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*From Local to Upper Capture: The Chinese Experiment of Administrative Courts**

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Abstract

For decades, it has remained difficult for Chinese citizens to challenge government decisions through administrative litigation, as local governments control the crucial fiscal and personnel resources of the courts. In 2014, the Supreme People's Court (SPC) announced the decision to allow the newly integrated railway transport courts (RTCs) to accept and hear administrative cases. Unlike the local people's courts (LPCs), the RTCs are under the direct administration of the provincial high courts. Drawing on a unique dataset of more than 238,000 first-instance judgment records between 2015 and 2019, we study whether the RTCs' incorporation into the adjudication of administrative cases has improved Chinese citizens' chances of winning their cases. Our multivariate regression analysis shows that only at the primary level are the

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RTCs more likely than the LPCs to side with citizens. Moreover, the primary RTCs' pro-plaintiff effect becomes statistically insignificant when the cases concerned are filed against government agencies from higher administrative levels. We also find suggestive evidence indicating provincial governments' implicit influence over the RTCs. Overall, China's experiment of administrative courts has achieved partial success. The RTCs' leverage to evade the capture by local government agencies may remain constrained given their embeddedness in the current Chinese political system.

The history of China has seen numerous central rulers grappling with the challenge of exercising effective authority over a vast territory. For centuries, the rulers employed complex delegation systems comprising myriad multilevel local agents.[1] Still, it has often been difficult for them to stay informed and effectively monitor the actions of their local agents while imposing credible sanctions on those who are incompetent or abrogate their responsibilities. Since its introduction in 1989, administrative litigation has offered Chinese citizens a legal instrument to defend their rights against wrongful administrative actions.[2] In this vein, it also serves as a "fire-alarm" mechanism that allows the Communist Party of China (CPC or "the Party" hereafter) to discipline local government officials through the citizenry.[3]

In practice, however, administrative litigation has been characterized by various difficulties in "filing, hearing, and adjudicating."[4] As local governments have a crucial say in the personnel and budgetary matters of the local people's courts (LPCs), those courts are subject to a variety of formal and extrajudicial influences from their respective municipal (prefecture-level municipalities) (地級市 *dijishi*) and county (縣 *xian*) governments.[5] As a result, the LPCs, treated by local officials as their subordinates, are often unwilling to accept and hear administrative cases. Because the courts are likely to be incapable of providing them with a satisfactory remedy, many Chinese citizens hold a relatively low level of trust in the courts and have usually chosen to voice their discontent through petitions (信訪 *xinfang*) rather than litigation.[6]

The Party Center's most recent turnover in 2012 acted as a crucial watershed for administrative litigation in China. In 2013, the new Party leadership pledged to "deepen the reform" and "accelerate the construction of a just, efficient, and authoritative socialist judicial system."[7] The Party Center's determination prompted several critical changes in the

judicial system, including a shift in local governments' personnel and financial control over local courts to the provincial level.[8] Several judges and law scholars also launched extensive discussions, searching for possible means of tackling the difficulties associated with administrative litigation. Some focused on expanding the initiatives that had previously been experimented with by individual provincial courts, whereas others considered a separate court system for administrative cases. Inspired by the practice in a number of continental European countries, many envisioned placing the Chinese administrative court system under the direct control of the Supreme People's Court.[9]

During the 18th Central Committee's Fourth Plenum in 2014, the Party Center, focusing on the theme of "strengthening the rule of law in China," openly vowed to take concrete action to address the issues that had long plagued administrative litigation. Two important changes followed. First, in November 2014, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed the amended Administrative Litigation Law (ALL), which incorporated several previously adopted local initiatives, such as elevated jurisdiction (提級管轄 *tiji guanxia*) and off-site trials (異地審判 *yidi shenpan*).[10] Second, the SPC decided to create administrative divisions in select railway transport courts (RTCs) across the country.[11] First created in the early 1950s under the Ministry of Railways (鐵道部 *tiedao bu*), the RTCs were integrated into the general court system between 2010 and 2012.[12] As the newly integrated RTCs are administered by the provincial high courts, they present the SPC with a unique opportunity to extricate administrative litigation from unwarranted interventions by local governments.

Despite their importance, the RTCs have received little attention in the literature. Most studies have focused on off-site trials and other reforms that similarly attempt to reduce the local capture of administrative litigation.[13] None of them has paid attention to the RTCs and their impact on the adjudication of administrative cases. In this article, we seek to evaluate the reform that allows the RTCs to accept, hear, and adjudicate administrative cases based on an original dataset of more than 238,000 first-instance (一審 *yishen*) judgment records between 2015 and 2019. Perhaps the largest to date, our dataset documents a variety of details on each administrative case, thus providing us with a unique opportunity to compare the judgments delivered by the LPCs and RTCs. It also allows us to uncover many of the nuances concerning the RTCs' impact on administrative litigation in China. Our article joins recent

studies that have also employed rigorous quantitative techniques to examine the patterns of China's juridical practices and their implications.

Controlling for various case- and location-related confounders, our multilevel regression analysis shows that the RTCs appear to exercise different effects at the intermediate (中級 *zhongji*) and primary (基層 *jiceng*) levels. First, the RTCs seem more likely than the LPCs to render favorable judgments to citizens only at the primary level. However, their pro-plaintiff effect appears to be constrained by the presence of government agencies from higher administrative levels. Second, we find that defendants are less likely to be defeated in both intermediate and primary RTCs when the stakes of a loss for government agencies are high, as in cases involving intricate invested interests such as land use and demolition cases. We also find similar results for cases potentially jeopardizing political stability, such as those brought against local police departments. Finally, we find evidence suggesting that the RTCs may be subject to the implicit influence of provincial government agencies, as provincial defendants are significantly less likely to be defeated in both intermediate and primary RTCs, and the primary RTCs located in provincial capitals are also less likely to side with citizens. These last two findings may explain the varying effects exerted by the intermediate and primary RTCs.

Broadly speaking, China's experiment of administrative courts illustrates how a judicial reform that aims to strengthen the courts' independence can aid political survival. Nonetheless, the reform propsoed to turn the RTCs into quasi-administrative courts appears to have ultimately increased the influence of provincial government agencies. This article also speaks to the literature on decentralization and governance, as we demonstrate how a reform that seeks to curb administrative litigation captured by local government agencies can yield outcomes that vary by the level of court and administrative jurisdiction.

The rest of our article proceeds as follows. In Section 1, we briefly review the history of the RTCs in China and their incorporation into the adjudication of administrative cases. In Section 2, we introduce the original dataset of administrative cases for this study. We then explain the key variables included in our multilevel regression analysis. After presenting the main findings, we conduct various robustness checks and additional subsample analysis. Several tests help us address the nonrandom assignment of administrative cases to the RTCs and LPCs. In Section 3, we provide several tentative explanations for our main findings. In line with studies of court embeddedness and judicial corruption in

China, our findings suggest that the RTCs' leverage to overcome the capture by local administrative forces remains constrained. Despite their built-in detachment from municipal and county governments, the RTCs may still have to yield to their corresponding provincial government agencies that oversee the operations of the provincial high courts.[14] In Section 4, we conclude our study by reflecting on the RTCs' contribution to overall administrative litigation reform and suggest possible avenues for future research.

