

## *How Are “Red Social Workers” Trained? Party-Building Absorption of Society in China\**

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### *Abstract*

A key means of consolidating the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) ruling basis and enhancing its resilience and political leadership is to establish primary party organizations (PPOs) at the grassroots level. Drawing on the case of the Aixin Social Work Service Center in Jiangsu Province, this article interrogates the rationale and mechanism of party-building in social organizations in China. A concept of “party-building absorption of society” is raised to explore how the “red social worker” is created and trained by the party-state. Four mechanisms are found to be adopted by the CCP to build PPOs in social organizations, i.e., goal-compatibility, co-optation/ exclusion, liaison, and competition. It reveals that although the CCP can turn non-government organizations (NGOs) red and reinforce social control and surveillance over them through party-building, it would reshape the state-society relations through transactional governance and may fail to realize social actors’ ideological identification with the party.

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