

**BALLOTING FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS
IN JIANGSU: INTRA-PARTY
DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE**

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Executive Summary

1. As an experimental move toward intra-Party democracy, three cities in Jiangsu Province have introduced contested elections within local party committees for their top party positions in 2011.
2. Under the mechanism dubbed as “open recommendations and balloting,” qualified candidates need to go through two rounds of screening by two panels of provincial-rank cadres based in Jiangsu before they are voted by members in the Standing Committee of the Jiangsu Provincial Party Committee.
3. Although almost every village in China is required to hold direct elections regularly, such grass-roots elections can only play limited role in China’s democratization since village committees are formally excluded from China’s five-level governmental apparatus.
4. Semi-competitive elections are now held at township level, but after years of experimentation, the Chinese authorities are still reluctant to promulgate contested elections for above-township-level party/government positions.
5. In response to the criticism that political reforms have lagged behind economic reform in China, the Party is trying to rely more on the contested intra-party balloting system in the selection of its high-rank cadres than the opaque one-candidate-one-position appointment process.
6. On the institutionalization of cadres selection, the Party’s long-term goal is still meritocracy rather than democracy. Competitive elections are means instead of an end that help the Party single out capable and loyal officials.
7. From the balloting result of Jiangsu’s experimentation, the winners of the elections are still the Party’s favorites and the whole process is within the control of the provincial Party committee.

8. Besides Jiangsu, Beijing, Zhejiang, Hunan, Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces have opened up high-level civil vacancies to a broad range of qualified candidates that need to go through exams, interviews and balloting before they are considered for the positions.
9. China has a long tradition of selecting officials through examinations and recommendations rather than competitive elections, and such a cultural heritage still has significant impact upon today's politics.
10. Advocated by Li Yuanchao, the Jiangsu-born director of the CCP Central Organization Department, the intra-Party balloting system may be a solution to the rampant corrupt practices such as the selling and buying of government posts or bribing for higher positions.