1. Railway Transport Courts in China

Following the former Soviet Union's court system, China first established RTCs in 1954, putting them under the command of the Ministry of Railways. While these RTCs existed for only three years, they were restored in the 1980s to hear cases pertaining to criminal offenses, business disputes, and other legal matters occurring within the railway transport system. Unlike the people's courts, the RTCs were set up only at the subnational level.[15] Between 2010 and 2012, as part of the broad reform seeking to strengthen the Chinese judiciary, all 17 intermediate and 58 primary RTCs were integrated into the general court system.

The integrated RTCs stand apart from their LPC counterparts in several notable ways. For one thing, the SPC placed the RTCs under the administration of their respective provincial high courts rather than corresponding local governments.[16] As a result, whereas the LPCs have long been facing formal or extrajudicial interference by their respective municipal and county governments, the RTCs have the potential to fulfill the ideals of administrative courts in China. In 2015, the SPC began to establish specialized divisions within select RTCs across the country to accept and hear administrative cases. In January of the same year, the intermediate RTCs in Beijing and Shanghai became the first to accept administrative cases.

As of 2019, ten intermediate and 29 primary RTCs, which account for more than half of the RTCs in China, undertake administrative cases (see Table 1).[17] These RTCs are present in 15 provinces and three municipalities under the direct administration of the central government (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin).[18] Nine provinces (Gansu, Guangdong, Guangxi, Henan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Shaanxi, Shanghai, and Yunnan) have both intermediate and primary RTCs that work as functional administrative courts. Regardless of court type, most administrative cases are accepted and

heard by the primary courts. The intermediate RTCs and LPCs hold jurisdiction over a relatively small number of administrative cases in the first instance, most of which are filed against people's governments (人民政府 *remin zhengfu*) at or above the county level.

Table 1: Intermediate and Primary RTCs with Administrative Tribunals, 2015–2019

	Railway Transport Courts (RTCs)
Intermediate Courts	Beijing (北京); Guangzhou (廣州); Kunming (昆明); Lanzhou (蘭州); Nanchang (南昌); Nanning (南寧); Shanghai (上海); Wuhan (武漢); Xi'an (西安); Zhengzhou (鄭州)
Primary Courts	Ankang (安康); Baicheng (白城); Guangzhou (廣州); Hangzhou (杭州); Hengyang (衡陽); Huaihua (懷化); Jilin (吉林); Jinan (濟南); Kaiyuan (開遠); Kunming (昆明); Lanzhou (蘭州); Liuzhou (柳州); Luoyang (洛陽); Nanchang (南昌); Nanning (南寧); Nanjing (南京); Qingdao (青島); Shanghai (上海); Tianjin (天津); Tonghua (通化); Wuhan (武漢); Xian (西安); Xining (西寧); Xuzhou (徐州); Yanbian (延邊); Yinchuan (銀川); Changchun (長春); Changsha (長沙); Zhengzhou (鄭州)

It should be noted that the RTCs do not necessarily hear every administrative case, with their exact jurisdiction varying by province.[19] For example, the Beijing Fourth Intermediate People's Court (the former Beijing Intermediate Railway Transport Court) has exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving all of the city's district and county people's governments. The Shanghai Third Intermediate People's Court (the former Shanghai Intermediate Railway Transport Court), in contrast, has exclusive jurisdiction only over cases filed against the people's government of Shanghai. The RTCs may also hold jurisdiction over a small number of non-administrative cases, such as those concerning food safety and environmental protection. For example, up to 2017, non-administrative cases accounted for about 25 percent of all cases accepted and heard by the Beijing Fourth Intermediate People's Court.[20] In principle, depending on the specific arrangements between the SPC and the provinces, the RTCs hold jurisdiction over cases that are considered prone to local governments' interference.

With the Party Center's explicit support, the reform that turned the RTCs into quasi-administrative courts is perhaps the most ambitious change since the introduction of administrative litigation in 1989. However, it remains unclear whether the RTCs have indeed helped to reduce the capture of administrative litigation by local government agencies. In the

next section, drawing on a uniquely large dataset of administrative cases, we will examine whether the RTCs are more likely than their LPC counterparts to provide citizens with a favorable judgment.

2. RTCs and the Adjudication of Administrative Cases

In this section, we first explain how we assembled a unique dataset of Chinese administrative cases for this study. Drawing from the dataset, we then define the key variables included in our multilevel regression analysis. Finally, we present the main findings with a detailed discussion of the robustness tests and additional subsample analysis.

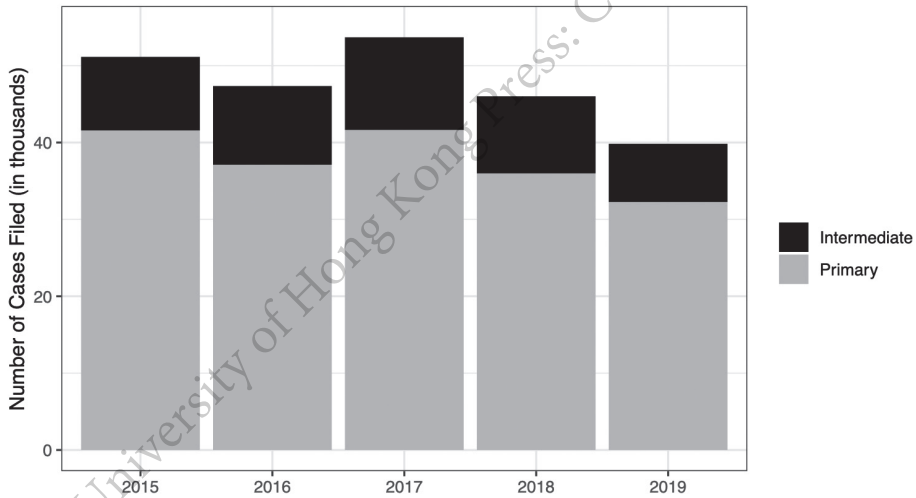
a. Data

In July 2020, through a special partnership with a technology company that works for the SPC, we acquired all publicly available court records of administrative cases after 2014.[21] Our dataset is the most comprehensive to date. While many studies have employed web scraping and other computational techniques to collect records from China Judgments Online (CJO),[22] we obtained the judgement records directly from the aforementioned company to avoid any unexpected loss of data during the scraping process. In addition, most studies retrieve judgment records manually and focus on specific provinces, whereas our dataset contains all publicly available administrative cases for the whole country.[23]

We also worked with the same company and our assistants to systematically extract a variety of crucial information about each administrative case. First, we created a list of variables to be retrieved from the judgment records. In addition to information on the plaintiff and defendant, the list also include other related details as the court location, dates of filing and adjudication, primary cause(s) of the litigation, and the judgment provided by the court. The company then employed various automatic text annotation models based on our preliminary specifications. After several adjustments, we applied the model that we considered relatively satisfactory for all records in the dataset. Finally, we had our assistants scrutinize a random thousandth (i.e., 1/1,000) of our records to verify whether the final model carried the annotations expected. For the variables included in the study (see below), the percentage of correct annotations ranges between 90 and 99 percent (average = 97.9 percent). We have also conducted additional tests to show these errors occur at random.

