

# Mining and Land in North China: politics and livelihoods

**Ye Jingzhong and Wang Chunyu**

College of Humanities and Development Studies (COHD)

China Agricultural University

07/04/2011

# Lead-in

- In the name of ‘development’, various kinds of resources have been continuously flowing into cities from the countryside for urban construction and expansion in China, particularly mineral resources, leading to mountains full of holes and scars, and further destruction to local landscape, environment and peasants livelihood.





# Mining in Yang Township, Qinglin County, Hebei Province

- 9 villages located in *Taihang* Mountain range, the mountainous land belongs to local collective (**vague**), rocks with low concentration of iron content
- Since 2000, increased market demand of steel production for urban construction, mining of iron ore started, plus processing/refinery into iron powder
- The prerequisites for legal mining are demanding, many of the local enterprises can only obtained **Exploration Right but not Mining Right**, thus many are in fact illegal mining



# Three cases in Yang Township, Qinglin County, Hebei Province

1. Mining **vs** Fighting against illegal mining

2. Scrabbling for authorizing mining rights

3. An individual war



# Case 1: Mining vs Fighting against illegal mining

administrative penalty

- **Zhao Rui**, Zhao Gang's son, promoted as Officer of Fighting against Illegal Mining in Water Conservancy Bureau

factories to explore and refine the iron ore, all illegal

- **Zhao Gang**, leader in Liu Village, good relationship with the township leader who later was promoted to be the director of Water Conservancy Bureau

Director: "We smashed some machines indeed. However, when we know the owner of these machines, we just made a pose to take the picture."

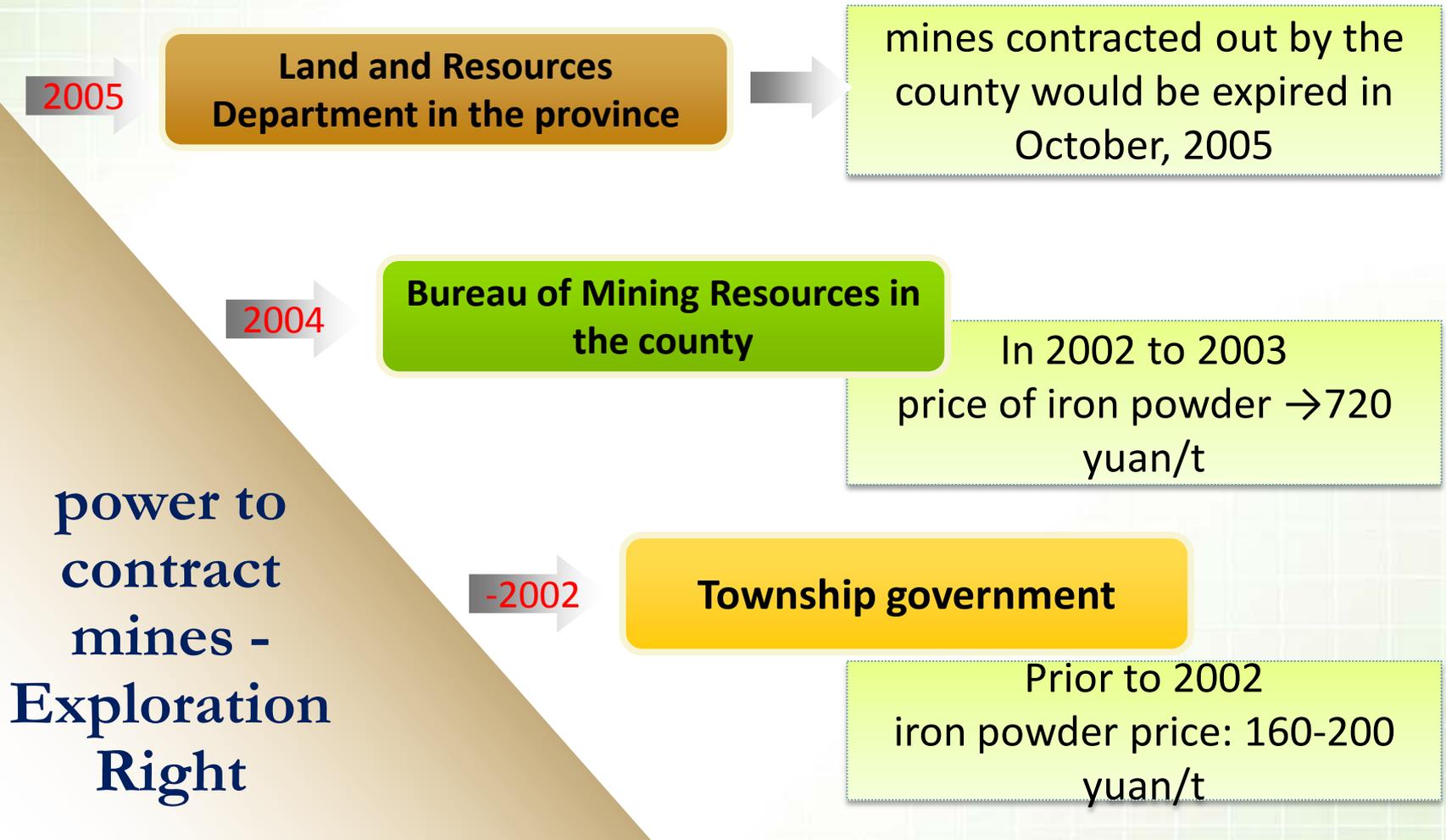
# Case 1: Mining vs Fighting against illegal mining

