

State Wrongs in Rural Townships

Introduction

This book delves into the intriguing phenomenon of "rightful resistance" in rural China, a form of collective action where marginalized communities employ the rhetoric and commitments of the central government to challenge local misconduct, demand participation, and push boundaries. Through a combination of interviews, surveys, and case studies, the authors provide a comprehensive analysis of this unique form of contentious politics.

Drawing comparisons with collective action in diverse contexts such as East Germany and the United States, the book highlights the similarities and differences in strategies, tactics, and outcomes. It explores the origins, dynamics, and consequences of rightful resistance, shedding light on its potential to promote

accountability, transparency, and public participation in governance.

Furthermore, the book examines the impact of rightful resistance on social change, emphasizing the power of collective action and the significance of local knowledge and agency. It also delves into the challenges and opportunities of rightful resistance in the 21st century, considering the changing state-society relations, the rise of the middle class and new social movements, and the implications of climate change and environmental degradation.

Overall, this book offers a nuanced understanding of rightful resistance in rural China, its implications for governance and development, and its significance in promoting social justice and human rights. It is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and activists interested in contentious politics, rural development, and social change.

The book's key contributions include:

- A comprehensive analysis of rightful resistance in rural China, drawing on extensive research and case studies.
- A comparative perspective, examining similarities and differences with collective action in other contexts.
- An exploration of the impact of rightful resistance on governance, development, and social change.
- An examination of the challenges and opportunities of rightful resistance in the 21st century.
- A valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and activists working on contentious politics, rural development, and social change.

Book Description

In the vast tapestry of rural China, a unique form of collective action has emerged, known as "rightful resistance." This book provides a comprehensive exploration of this phenomenon, where marginalized communities employ the rhetoric and commitments of the central government to challenge local misconduct, demand participation, and push boundaries.

Drawing on extensive interviews, surveys, and case studies, the authors offer a nuanced analysis of rightful resistance, shedding light on its origins, dynamics, and consequences. They compare rightful resistance in China with collective action in diverse contexts, including East Germany and the United States, highlighting similarities and differences in strategies, tactics, and outcomes.

The book delves into the impact of rightful resistance on governance and development, demonstrating its

potential to promote accountability, transparency, and public participation. It also examines the challenges and opportunities of rightful resistance in the 21st century, considering the changing state-society relations, the rise of the middle class and new social movements, and the implications of climate change and environmental degradation.

This book is a valuable resource for scholars, policymakers, and activists interested in contentious politics, rural development, and social change. It offers a comprehensive understanding of rightful resistance in rural China, its implications for governance and development, and its significance in promoting social justice and human rights.

Key Features:

- A comprehensive analysis of rightful resistance in rural China, drawing on extensive research and case studies.

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Chapter 1: Contentious Politics in Rural China

1. Historical Context of Rural Contention

The history of rural contention in China is long and complex, dating back to the imperial era. However, it was during the 20th century that rural contention took on its modern form, shaped by a combination of political, economic, and social factors.

One of the key factors contributing to rural contention was the land reform policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) after it came to power in 1949. These policies, which aimed to redistribute land from wealthy landowners to poor peasants, led to widespread upheaval and resistance in rural areas. Peasants who had benefited from the land reforms became strong supporters of the CCP, while those who lost land became disaffected and prone to protest.

Another factor contributing to rural contention was the CCP's emphasis on rapid industrialization and economic development. This led to a neglect of rural areas, which resulted in widespread poverty and inequality. Rural residents felt that they were being left behind and that the government was not doing enough to address their needs.

Finally, the CCP's authoritarian rule and its suppression of dissent also contributed to rural contention. Peasants who felt that they had been wronged by local officials or government policies had few avenues to express their grievances. This led to a build-up of resentment and frustration, which often erupted in protests and demonstrations.

The combination of these factors created a fertile ground for rural contention in China. In the years since the 1949 revolution, there have been numerous instances of rural protests and demonstrations, ranging

from small-scale disputes over land rights to large-scale uprisings against government policies.

Chapter 1: Contentious Politics in Rural China

2. Forms of Collective Action

Contentious politics in rural China manifests in diverse forms of collective action, each shaped by specific grievances, opportunities, and constraints. These forms of collective action range from everyday forms of resistance, such as foot-dragging and work slowdowns, to more organized and visible protests, such as demonstrations and petitions.

One common form of collective action is petitioning. Villagers may petition local officials, higher-level government agencies, or even the central government in Beijing to address their grievances. Petitions can be used to demand redress for specific injustices, such as illegal land grabs or corrupt officials, or to advocate for broader policy changes.

Another form of collective action is litigation. Villagers may file lawsuits against local officials or government agencies to protect their rights or seek compensation for damages. Litigation can be a powerful tool for holding officials accountable and promoting the rule of law, but it can also be a lengthy and costly process.

In some cases, villagers may resort to more disruptive forms of protest, such as demonstrations and strikes. These forms of collective action are often used as a last resort when other avenues for redress have been exhausted. Demonstrations may involve villagers gathering in public spaces to voice their grievances and demand action from the government. Strikes may involve workers refusing to work or farmers refusing to sell their crops in protest against unfair policies or practices.

Collective action in rural China can also take the form of social movements. Social movements are networks of individuals and organizations that come together to

pursue common goals, such as environmental protection, labor rights, or land rights. Social movements can play a powerful role in raising awareness of important issues, mobilizing public support, and pressuring the government to take action.

The forms of collective action that villagers choose depend on a variety of factors, including the nature of their grievances, the political opportunities and constraints they face, and the resources at their disposal. Villagers may also use multiple forms of collective action in combination to achieve their goals.

Chapter 1: Contentious Politics in Rural China

3. State-Society Relations in Rural China

State-society relations in rural China are complex and dynamic, shaped by a long history of interactions between the state and rural communities. These interactions have been characterized by both cooperation and conflict, as the state has sought to assert its authority and control over the countryside, while rural communities have resisted these efforts and sought to maintain their autonomy.

In recent decades, state-society relations in rural China have been transformed by a number of factors, including the rise of the market economy, the increasing integration of rural areas into the global economy, and the growing awareness of rights among rural residents. These changes have led to new forms of contention and resistance in rural China, as

communities have sought to protect their interests and hold the state accountable.

One of the most important factors shaping state-society relations in rural China is the land tenure system. Land is a scarce resource in China, and the state has historically maintained a tight grip on land ownership and use. This has led to conflicts between the state and rural communities, as the state has sought to expropriate land for development projects or to redistribute land to landless peasants.

Another factor shaping state-society relations in rural China is the hukou system, which restricts the movement of people between rural and urban areas. The hukou system has created a dual society in China, with rural residents facing discrimination in terms of access to education, employment, and social services. This has led to resentment and resistance among rural communities, who have sought to challenge the hukou system and demand equal rights.

The rise of the market economy has also had a significant impact on state-society relations in rural China. The market economy has led to increased inequality between rural and urban areas, as well as between different regions of the country. This has led to protests and social unrest in rural areas, as people have demanded a fairer share of the benefits of economic growth.

The increasing integration of rural areas into the global economy has also had a significant impact on state-society relations in rural China. The global economy has created new opportunities for rural communities to earn income, but it has also made them more vulnerable to economic shocks. This has led to increased uncertainty and instability in rural areas, and has contributed to the rise of contention and resistance.

Finally, the growing awareness of rights among rural residents has also had a significant impact on state-

society relations in rural China. Rural residents are increasingly aware of their rights under the Chinese constitution and other laws, and they are more willing to challenge the state when their rights are violated. This has led to an increase in litigation and other forms of legal resistance in rural areas.

This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.

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