Our main objective is to evaluate whether the RTCs have been able to mitigate the capture of administrative litigation by local government agencies. Therefore, we have selected all first-instance judgment records between 2015 and 2019.[24] In our dataset, each observation is a unique record rendered by an LPC or RTC.[25] We then restrict our attention to cases that took place in prefecture-level municipalities. Our final sample contained more than 238,000 records, which accounted for 45 percent of all the administrative judgments and 20 percent of all the administrative cases in the same period.[26] As shown in figure 1, with the exception of 2019, more than 40,000 administrative cases were filed in China's LPCs and RTCs during the study period, with nearly 80 percent of them filed at the primary level.

Figure 1: Number of Administrative Cases, 2015–2019

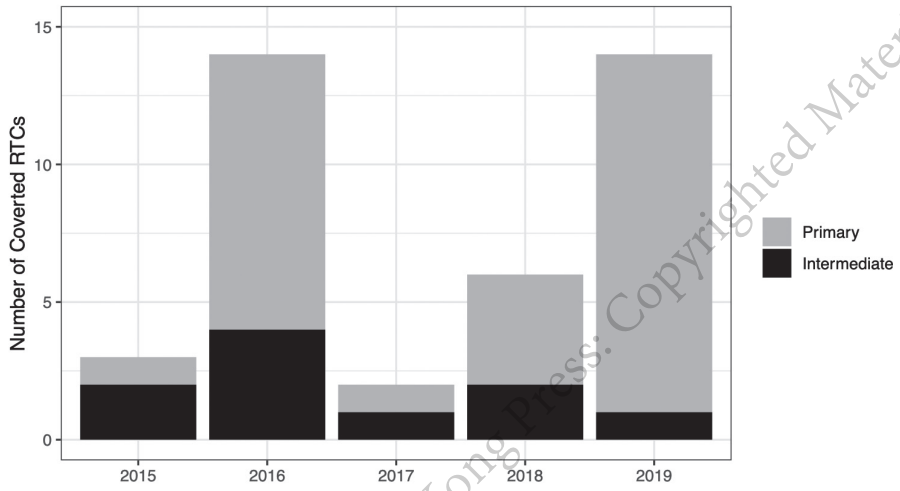


b. Variables

Our key explanatory variable is a binary indicator that equals 1 when a case's first-instance judgment was delivered by an RTC. The RTCs, being under the direct command of their provincial superiors, are supposed to be "immune" from being captured by their respective municipal and county governments. Figure 2 shows the increases in the number of RTCs undertaking administrative cases since 2015. Overall, 2016 and 2019 saw the largest number of RTCs becoming quasi-administrative courts, although most intermediate RTCs with administrative divisions

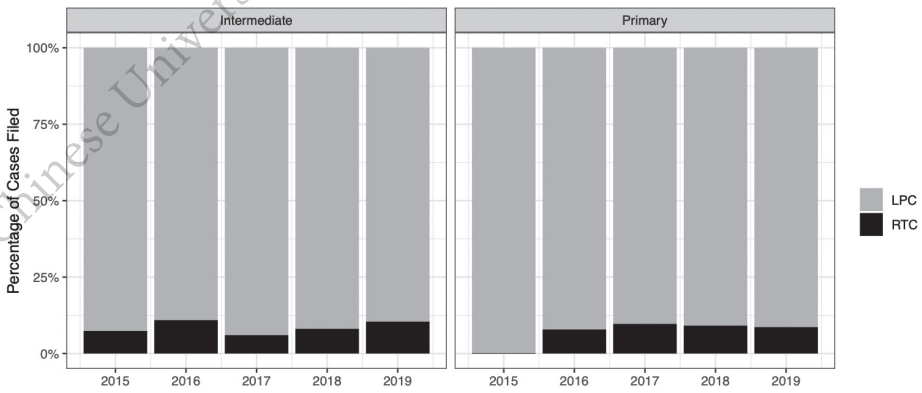
were set up between 2015 and 2016 (six out of ten). As for the primary level, the year of 2019 witnessed the largest number of new RTCs with administrative divisions (13).

Figure 2: Number of RTCs that Process Administrative Cases, 2015–2019



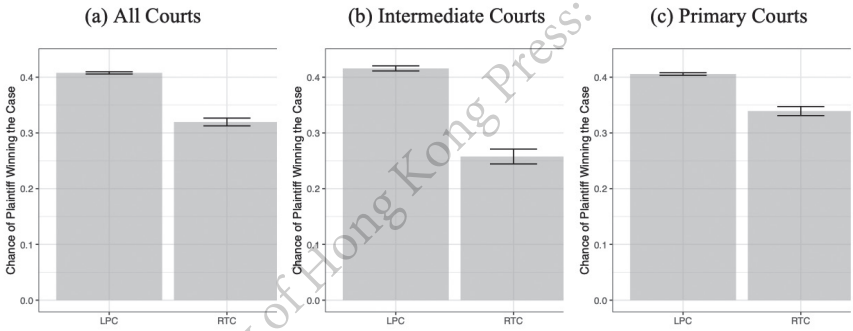
Notably, most administrative cases were still undertaken by the LPCs during the study period. As figure 3 shows, the RTCs delivered only about ten percent of the first-instance judgments.

Figure 3: Administrative Cases at LPCs and RTCs, 2015–2019



The dependent variable of interest is another binary indicator that takes the value of 1 when the plaintiff won the case in the first instance.[27] Between 2015 and 2019, plaintiffs won about 41 and 32 percent of the administrative cases filed in the LPCs and RTCs, respectively. As figure 4 shows, contrary to our expectation, it seems that plaintiffs are more likely to lose their case in the RTCs. A simple *t*-test reveals that the difference between the LPCs and RTCs (about nine percentage points) is statistically significant ($p < .001$). When we divide the courts by the level of jurisdiction, we find that the difference between the RTCs and LPCs in a plaintiff's chance of winning administrative litigation is slightly larger at the intermediate level. The observed differences here warrant further multivariate regression analysis.[28]

Figure 4: Plaintiff's Chance Winning, LPCs vs. RTCs—Error Bars Present 95 percent Confidence Intervals



To recap, we have decided to focus on plaintiff victory in our analysis because in the Chinese context administrative litigation is fraught with the undue dominance or advantage of government agencies over the citizenry. Furthermore, our decision to focus on whether or not the plaintiff won the case aligns with existing studies, and it is important to highlight that most reforms are aimed at increasing citizens' chances of winning in the courts.[29]