- The **power** at different levels are connected in the pursuit of local resources.
- The complicated process of opening a mining factory has chased away those who do not have capital or connections with the upper level officials, thus the mining factories are only accessible to those political and economic *elites*.
- The village leader is the **sole broker** between the investors and the villagers, in terms of authority of negotiation with outside investors, and power of recommending the villagers to work in the factories, even of determining types of work.

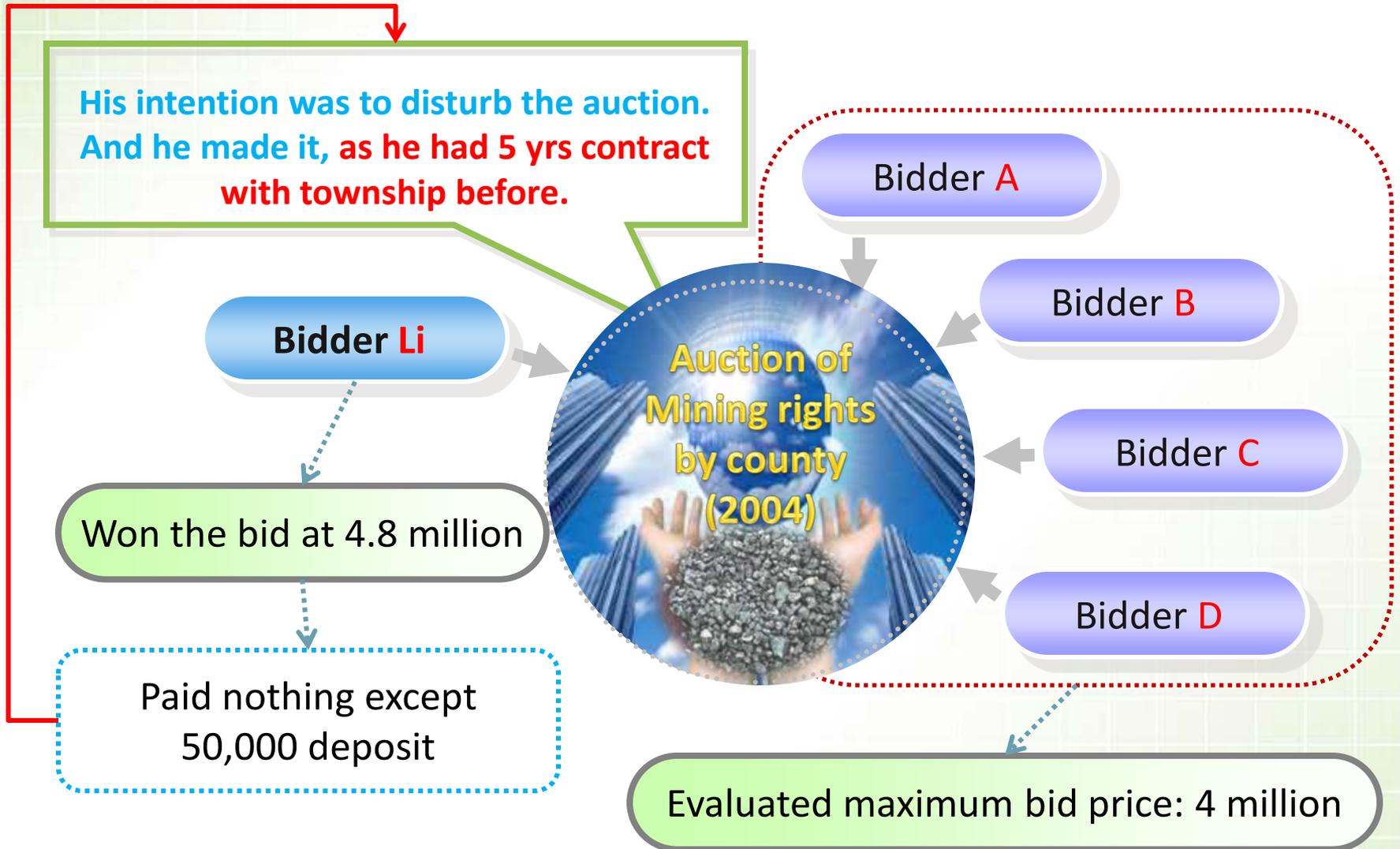
## Case 1: Mining vs Fighting against illegal mining

