

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Politics and Society in East Asia

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## POLITICAL SELECTION IN CHINA

*Rethinking Foundations and Findings*

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-32711-4 — Political Selection in China  
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Frontmatter  
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009327114](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009327114)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009327145

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First published 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-009-32711-4 Paperback  
ISSN 2632-735X (print)  
ISSN 2632-7368 (online)

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## Political Selection in China

### Rethinking Foundations and Findings

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009327145  
First published online: August 2023

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**Abstract:** Political selection is about how individuals are selected to political office – and this substantially determines the quality of governance. The evidence favors democratic elections as the selection institution that produces high governance quality. Yet authoritarian China, where a communist party monopolizes the selection of all officials of importance, presents a sophisticated and, by some measures, successful contrast to liberal democratic versions of political selection. Understanding how and how much the preferences of the few at the political center in Beijing systematically shape the composition and actions of the tens of thousands of leaders who manage politics, society, and the economy across China is foundational to understanding China. This Element critically reviews the literature on political selection in China to better structure our knowledge on this important question. It clarifies sources of greatly disparate findings in statistical studies and identifies major descriptive challenges to these studies in rich qualitative and quantitative evidence.

**Keywords:** political selection, China, meritocracy, patronage, performance evaluation

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ISBNs: 9781009327114 (PB), 9781009327145 (OC)  
ISSNs: 2632-7368 (online), 2632-735X (print)

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