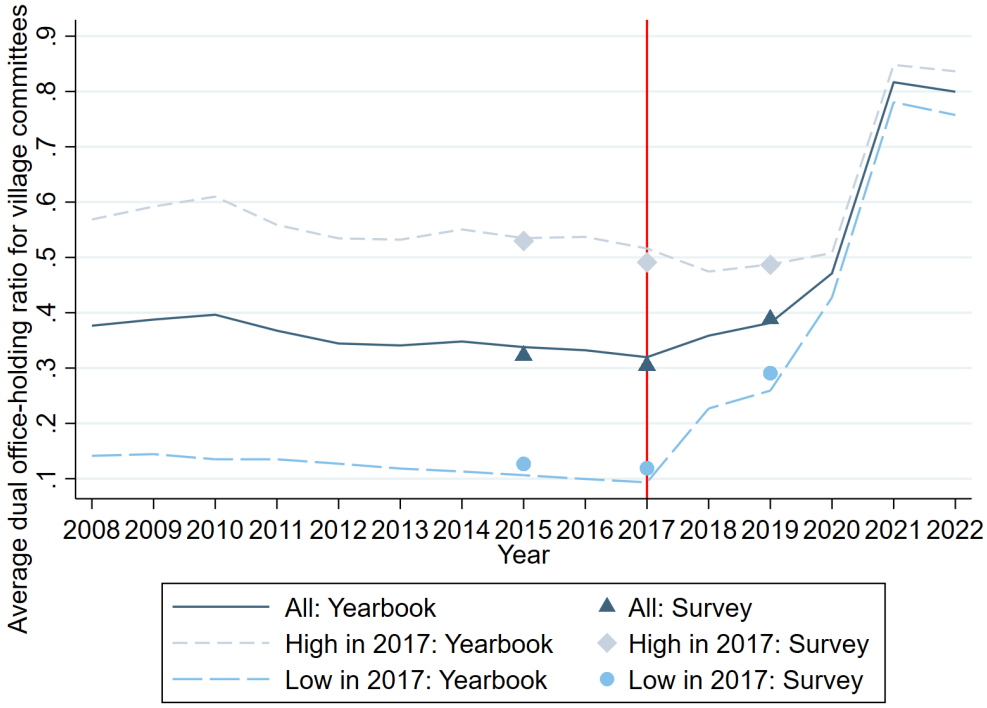
We illustrate the impact of the dual office-holding promotion in Figure 1, which presents the evolution of dual office-holding ratio over time on average and separately for provinces with above and below median ratios in 2017. Since 2010, the two groups exhibit a slightly declining trend in this ratio. After the release of the Rural Revitalization Strategy in 2018, the low group increased its ratio from 9.3% to 22.7% in a year, while the ratio stayed constant in the high group. The surge for both the high and low provinces since 2020 (not covered in our sample period), especially in 2021, was driven by the enforcement of the dual office-holding policy through the Regulations on the Rural

[18]The Strategy is rooted in China's large urban-rural gap, which has arisen partly as a result of long-standing government development policies that have led to the countryside and agriculture nurturing the urban areas and industry through their provision of population and resources (such as land) (Xie and Zhou, 2014; Zhong et al., 2022). Agriculture, rural areas, and farmers have been viewed as the most vulnerable parts in the process of modernization in China, and the Strategy aims to address the comparatively weak state of the countryside.

[19]This annual document traditionally targets agriculture, rural areas, and farmers. The 2018 version was entitled "Opinions on Implementing the Rural Revitalization Strategy." See http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2018-02/04/content_5263807.htm (in Chinese).

[20]The timeline for the drafting and releasing procedure was as follows. First, a news conference in February 2018 revealed that the first draft of the Strategy was completed. Then on May 31, the Political Bureau of the CCP Central Committee held a meeting to review the Strategy. On July 17, Pengcheng Yan, the spokesman of the National Development and Reform Commission, revealed that the Strategy had been issued. The final document was made public on September 26, on the official website of Chinese government. See http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2018/content_5331958.htm (in Chinese).

Figure 1: Average dual office-holding ratio for village committees



Notes: This figure displays the average dual office-holding ratio for village committees from 2008 to 2022. We also separate provinces into two groups based on the median of their average dual office-holding ratios calculated from the China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook in 2017. Then we calculate group average ratios of dual office-holding over time using census data from the annual yearbook or sample villages from the CRHPS.

Work of the Chinese Communist Party[21] which stipulated that the PS should (*yingdang*) assume the position of VC through legal procedures. Following this surge which brought the ratio of dual office-holding villages to 80%, the central government toned down its policy toward dual office-holding by stating that active promotion should be conducted in places where conditions permit it, adapting to local conditions and allowing flexibility.[22]

3 Data and identification strategy

3.1 Data: The China Rural Household Panel Survey

Our primary source of data is the China Rural Household Panel Survey (CRHPS), which we access through the Chinese Family Database at Zhejiang University.[23] It shares the same sample pool with the China Household Finance Survey (CHFS)[24] conducted by the Survey and Research Center for China Household Finance at the Southwestern University

[21] See http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-09/01/content_5426319.htm (in Chinese).
[22] See http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2021-02/21/content_5588098.htm (in Chinese).
[23] http://ssec.zju.edu.cn/dataset/CRHPS gives more information on data application.
[24] The sample pool of the CHFS also includes urban households and urban communities, which we use later as a placebo test.

of Finance and Economics, but focuses on agriculture, rural areas, and farmers.[25] The CRHPS covers 29 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions of mainland China (excluding Xinjiang and Tibet), and achieves nationwide representativeness through a stratified, three-stage, random sampling design (Qian, 2020). Specifically, counties within a given province, residential communities, and households are chosen respectively from the first, second, and third stage, and each stage applies a probability proportional to size sampling strategy according to the sample units' population based on the national census. The survey consists of two types of questionnaires: the household questionnaire and the community questionnaire. The former is answered by rural households and collects information regarding their demographics, socioeconomic status, and subjective attitudes, especially toward rural governance. The community questionnaire is completed by a village cadre[26] and gathers detailed data concerning local economic, social, and political situations.

The CRHPS has been conducted biennially since its launch in 2015. We primarily utilize the two latest waves (2017 and 2019), which contain questions on subjective evaluations of grassroots governance, introduced in 2017. We construct a balanced panel of 453 rural villages with full observations of variables we use in the baseline regressions, including 314 villages that had different PS and VC in 2017.

3.2 Main variables and descriptive statistics

The policy treatment we study, dual office-holding, is indicated by a binary variable taking the value of 1 when the same person holds both the positions of PS and VC in a village. Approximately 30.5% of the CRHPS villages had a one-head system in the 2017 wave, a ratio that increased by over a quarter in two years (to 38.9% in 2019). In Figure A.1, we map the change in the average dual office-holding ratio for each province based on the CRHPS (Panel (a)) and official statistics collected from the annual China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook (Panel (b)). The correlation of the proportion of treated villages at the province level, as reported by the the two sources in 2017 and 2019, is notably high at 0.652, and the correlation of the two level ratios is 0.874, providing reassurance on the representativeness of the CRHPS villages in terms of dual office-holding adoption.

For voting behavior, we focus on election turnout.[27] We keep only villages with a

[25]The CRHPS has been frequently used to study various topics related to rural China, including policy distortion (Wu et al., 2018), land usage (Duan et al., 2021), property rights (Bu and Liao, 2022), and population aging (Ren et al., 2023).

[26]The community survey respondent is determined as follows: if the PS is in the village office he or she is chosen. If not, the VC will be the respondent, followed by the deputy PS, and finally the deputy VC.

[27]To determine voter turnout, the community questionnaire first asks who participates in the villagers'/urban residents' assembly or the assembly of villagers'/urban residents' representatives. The options are: (i) all individuals aged 18 years old and above, (ii) representatives from all the households, (iii) representatives from all the villagers'/urban residents' groups, and (iv) others. Then, the ques-

turnout above 50%, in which case the election is valid; otherwise, reorganization is required. Turnout at village elections is, in most cases, very high, with a mean participation rate of 90%.

For political perceptions, we focus on villagers' views on corruption and confidence in local governance. The first question assesses the perception of villagers regarding the severity of corruption among grassroots cadres in rural areas, which are defined in the survey as the members of the two village organizations led by the PS and the VC, and township cadres such as the township mayor and township party secretary. Respondents are asked to rate the severity on a scale of 1 ("not severe") to 4 ("very severe"). The second question measures the level of confidence that respondents have in their local government,[28] on a scale of 1 ("not confident at all") to 5 ("very confident"). For both questions, there is an additional option to answer "do not know." The distribution of responses can be found in Figure A.2, which is split into two- and one-head villages. On average, a majority of respondents find that corruption is "not" or "not very" severe in their villages. They also have a high level of positive perceptions about the local government and cadres, which is consistent with other international surveys.[29] We construct ordinal variables for both the corruption and confidence questions excluding "do not know" answers. We exploit this unclear option when investigating potential reporting biases associated with answering the corruption and confidence questions in our context in Section 5.2.1.

3.3 Empirical strategy: An instrumental variable approach

Nonrandom selection into the one-head policy adoption and its timing, influenced by factors from both the upper government and the village side, may introduce biases which are unclear in their direction. For example, a common indication of nonrandom selection might occur when local governments exercise caution in implementing the policy in areas with ethnic minorities.[30] Alternatively, the ease of policy adoption within a specific place can be a result of widespread popularity of the Communist Party or the presence of strong vertical control.

Conducting elections is a prerequisite to adopting dual office-holding, wherein the

tionnaire indirectly inquires about both the number of registered voters (eligible households) and the number of votes cast in the last election if the cadre respondent chooses option (i) or (ii). Alternatively, it directly inquires about the turnout results in the last election if option (iii) or (iv) is selected.

[28]The question does not specify the exact government level it pertains to. However, perceived confidence in the local government, stemming from a singular authority system, can be attributed to either perception adaptation, as the PS is commonly seen as an extension of governing from upper organizations, or to the active involvement of local government in policy implementation.

[29]In the newest report of the Edelman Trust Barometer, China ranks among the highest countries with respect to the respondents' trust in the government.

[30]In Figure A.3 we see there is a mild policy reaction in the provinces of Ningxia, Qinghai, and Yunnan. Moreover, in the provinces of Xinjiang and Tibet (not included in the sample), the provincial dual office-holding ratio actually decreases.

Table 1: The effect of electing in 2018 or 2019 on dual office-holding

	Dual office-holding		
	All villages	Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave	Villages with one head in the 2017 wave
	FE	FE	FE
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	0.190***	0.263***	0.026
	(0.043)	(0.048)	(0.065)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	906	630	276
Mean dep var	0.347	0.097	0.917

Notes: This table presents the results from the regressions of dual office-holding on electing in 2018 or 2019. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

village chooses between electing the PS as the VC or appointing the elected VC as the PS. We therefore exploit differences in the timing of elections across villages as an instrumental variable (IV) that predicts the introduction of the one-head system, enabling us to derive causally interpretable estimates of the policy's impact. The relevance of this instrument relies on the assumption that a village was more likely to introduce dual office-holding if it held an election in 2018 or 2019 (relative to in earlier year), coinciding with the launch of the Strategy. The resulting IV first-stage equation is as follows:

$$\textit{Dual office-holding}_{v,t} = \beta \times \textit{Electing in 2018 or 2019}_{v,t} + \gamma_v + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{v,t}, \qquad (1)$$

where $\textit{Dual office-holding}_{v,t}$ takes the value of 1 if village v in wave t has a one-head system, and 0 otherwise; $\textit{Electing in 2018 or 2019}_{v,t}$ represents election timing with β capturing the (first-stage) correlation with policy adoption; γ_v and δ_t are respectively village and wave fixed effects.

As shown in Figure A.4, about 38.4% of our sample villages held an election in 2018 or 2019. Table 1 reports the results from the first-stage regressions showing, in column (1), that having an election in those two years increases the probability of dual office-holding by 19.0%. The effect size is large, considering that the average ratio of one-head villages was 30.5% in the 2017 wave. We also report results for two subsamples of villages: those with a two-head and those with one-head system in the 2017 wave, in columns (2) and (3) respectively. Reassuringly, this reveals that the effect of an election in 2018 or

2019 is primarily driven by villages with two heads before the year the Strategy started. In Figure A.5(a), we further illustrate the effect of election years on dual office-holding using an event plot that substitutes the variable *Electing in 2018 or 2019* with dummies indicating each election year, for the baseline election year set at 2017. It shows that there is no significant effect of election years on dual office-holding in any year up to 2018.[31] This demonstrates that election timing is a relevant predictor of policy adoption as villages reacted to the one-head policy only after the Strategy came into play, with no sign of gradual implementation pre-2018.

Still, for election timing to be a good instrument, it must also be uncorrelated to village characteristics (observed or unobserved) that would influence political outcomes. This is arguably the case for elections in rural China as their timing will depend on the year of original introduction of the election in the 1980s (which has been shown to be exogenous by Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022)), specified tenure rules that are set according to the Organic Law,[32] and some unexpected shocks to tenure length (such as the death of the VC, which should by nature be exogenous). We statistically investigate the validity of election timing as an instrument by checking for correlation between baseline village characteristics (from the 2017 wave) and holding an election in 2018 or 2019 (using the 2019 wave). We do this for village governance, socioeconomic, and political characteristics[33] and present the resulting balancing test in Figure 2. It shows that there is no statistically significant correlation between any of the baseline village characteristics we consider and an election taking place in 2018 or 2019, whether we look at all villages or only those with one head in 2017. This finding alleviates concerns regarding potential endogenous manipulation of election timing, which would invalidate its use as an exogenous instrument.

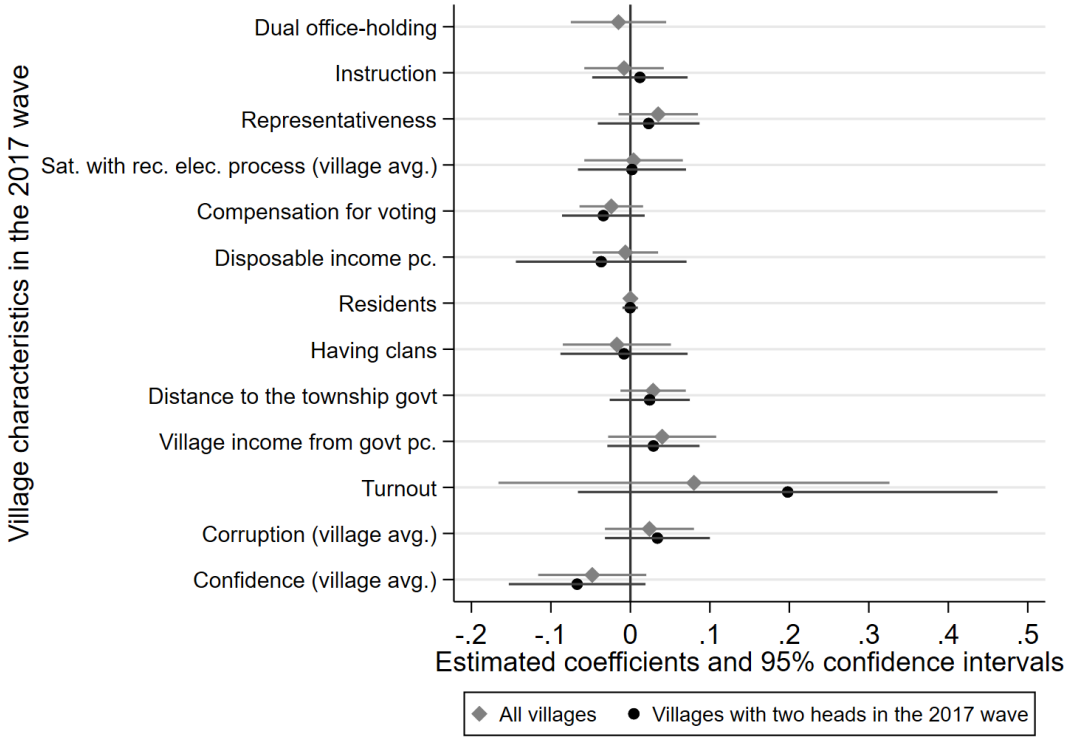
As a robustness check, we use provincial-level data on village committees collected from the China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook and replicate the survey-based micro-evidence on the quality of election timing as an instrument. Based on the official statistics, we mimic Equation 1 and regress the provincial dual office-holding ratio from 2014 to

[31] We also utilize the 2015 wave and present the results in Figure A.5(b) with the same event plot method. The sudden increase in 2018 is also obvious especially among villages that initially had two heads.