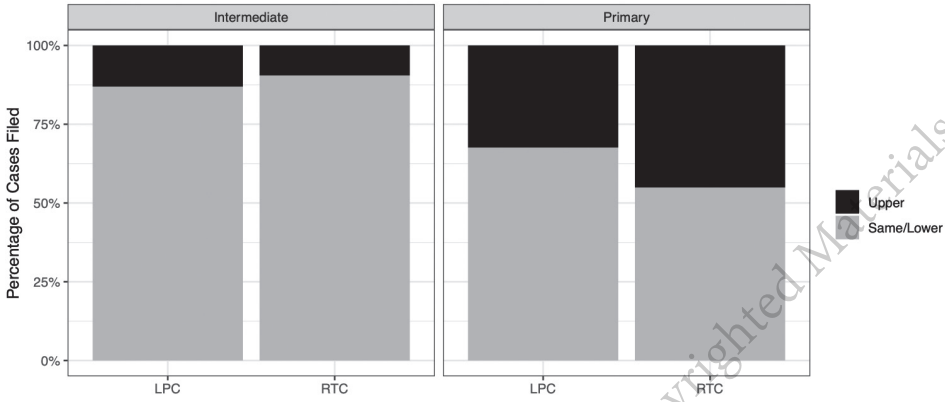
Our analysis considers various case- and location-specific covariates that may confound the correlation between our key explanatory (i.e., whether a case was filed and adjudicated by an RTC) and outcome variables (i.e., whether citizens won the case). To put it differently, these covariates allow us to account for a variety of observable factors that can influence the Center and/or provinces' decision to have the RTCs accept

and hear administrative cases, as well as the courts' judgments. Following other empirical studies, our the intuition is as follows: Holding as many relevant legal factors constant as possible, the observed significant differences (in terms of the first-instance judgments, for instance) among similar cases can be largely attributed to extra-legal factors.[30]

To begin with, the regression model controls for each case's administrative management field (行政管理領域 *xingzheng guanli lingyu*) (e.g., urban planning) and the type of administration action (行政行為 *xingzheng xingwei*) that triggered the litigation (e.g., administrative penalties) in the first place. These two categorical variables allow us to account for the political and economic stakes of a case, which can affect both case allocation and the court's judgment.[31] Previous studies have suggested that a court is more likely to deliver a defeat for the plaintiff if the case has the potential to threaten political stability.[32] We then include three binary variables that indicate whether the plaintiffs were a natural person (versus a legal person, such as a state-owned enterprise [SOE], private firm, or other social organizations), whether the plaintiffs were represented by a lawyer, and whether the plaintiffs were listed as a group of more than three individuals. Similarly, we included two binary variables to specify whether the defendant was represented by a lawyer and whether the case involved more than one government agency. The final model then included a binary variable indicating whether the case involved a third party (第三人 *disanren*). Although administrative litigations are filed against administrative decisions (e.g., permission for construction), cases can also involve other non-governmental actors. This variable is thus useful to illustrate how "complicated" a case can be.

In the analysis, we also include a binary indicator that takes the value of 1 if a case filed in the intermediate courts was against a central or provincial government agency (otherwise 0). For the primary courts, we code cases involving a municipal or higher government agency as 1 (otherwise 0). This variable allows us to examine whether court judgments differ when the defendant is from a higher-level administrative jurisdiction. One could suggest, for instance, that upper-level government agencies, compared with their lower-level counterparts, are more likely to be law-abiding and thus less likely to be defeated in administrative litigation. In figure 5, we can see that upper-level defendants account for only a small portion of the administrative cases in both intermediate LPCs and RTCs. In contrast, upper-level and same/lower-level defendants account for roughly the same portion for the primary RTCs.

Figure 5: Relative Level of Government Agencies



In addition to these case-related covariates, we have also included four variables to indicate the overall socioeconomic development of a municipality: foreign direct investment, GDP per capita, population size, and real estate investment.[33] These additional controls may be associated with the resources available for the courts to accept and hear cases, although it could be contended that they are also associated with local governments' bargaining power over local courts. Investment in the real estate sector may trigger more administrative cases involving land uses and demolition. All four variables are logged and lagged by one year.

c. Model Specification

We have decided to employ multilevel modeling techniques that consider individual outcomes as a function of both individual- and group-level covariates. For our purpose, we will use these techniques to model a court's first-instance judgment to an administrative case as a function of various case- and municipality-level control variables. Previous studies have offered several reasons for the use of multilevel models as an ideal alternative to classical regression models.[34] One of the most appealing motivations for this study is to address both observed and unobserved location-specific factors that may affect the courts' decisions across different municipalities. Given that our dataset also contains administrative cases across different years, we define the dependent variable (i.e., whether the plaintiff won the case) as a function of the explanatory and control variables (i.e., case- and municipality-level covariates) while having the intercept vary by year and municipality.

$$\text{Win}_{ijt} = \alpha_{jt} + \beta(\text{RTC})_{ijt} + \text{C}_{ijt}\kappa_1 + \text{M}_{jt}\kappa_2 + \varepsilon_{ijt},$$
$$\text{where } \alpha_{jt} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1(\text{Municipality})_j + \gamma_2(\text{Year})_t + \mu_{jt}.$$

In the baseline model, Win_{ijt} refers to the outcome variable – that is, whether the plaintiff won a case i in municipality j and year t. The terms $\text{C}_{ijt}\kappa_1$ and $\text{M}_{jt}\kappa_2$ denote the control variables (case- and municipality-related, respectively) and the vectors of their corresponding coefficients. Our decision to consider *Year* and *Municipality* in our multilevel or mixed-effect model allows us to account for any other unobserved location- and year-specific factors that determine the allocation of administrative cases between the RTCs and LPCs, as well as the court's judgment. Each province may use a different logic to assign administrative cases to the RTCs across different municipalities. There can also be significant unobserved changes during the period under study.

The primary coefficient of our interest is β. As mentioned above, if the RTCs, with their built-in detachment from their local governments, have achieved the expected outcome by providing a favorable judgment to citizens in administrative cases, the estimated β should be positive and statistically significant. A negative coefficient, in contrast, will suggest that the reform to turn the RTCs into quasi-administrative courts may have in fact exacerbated the established prevalence of local capture of administrative litigation. If the estimated β, finally, turns out to be statistically insignificant, it will show that the RTCs and LPCs are not (statistically) different from each other. The latter two scenarios will indicate that the reform has somewhat failed.

