

CHINA'S INNOVATION IN HOME EVICTION

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Executive Summary

1. Chinese local governments have recently become heavily dependent on a new practice that capitalises on homeowners' social ties to facilitate urban demolition. They hailed this practice as “harmonious demolition”.
2. Rather than use direct coercion, local officials, staff members of public organisations and workers of state-owned enterprises are sent to persuade their relatives affected by the demolition to leave their homes.
3. The Chinese local authorities usually establish special, temporary demolition offices and recruit family members of stubborn homeowners to serve as “thought” workers who are required to use emotion and affection to help push demolition forward.
4. After a demolition office is set up, a “contract system” is usually established to hold government bureaus and other work units responsible for controlling relatives of homeowners who refuse to accept demolition orders.
5. Local regulations are also established to punish work unit heads or members who hesitate to take part in “harmonious demolition”.
6. Moral appeals may also be layered on top of financial penalties and career consequences to motivate work unit members to pressure their relatives out of resistance.
7. Controlled by local authorities, many work unit members have little choice but to cajole their family members into signing demolition agreements, through emotional blackmail and affinity.
8. Only a handful of work unit members resort to negative means like severing relations or innovative tactics like media exposure to lessen the demands placed on them.

9. The “harmonious demolition” practice leaves many unit members, leaders and workers alike, in a state of helplessness, which in the long run may threaten to alienate people who have previously benefited from party rule and tend to be well-disposed towards the regime.