[32] The specified tenure was three years before the end of 2018 (December 29), when the central government modified the Organic Law and allowed village committee members to serve for five years instead of three to align with the term of party positions. We address this potentially confounding effect of tenure change in Section 4.2 and Section 5.2.

[33] Governance-related characteristics include dual office-holding status, whether dual office-holding is clearly required by the upper organizations, the way the village holds the villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives, villagers' average satisfaction level with the recent election process, and whether the village compensates for voting. Socioeconomic characteristics include disposable income per capita, village size indicated by the number of residents, and whether the village has clans (i.e., having the same surname). Political characteristics include distance to the township government and village income per capita transferred from the upper government. Most importantly, we also consider the baseline outcomes of interest, that is, the baseline turnout and village average political perceptions.

Figure 2: Balancing test of election timing in the 2019 wave with respect to the baseline village characteristics from the 2017 wave



Notes: This figure displays the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from OLS regressions of holding an election in 2018 or 2019 in the 2019 wave on each one of the baseline village characteristics from the 2017 wave, stated on the vertical axis, for all the sample villages or sample villages with two heads in the 2017 wave. Instruction is a binary variable taking the value of 1 if dual office-holding is clearly required by the upper organizations. Representativeness is a binary variable taking the value of 1 if all individuals over 18 years old can attend the villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives. Satisfaction with recent election process takes the average of villagers' satisfaction level regarding the recent election process (with a 1-5 scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied"). Compensation for voting is a binary variable taking the value of 1 if the village compensates for voting. Disposable income per capita in 10,000 yuan is reported by the village cadre answering the community questionnaire. Residents represents the number of village residents in 1000 people. Having clans is a binary variable taking the value of 1 if the village has clans that share the same surname. Distance to the township government represents the road distance to reach the township government in 10 kilometers. Village income from government per capita represents the amount of subsidies or refunds from the higher-level governments in 10,000 yuan. We also take the average of villagers' perceived corruption and confidence. Each regression controls for province fixed effects, and its observations vary according to data availability. Standard errors are clustered at the village level.

2019 (consistent with the election years in our sample) on the product of the provincial election ratio and an indicator variable representing the calendar years 2018 to 2019. We also extend the sample years from 2008 to 2022, which is possible using the yearbook data. Columns (1) and (2) of Table A.1 show that those provinces with higher proportion of villages holding elections between 2018 and 2019 (or 2022) had significantly higher dual office-holding ratios, with the economic magnitude in line with the survey evidence. The provincial election ratio itself, however, does not exhibit a significant effect on dual office-holding. In columns (3) and (4) we show that the provincial dual office-holding ratio in

2017 does not predict the provincial election ratio in the following years, as it did not in the sample villages from our survey, which reveals no sign of an accelerated election process under the pressure of target ratio achievement, especially for those provinces with a low dual office-holding ratio.

We obtain causal estimates of the impact of dual office-holding on various outcomes from the following second-stage equation:

$$Outcome_{i/v,t} = \theta \times Dual\ \widehat{office\text{-}holding}_{v,t} + \gamma_v + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{i/v,t}, \tag{2}$$

where $Outcome_{i/v,t}$ represents either turnout at the village level (v) or villagers' perceptions of rural governance at the individual level (i); $Dual\ \widehat{office\text{-}holding}_{v,t}$ is the instrumented independent variable stemming from Equation 1. γ_v and δ_t are as before, village and wave fixed effects. The standard errors are clustered at the village level: the level of treatment variation in our setting. We present results for both the full sample of villages and for the subsample with a two-head system in the 2017 wave.

4 Dual office-holding and turnout

4.1 Turnout results

We start our investigation of the impact on turnout of elections when a village has introduced the one-head system. We start by presenting reduced-form estimates in columns (1) and (4) of Table 2, which provide consistent evidence of a significant negative relationship between election timing and the proportion of registered voters going to the polls. Holding an election in 2018 or 2019 decreases turnout by 4.0% on average and by 6.4% for villages with a two-head system beforehand. The causal IV estimates from Equation 2 are reported in columns (2) and (5). They show that dual office-holding leads to a sharp and significant drop in turnout of more than 20%, a large effect given the baseline average participation rate of almost 90% at village elections.[34]

For comparison, we also report the results from (noncausal) village fixed effects regressions in columns (3) and (6). The estimated coefficients are close to zero and insignificant. This could reflect positive selection bias issues from several sides, which our IV approach seeks to address. For example, villages with stronger upper-level governments or villagers' support for the policy will be more likely to implement dual office-holding while still registering high levels of turnout, either because of enforcement or voter preferences.

[34]The first-stage Kleibergen-Paap F-statistics are 19.2 for all villages and 29.4 for villages with two heads in the 2017 wave. These F-statistics are equivalent to the effective F-statistics in the just-identified case developed by Montiel Olea and Pflueger (2013) for a test of weak instruments robust to heteroscedasticity, serial correlation, and clustering. The above first-stage F-statistics exceed their proposed critical values of 15.1 and 23.1, with the worst-case biases being 20% and 10%, respectively, demonstrating that our instrument is not weak especially for the subsample with two heads before.

Alternatively, local leaders with certain (unobserved) traits may push the policy as they seek both positions, and may also be more likely to buy votes.

Table 2: The effect of dual office-holding on turnout

	Turnout					
	All villages			Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave		
	Reduced-form	IV 2nd stage	FE	Reduced-form	IV 2nd stage	FE
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Dual office-holding		-0.209**	0.007		-0.244***	-0.002
		(0.089)	(0.015)		(0.078)	(0.018)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	-0.040***			-0.064***		
	(0.014)			(0.016)		
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat		19.243			29.442	
Observations	906	906	906	630	630	630
Mean dep var	0.899	0.899	0.899	0.902	0.902	0.902

Notes: This table presents the results from reduced-form (columns (1) and (4)), second-stage IV (columns (2) and (5)), and village fixed effects (columns (3) and (6)) specifications. It reports coefficients from regressing village turnout on elections being held in 2018 or 2019 in columns (1) and (4) or dual office-holding in all other columns. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

4.2 Turnout robustness

A first legitimate concern regarding our identification strategy, based on election timing, is the potential presence of a pre-existing declining trend in turnout over time. In other words, our instrument might merely capture the effects of this underlying time trend because of a later election year. We test this in Figure A.6(a), using the the 2017 and 2019 waves, and in Figure A.6(b), which adds information from the 2015 wave. In all cases, we do not observe any indication of a declining pre-trend in turnout. In column (1) of Table A.2 we present IV estimates that include observations from the 2015 wave, which confirm, using this longer time horizon, the significant negative relationship between dual office-holding and turnout.

Second, we test how the level of clustering of standard errors matters for our results. Standard errors may be correlated within provinces, as each province has a different pace of carrying out (initial) village elections (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022), or within counties, since county-level party committees are primarily responsible for the detailed implementation of the tasks listed in the Strategy. The results reported in columns (2) and (3) of Table A.2 show that the significance of our estimates is robust to clustering at higher administrative levels than the village.[35]

[35] As there are only 29 provinces, we use the wild restricted efficient bootstrap test to address the bias from a small number of clusters (Davidson and MacKinnon, 2010). Moreover, our first-stage is weak when clustering at the province level, and therefore we also report the results of wild bootstrap for

Third, we investigate whether elections held in "unusual" years affect our results. The Organic Law stipulates that, upon the expiration of the VC's term, a timely election should be held, implying that the elections should, in normal circumstances, happen every three years.[36] According to the Regulations on the Elections of the Village Committees published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in 2013, elections may be held at shorter intervals due to invalid elections (failure to follow a legal procedure), recalls,[37] resignations, and automatic terminations in the event of death, incapacity, criminal behavior, or being found incompetent through two consecutive evaluations. A longer interval may be attributed to emergencies, natural disasters, major economic or social events, and other significant circumstances. Figure A.7 displays the interval between the election years given in the two waves. We see most observations (86.8%) are scattered around 0, 3, and 4 (mostly because of a natural rounding issue). We check robustness by dropping the other observations as they might be more likely to suffer from selection bias. The results in column (4) remain negative and significant.

Finally, we address the potential confounding effect of a prolonged tenure from three years to five years for all committee members. The change was specified in the modified version of the Organic Law passed on December 29, 2018. Therefore, those villages holding an election in 2019 might be influenced by this change. There are compelling reasons to believe that this could impact the willingness of potential candidates to run for election and shape their their campaign strategies, which in turn could affect voter turnout. Villagers may also adapt their voting behavior in response to this tenure change given the possibility of being served or ruled by someone for a longer term. Both behavioral changes could bias our IV estimates. We tackle this in two ways. First, we test for differences in village cadre respondents' willingness to work longer terms in two- and one-head systems. The community questionnaire asks them whether they would be willing to engage in this work longer, if reelection were a possibility. We accordingly construct a dummy variable, "Staying longer," to see whether dual office-holding impacts positive answer to this question. Results reported in column (1) of Table A.5 show that willingness to serve longer terms does not change when dual office-holding is adopted. Second, we check if our turnout results are affected when dropping the small number of villages with an election in 2019 that were affected by the mandate length change. IV estimates for this subsample in column (2) are statistically indistinguishable from the baseline results, alleviating concerns that tenure change is what drives falls in turnout when dual office-holding is adopted.

Anderson-Rubin test for the coefficient on the instrumented variable being equal to zero (Wang, 2021).

[36] Although the tenure specification changed to five years by the end of 2018, those who were elected prior to that change should still adhere to the previous tenure specification.

[37] When more than one-fifth of eligible voters in the village or one-third of village representatives jointly sign, they can initiate a request for the recall of village committee members, thereby initiating the recall procedure.

4.3 Turnout mechanisms

One central reason why turnout might fall is lack of electoral competition under institutional changes (Franklin, 2004). We postulate that this decrease could be linked to various strategies employed by local governments to promote the implementation of the one-head system around village elections.

The 2018 Strategy stipulated the aim of reaching a dual office-holding ratio of 50% nationally by the end of 2022. However, this target ratio was often set higher at the local government with a lower level[38] by officials potentially concerned about not reaching this threshold if their chosen candidate for PS was not the one eventually voted in among VC candidates at the election. Since there is no specific guideline from the central government regarding how to promote dual office-holding, local governments explore different approaches, for example, resorting to in-depth due diligence and incorporating ordinary villagers' views,[39] negotiating with the incumbent cadres,[40] and strengthening the vetting system[41] (see DeLisle and Yang (2022) for a detailed survey of approaches). These strategies will result in less-intense electoral competition and vote solicitation with more predictable election results, and ultimately lower turnout (Bursztyn et al., 2023) when villagers perceive their individual vote is not that marginally beneficial. We offer two pieces of evidence to support these arguments.

A stylized fact documented in the literature is that local governments tend to show a higher preference for the incumbent PS assuming concurrent positions compared to the incumbent VC, partly because that this is how they interpret the intention of the one-head policy and usually they have more knowledge of and interactions with the

[38] Cheng and Shi (2019), for example, conducted a survey at the P town in the jurisdiction of L county, Tangshan City, Hebei Province. The target ratio set at each level of local government (from town to province) was 100%, 80%, 70%, and 60%, respectively. By promoting the policy in more villages, local officials could minimize the risk that a one-head system was accepted in less than 50% of villages, which would negatively impact their work evaluations.

[39] We conducted an interview with a town party leader in Zhejiang Province, who is directly responsible for implementing the one-head policy. He told us that upper-level governments will implement door-to-door household surveys typically before a village party committee election to ascertain villagers' potential votes and their attitudes toward potential candidates regarding their ability, willingness to serve villagers, etc. After thorough surveys, the upper-level government already knows who is suitable for leading the village and most likely to be elected by villagers. Thus, they will make this person be elected as village PS and let him or her run for the position of VC. This kind of due diligence, however, is said to take a lot of effort.

[40] This includes compensating quitters economically, especially former VCs, or empowering them with similar rights in a deputy position (Cheng and Shi, 2019; DeLisle and Yang, 2022)

[41] That is, local governments may use a negative list of ineligible types to block the candidacy of some people, such as those deemed "black and evil". This practice is supported by a national policy launched in 2018 to crack down on gang crimes, which is said to have severely punished approximately 3,700 "village overlords" and sacked 41,700 village cadres who had engaged in offenses late in 2020 (see the report by *The Economist* magazine). An empirical concern for this policy is that it may incidentally trigger early by-elections when village cadres are removed from their positions in village committees. We address this concern by showing robustness when keeping conventional intervals between election years from the two waves in Table A.2 and Table A.4.

incumbent PS (DeLisle and Yang, 2022). We provide evidence on this special head preference by examining turnover of the two positions. As there is limited information available regarding the specific identities of individuals serving as PS or VC, we resort to the (non)matching of the birth year of cadres in the 2015, 2017, and 2019 waves. We start with keeping only villages with nonmissing birth year information for their head(s) and further exclude those with two heads sharing the same birth year within a wave. Then we compare each position holder's birth year in 2019 (2017) with that in 2017 (2015) and define four different types of turnover: "Former VC, now PS", "Fresh PS", "Former PS, now VC", and "Fresh VC". For example, "Former VC, now PS" is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if the birth year of the VC in the 2017 (2015) wave is the same as that of PS in the 2019 (2017) wave when there are two heads in the 2017 (2015) wave, and 0 otherwise. "Fresh PS" takes the value of 1 if the birth year of neither the VC or the PS in the 2017 (2015) wave is the same as that of PS in the 2019 (2017) wave. We observe a very high ratio of a freshman becoming the new leader, which is a sign of potential measurement error especially considering a recalling bias by the village cadre respondent not having the position of PS or VC.[42] However, this kind of measurement error does not harm the unbiased estimates if it is independent from our instrumental variable, which is most likely the case. Table 3 gives the second-stage IV estimates. Dual office-holding significantly increases the likelihood of a former PS being elected as VC in the subsequent term (column (3)), while the estimate is positive with lower magnitude, but not significant, for a former VC being chosen as PS later (column (1)). We also observe a more positive and significant result for "Fresh VC" compared with that of "Fresh PS" (columns (2) and (4)), which again implies there is a lower preference for a former VC.

The lure of potential rents often causes corruption and vote buying in the electoral process in rural China (Zhao, 2018; Ruan and Wang, 2023). This will be alleviated with less electoral competition and also with the enhanced screening and selection of candidates by the local governments. In this sense, one by-product of dual office-holding is a decrease in votes that are not intended to be cast in the first place. The household questionnaire asks villagers whether bribery in elections is the type of corruption they believe rural

[42] We validate these measures by exploring the reported duration in the current position. This question is only asked for the position of PS if there is one head, which makes it an accurate measure for the duration of the PS. But we also use the information about the PS to indicate the duration of the VC if there is only one head: therefore, a higher value for VC in the case of "Former PS, now VC" just means a higher duration held as PS. According to Table 3, a former VC who is now PS has the shortest duration in the position of PS, while a former PS who is now VC has the longest duration mainly because he/she stays a longer term as PS. The duration for a fresh PS or a fresh VC is also relatively high, which is another sign of measurement error. As a robustness check, we construct two measures indicating turnover of the PS and the VC. The two variables take the value of 1 if the birth year of PS (VC) in a previous wave is not the same as the birth year of PS (VC) in the current wave. Again, we report the duration of the PS (VC) conditional on there being no turnout of PS (VC), we can see the duration is high as expected.

grassroots cadres are most likely to engage in. We create an indicator variable based on this question, and about 14.0% of villagers hold such a view, which ranks in the middle among all the types of corruption they believe cadres engage in, as shown in Figure A.8. The IV estimates in column (5) of Table 3 illustrate that dual office-holding significantly decreases villagers' views about the prevalence of bribery in elections.