While the dependent variable is a binary indicator that takes the value of 0 or 1, we have chosen the multilevel linear model as our baseline estimator.[35] The reason is twofold. First, as we will conduct separate regressions to study whether the key correlations of interest differ significantly between the intermediate and primary courts, a linear model is more appropriate for the comparison of coefficients based on different sub-samples than a non-linear (e.g., logit or probit) model. Second, as we will also examine whether the correlation of interest will vary when the case involves upper-level government agencies (see below), a linear model makes it straightforward to model and interpret the interaction term.[36]

To avoid the bias caused by omitted variables, our baseline model includes all of the explanatory and control variables discussed in this section. Table 2 presents the summary statistics of these key case-related variables.

Table 2: Summary Statistics

(a) Intermediate Courts					
	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Plaintiff won (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,263	0.402	0.490	0	1
RTC (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.084	0.277	0	1
Plaintiff was natural person (Yes = 1, No = 0)	48,923	0.876	0.330	0	1
Plaintiff had lawyer (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.496	0.500	0	1
Plaintiff was a group (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.013	0.113	0	1
Defendant had lawyer (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.416	0.493	0	1
Defendant was a group (Yes = 1, No = 0)	47,590	0.159	0.365	0	1
Defendant from upper levels (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.128	0.334	0	1
Third party (Yes = 1, No = 0)	49,453	0.220	0.414	0	1
(b) Primary Courts					
	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Plaintiff won (Yes = 1, No = 0)	186,969	0.401	0.490	0	1
RTC (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.070	0.254	0	1
Plaintiff was natural person (Yes = 1, No = 0)	185,809	0.793	0.405	0	1
Plaintiff had lawyer (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.479	0.500	0	1
Plaintiff was a group (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.004	0.067	0	1
Defendant had lawyer (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.404	0.491	0	1
Defendant was a group (Yes = 1, No = 0)	182,370	0.170	0.376	0	1
Defendant from upper levels (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.333	0.471	0	1
Third party (Yes = 1, No = 0)	188,569	0.412	0.492	0	1

d. Main Results

We present the main results in Table 3. We divide our observations into intermediate (Models 1 and 2) and primary courts (models 3 and 4) to explore how the key coefficients vary by the level of court jurisdiction. In addition to the baseline model specification (models 1 and 3), we also include the interaction of *RTC* and *upper-level defendant* to examine whether the correlation between *RTC* and the first-instance judgment varies when the defendant is an upper-level government agency.[37]

Table 3: RTCs and the Plaintiff's Chance of Winning, 2015–2019

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.022*	-0.013	0.015*	0.025***
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.028***	-0.029***	0.098***	0.098***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.037***	0.037***	0.049***	0.049***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.118***	-0.118***	-0.007	-0.007
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.010**	0.010**	0.026***	0.026***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.0001	0.00001	0.005	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	-0.058***	-0.051***	-0.078***	-0.076***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Third party (= 1)	0.012*	0.012*	0.003	0.003
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)
FDI (log)	0.004	0.004	0.007***	0.007***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.035***	-0.035***	-0.042***	-0.042***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Population (log)	-0.039***	-0.039***	-0.015**	-0.015**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.021*	-0.021*	-0.027***	-0.027***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.006)
RTC x upper-level defendant		-0.066**		-0.020**
		(0.031)		(0.010)
Constant	1.418***	1.418***	1.276***	1.278***
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.091)	(0.091)
Observations	36,521	36,521	139,325	139,325
Log Likelihood	-20,851.010	-20,851.290	-80,143.930	-80,145.510
Akaike Inf. Crit.	41,904.020	41,906.570	160,499.900	160,505.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	42,763.090	42,774.150	161,543.400	161,558.400

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Two results are noteworthy. First, we find that the RTCs appear to exercise varying effects at different levels. At the intermediate level, the *RTC* coefficient—our main coefficient of interest—is negative and statistically significant at $p < .1$ in model (1). The *RTC* coefficients in both models (3) and (4) are positive and statistically significant, suggesting that the primary RTCs are associated with a *higher* chance of winning for citizens in administrative cases. In contrast, the intermediate RTCs, compared with their LPC counterparts at the same level of court jurisdiction, appear more likely to provide a favorable judgment to government agencies. Given that the plaintiffs won close to 50 percent of cases on average, the estimated coefficients suggest that the change caused by the RTCs may not be trivial.

Second, it appears that RTC's judgment is conditional on the defendant's administrative level. When the case is filed against a government agency above the RTC's jurisdictional level, the RTCs appear to be associated with a *lower* chance of the plaintiff winning the case. To put it differently, because the coefficients for *Defendant from upper levels* are consistently negative and significant at $p < .001$, which suggest that citizens who confront a defendant at a level higher than that of the court jurisdiction are significantly *less* likely to win, the interaction term's coefficients imply that the RTCs may even bolster upper-level government agencies' advantage in administrative cases.

Figure 6 illustrates the RTCs' estimated marginal effect, conditional on the presence of upper-level defendants, based on the results of models (2) and (4). Interestingly, compared with their primary counterparts, the intermediate RTCs seem to be under greater pressure from higher-level government agencies, as the estimated marginal effect is negative and significantly different from zero. As for the primary RTCs, given that the confidence interval of the estimated effects includes zero, the presence of upper-level defendants appears only to make the RTCs and LPCs no different from each other. In both scenarios, the RTCs do not favor citizens when cases are filed against government agencies from higher-level administrative jurisdictions.

The results so far indicate that citizens who file cases in the intermediate RTCs face a greater disadvantage when they confront upper-level defendants. Nonetheless, recall from figure 5 that upper-level defendants account for a relatively small proportion of the cases filed and heard at the intermediate RTCs (less than ten per cent). When the government agencies involved are from the same or a lower administrative level, the

RTCs do not discriminate against citizens any more than the LPCs do. For most cases filed at the intermediate level, the judgments rendered by the RTCs are not statistically different from those delivered by the LPCs. In Table 4, we summarize our findings with respect to the RTCs' conditional effect on administrative litigation in China.

Figure 6: Estimated Marginal Effect of RTCs, Conditional on the Presence of Upper-Level Defendant—Error Bars Present 95 percent Confidence Intervals

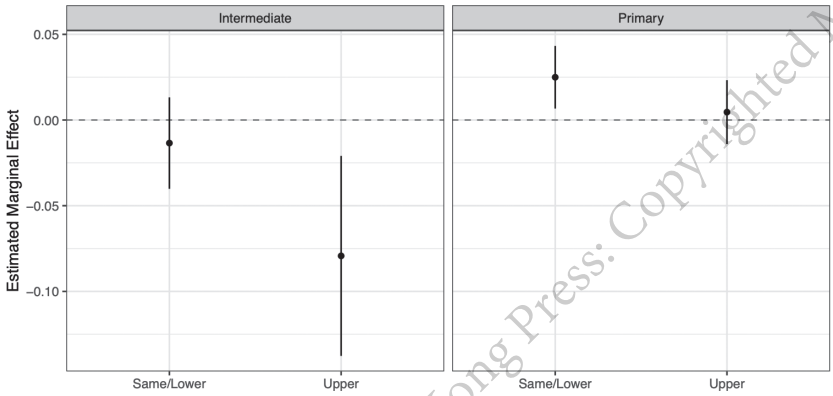


Table 4: Summary of RTCs' Conditional Effects

	Intermediate Courts	**Primary Courts**
Same/Lower-level Defendant	About the same as LPCs	More likely to render the plaintiff *favourable* judgments than the LPCs
Upper-level Defendant	More likely to render the plaintiff *unfavourable* judgments than the LPCs	About the same as LPCs