- As a result, **economic gap** between village leaders and ordinary villagers is enlarged.
- The **officials** in the township and the county are also gaining benefits from legal taxes and fees or bribery.
- The honeymoon between the officials and the investors is so sweet that the **fighting against illegal mining remains on paper**.

# Case 2: Scrabbling for authorizing mining rights



# Case 2: Scrabbling for authorizing mining rights

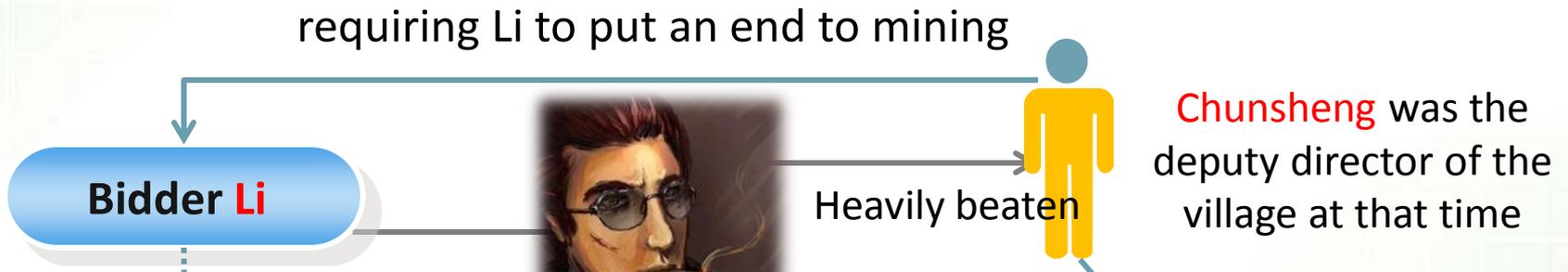


## Case 2: Scrabbling for authorizing mining rights

- In the arena of the rural community, local officials and investors **are sharing one cake of profits.**
- The **once-decentralized power was called back** gradually, in the name of regulating the illegal mining. This practice did damage to the established alliance between the lower level government and the contractors.
- The **lower level officials** have more frequent contacts with the investors. They may be friends, relatives or in nominal kinship. They are more likely to compose certain conspiracy. They could not, definitely, make overt challenges to the authority, **but leave such case going on**, thus,
- **The upper level government/state power**, although strong and pervasive, would not be the guaranteed winner in this game of interests.

## Case 3: An individual war

Continued from Case 2: in 2004, Li won the bidding of the mine in the village but refused to pay the bid he promised...



**Li** also fought back with his money and relationship with the officials in the township. Li bribed some villagers in the election and pushed Chunsheng away from the village committee in 2005. This became a new content of Chunsheng's further appeals.

Started to appeal to different bureaus in the government at the township, county, provincial and even the central levels.

## Case 3: An individual war

- Before the county and the provincial government took back the power of authorizing mining rights, there were **only two main actors in the** arena (township government and Li) and the profits were shared between them.
- Chunsheng's action was no good to the fundamental rights of the investor Li and the township government. He was **not supported by ordinary villagers** who had already depended on the factories for a living. This is an individual war.

# Conclusions

- Rural politics is currently reshaped by the alliance of the officials and the capital.
- The village leader has become the big land grabber, occupying the land or selling it to the outsiders in the name of the collective. Ordinary peasants became economically lagged far behind compared to the village *elites*.
- Urban absorption of benefits from the rural community is continuing (migrants and resources) by taking advantages of the vague land tenure system, urban-biased policies and modern development discourse.
- The strong governments (at different levels), the greedy capital and local *elites* play together for profits, while the space of peasants livelihood has been narrowed down.
- Profits are privatized and costs are socialized.



*Thank you!*

**07.04.2011**