Table 3: The effects of dual office-holding on head preference and bribery in elections

	Former VC, now PS	**Fresh PS**	**Former PS, now VC**	**Fresh VC**	**Bribery in elections**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage				
Dual office-holding	0.150	0.403	0.473***	0.682*	-0.181**
	(0.148)	(0.324)	(0.158)	(0.370)	(0.075)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	18.035	18.035	18.035	18.035	18.934
Observations	714	714	714	714	18,573
Mean dep var	0.041	0.426	0.042	0.469	0.140
Duration of PS (VC) if dep var = 1	1.352	6.521	9.536	4.724	
Duration of PS (VC) if Turnover of PS (VC) = 0	10.837	10.837	8.182	8.182	
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage				
Dual office-holding	0.214	0.238	0.455***	0.573*	-0.192***
	(0.147)	(0.295)	(0.138)	(0.305)	(0.063)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	25.004	25.004	25.004	25.004	28.704
Observations	476	476	476	476	12,924
Mean dep var	0.055	0.452	0.042	0.498	0.141
Duration of PS (VC) if dep var = 1	1.271	6.644	8.632	4.331	
Duration of PS (VC) if Turnover of PS (VC) = 0	10.706	10.706	6.710	6.710	

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of four dummy variables indicating head preference (columns (1) to (4)) and bribery in elections (column (5)). In the first four columns, we keep only those observations with non-missing birth year information for each head and exclude those observations in which the two heads' birth years are the same. "Former VC, now PS" ("Former PS, now VC") indicates whether the birth year of the former VC (PS) is the same as that of the current PS (VC) when there are two heads in the previous wave. "Fresh PS" ("Fresh VC") indicates whether the birth year of either former head is not the same as that of the current PS (VC). Bribery in elections indicates whether it is the type of corruption respondents believe rural grassroots cadres are most likely to engage in. Duration of PS (VC) refers to the length of time that the incumbent PS (VC) remains in his or her assigned position (this variable is censored at one year on the left side based on the survey question design). Turnover of PS (VC) refers to whether the birth year of PS (VC) in a previous wave is not identical to the birth year of the PS (VC) in the current wave (excluding observations with the same birth year for both the PS and VC in each wave). Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

As we show, villagers may find voting less attractive following the introduction of dual office-holding due to reduced gains from selling their votes, a lower anti-corruption

sentiment, or indifferent preferences over the candidates (on the final list). Another motivation to consider is democratic orientation. Shi (1999b) documents that holding democratic values is one reason why Chinese citizens would like to vote in elections for local unit leaders (including VCs), while Chen and Zhong (2002) argue that the relationship is subject to changes in the constraints imposed in these elections. We thus test whether villages where villagers hold, on average, higher democratic ideals differ in their turnout results. We first construct a related measure of democratic participation for each villager, indicative of support for democracy, using three questions inquiring about the respondent's: (i) household participation at the last assembly of villagers' representatives, (ii) active engagement in discussions on village public affairs, and (iii) attitudes toward major decisions made in the community and the handling of public affairs.[43] This measure takes the value of 1 if the respondent answers "yes" to the former two questions and does not answer "never paying attention" to the latter. We then calculate the village average. We do not observe that this measure is significantly correlated with turnout (the correlation for the 2017 wave is –0.044 with the p-value of 0.354). Meanwhile, it does not significantly moderate the effect of dual office-holding on turnout based on the first column in Table 6, which interacts village-level democratic participation. The results imply that democratic orientation may not be a motivation to vote for villagers and it is not driving the effect of dual office-holding on turnout.

5 Dual office-holding and political perceptions

5.1 Political perceptions results

We now turn our attention to how the change in the power structure affects villagers' political perceptions. We focus on individual responses to questions about perceptions of corruption among grassroots cadres and confidence in local government. As in the previous section, in Table 4, we present both the reduced-form and the second-stage results using the election timing IV, along with fixed effect estimates, for these two measures. Columns (1) and (4) indicate that conducting an election in 2018 or 2019 leads to villagers' positive evaluation of local governance. Associated IV estimates show that dual office-holding strongly and significantly reduces villagers' perception of corruption (column (2)) and increases their confidence in local government (column (5)). The economic magnitude of these estimates is substantial as they amount to approximately half of one unit for each variable. The village FE results in columns (3) and (6) go in the same direction, albeit smaller and less precise, as the IV results for corruption, but the results

[43]These three questions are available only in the 2017 wave. Questions (i) and (ii) are yes or no answers, and question (iii) gives response choices of "1 = never paying attention," "2 = only paying attention to those relevant to myself," and "3 = closely paying attention." Their average values are 36.4%, 38.6%, and 2.1, respectively.

are negligible and nonsignificant when looking at the confidence level. The positive (negative) selection bias in the FE regressions of corruption (confidence) can, for example, stem from a local government's aggressively implementing the policy, which can violate the Organic Law, and in turn negatively impact villagers' political perceptions.[44]

Table 4: The effect of dual office-holding on political perceptions

	Corruption			Confidence		
	Reduced-form	IV 2nd stage	FE	Reduced-form	IV 2nd stage	FE
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Panel A: All villages					
Dual office-holding		-0.832***	-0.096*		0.554**	-0.044
		(0.283)	(0.052)		(0.241)	(0.043)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	-0.164***			0.107***		
	(0.044)			(0.038)		
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat		19.994			19.754	
Observations	12,938	12,938	12,938	17,363	17,363	17,363
Mean dep var	1.987	1.987	1.987	3.938	3.938	3.938
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave					
Dual office-holding		-0.666***	-0.128*		0.422**	-0.005
		(0.230)	(0.069)		(0.190)	(0.053)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	-0.174***			0.111**		
	(0.052)			(0.044)		
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat		27.891			29.318	
Observations	8,973	8,973	8,973	12,093	12,093	12,093
Mean dep var	2.010	2.010	2.010	3.925	3.925	3.925

Notes: This table presents the results from reduced-form (columns (1) and (4)), second-stage IV (columns (2) and (5)), and village fixed effects (columns (3) and (6)) specifications. It reports coefficients from regressing political perceptions on elections being held in 2018 or 2019 in columns (1) and (4) or dual office-holding in all other columns. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Previously, when investigating the turnout drop, we provided evidence that dual office-holding reduced the perception of electoral corruption. Corruption can manifest itself in many other ways, as highlighted by the multiple types of behaviors that villagers can select from in the CRHPS (Figure A.8). For example, apart from acts related to abuse of power for personal gain, corruption can also take the form of officials falsifying records and acting irresponsibly at work. Since different types of corruption are likely to be highly correlated, it is important to check that the positive impact of dual office-holding does not

[44] DeLisle and Yang (2022) document, based on a news report and their on-site visits, that some local governments in Jiangxi Province directly appointed party secretaries as village chiefs (while assigning former elected chiefs to other positions).

solely stem from the reduction in electoral bribery. We account for the influence of bribery in elections by including it in the baseline regressions as a control. Results in Panel A of Table A.3 show that electoral corruption is positively associated with a perception of general corruption and negatively associated with confidence. However, its inclusion does not significantly change the IV estimates of the impact of dual office-holding on political perceptions.[45]

5.2 Political perceptions robustness

We start by checking whether the difference in sample sizes across the political perceptions measures affects our results. Regression results are derived from a smaller sample size for perceived corruption compared to confidence because of a higher proportion of "do not know" answers given by respondents when asked about perceived corruption.[46] We show, in columns (1) and (5) of Table A.4, that our baseline results are robust to imposing a constraint that each village-wave pair should have a minimum of ten observations.

Next, we carry out the same battery of robustness tests as in the turnout analysis and begin with determining whether the level of standard error clustering changes the significance of the political perceptions findings. Since specific terms of elections are independently initiated by each province, and county cadres are responsible for advancing the promotion of the one-head system in villages, we consider clusters at either the province or the county level instead of the village level used in the main regression. After taking into account the issue of a small number of clusters this creates at the province level and addressing the problem of weak instruments, we find that dual office-holding continues to have a significant positive impact on villagers' subjective evaluations even when we cluster at different region levels (columns (2), (3), (6), and (7)).

We then investigate whether an "unusual" gap (i.e., a gap shorter or longer than three years) between the two most recent election years may introduce a bias in our corruption or confidence findings, particularly if this gap is short. This situation may stem from a recall or resignation process followed by a by-election, which may be prompted by pressure from villagers unhappy with the leadership, and may downwardly (upwardly) biase our IV estimates of corruption (confidence). We re-estimate the regressions excluding observations with gaps between elections of one, two, or five years. We find that most of the results remain unchanged, except for the impact of dual office-holding on confidence

[45] Additionally, to address the possibility that villagers' views on electoral corruption mainly refer to the last election, we also flexibly include bribery in elections, that is, include its interaction with each dummy for election years. The resulting coefficients, presented in Panel B of Table A.3 still have the expected signs and remain large and significant.

[46] In the third stage of sampling, the CRHPS surveyed a fixed number of households (i.e., 20) in each sample village. Consequently, each village is supposed to have an adequate number of observations to represent the average perceptions of the village. However, due to the presence of a "do not know" option, some village-wave pairs have relatively few observations, particularly for perceived corruption.

that is still relatively positive and large but no longer statistically significant for villages previously under a two-head system (columns (4) and (8)).

We then turn to a potentially confounding effect from the 2019 tenure change to five years. A shorter term is beneficial for ensuring accountability among office-holders, particularly when the administrative cost of elections is low. However, due to time constraints, it can also pose challenges when it comes to effectively implementing policies (see Gersbach et al. (2021) for a review of optimal tenure length). Therefore, the potential bias is ambiguous. We alleviate this concern by first showing in Table A.5 that village cadres' willingness to stay longer in their positions is not influenced by dual office-holding. We then drop the few villages with elections in 2019 and show that the results do not change in significance or magnitude compared with the baseline (columns (3) and (4)).

In another robustness exercise we consider whether our results are driven by villagers' general subjective perceptions toward life somehow positively correlating with the change in political structure, but not specifically because political perceptions improve (Guriev et al., 2021). We test this by using villagers' self-reported overall happiness levels as the outcome in our IV estimation of the impact of dual office-holding on villagers' outcomes. The results reported in the final column of Table A.4 indicate that there is no statistically significant improvement in average happiness in one-head villages, despite the large positive effects found on perceived corruption and confidence in local politicians. This indicates that our findings are not just driven by a (potentially spurious) change in general attitudes coinciding with the policy introduction.

A final concern for our findings is that they could merely capture a "honeymoon effect," that is, a (short) period of goodwill and popularity for the newly elected leader and/or the one-head system just introduced. As time passes, villagers' doubts and complaints about these elected officials and dual office-holding may mount as they become increasingly aware of issues associated with how well these grassroots cadres or the system perform. We investigate this possibility by constructing a variable indicating the number of years since the last election, calculated as the difference between the wave and the year of election. We include this variable into the baseline regressions and present results in Table A.6. The first-stage F-statistics drop substiantially, especially for villages with two heads before, due to that the time length measure highly correlates with our IV (with the correlation being around –0.336) and thus, it decreases the precision of electing in 2018 or 2019 in predicting dual office-holding (see Panel B). However, there is still a significant effect of dual office-holding on perceived corruption, regardless of whether we consider robust weak IV inferences.[47] Therefore, we conclude that a honeymoon effect is not driving our results, and the changes of estimates in this table are primarily due to collinearity between our IV and the constructed measure in limited waves.

[47]In an untabulated practice, we also drop sample villages with a maximum time length of three years in either wave (41.5%) and find qualitatively the same results.

5.2.1 Potential (changes) in reporting biases

The survey elicitation of political perceptions we use may suffer from reporting biases, especially when doubts exist regarding villagers' openly expressing liberal views. In our context, this is especially worrying as the change in power structure could impact villagers' truthful reporting by increasing the fear of social stigma or retaliation. This is a concern despite the fact the two measures of political perceptions we employ, corruption and confidence, do not touch upon sensitive topics, such as views on the CCP and the central government (Cantoni et al., 2017). Additionally, these survey questions prioritize governance effectiveness instead of specifically addressing attitudes toward the power structure, and thus they do not overly require adherence to political correctness. Still we empirically investigate whether we can reject the possibility that bias in reporting drives our findings.

First, the design of the survey questions is advantageous. It uses a Likert-scale response format that facilitates nuanced responses, with observations distributed across all available options. As reported in Figure A.2, around 30% of respondents rate the corruption level as "moderately severe" or "very severe." A similar portion also rate the confidence in the local government as "moderately confident" or lower. Most importantly, these survey questions also include a "do not know" option. Of all respondents, 29.7% and 7.4% choose this option for the corruption and confidence questions, respectively. This may indicate either a lack of familiarity with or political interest in local governance or a deliberate attempt to conceal their true perceptions. The relative size of these percentages suggests that refraining from giving a definitive response is not uncommon among villagers when expressing their views on village cadres, especially about corruption practices. To show how the village average probability of answering "do not know" correlates to villagers' political perceptions, we present the results from a simple FE regression in Table A.7. The first column reveals a positive association between perceived corruption and "do not know" probability, suggesting that this answer choice can provide informative insights into the actual perceived corruption level. The question design allows those who might feel stigmatized or afraid to select a harmless option. We then use our IV approach to produce estimates of the impact of dual office-holding on the frequency of "do not know" answers. The results in the last two columns of Table A.7 are precisely estimated zero effects, especially for "do not know" about corruption, suggesting that the change in power structure does not lead to more or fewer individuals expressing political opinions when surveyed.

Second, we explore individual heterogeneity in reporting patterns depending on villagers' risk and trust preferences. We expect that those with higher risk tolerance and a higher level of general trust might be more inclined to express their true opinions (Cantoni et al., 2017). We construct two variables indicating villagers' preferences to-

ward risky investment and their trust in strangers based on the median responses to the corresponding questions.[48] In Table B.1 we introduce an interaction term between risk tolerance (trust in strangers) and dual office-holding to show that those with higher levels of both preference traits are less likely to select "do not know" answers but that there are no moderating effects for these traits under a changed power structure. In Table A.8 we check whether risk and trust level affects our political perceptions findings. Although we observe that villagers' personality traits can affect their views on corruption and confidence, this effect does not vary with the introduction of the one-head system.

Third, we examine the degree of social stigmatization or fearfulness by exploiting the presence or lack of presence of other individuals during the main respondent's interview. In the 2017 wave, the survey provides information regarding the identity of the other present individuals, specifically, whether they are village cadres, parents, spouses, children, or relatives.[49] We construct two dummies based on the presence of village cadres and others, with average ratios of 2.4% and 18.9% respectively. Table A.9 (columns (1) and (2)) shows that dual office-holding is not correlated to the probability of cadres being present on site and slightly negatively related with others being present. Regression results with village fixed effects of political perceptions and giving "do not know" answers on the two presence measures and their interaction terms with dual office-holding are given in columns (3) to (6) of Table A.9 and columns (1) to (4) of Table B.2. Accordingly, the presence of cadres makes respondents more likely to express clear attitudes (about their confidence level in local government), and conditional on that, they are more likely to express positive attitudes, implying the potential existence of pressure. However, we find that dual office-holding only increases (rather than decreases) perceived corruption with cadres present. We observe no significant divergence in reporting patterns by villagers living under different power structures. The final analysis we conduct tests whether this particular type of information moderates our IV estimates, assuming that those with a higher probability of others' presence in the 2017 wave experience a similar scenario in the 2019 wave. The results reported in the final two columns of Table A.9 and Table B.2 show that the presence of other individuals, who could increase reporting bias via social pressure, does not significantly moderate any of our results.

Fourth, an alternative source of reporting bias may emerge from politically connected respondents who may intentionally manipulate their expressed perceptions to align with the new power structure, thereby contaminating the effectiveness of the political perceptions questions. To mitigate this issue, we consider the party affiliation of respondents

[48] The question on risk tolerance was administered to all respondents in the 2019 wave (and in the 2015 wave), while it was only directed at new respondents in the 2017 wave. Hence, we substitute the missing data in the 2017 wave with information from the 2015 wave. The question regarding trust in strangers is exclusively available in the 2017 wave, and consequently, we utilize it solely for panel households.

[49] Village cadres may be on site to facilitate the household interview when the respondents have doubts about the interviewers, but it is also possible that cadres decide on their own to be present.

and their family members, as well as whether they or family members are village cadres. On average, 9.2% of sample villagers are affiliated with the Communist Party,[50] 17.8% of sample households have at least one party member, and 7.1% have cadres in the household. We report analyses of their moderating role in Table B.3 and Table A.10, where we find that politically connected respondents tend to provide clear and also more positive responses concerning local governance. Although we do find some evidence that politically connected respondents reply differently in a one-head system regarding grassroots corruption (but not confidence in an upper-level government), this difference does not translate into upwardly biased evaluations. Most importantly, political connection appears to weaken the impact of dual office-holding, although the majority of the moderating estimates are not statistically significant. This may imply that these politically connected respondents hold more liberal views than the general public (Ji and Jiang, 2020), consistent with the moderating role of higher democratic values that we find.