Although we are mainly interested in the estimated coefficients of *RTC* and *RTC x upper-level agencies*, the results of several control variables are worthy of attention and even further research. For instance, in the intermediate courts, SOEs, private firms, and other organizations acting as legal persons are more likely to win their cases against government agencies than are natural persons. Moreover, the presence of lawyers on both sides appears to increase citizens' chance of winning their case, although citizens do not fare any better when they file collective litigation in the intermediate courts. At the same level, plaintiffs are more likely to win their case when

the case includes a third party, perhaps because many cases associated with a third party involve conflicts between different individual citizens rather than between citizens and government agencies. A defendant's defeat in a case may thus not always lead to a substantial loss for a government agency. However, it remains to be explained why the same phenomenon is not observed for the primary courts. Finally, on average, plaintiffs seem to have less chance of winning their case in municipalities with higher average incomes, larger populations, and greater amounts of real estate investment.

e. Robustness Checks

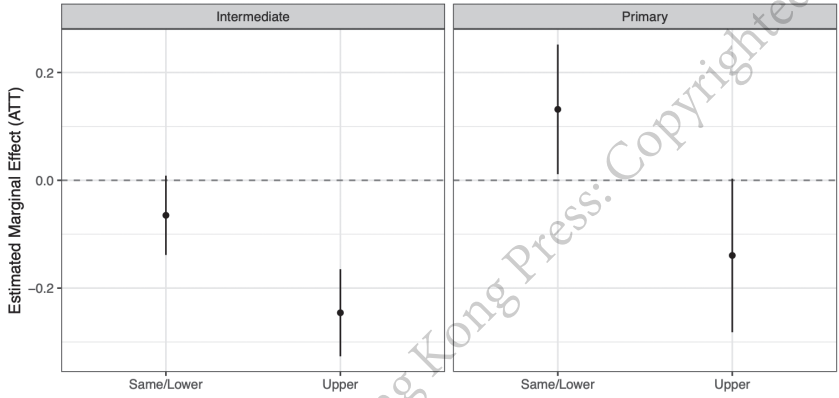
We have conducted several tests to ensure that our results do not depend on our modeling preference and the decision to include municipality-level predictors. These tests also help us address the issue of endogeneity. After all, whether a case filed and accepted by an RTC is by no means an entirely random process. All additional regression tables are available in the appendices. Overall, our main findings still hold.

First, as previously noted, we implement the same analysis with multilevel logit models (Appendix 2). Next, we exclude cases in provinces that have yet to convert at least one RTC and rerun the same analysis (Appendix 3). Doing so allows us to remove other unobserved confounders that can influence the Center or the provinces' decision to turn an RTC into a functional administrative court. For a similar reason, we also restrict our samples to the same types of cases (by administrative management field and the type of administration actions) to tease out the unobserved factors affecting whether a case is filed, accepted, and adjudicated by an RTC (Appendix 4).[38] Since the baseline model controls for municipality-level covariates that contain non-random missing values, we perform the same analysis without them (Appendix 5).

Lastly, following the assumption of selection on the observables (SOO), we conduct matching estimation, a common technique for causal identification based on non-experimental or observational data.[39] Intuitively, the SOO assumption asserts that one can identify, at least partially, the average treatment effect if observations in the study population are nearly identical based on observed pre-treatment covariates. In other words, the observations, in theory, should differ only with respect to the treatment status (i.e., whether an RTC delivered the judgment). In our estimations, we first use the logit model that includes all the control variables to estimate the propensity scores (i.e., the probability of a case being

assigned to an RTC) and match the observations based on the predicted probabilities. The model also includes the fixed effects to account for time- and location-specific unobservable confounders.[40] In figure 7, we present the average treatment effects among the treated (ATT) of the RTCs yielded by our matching estimations. Overall, the results are very similar to the main findings reported in figure 6.

Figure 7: Estimated Marginal Effect of RTCs (ATT), Conditional on the Presence of Upper-level Defendant (Matching with Propensity Score)—Error Bars Present 95 percent Confidence Intervals



f. Additional Subsample Analysis

Previous studies have indicated that the impact of China's administrative litigation reforms may be conditional upon several other factors. For instance, the courts may act differently in cases against local government agencies that play a vital role in maintaining political stability and social order, local police departments in particular.[41] One could also argue that judgments are also likely to depend on the type of case. For example, the courts may be more likely to favor citizens in cases with relatively low political stakes.

Here, we present the results of two additional tests.[42] The full regression tables are relegated to the appendices 6 and 7. First, we created additional subsamples using a binary variable indicating whether the case was filed against the local police department. As shown in Table 5, when that is the case, we find that both intermediate and primary RTCs are significantly less likely to provide citizens with a favorable judgment, at least in the first instance (models 1 and 2).[43] The main findings in table 3 still hold, in contrast, for cases against other government agencies.

Table 5: Cases Involving the Police Department vs. Other Cases

	Lawsuits w/ Police Dept		Other Lawsuits	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermediate	Primary	Intermediate	Primary
RTC (=1)	-0.686***	-0.051***	-0.024*	0.026***
	(0.225)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Observations	85	29,141	36,436	110,184

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Note: All multilevel linear models include the control variables. The full table is available in the appendix.

Second, we selected several administrative management fields and actions that are commonly considered "easy" or "difficult" cases for the courts to determine whether the results vary. We consider cases that pertain to government information disclosure as easy cases because there is often little at stake if the government agency loses to citizens in such cases. In contrast, cases triggered by local governments' decisions on land expropriation and demolition, a common source of protests in China, are viewed as difficult cases.[44] The results are presented in table 6. Our main findings are found to be driven primarily by cases with relatively low stakes, namely, easy cases (models 1 and 2). For cases that touch upon potentially intractable conflict between citizens and government agencies, in contrast, there is no statistical difference between the RTCs and LPCs (models 3 and 4). Hence, more research is needed to explore why the RTCs, as well as other judicial reforms in China, exhibit heterogeneous effects under different circumstances.

Table 6: Low-stake vs. High-stake Lawsuits

	Low Stakes		High Stakes	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermediate	Primary	Intermediate	Primary
RTC (=1)	-0.087***	0.057***	0.040	0.017
	(0.031)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.023)
Observations	4,254	14,974	13,200	18,834

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Note: All multilevel linear models include the control variables. The full table is available in the appendix.