Finally, we validate the two measures of political perceptions by demonstrating their correlation with economic outcomes. Table A.11 reveals that favorable evaluations (perceptions of lower corruption and higher confidence) are positively correlated with personal experiences with popular economic policies, including receiving agricultural and other government subsidies and being registered as a poor household, which gives access to a range of support from the central government.[51] Conversely, favorable evaluations are negatively correlated with personal experiences linked to unpopular economic policies such as having experienced land expropriation within the last two decades, which is typically accompanied by inadequate compensation for permanent land loss (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022).

Taken together, this evidence indicates that villagers express a reasonable reflection of their true opinions pre- and post-policy, and that changes in reporting bias are not what drive the improvement in political perceptions following the introduction of dual office-holding in their village.

[50] As of the end of 2019, the number of party members in China reached 91.9 million, accounting for 6.5% of the total population. The higher ratio of party members in our sample can be attributed to the fact that household heads are more likely to have party membership and more likely to be the primary respondents.

[51] With the implementation of anti-poverty programs since 2013, nationally, those registered as poor households were typically assigned dedicated officials tasked with poverty alleviation (80% of them), and provided with direct cash subsidies (19%), daily necessities like household appliances and food (18%), reimbursement for medical costs (35%), waived education fees (17%), subsidies for dangerous housing renovation (24%), and so on.

5.3 Political perceptions mechanisms

5.3.1 Organizational effectiveness

One of the main reasons villagers positively evaluate dual office-holding may be because they perceive that a one-head structure more clearly delineates responsibilities, reduces confusion, conflicts, and thus coordination costs, which in turn facilitates more efficient implementation of central policies aimed at revitalizing rural areas (Oi and Rozelle, 2000; O'Brien and Han, 2009; Tan, 2010; DeLisle and Yang, 2022). We therefore carefully investigate organizational effectiveness as a potentially important channel to explain the improvement in political perceptions following the recentralization of power in Chinese villages.

A political system with ambiguous power and divided governance can make it difficult to assign blame or rewards or to hold all accountable (Lim and Snyder Jr, 2021; Martinez-Bravo and Sanz, 2022). Dual office-holding clarifies the responsible entity and also enables villagers, to some extent, to remove an incompetent PS through elections. We thus consider both the extensive and intensive margins of turnover of elected officials to indicate improved accountability (Ferraz and Finan, 2011). As in previous analyses, we utilize the information on birth years to identify the turnover of both positions. When estimating how dual office-holding adoption changes the probability of having a new PS and VC in place, most of the first four IV estimates in Figure 3 point to an increase of turnover. Moreover, Figure 3 shows that dual office-holding appears to reduce the mean duration of the PS and VC in their position at the time of the survey,[52] further suggesting that the policy increased the accountability of elected officials.

Enhanced responsibility may also lead village cadres to be more conscientious in their political duties (Krause et al., 2014). We test this prediction by examining whether village cadres engage in secondary employment, in addition to their function as PS or VC. Estimates on "Other jobs" in Figure 3 indicate that dual office-holding does decrease the likelihood of officials taking on a second job, potentially leading to increased dedication to the management of village affairs.

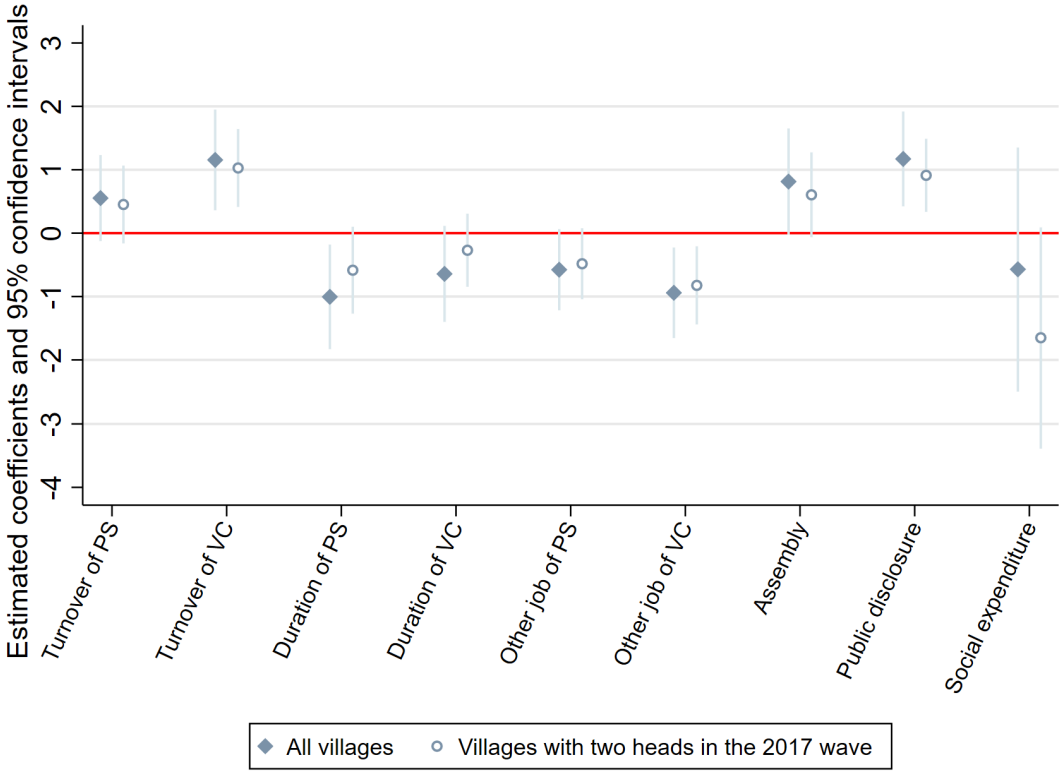
Finally, we consider several policy decisions recorded in the CRHPS survey where village cadres can exert an influence that could indicate improved accountability and management. First, we consider whether dual office-holding changes the frequency of the villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives,[53] which are open for all villagers or villagers' representatives to discuss and decide important village matters[54]

[52]This duration measure is more accurate for the position of PS since the associated question only asks about the PS when the village undertakes a one-head system. Consequently, the estimated coefficients for the VC are likely to be upper bounds, reflecting the more common scenario observed above: the former PS being elected as the current VC.

[53]We exclude observations at the 1.5% tail on the right side (30 or above) to limit the influence of outliers.

[54]For example, the utilization of earnings from the village collective economy, the disposal of village

Figure 3: The effect of dual office-holding on organizational effectiveness



Notes: This figure displays the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the second-stage IV regressions of each variable displayed on the horizontal axis on dual office-holding. Turnover of PS (VC) refers to whether the birth year of PS (VC) in a previous wave is not identical to the birth year of PS (VC) in the current wave (excluding observations with the same birth year for both the PS and VC in each wave). Duration of PS (VC) refers to the length of time (in ten years) that the incumbent PS (VC) remains in his or her assigned position (this variable is censored at one year on the left side based on the survey question design). Other job of PS (VC) refers to whether the PS (VC) has another job. Assembly refers to the frequency (in ten times) of the villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives held last year. Public disclosure refers to villagers' satisfaction with public disclosure measured by the mean value of responses to four questions regarding village public affairs, financial income and expenditure, economic development, and economic burden on farmers with an scale of 1–5 ranging from "not satisfied at all" to "very satisfied." Social expenditure is a binary variable taking the value of one if the household provided cash or noncash of more than 100 yuan to nonrelatives and organizations in the last year (with the estimated coefficients rescaled by multiplying 10).

(Meng and Zhang, 2011), and do find evidence that more assemblies are held in the one-head system. Furthermore, the policy seems to enhance perceived public transparency, measured as the average satisfaction level of villagers regarding the disclosure of village public affairs, financial income and expenditure, economic development, and economic burden on farmers. Last, we use household social expenditure, referring to transfers made to nonrelatives and organizations, to indicate potential changes in rent extraction by village cadres. We find that dual office-holding reduces the occurrence of household social expenditure for villages that had two heads before, which is consistent with the hypothesis of extraction problems being worse in cases of uncoordinated rent-seeking with

collective property, plans for land contract management, homesteads usage, as well as the allocation of compensation for land expropriation.

multiple officials (Shleifer and Vishny, 1993; Fan et al., 2009).

Heterogeneity in perception responses—The effectiveness of institutional arrangements may vary depending on the context. We therefore investigate potential differences in villagers' political perceptions responses to dual office-holding depending on the baseline self-governance and vertical control level across villages (Wright, 2008; Jia et al., 2021; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022). One could expect that the introduction of a one-head system is perceived as more organizationally efficient in areas where elections have been poorly implemented and where government capacity is higher.

During recent years, there have been mounting concerns about violence, corruption, and elite capture in village elections within rural China (DeLisle and Yang, 2022). We gauge the quality of election implementation by utilizing villagers' assessments of the recent election process in their village, rated on a 1–5 scale during the 2017 wave, where higher ratings indicate greater satisfaction. We include the interaction term of this measure and dual office-holding into the regressions and report the results in Table 5 (columns (1) and (5)). These clearly point to stronger positive effect of dual office-holding on the political perceptions for individuals who were previously less satisfied with the functioning of the election process in their villages.

To measure government capacity, we use three different indicators. The first is the dependency ratio, defined as the proportion of transfer income to disposable income for rural individuals within a specific province; we obtain this from the annual "China Statistical Yearbook."[55] It reflects the relative strength in economic resources between the villagers and the upper-level government. The second measure relates to the average effort of governments in combating corruption, calculated by dividing the number of corrupt officials in the cases investigated by the procuratorate in each province with the number of government employees in the same province over the 2013 to 2017 period.[56] We collected this information manually from the provincial procuratorates' annual reports and the annual China Statistical Yearbook, respectively. The third measure is a general measure of good local governance available in the 2016 wave of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS). It is constructed using five questions asked to rural respondents about their experiences when interacting with their local governments.[57] We present

[55]See https://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/yearbook.

[56]We start in 2013 because that was the year that President Xi launched a national anti-corruption initiative, and the end year is the final year for which investigated corruption cases are available in the provincial procuratorates' annual reports. After 2017, the responsibility for investigating corrupt cases was transferred to the State Committee of Supervisory.

[57]The CFPS is another nationally representative survey conducted by the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University (Xie and Hu, 2014). The five questions we consider involve respondents rating the work performance of the county/district government in the last year on a 1–5 scale, and whether they have experienced "unjust treatment by government officials," "conflicts with government officials," "unreasonable delays and stalling when going to government offices for business," and "unreasonable charging when going to government offices for business." We reverse-code and average the responses to the latter four negative questions and combine it with the response to the former positive question to conduct the principal component analysis; we subsequently use the first component extracted.

Table 5: The effect of dual office-holding on political perceptions: Heterogeneity

	Corruption				Confidence			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage							
Dual office-holding	-3.829***	3.117	1.746	-1.191**	2.998***	-2.395*	-1.803**	0.554*
	(1.200)	(1.968)	(1.289)	(0.566)	(1.352)	(1.352)	(0.861)	(0.298)
Dual office-holding ×	0.938***				-0.737***			
Satisfaction with	(0.305)				(0.254)			
recent election process								
Satisfaction with	-0.620***				0.525***			
recent election process	(0.095)				(0.079)			
Dual office-holding ×		-23.901				17.538*		
Dependency ratio		(14.581)				(10.052)		
Dependency ratio		3.785				-0.423		
		(5.433)				(3.230)		
Dual office-holding ×			-0.754*				0.694**	
Anti-corruption effort			(0.409)				(0.281)	
Dual office-holding ×				-4.448**				-0.427
Positive experience with				(2.029)				(2.135)
the local gov (CFPS)								
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,259	12,938	12,938	12,705	13,493	17,363	17,363	17,034
Mean dep var	2.026	1.987	1.987	1.979	3.914	3.938	3.938	3.943
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage							
Dual office-holding	-2.562***	1.179	0.194	-0.754***	1.919***	-1.116*	-0.350	0.457**
	(0.719)	(0.881)	(0.507)	(0.262)	(0.552)	(0.663)	(0.324)	(0.211)
Dual office-holding ×	0.577***				-0.429***			
Satisfaction with	(0.160)				(0.124)			
recent election process								
Satisfaction with	-0.372***				0.318***			
recent election process	(0.015)				(0.015)			
Dual office-holding ×		-11.759				9.634*		
Dependency ratio		(7.176)				(5.344)		
Dependency ratio		1.977				0.610		
		(4.656)				(2.668)		
Dual office-holding ×			-0.253				0.231**	
Anti-corruption effort			(0.165)				(0.114)	
Dual office-holding ×				-1.415***				0.974*
Positive experience with				(0.536)				(0.517)
the local gov (CFPS)								
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,307	8,973	8,973	8,763	9,686	12,093	12,093	11,803
Mean dep var	2.046	2.010	2.010	2.002	3.911	3.925	3.925	3.932

Notes: This table presents heterogeneous effects of dual office-holding on political perceptions. Satisfaction level with the recent election process for villagers is measured with a 1–5 scale ranging from "not satisfied at all" to "very satisfied." Dependency ratio refers to the proportion of transfer income to disposable income for rural individuals in a given province, obtained from the annual China Statistical Yearbook. Anti-corruption effort refers to the five-year (2013–2017) average of corrupt officials divided by the number of government employees, obtained from provincial procuratorates' annual reports and the annual China Statistical Yearbook. Positive experience with local government in a given province (not available for Inner Mongolia) is measured by averaging the responses of rural respondents from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) to five questions pertaining to their positive or negative (the answers are inversely coded) encounters with the local government. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

estimates from interacting dual office-holding introduction and these three measures of government capacity in the remaining columns of Table 5. Whichever measure is used, a clear pattern emerges: respondents report more positive political perceptions in villages with, on average, higher government capacity. All this evidence strongly suggests that the centralization of power in rural China was (more) positively perceived by villagers who were unhappy with the election process and where local government capacity was stronger.

5.3.2 Democratic ideals

Some villagers may be more or less attached to "democratic ideals" (Chen and Zhong, 2002) and the positive response to the introduction of the one-head system could be driven by those who are less concerned with the democratic process. We use the binary measure of democratic participation created in Section 4.3, which classified 19.4% of respondents as "politically active," to test this hypothesis. The results for corruption and confidence are reported in the last two columns of Table 6. These point to the moderating role of democratic participation in villagers' responses to dual office-holding introduction. Villagers who are more involved in the democratic process are much less likely to express improved political perceptions under a one-head system. This suggests that these villagers may harbor reservations toward the new power structure and that the acceptance of recentralization may be highly dependent on how attached to democracy are those experiencing it.

5.3.3 Meritocratic selection

The implementation of dual office-holding essentially entails two rounds of selection processes, one round by the upper-level government and one round by villagers. While these two sides may have some different considerations when selecting a candidate — the government may prioritize candidates with a positive track record and good interactions with it[58] — and villagers may prioritize someone who can strengthen their bargaining power — their interests still overlap in many areas. Further, each side brings its own advantages to the selection process. Villagers are more knowledgeable about competent local candidates and upper-level government can help in excluding individuals with a history of violence and corruption. Consequently, these two rounds of selection have the potential to identify candidates who are both competent and of good character, potentially explaining why political perceptions improve after the introduction of dual office-holding.

[58] In various official documents over the years, the central government has already identified several specific categories of individuals that they encourage to be selected for grassroots rural governance. These include women, rural experts in wealth creation, veterans, farmers returning from working and doing business outside their hometowns, college and university graduates, cadres and employees from county and township government offices, as well as state-owned enterprises and institutions, who are granted early leave or retirement.

Table 6: The moderating role of democratic participation

	Turnout (1)	**Corruption** (2)	**Confidence** (3)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage		
Dual office-holding	-0.177	-0.698***	0.440**
	(0.116)	(0.256)	(0.220)
Dual office-holding × Democratic participation (village avg.)	-0.232		
	(0.908)		
Dual office-holding × Democratic participation		0.450	-0.652
		(0.494)	(0.493)
Democratic participation		-0.436***	0.481***
		(0.164)	(0.157)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	906	10,653	14,072
Mean dep var	0.899	2.045	3.895
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage		
Dual office-holding	-0.230**	-0.671***	0.400**
	(0.094)	(0.249)	(0.196)
Dual office-holding × Democratic participation (village avg.)	-0.108		
	(0.620)		
Dual office-holding × Democratic participation		0.457*	-0.495*
		(0.250)	(0.261)
Democratic participation		-0.321***	0.280***
		(0.040)	(0.035)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	630	7,535	10,010
Mean dep var	0.902	2.061	3.897

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of turnout (column (1)) and political perceptions (columns (2) and (3)) on dual office-holding and its interaction with democratic participation level. Democratic participation, constructed using information from the 2017 wave, refers to whether the respondent is a political activist, and takes the value of 1 if they (or members of their families) attended the last villagers' assembly or the assembly of villagers' representatives, actively participate in discussions on village public affairs, and are concerned about significant decisions made in the village and the handling of public affairs. Democratic participation (village avg.) is the village average of individual democratic participation level. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

To explore this possibility, we examine the attributes of both the PS and VC. Specifically, we look at their gender, age, education level, whether their household is registered in the village (*hukou*), whether they live in the village, and their previous occupation (including other community staff, self-employed, business owner, civil servant, soldier, employee of enterprises and institutions, or farmer). We plot the IV estimates in Figure A.9, which suggest that the policy had little to no significant effect on meritocratic selection. While PSes are somewhat younger and VCs slightly are more likely to be registered in the village and to be business owners, we importantly do not find evidence

that more-educated individuals are selected for concurrent positions. We therefore reject meritocratic selection on candidates' valence as a driver of villagers' improved political perceptions following the introduction of dual office-holding.

5.3.4 Better village cadre pay

Lack of income is a major cause of corruption (Zheng and Xiao, 2020). Income of village cadres, which can vary across different places, primarily stems from local governments and also from village collective funding. One of the main stated reasons for local governments to adopt dual office-holding was to reduce costs by minimizing the number of administrative personnel (O'Brien and Han, 2009). Consequently, the saved funds could potentially be utilized to raise the average wage of village cadres, which could in turn lead to increased work dedication as well as reduction in corruption.

We check whether the implementation of dual office-holding resulted in an increase in the monthly salaries of village cadres. Results reported in Figure A.9 show that there was no significant increase in the average wage of either the PS or VC after a village adopted a one-head system. Additionally, we examine the subjective appraisal of the village cadre respondents (not necessarily the PS) regarding their pay satisfaction considering their abilities and work situation. The mean value of this measure is below "moderately reasonable" which indicates that village cadres would expect higher salaries. The estimated coefficients of dual office-holding are positive but not statistically significant. Overall, we thus conclude that the income increase of village cadres is not a mechanism that can explain the changes in political perceptions.

6 Placebo test using urban communities

The 19th National Congress of the CCP highlighted the importance of enhancing grassroots organizational development not only in rural areas but also in urban communities, enterprises, schools, research institutions, and social organizations (Guo, 2020). The Central Committee of the Party issued the Regulations on the Work of the Branches of the Chinese Communist Party (for Trial Implementation), effective on October 28, 2018. According to it, village and community party secretaries who meet the necessary criteria can assume the positions of village committee chiefs and residential committee chiefs through legal procedures. We collect data on the average dual office-holding ratio for residential committees from the annual China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook and the CRHPS. Figure B.1 demonstrates an increase in the dual office-holding ratio of urban communities for provinces with a relatively low baseline level since 2018.

Next, we utilize urban communities as a placebo test for which the primary information is also available in the CRHPS. We anticipate a null effect of dual office-holding

on urban communities given the observed rural-urban divergence in political engagement (Tzeng, 2020), in which villagers demonstrate political enthusiasm while urban residents often display apathy toward grassroots elections.[59] A main difference arises from the stakes involved in election decisions. Village committees have significant relevance in determining the use of collective assets like land, managing collective economies, and overall village development, for which villagers largely rely upon. Residential committees primarily handle routine tasks without large distributive interests (Benewick et al., 2004). Meanwhile, some scholars perceive residential committees as de facto extensions of the administrative apparatus of higher-level governments, which are responsible for providing economic resources (funding, office, and salary) and offering business guidance (Read, 2000). The local party branch of each urban community retains the ultimate decision-making authority in any event. While upper-level governments may also provide guidelines to village committees and they pay village cadres' salaries, the Organic Law emphasizes that they cannot interfere in matters that pertain to villagers' self-governance. Mechanically, elections are also made more competitive according to the stipulations in the Organic Law, as compared to those set forth in the Organic Law of the Urban Residents' Committees. For example, there are no strict requirements for direct elections or multiple candidates within a position in the latter law. Therefore, urban communities face fewer governance dilemmas and election issues with the presence of two grassroots organizations, and their adoption of a one-head system is considerably easier.

We follow the IV approach used for villages. To provide an initial insight into the intensity of our IV on dual office-holding, we present the first-stage results using the primary two waves in the first column of Table A.12. We observe that holding an election in 2018 or 2019 significantly increases the probability of dual office-holding by 17.3% for all the urban communities and by 34.2% for those communities with two heads before. Subsequently, we report the results from the second-stage regressions in the remaining columns, focusing on turnout and residents' confidence level in local government using different waves. Note we cannot analyze the corruption measure here as it is only included in the rural module. Since the first-stage F-statistic for the whole urban sample using two waves is borderline weak (below the threshold of 15.1 with the worst-case bias being 20%), we also present Anderson-Rubin test statistics. Overall, the results indicate, as expected, that dual office-holding has no effect on the outcome variables.

The lack of effects found in urban communities alleviates several concerns for our village-level results related to special survey question designs, reporting biases, sampling

[59]There appears to be a paradox of political apathy and high turnout, as seen from the descriptive statistics in the second and third columns of Table A.12, in urban communities. It can be explained by the specific form that urban elections take. Village committee elections employ a direct approach where all eligible adults have the right to vote. By contrast, residential committee elections, in essence, adopt a (quasi) indirect approach, with households or representatives from urban residents' groups instead of individuals forming voting units (Xiong, 2008).

problems, and unobserved policies that may influence general turnout or subjective appraisal in local governance regardless of community types.

7 Conclusion

Leveraging a national representative village dataset and an IV approach, we provide causal evidence on the short-run impact of a recentralization policy in China, specifically, a policy that promotes a single individual simultaneously holding the positions of village party secretary and village chief, on voting behavior and political perceptions among villagers. Our findings indicate that the implementation of dual office-holding leads to a decrease in voter turnout due to reduced electoral competition. But, this consolidation of roles improves villagers' perceptions of corruption and confidence in the government, which we attribute to the relief of frictions under the dual power structure.

That the reversal of the democratic process through party influence under institutional constraints does not incur costs in perceptions leads us to further consider the dynamics surrounding the strategic adoption of democratic institutions in autocracies, which actually benefits the resilience of the regimes rather than accelerates their vulnerability. During this process, it is crucial to pay closer attention to the specific contexts in which these institutions are situated as it deepens our understanding of the dynamics at play and their implications for future democratic processes.

More research is needed regarding how the recentralization process plays out in the long run, especially with respect to economic development. Recentralization might facilitate better execution of central policies and allocation of government resources to combat social inequality, as a cure for the increasingly weak state of rural areas. Additionally, while we find no effects for urban communities, it remains an open question as to how this party intervention along with other policies, such as general party building (Chen et al., 2023), impacts the management of freer market entities including non-state owned enterprises.

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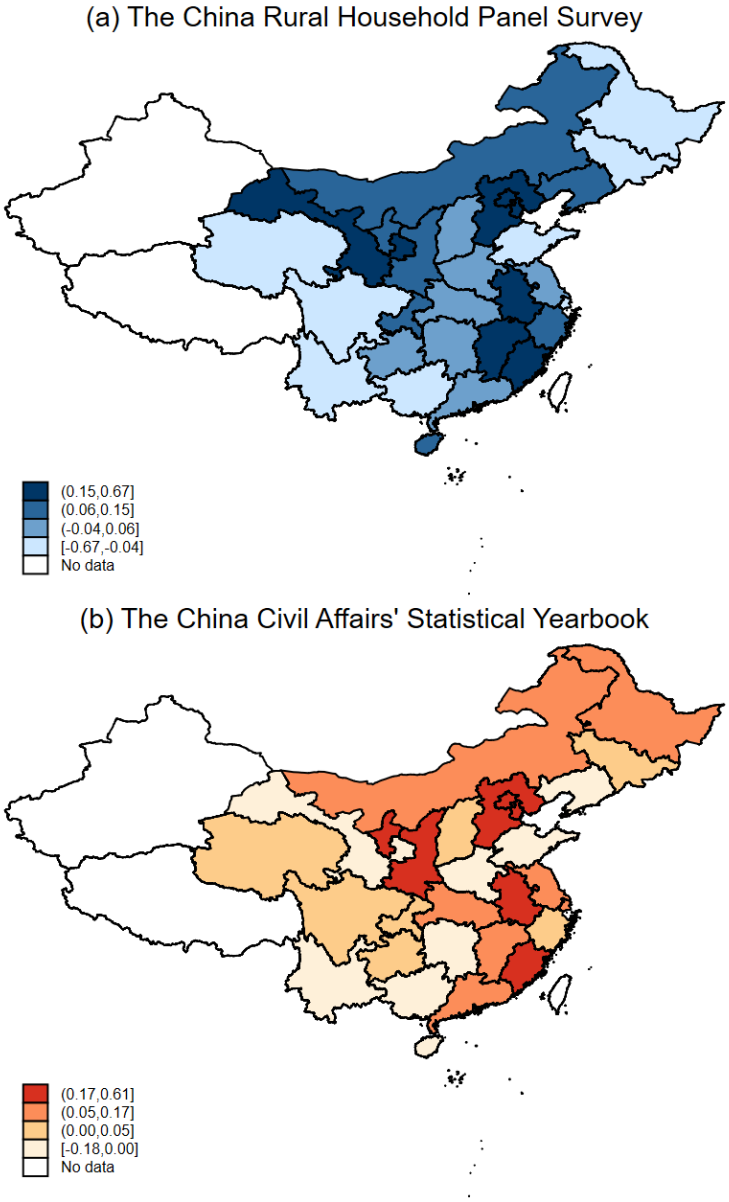
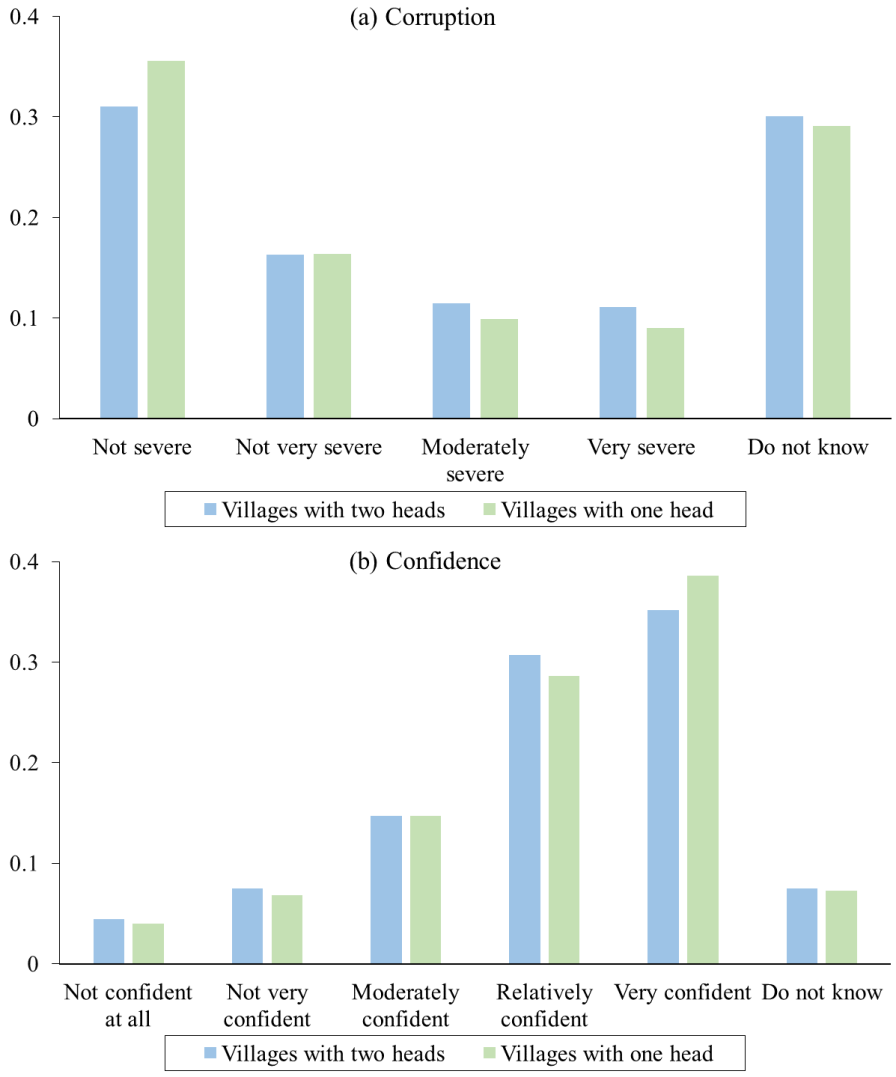
Online Appendix A

Figure A.1: Change of the provincial dual office-holding ratio between 2017 and 2019



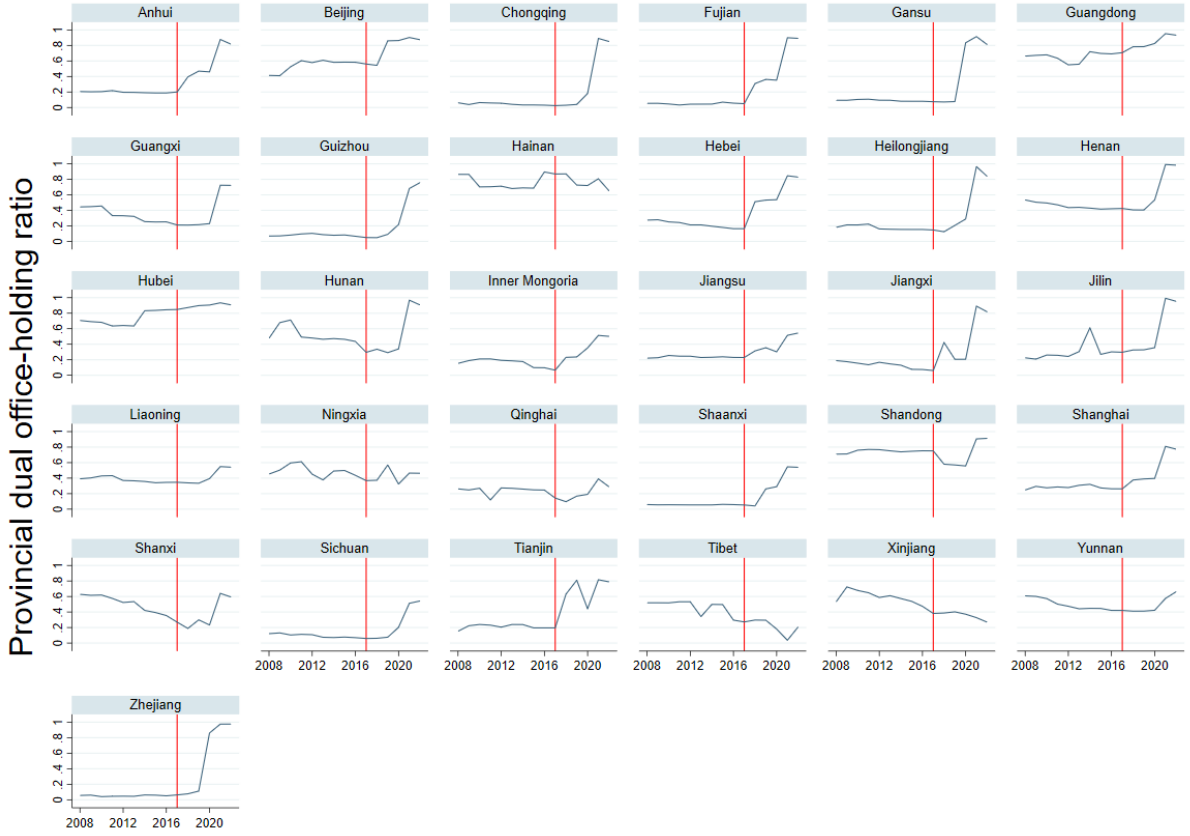
Notes: This figure displays the change of the average dual office-holding ratio between 2017 and 2019 for each sample province. The graph in Panel (a) is drawn using sample villages from the CRHPS. The graph in Panel (b) is drawn using data at the province level from the annual China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook.