3. Why Intermediate and Primary RTCs Have Varying Effects

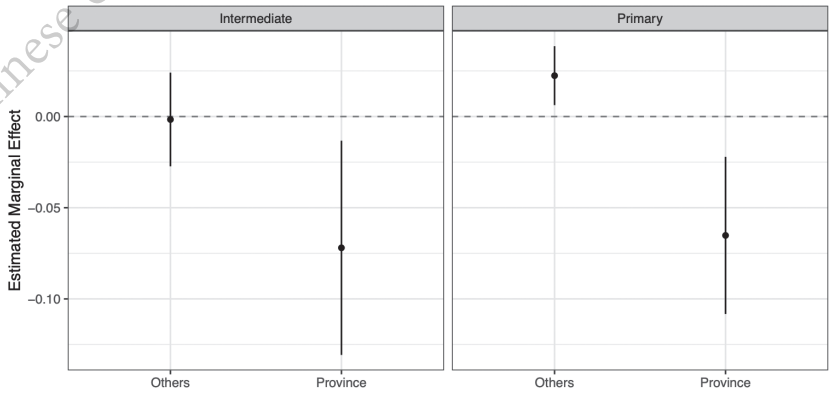
Our main findings suggest that the RTCs may have produced varying effects, conditional on the level of court jurisdiction. More specifically, it appears that the intermediate RTCs are *less* likely than the LPCs at the same level to grant citizens a favorable judgment when the case is against an upper-level government agency. At the primary level, in contrast, the RTCs are *more* likely than their LPC counterparts to side with citizens. This pro-plaintiff effect, however, is statistically significant only when cases are filed against government agencies at the same or a lower level. These findings warrant explanations. Why have the RTCs been unable to deliver judgments that favor the plaintiff when they encounter upper-level government agencies? Also, why do the RTCs appear to have achieved the desired outcome at the primary level, albeit conditionally? What explains their relative success at that level?

We posit that, while the RTCs' built-in detachment from local governments may help them resist the capture of administrative litigation by local government agencies, they may in fact be in a rather precarious position relative to the LPCs, especially when faced with interventions by upper-level government agencies. Given the Chinese courts' administrative and political embeddedness, the provincial high courts may be subject to similar formal or even extrajudicial influence from government agencies at the same level, as in the case of LPCs and their respective municipal or county government agencies. Since the SPC has placed the RTCs under the command of the provincial high courts, they are prone to the influence of their respective provincial government agencies and thus have a similar incentive to avoid adjudication that may compromise the interests of provincial government agencies.

Accordingly, the intermediate RTCs' proximity to provincial government agencies, both hierarchically and geographically, may further constrain their leverage to side with plaintiffs. First, the intermediate RTCs are likely to be under greater pressure than the primary RTCs, especially when a case concerns a defendant from an upper-level administrative jurisdiction, as such defendants can engage in lobbying and/or seek support via their connections with provincial governments and even central ministries. Second, every intermediate RTC is located in a provincial capital; in comparison, only about half of the primary RTCs are. Such proximity may provide additional interactive opportunities between the intermediate RTCs and provincial government agencies, which may in turn influence the RTCs' adjudication of administrative cases.

These explanations align with recent qualitative studies of judicial corruption in China, which suggest that the courts are likely to fall under the external influence of government agencies when the two are close to each other through various forms of organizational and spatial contact.[45] Here, we conduct two tests to illustrate our conjectures. Note that the statistical findings presented are only suggestive and await further qualitative evidence to uncover the exact mechanisms. First, we examine whether provincial defendants are indeed relatively privileged compared with defendants from other levels of government administration. To recap, the RTCs are under the direct administration of the provincial high courts, which in turn may face various formal or informal influences from their provincial governments, as in the case of the LPCs and their respective local governments. Therefore, it is likely that the RTCs may discriminate against citizens regardless of their jurisdictional level. We carry out an additional test, similar to the main analysis, but replace the binary indicator *Defendant from upper levels* (Table 3) with another binary variable that specifies whether the defendant is at the provincial level (otherwise 0). Figure 8 shows how the estimated *RTC* coefficient varies by the defendant's administrative level. Consistent with our conjecture, we find that both intermediate and primary RTCs are less likely to provide the plaintiff with a favorable first-instance judgment in the presence of a provincial defendant.[46] While previously we have shown that the primary RTCs' estimated impact ceases to be statistically significant when the defendant is above the county level, here we are able to further specify that their pro-citizen effect is particularly constrained by the presence of provincial defendants.

Figure 8: Estimated Marginal Effect of RTCs, Conditional on the Presence of Provincial Defendant—Error Bars Present 95 percent Confidence Intervals



Second, if operating in proximity to provincial governments indeed works against the RTCs, then we should observe the primary RTCs located in provincial capitals to be as similarly unlikely to favor citizens as their intermediate peers. The results in Table 7 are consistent with this hypothesis.

Table 7: Primary RTCs and the Plaintiff's Chance of Winning

	(1)	(2)
	In Capital	**Outside Capital**
RTC (= 1)	-0.022**	0.082***
	(0.011)	(0.014)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	0.087***	0.102***
	(0.007)	(0.004)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.052***	0.047***
	(0.005)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.079*	0.013
	(0.041)	(0.022)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.024***	0.026***
	(0.006)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	-0.001	0.006*
	(0.006)	(0.003)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	-0.104***	-0.068***
	(0.006)	(0.004)
Third party (= 1)	0.008	0.002
	(0.007)	(0.003)
FDI (log)	0.013**	0.006**
	(0.007)	(0.003)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.027	-0.043***
	(0.037)	(0.006)
Population (log)	-0.010	-0.015**
	(0.036)	(0.007)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.038*	-0.028***
	(0.023)	(0.006)
Constant	1.391***	1.283***
	(0.441)	(0.099)
Observations	31,511	107,814
Log Likelihood	-18,460.330	-61,615.910
Akaike Inf. Crit.	37,122.670	123,443.800
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	37,966.830	124,460.200

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Our findings speak to the broad political economy literature on governance and decentralization in developing countries. Since the 1980s, the supporters of decentralization have considered the transfer of fiscal resources and policymaking authority to subnational governments to be a key solution for improving government efficiency while boosting policy responsiveness and political accountability.[47] In China, the market reform that prompted nationwide fiscal and policy decentralization has been highlighted as a crucial factor in the country's remarkable economic growth by providing local officials with incentives to pursue innovative development strategies.[48] Nonetheless, as illustrated by recent studies of China and other countries, decentralization can also encourage the "capture" of administrative and elected political offices by local elites, cultivating rampant political corruption and impeding the provision of government services and local public goods.[49] A study of pro-poor distributions in India further shows that captured public agencies at the local level can even bring about different socioeconomic outcomes depending on the level of administrative jurisdiction. On the one hand, grassroots officials may have fewer incentives or less leverage to evade their designated duties, as it can be difficult to conceal crucial policy information from the public in local communities. On the other hand, deviation from assigned responsibilities is often more prevalent among mid-level public officials, as they are likely to face more lobbying and other subtle influence from higher-level principals. It seems that a similar logic can also account for the different effects of China's experiment of administrative courts.