Figure A.2: Distribution of individual responses of the political perceptions questions



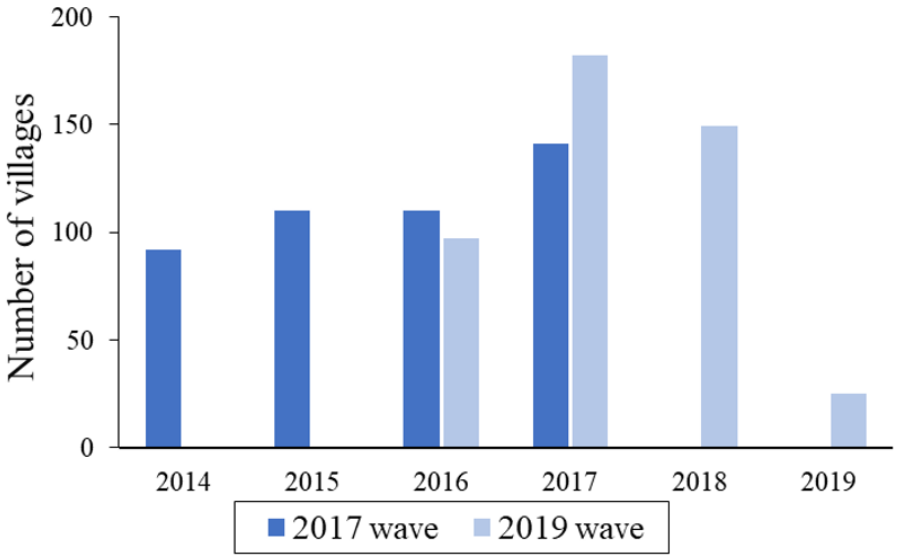
Notes: This figure displays the distribution of individual responses to the corruption (Panel (a)) and confidence (Panel (b)) questions. The original question for corruption is: "Do you think corruption among grassroots cadres in rural areas is severe currently?" The original question for confidence is: "Overall, do you have confidence in the local government?"

Figure A.3: Dual office-holding ratio over time by province



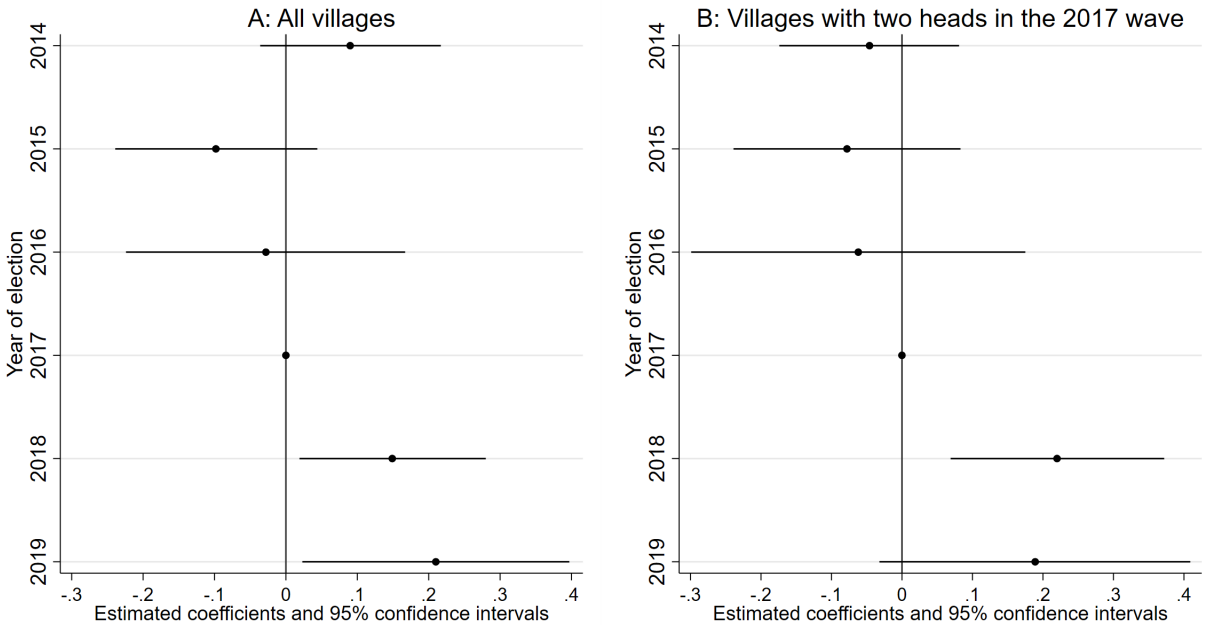
Notes: This figure displays the provincial dual office-holding ratio from 2008 to 2022. Provincial dual office-holding ratio is the percentage of villages within a province in which the same person is simultaneously the PS and the VC, collected from the annual China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook.

Figure A.4: Distribution of last election year in each wave

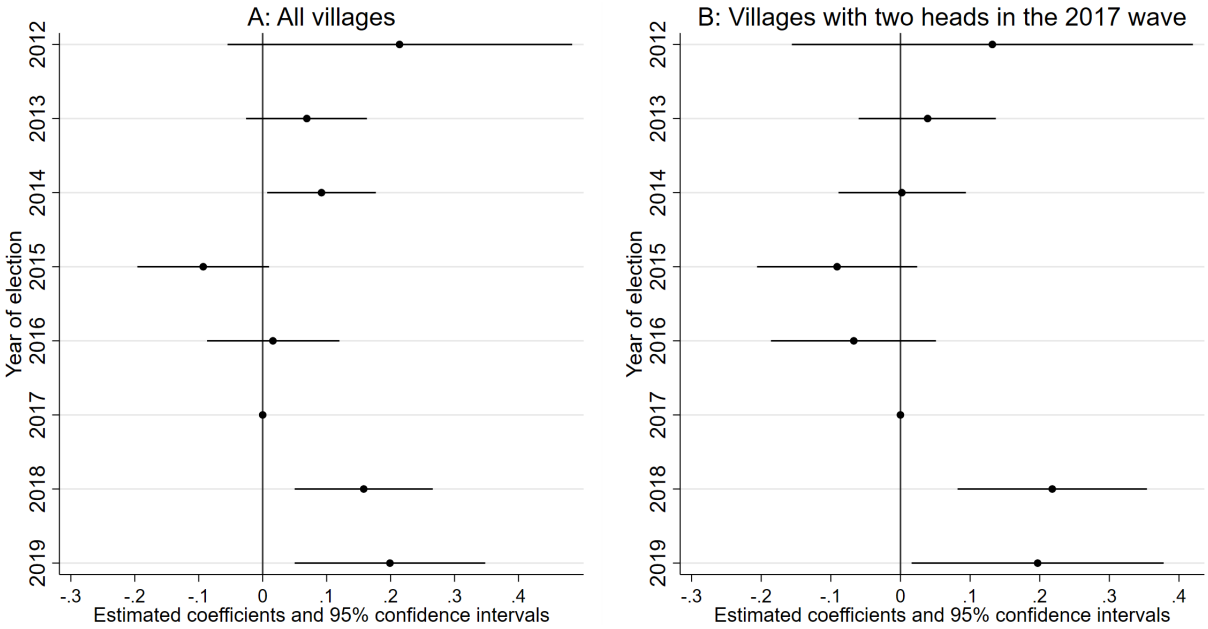


Notes: This figure displays the distribution of the last election year in each wave for the 453 rural villages in the sample.

Figure A.5: Coefficients and confidence intervals from the first-stage IV regressions



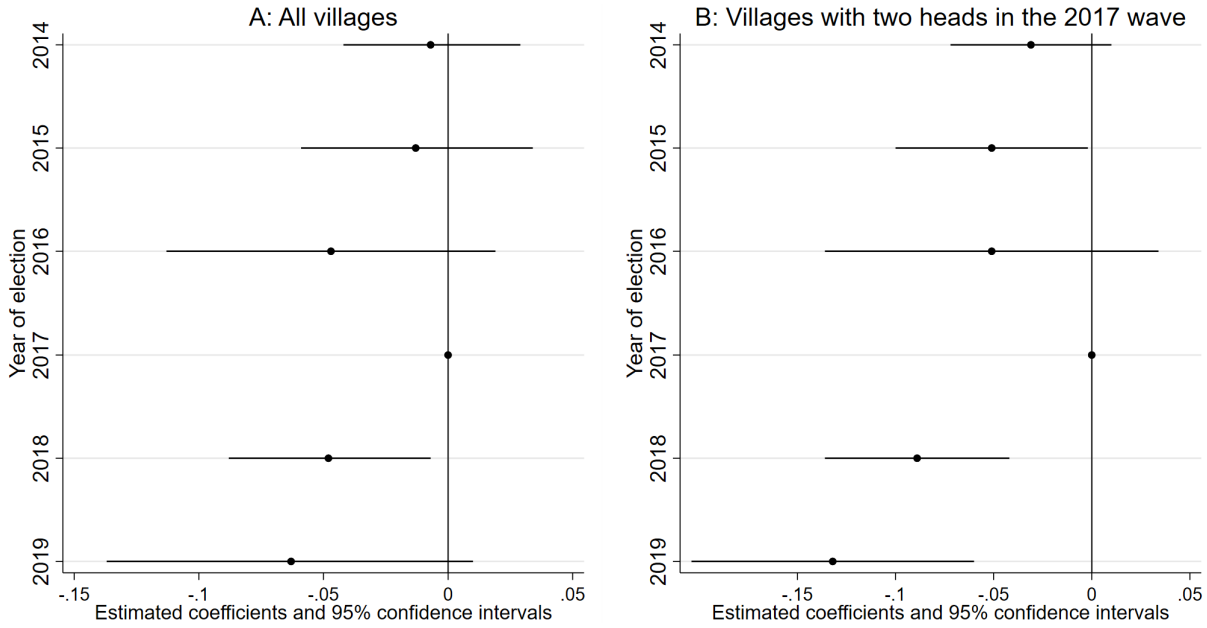
(a) Using the 2017 and 2019 waves



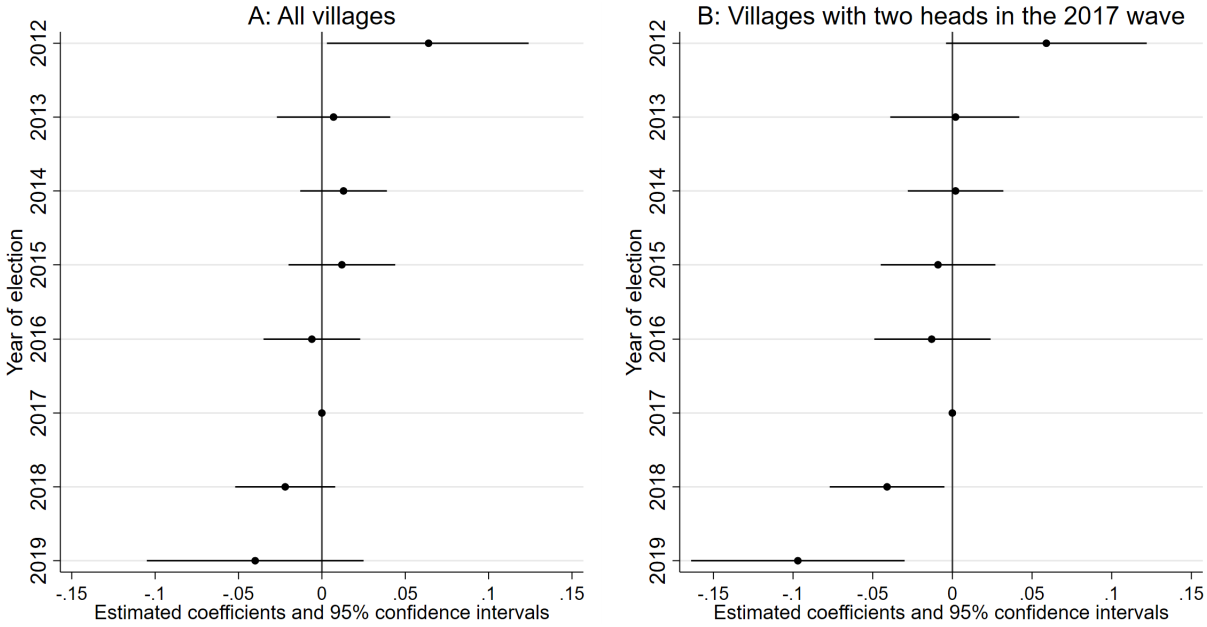
(b) Using the 2015, 2017, and 2019 waves

Notes: This figure displays the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the first-stage IV regressions using the 2017 and 2019 waves (Panel (a)) and using the 2015, 2017, and 2019 waves (Panel (b)). The left graphs include all the sample villages, while the right graphs include sample villages with two heads in the 2017 wave. The dependent variable is dual office-holding status; the independent variables are indicator variables for each year of election displayed in the horizontal axis with the baseline year being 2017. All regressions control for village and wave fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the village level.

Figure A.6: Coefficients and confidence intervals from testing potential pre-trends of turnout



(a) Using the 2017 and 2019 waves



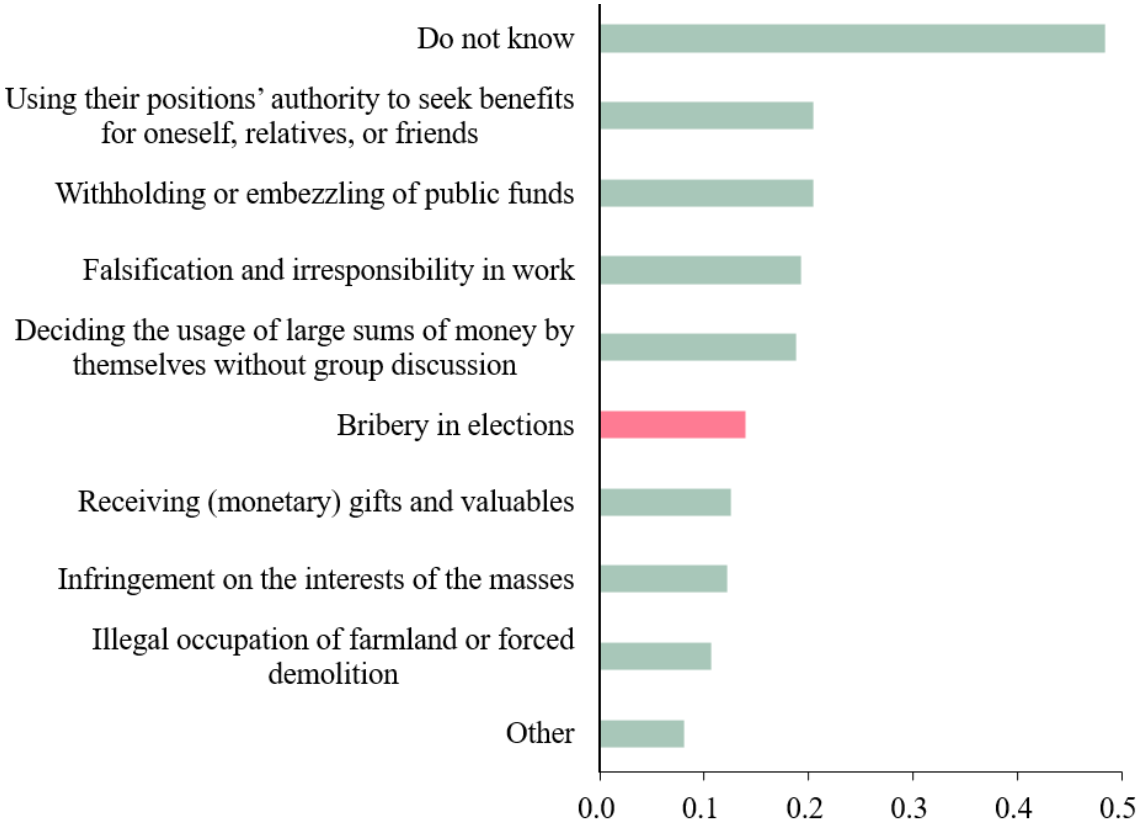
(b) Using the 2015, 2017, and 2019 waves

Notes: This figure plots the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regressions of turnout on each year of election displayed in the horizontal axis with the baseline year being 2017 using the 2017 and 2019 waves (Panel (a)) and using the 2015, 2017, and 2019 waves (Panel (b)). The left graphs include all the sample villages, while the right graphs include sample villages with two heads in the 2017 wave. All regressions control for village and wave fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the village level.

Figure A.7: Interval between election years provided in the 2017 and 2019 waves

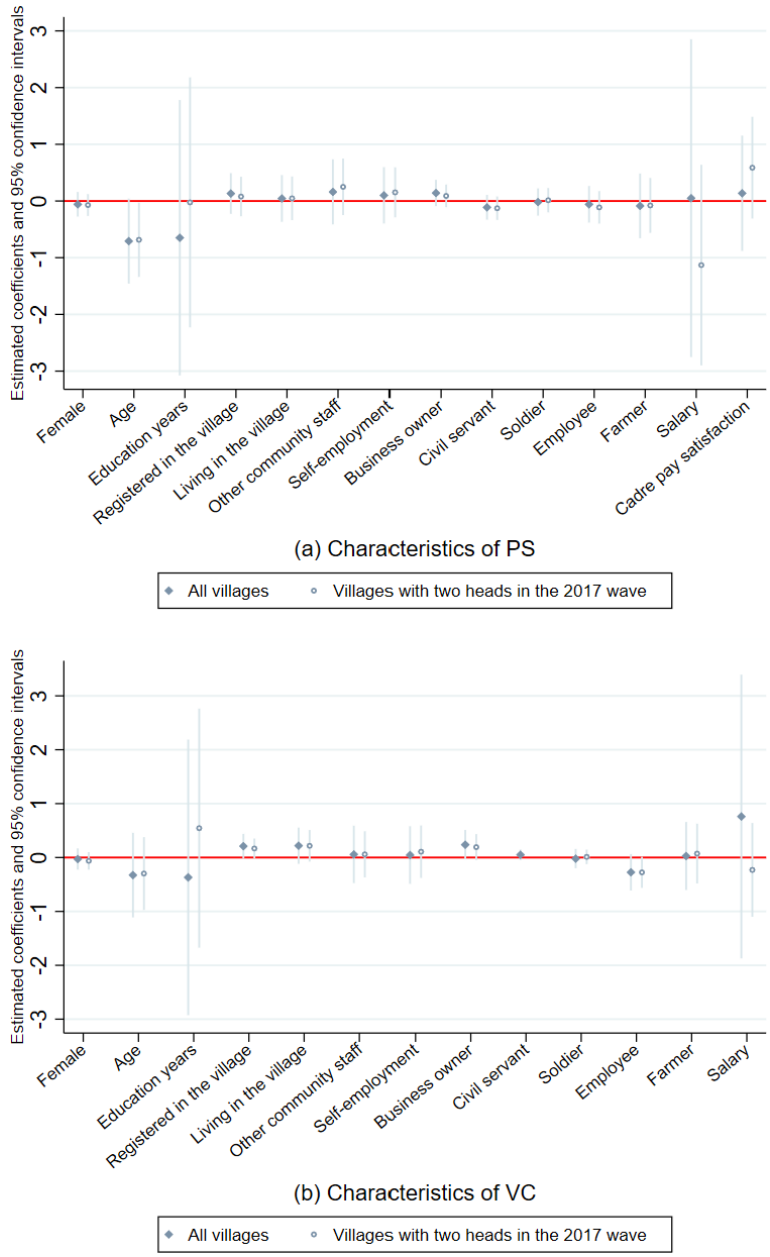
Notes: This figure displays the distribution of the interval between election years provided in the 2017 and 2019 waves for the sample villages.

Figure A.8: Types of corruption villagers believe rural grassroots cadres are most likely to engage in



Notes: This figure displays the average probability of villagers' choosing a specific type of corruption as their response to the question asking which type of corruption they think rural grassroots cadres are most likely to engage in currently. The question is designed as multiple choice.

Figure A.9: Potential mechanisms from meritocratic selection and income of village cadres



Notes: This figure plots the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the second-stage IV regressions of various characteristics (displayed in the horizontal axis) on dual office-holding for both PS (Panel (a)) and VC (Panel (b)). Female, Age, Education years, Registered in the village, Living in the village, and Salary represent a village cadre's gender, age (in 10 years), education level, whether his or her household is registered in the village, whether he or she lives in the village, and monthly salary (in 1,000 yuan) respectively. We also include each dummy for previous occupation of the village cadre including other community staff, self-employed, business owner, civil servant, soldier, employee, and farmer. In Panel (a), we also include Cadre pay satisfaction on a scale of 1 ("not reasonable") to 3 ("reasonable"), which represents the subjective assessment of the village cadre respondent (not necessarily the PS) regarding the reasonableness of salary based on his or her abilities and work situation.

Table A.1: Validation of the instrumental variable at the province level

	Provincial dual office-holding ratio		**Provincial election ratio**	
	2014–2019	2008–2022	2018–2019	2018–2022
	FE	FE	OLS	OLS
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Year 2018–2019 (or 2018–2022) ×	0.198**	0.214***		
Provincial election ratio	(0.091)	(0.063)		
Provincial election ratio	-0.014	0.001		
	(0.021)	(0.012)		
Provincial dual office-holding			0.162	0.063
ratio in 2017			(0.231)	(0.103)
Province FEs	Yes	Yes	No	No
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	174	435	58	145
Mean dep var	0.323	0.391	0.264	0.293

Notes: This table presents the results from FE regressions of provincial dual office-holding ratio on provincial election ratio (columns (1) and (2)) and OLS regressions of provincial election ratio on provincial dual office-holding ratio in 2017 (columns (3) and (4)). Provincial dual office-holding ratio (in 2017) is the percentage of village committees within a province in which the same person is simultaneously the PS and the VC (in 2017). Provincial election ratio is the percentage of village committees in a province holding an election that year. Year 2018–2019 (or 2018–2022) is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if the year falls within the range of 2018–2019 (or 2018–2022), and 0 otherwise. Column (1) ((2), (3), and (4)) includes sample years 2014–2019 (2008–2022, 2018–2019, and 2018–2022). Province-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.2: Robustness checks for turnout results

	Turnout			
	Including the 2015 wave	Clustering at the province level	Clustering at the county level	Keeping conventional interval
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.143**	-0.209**	-0.192**	-0.181**
	(0.069)	(0.079)	(0.088)	(0.089)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	21.788	7.446	17.106	17.400
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Wald test		0.005		
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test		0.005		
Observations	1,304	906	860	786
Mean dep var	0.898	0.899	0.896	0.902
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.157***	-0.244***	-0.263***	-0.172**
	(0.060)	(0.082)	(0.096)	(0.070)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	29.273	14.405	18.314	29.213
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Wald test		0.000		
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test		0.004		
Observations	907	630	602	544
Mean dep var	0.899	0.902	0.899	0.905

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of turnout on dual office-holding. We include observations from the 2015 wave in column (1), cluster at the province and county levels in columns (2) and (3), and keep only those with the time between election years in the 2017 and 2019 waves being zero, three, and four years in column (4). Observations are less in column (3) than in column (2) because of missing values on county information, which is only provided in the 2015 wave. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.3: Incorporating bribery in elections in different forms

	Corruption	**Confidence**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**
	All villages		Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: A simple form + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.620**	0.476**	-0.466**	0.340*
	(0.253)	(0.228)	(0.210)	(0.179)
Bribery in elections	0.766***	-0.360***	0.741***	-0.348***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	19.884	19.366	27.834	29.436
Observations	12,938	17,163	8,973	11,954
Mean dep var	1.987	3.939	2.010	3.927
	Panel B: A flexible form + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.546**	0.560**	-0.362*	0.418**
	(0.251)	(0.241)	(0.208)	(0.185)
Bribery in elections ×	0.933***	-0.362***	0.810***	-0.320***
Election in 2014	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.091)	(0.076)
Bribery in elections ×	0.831***	-0.316***	0.844***	-0.273***
Election in 2015	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.072)	(0.074)
Bribery in elections ×	0.632***	-0.341***	0.632***	-0.380***
Election in 2016	(0.058)	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.078)
Bribery in elections ×	0.766***	-0.344***	0.767***	-0.335***
Election in 2017	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.060)
Bribery in elections ×	0.743***	-0.435***	0.639***	-0.405***
Election in 2018	(0.069)	(0.071)	(0.081)	(0.092)
Bribery in elections ×	0.860***	-0.609***	0.814***	-0.596***
Election in 2019	(0.162)	(0.171)	(0.182)	(0.183)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	20.186	19.490	28.282	29.690
Observations	12,938	17,163	8,973	11,954
Mean dep var	1.987	3.939	2.010	3.927

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of political perceptions on dual office-holding including bribery in elections (Panel A) or its interaction with each indicator variable of each election year (Panel B). Bribery in elections indicates whether it is the type of corruption respondents believe rural grassroots cadres are most likely to engage in. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.4: Robustness checks for political perceptions results

	Corruption				Confidence				Happiness
	Keeping obs. ≥ 10	Clustering at the province level	Clustering at the county level	Keeping conventional interval	Keeping obs. ≥ 10	Clustering at the province level	Clustering at the county level	Keeping conventional interval	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage								
Dual office-holding	-0.779***	-0.832*	-0.805***	-0.803***	0.571**	0.556	0.552**	0.534**	0.134
	(0.254)	(0.478)	(0.286)	(0.278)	(0.243)	(0.409)	(0.266)	(0.248)	(0.147)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	23.295	7.895	16.789	19.203	19.340	7.092	17.354	18.417	19.247
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Wald test		0.054				0.126			
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test		0.014				0.051			
Observations	12,491	12,938	12,356	11,220	17,350	17,363	16,519	15,010	18,762
Mean dep var	1.983	1.987	1.984	1.983	3.938	3.938	3.943	3.946	3.887
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage								
Dual office-holding	-0.658***	-0.666**	-0.675***	-0.575***	0.436**	0.422	0.485**	0.297	-0.065
	(0.229)	(0.321)	(0.250)	(0.208)	(0.193)	(0.266)	(0.234)	(0.181)	(0.121)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	27.125	13.669	17.639	29.123	28.672	14.297	18.601	30.086	28.596
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Wald test		0.017				0.089			
Wild-bootstrapped p-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test		0.010				0.049			
Observations	8,670	8,973	8,609	7,727	12,080	12,093	11,566	10,398	13,054
Mean dep var	2.008	2.010	2.007	2.013	3.925	3.925	3.925	3.935	3.880

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of political perceptions (columns (1) to (8)) and happiness (column (9)) on dual office-holding. We keep villages with no less than ten observations in columns (1) and (5), cluster at the province level in columns (2) and (6), cluster at the county level in columns (3) and (7), and keep only those with duration between election years in the 2017 and 2019 waves being zero, three, and four years in columns (4) and (8). Observations are less in columns (3) and (7) than in columns (2) and (6) because of missing values on county information. Happiness is an ordinal variable derived from villagers' responses to the question assessing their overall happiness, rated on a 1–5 scale from "not happy at all" to "very happy". Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.5: Considering a confounding effect from the tenure change

	Staying longer	**Turnout**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.293	-0.214**	-0.970***	0.550**
	(0.306)	(0.097)	(0.328)	(0.251)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	18.289	15.323	16.569	15.837
Observations	894	856	12,211	16,359
Mean dep var	0.721	0.901	1.982	3.939
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	0.054	-0.209***	-0.695***	0.404**
	(0.245)	(0.075)	(0.239)	(0.186)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	27.937	26.808	26.414	26.855
Observations	620	592	8,415	11,336
Mean dep var	0.734	0.904	2.008	3.928

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of Staying longer (column (1)), turnout (column (2)), and political perceptions (columns (3) and (4)) on dual office-holding. Staying longer is an indicator variable representing whether the village cadre respondent would like to engage in this work in the long term. We exclude villages holding elections in 2019 in the last three columns. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.6: Considering a honeymoon effect

	Corruption	**Confidence**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**
	All villages		Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.537*	0.011	-0.921*	0.338
	(0.321)	(0.240)	(0.525)	(0.327)
Time length since last election	0.023	-0.042***	-0.028	-0.009
	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.043)	(0.028)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat	10.801	10.914	7.658	8.735
P-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test	0.061	0.962	0.020	0.262
Observations	12,938	17,363	8,973	12,093
Mean dep var	1.987	3.938	2.010	3.925
	Panel B: IV 1st stage			
Electing in 2018 or 2019	0.254***	0.242***	0.212***	0.220***
	(0.077)	(0.073)	(0.076)	(0.074)
Time length since last election	0.022	0.020	-0.021	-0.018
	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.021)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	12,938	17,363	8,973	12,093
Mean dep var	0.349	0.346	0.098	0.097

Notes: This table presents the results from the first-stage (Panel A) and the second-stage (Panel B) IV regressions of political perceptions on dual office-holding. Time length since last election refers to the duration, in years, since the most recent election. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.7: The effect of dual office-holding on giving a "do not know" answer

	Corruption	**Confidence**	**"Do not know" corruption**	**"Do not know" confidence**
	FE	FE	IV 2nd stage	IV 2nd stage
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A: All villages			
Dual office-holding			0.001	-0.053
			(0.090)	(0.052)
"Do not know" corruption (village avg.)	0.297**			
	(0.126)			
"Do not know" confidence (village avg.)		-0.137		
		(0.110)		
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat			18.939	19.238
Observations	12,938	17,363	18,410	18,750
Mean dep var	1.987	3.938	0.297	0.074
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave			
Dual office-holding			0.013	-0.071
			(0.077)	(0.045)
"Do not know" corruption (village avg.)	0.239			
	(0.147)			
"Do not know" confidence (village avg.)		-0.132		
		(0.127)		
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat			28.743	28.598
Observations	8,973	12,093	12,804	13,041
Mean dep var	2.010	3.925	0.299	0.073

Notes: This table presents the results from the FE regressions of political perceptions on the average proportion of respondents in the village giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions (columns (1) and (2)) and the second-stage IV regressions of giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions on dual office-holding (columns (3) and (4)). Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.8: The moderating role of risk tolerance and trust in strangers

	Corruption (1)	**Confidence** (2)	**Corruption** (3)	**Confidence** (4)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.849***	0.400	-0.739***	0.336
	(0.325)	(0.279)	(0.278)	(0.224)
Dual office-holding × Risk tolerance	0.060	0.314		
	(0.307)	(0.303)		
Risk tolerance	0.079	-0.162		
	(0.109)	(0.106)		
Dual office-holding × Trust in strangers			0.299	-0.045
			(0.346)	(0.323)
Trust in strangers			-0.116	0.038
			(0.116)	(0.109)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,526	13,739	10,889	14,460
Mean dep var	2.012	3.915	2.043	3.895
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	-0.727***	0.463*	-0.684***	0.389*
	(0.268)	(0.238)	(0.252)	(0.205)
Dual office-holding × Risk tolerance	-0.021	0.071		
	(0.199)	(0.199)		
Risk tolerance	0.090***	-0.061**		
	(0.034)	(0.031)		
Dual office-holding × Trust in strangers			0.193	-0.200
			(0.178)	(0.182)
Trust in strangers			-0.039	0.044
			(0.032)	(0.033)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,284	9,551	7,699	10,286
Mean dep var	2.034	3.902	2.059	3.899

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of political perceptions on dual office-holding and its interaction with risk tolerance (columns (1) and (2)) and trust level in strangers (columns (3) and (4)). Risk tolerance and trust in strangers are indicator variables based on the median responses to their corresponding questions. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.9: Considering people being present on site when respondents answered political perceptions questions

	Cadres on site	**Others on site**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**	**Corruption**	**Confidence**
	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV 2nd stage	IV 2nd stage
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Panel A: All villages							
Dual office-holding	-0.007	-0.038*					-0.645**	0.319
	(0.005)	(0.023)					(0.270)	(0.202)
Dual office-holding ×					0.335*	-0.056		
Cadres on site					(0.187)	(0.159)		
Dual office-holding ×					0.001	-0.043		
Others on site					(0.088)	(0.087)		
Cadres on site			-0.329***	0.191**	-0.429***	0.206**		
			(0.089)	(0.075)	(0.102)	(0.091)		
Others on site			0.024	-0.017	0.023	-0.005		
			(0.041)	(0.039)	(0.050)	(0.045)		
Dual office-holding ×							1.629	-0.444
Cadres on site (2017)							(1.725)	(1.521)
Dual office-holding ×							-0.176	0.100
Others on site (2017)							(0.646)	(0.494)
Cadres on site (2017)							-0.733	0.342
							(0.560)	(0.473)
Others on site (2017)							0.047	-0.050
							(0.213)	(0.157)
Prov FEs	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
Village FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,473	9,473	6,489	8,625	6,489	8,625	10,954	14,552
Mean dep var	0.024	0.189	2.163	3.832	2.163	3.832	2.043	3.895
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave							
Dual office-holding							-0.572**	0.302
							(0.250)	(0.195)
Cadres on site			-0.429***	0.206**				
			(0.103)	(0.091)				
Others on site			0.023	-0.005				
			(0.050)	(0.045)				
Dual office-holding ×							0.575	-0.107
Cadres on site (2017)							(0.403)	(0.481)
Dual office-holding ×							-0.264	0.102
Others on site (2017)							(0.298)	(0.240)
Cadres on site (2017)							-0.340***	0.210***
							(0.093)	(0.079)
Others on site (2017)							0.003	-0.031
							(0.046)	(0.042)
Village FEs			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Wave FEs			Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Observations			4,497	6,039			7,746	10,355
Mean dep var			2.188	3.832			2.058	3.898

Notes: This tables presents the results when we consider whether there were people on site when respondents answered political perceptions questions. We use data from only the 2017 wave and run OLS regressions in columns (1) to (6), while we use data from the two waves and run IV regressions in columns (7) and (8). Cadres on site (Others on site) is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if there are cadres (others) on site when answering the questionnaire, and 0 otherwise. The information is available in the 2017 wave. Cadres on site (2017) and Others on site (2017) is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if there are cadres (others) on site in the 2017 wave, and 0 otherwise. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.10: The moderating role of party affiliation and whether having cadres in the household

	Corruption (1)	**Confidence** (2)	**Corruption** (3)	**Confidence** (4)	**Corruption** (5)	**Confidence** (6)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage					
Dual office-holding	-0.902***	0.524**	-0.872***	0.556**	-0.877***	0.542**
	(0.297)	(0.236)	(0.300)	(0.245)	(0.291)	(0.238)
Dual office-holding ×	0.289	-0.402				
Party affiliation (ind)	(0.265)	(0.274)				
Party affiliation (ind)	-0.363***	0.375***				
	(0.094)	(0.096)				
Dual office-holding ×			0.147	-0.078		
Party affiliation (hh)			(0.297)	(0.265)		
Party affiliation (hh)			-0.277**	0.182*		
			(0.112)	(0.099)		
Dual office-holding ×					0.265	0.357
Cadres in household					(0.344)	(0.333)
Cadres in household					-0.500***	0.238*
					(0.136)	(0.127)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	12,099	16,217	12,801	17,158	12,937	17,161
Mean dep var	1.986	3.945	1.987	3.939	1.987	3.940
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage					
Dual office-holding	-0.776***	0.448**	-0.688***	0.454**	-0.730***	0.427**
	(0.245)	(0.196)	(0.239)	(0.197)	(0.239)	(0.186)
Dual office-holding ×	0.283	-0.476*				
Party affiliation (ind)	(0.244)	(0.267)				
Party affiliation (ind)	-0.319***	0.284***				
	(0.053)	(0.053)				
Dual office-holding ×			0.023	-0.209		
Party affiliation (hh)			(0.199)	(0.188)		
Party affiliation (hh)			-0.239***	0.183***		
			(0.044)	(0.038)		
Dual office-holding ×					0.508**	0.022
Cadres in household					(0.253)	(0.228)
Cadres in household					-0.459***	0.357***
					(0.055)	(0.047)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,361	11,251	8,874	11,946	8,973	11,953
Mean dep var	2.011	3.928	2.011	3.925	2.010	3.927

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of political perceptions on dual office-holding and its interaction with individual party affiliation (columns (1) and (2)), household party affiliation (columns (3) and (4)), and whether having cadres in the household (columns (5) and (6)). Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table A.11: Economic grounds for political perceptions

	Agricultural subsidies (1)	**Other government subsidies** (2)	**Registered poor household** (3)	**Land expropriation** (4)
	Panel A: All villages			
Corruption	-0.032	-0.040	-0.037	0.053
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Confidence	0.036	0.073	0.061	-0.014
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.073)
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave			
Corruption	-0.043	-0.042	-0.030	0.042
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.000)
Confidence	0.037	0.076	0.053	-0.006
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.497)

Notes: This table presents Pearson's correlation coefficients and their significance levels (in brackets) of political perceptions and whether the respondent receives agricultural subsidies (column (1)), receives other government subsidies (column (2)), is registered as a poor household (column (3)), and has experienced land expropriation (column (4)).

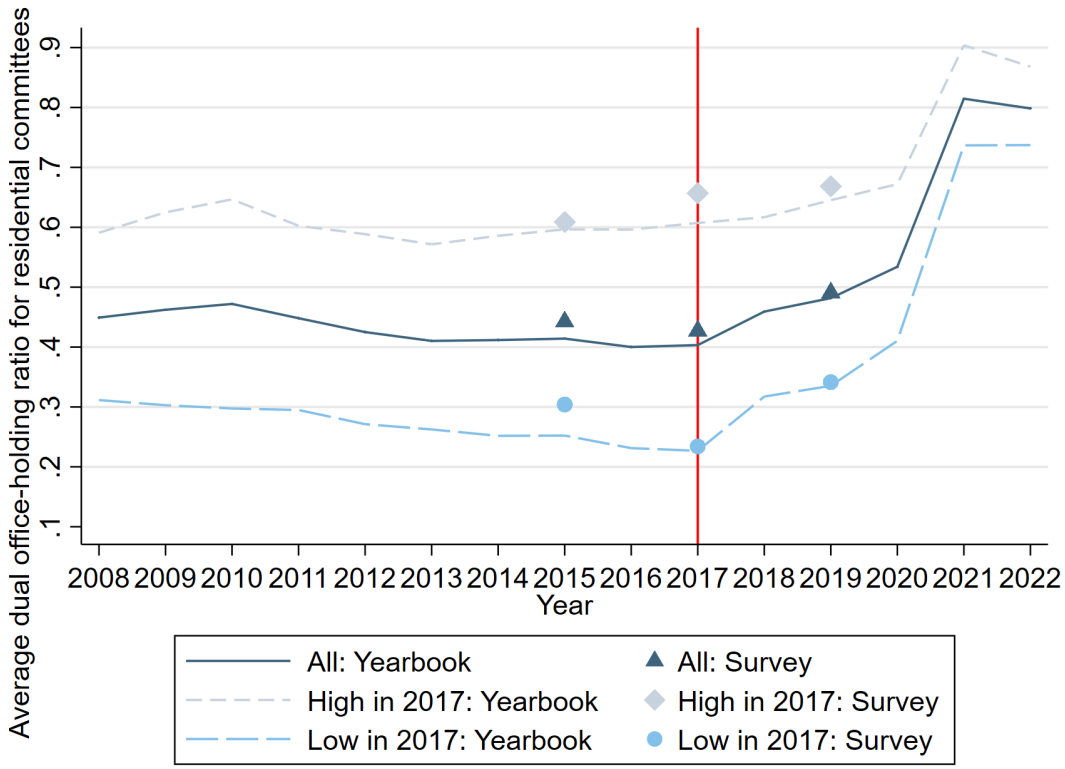
Table A.12: A placebo test with urban communities

	Dual office-holding	**Turnout**	**Turnout** (including the 2015 wave)	**Confidence**	**"Do not know" Confidence**
	FE	IV 2nd stage	IV 2nd stage	IV 2nd stage	IV 2nd stage
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Panel A: All urban communities				
Dual office-holding		0.012	-0.025	-0.239	-0.067
		(0.084)	(0.076)	(0.254)	(0.052)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	0.173***				
	(0.048)				
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat		13.293	15.555	15.093	15.476
P-value for Anderson-Rubin Wald test		0.883		0.339	0.178
Observations	754	754	1,077	15,949	16,974
Mean dep var	0.459	0.913	0.911	3.747	0.060
	Panel B: Urban communities with two heads in the 2017 wave				
Dual office-holding		0.064	0.044	-0.064	-0.067
		(0.059)	(0.048)	(0.218)	(0.044)
Electing in 2018 or 2019	0.342***				
	(0.061)				
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kleibergen-Paap F-stat		31.389	35.880	21.342	21.410
Observations	430	430	616	9,184	9,793
Mean dep var	0.107	0.907	0.907	3.745	0.062

Notes: This table presents the results from the FE regressions of dual office-holding on holding an election in 2018 or 2019 (column (1)), the second-stage IV regressions of turnout (columns (2) and (3)), confidence level in local government (column (4)), and giving a "do not know" answer to the confidence question (column (5)) on dual office-holding. We include observations from the 2015 wave in column (3). Community-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Online Appendix B

Figure B.1: Average dual office-holding ratio for residential committees over time



Notes: This figure displays the pattern of average dual office-holding ratio for residential committees from 2008 to 2022. We also separate provinces into two groups based on the median of their average dual office-holding ratios for residential committees calculated from the China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook in 2017. Then we calculate group average ratios of dual office-holding for residential communities over time using census data from the annual Yearbook or sample urban communities from the CRHPS.

Table B.1: The moderating role of risk tolerance and trust in strangers for regressions of giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions

	"Do not know" corruption (1)	**"Do not know" confidence** (2)	**"Do not know" corruption** (3)	**"Do not know" confidence** (4)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	0.022	-0.065	0.032	-0.048
	(0.105)	(0.057)	(0.093)	(0.058)
Dual office-holding × Risk tolerance	0.026	0.015		
	(0.118)	(0.053)		
Risk tolerance	-0.070*	-0.030		
	(0.042)	(0.019)		
Dual office-holding × Trust in strangers			-0.033	-0.010
			(0.128)	(0.068)
Trust in strangers			-0.023	-0.018
			(0.043)	(0.023)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	14,452	14,685	15,427	15,672
Mean dep var	0.272	0.064	0.294	0.077
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage			
Dual office-holding	0.028	-0.100*	0.048	-0.067
	(0.091)	(0.053)	(0.089)	(0.053)
Dual office-holding × Risk tolerance	0.030	-0.003		
	(0.081)	(0.033)		
Risk tolerance	-0.069***	-0.026***		
	(0.012)	(0.006)		
Dual office-holding × Trust in strangers			-0.048	0.000
			(0.073)	(0.040)
Trust in strangers			-0.035***	-0.020***
			(0.012)	(0.007)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,026	10,189	10,954	11,132
Mean dep var	0.273	0.063	0.297	0.076

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions on dual office-holding and its interaction with risk tolerance (columns (1) and (2)) and trust level in strangers (columns (3) and (4)). Risk tolerance and trust in strangers are indicator variables based on the median responses to their corresponding questions. Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table B.2: Considering people being present on site when respondents give a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions

	"Do not know" corruption OLS (1)	**"Do not know" confidence** OLS (2)	**"Do not know" corruption** OLS (3)	**"Do not know" confidence** OLS (4)	**"Do not know" corruption** IV 2nd stage (5)	**"Do not know" confidence** IV 2nd stage (6)
	Panel A: All villages					
Dual office-holding					0.123	-0.037
					(0.099)	(0.052)
Dual office-holding ×			-0.024	0.011		
Cadres on site			(0.068)	(0.032)		
Dual office-holding ×			-0.035	0.006		
Others on site			(0.030)	(0.019)		
Cadres on site	0.027	-0.044***	0.034	-0.048***		
	(0.033)	(0.014)	(0.041)	(0.016)		
Others on site	0.010	0.000	0.020	-0.001		
	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.010)		
Dual office-holding ×					-0.814	0.375
Cadres on site (2017)					(1.228)	(0.590)
Dual office-holding ×					-0.495	-0.095
Others on site (2017)					(0.353)	(0.130)
Cadres on site (2017)					0.263	-0.143
					(0.392)	(0.187)
Others on site (2017)					0.160	0.028
					(0.109)	(0.042)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,268	9,453	9,268	9,453	15,535	15,785
Mean dep var	0.300	0.088	0.300	0.088	0.295	0.078
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave					
Dual office-holding					0.081	-0.063
					(0.089)	(0.051)
Cadres on site	0.034	-0.048***				
	(0.041)	(0.016)				
Others on site	0.020	-0.001				
	(0.018)	(0.010)				
Dual office-holding ×					-0.146	0.116
Cadres on site (2017)					(0.198)	(0.100)
Dual office-holding ×					-0.230**	-0.034
Others on site (2017)					(0.114)	(0.049)
Cadres on site (2017)					0.001	-0.040***
					(0.034)	(0.014)
Others on site (2017)					0.032**	-0.000
					(0.016)	(0.009)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Observations	6,478	6,603			11,032	11,212
Mean dep var	0.306	0.085			0.298	0.076

Notes: This tables presents the results when we consider people being on site when respondents give a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions. We use data from only the 2017 wave and run OLS regressions in columns (1) to (4), while we use data from the two waves and run IV regressions in columns (5) and (6). Cadres on site (Others on site) is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if there are cadres (others) on site when answering the questionnaire, and 0 otherwise. The information is available in the 2017 wave. Cadres on site (2017) (Others on site (2017)) is an indicator variable taking the value of 1 if there are cadres (others) on site in the 2017 wave, and 0 otherwise . Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table B.3: The moderating role of party affiliation and whether having cadres in the household for regressions of giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions

	"Do not know" corruption (1)	**"Do not know" confidence** (2)	**"Do not know" corruption** (3)	**"Do not know" confidence** (4)	**"Do not know" corruption** (5)	**"Do not know" confidence** (6)
	Panel A: All villages + IV 2nd stage					
Dual office-holding	0.002	-0.046	0.046	-0.047	0.027	-0.048
	(0.092)	(0.055)	(0.095)	(0.054)	(0.092)	(0.054)
Dual office-holding ×	-0.134	-0.060				
Party affiliation (ind)	(0.099)	(0.050)				
Party affiliation (ind)	-0.101***	-0.014				
	(0.034)	(0.018)				
Dual office-holding ×			-0.255**	-0.016		
Party affiliation (hh)			(0.127)	(0.050)		
Party affiliation (hh)			-0.008	-0.021		
			(0.046)	(0.019)		
Dual office-holding ×					-0.485***	0.015
Cadres in household					(0.170)	(0.051)
Cadres in household					0.017	-0.052***
					(0.068)	(0.020)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,226	17,546	18,200	18,535	18,408	18,539
Mean dep var	0.298	0.076	0.297	0.074	0.297	0.074
	Panel B: Villages with two heads in the 2017 wave + IV 2nd stage					
Dual office-holding	-0.009	-0.068	0.025	-0.070	0.020	-0.067
	(0.078)	(0.046)	(0.079)	(0.045)	(0.079)	(0.045)
Dual office-holding ×	-0.023	-0.034				
Party affiliation (ind)	(0.090)	(0.045)				
Party affiliation (ind)	-0.132***	-0.032***				
	(0.017)	(0.010)				
Dual office-holding ×			-0.096	0.016		
Party affiliation (hh)			(0.079)	(0.036)		
Party affiliation (hh)			-0.087***	-0.031***		
			(0.013)	(0.007)		
Dual office-holding ×					-0.198**	0.028
Cadres in household					(0.099)	(0.034)
Cadres in household					-0.130***	-0.047***
					(0.019)	(0.008)
Village FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	11,939	12,159	12,656	12,889	12,803	12,896
Mean dep var	0.300	0.075	0.299	0.073	0.299	0.073

Notes: This table presents the results from the second-stage IV regressions of giving a "do not know" answer to the political perceptions questions on dual office-holding and its interaction with individual party affiliation (columns (1) and (2)), household party affiliation (columns (3) and (4)), and whether having cadres in the household (columns (5) and (6)). Village-level clustered standard errors are given in parentheses. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.