4. Conclusion

In this article, we examine a uniquely large dataset of first-instance judgment records in China to investigate whether permitting the RTCs to accept and hear administrative cases has brought about any significant changes. Controlling for various case- and location-specific covariates, we find that the RTCs, compared with their LPCs counterparts, are only more likely to provide Chinese citizens with a favorable judgment at the primary level. However, the estimated pro-plaintiff effect of the primary RTCs is reduced to statistical insignificance when the defendant is from a higher-level administrative jurisdiction. In the presence of upper-level defendants, the intermediate RTCs are significantly less likely to side with citizens. Additional tests further reveal that whether the RTCs can effectively reduce the local capture of administrative cases also seems to depend on the stakes

at play. Furthermore, both intermediate and primary RTCs are more likely to render judgments in favor of provincial defendants. The primary RTCs located in the same city as the government are also more likely to favor government agencies. To clarify, our results by no means imply that the intermediate RTCs are less likely than the primary RTCs to take citizens' side. Our aim is only to evaluate the differences between the RTCs and LPCs at two levels of court jurisdiction.

Overall, our results suggest that China's experiment of administrative court has achieved some success. The RTCs' leverage to evade local capture nonetheless depends on a number of structural factors that had existed before the reform. While the RTCs seem to remain constrained by government agencies from higher levels, we also find that provincial governments appear to exert some influence, most likely in an implicit manner, over the RTCs' adjudication of administrative cases. Although we show that granting the courts some independence can improve citizens' chances of winning administrative cases to some degree, our findings also align with the conventional wisdom: given their administrative, political, and economic embeddedness, the courts remain subject to various sources of external intervention within the Chinese political system. Future reforms will have to continue to strengthen the courts against the influence—both formal and informal—of government agencies. A possible solution might be to place the RTCs, or even the entire LPC system, under the direct command of the SPC rather than the provincial high courts.

Much more research also remains to be done. As the first next step, we plan to incorporate second-instance judgments, which are currently undergoing a similar process of automatic information retrieval, into our analysis. Including second-instance judgments will allow us to gain a comprehensive picture of the RTCs' impact on the adjudication of administrative cases. In another ongoing project, we plan to study how the experiment of administrative courts can affect their efficiency in delivering judgments, as well as the economic costs of litigation for both plaintiffs and defendants. It is also important to consider the RTCs' impact in tandem with other initiatives that similarly aim to mitigate or even eliminate various external influences on the courts. The introduction of off-site trials and elevated jurisdiction is worthy of consideration. Finally, future research should probe into the underlying logic of judges' decision-making in the LPCs and RTCs, possibly based on the insights produced by both quantitative and qualitative approaches, such as structured surveys, comparative case studies, and expert interviews.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Number of Administrative Cases and the Percentage of Lawsuits Filed at RTCs (By Province), 2015–2019

	Intermediate Courts					Primary Courts				
	LPC		RTC		%	LPC		RTC		%
Anhui	2,051	(16)	-		-	7,970	(111)	-		-
Beijing	1,822	(3)	1,921	(1)	51.3%	10,856	(16)	-		-
Fujian	1,594	(9)	-		-	4,789	(76)	-		-
Gansu	669	(12)	123	(1)	15.5%	884	(47)	260	(1)	22.7%
Guangdong	1,569	(21)	244	(1)	13.5%	14,095	(113)	4,596	(1)	24.6%
Guangxi	1,706	(14)	49	(1)	2.8%	4,161	(102)	286	(2)	6.4%
Guizhou	2,880	(6)	-		-	4,077	(45)	-		-
Hainan	1,236	(2)	-		-	920	(6)	-		-
Hebei	1,068	(11)	-		-	8,020	(141)	-		-
Henan	5,626	(18)	1,078	(1)	16.1%	14,739	(164)	509	(2)	3.3%
Hubei	1,059	(12)	32	(1)	2.9%	5,545	(88)	60	(2)	1.1%
Hunan	2,749	(13)	-		-	10,817	(117)	413	(3)	3.7%
Jiangsu	2,173	(13)	-		-	8,646	(88)	1,869	(2)	17.8%
Jiangxi	1,420	(11)	43	(1)	2.9%	3,859	(93)	1,031	(1)	21.1%
Jilin	1,233	(8)	-		-	4,301	(55)	154	(4)	3.5%
Liaoning	1,142	(14)	-		-	5,494	(82)	-		-
Shandong	4,177	(17)	-		-	12,417	(141)	42	(1)	0.3%
Shanghai	263	(2)	135	(1)	33.9%	7,101	(17)	1,283	(1)	15.3%
Shanxi	753	(11)	-		-	3,338	(63)	-		-
Sichuan	1,592	(18)	-		-	10,268	(124)	-		-
Tianjin	259	(3)	-		-	3,127	(16)	6	(1)	0.2%
Yunnan	688	(8)	43	(1)	5.9%	1,913	(64)	138	(1)	6.7%
Zhejiang	3,206	(11)	-		-	12,461	(90)	340	(1)	2.7%

Note: The number of courts is in parenthesis.

Appendix 2: Correlates of Plaintiff Winning (Multilevel Logit Models)

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.140*	-0.091	0.080*	0.159***
	(0.075)	(0.077)	(0.047)	(0.052)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.161***	-0.165***	0.508***	0.507***
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.206***	0.204***	0.262***	0.261***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.668***	-0.669***	-0.040	-0.037
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.097)	(0.097)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.065**	0.065**	0.128***	0.129***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.007	0.006	0.024	0.024
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	0.080**	0.078**	0.012	0.010
	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Third party (= 1)	-0.374***	-0.322***	-0.404***	-0.389***
	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.017)	(0.018)
FDI (log)	0.012	0.013	0.035**	0.035**
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.014)	(0.014)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.187***	-0.187***	-0.232***	-0.232***
	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Population (log)	-0.206***	-0.205***	-0.095***	-0.094***
	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.036)	(0.036)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.101*	-0.101*	-0.137***	-0.138***
	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.030)	(0.030)
RTC x upper-level defendant		-0.900***		-0.195***
		(0.272)		(0.058)
Constant	4.872***	4.855***	4.382***	4.387***
	(0.973)	(0.972)	(0.495)	(0.495)
Observations	36,521	36,521	139,325	139,325
Log Likelihood	-19,632.780	-19,626.320	-75,701.670	-75,696.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	39,465.550	39,454.640	151,613.300	151,604.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	40,316.120	40,313.710	152,647.000	152,647.500

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Appendix 3: Correlates of Plaintiff Winning (Selected Provinces)

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.012	0.015	0.016**	0.027***
	(0.015)	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.025*	-0.027**	0.076***	0.076***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.032***	0.031***	0.039***	0.039***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.072**	-0.073**	-0.017	-0.017
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.022)	(0.022)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.011	0.011	0.023***	0.024***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.007	0.006	0.006*	0.006*
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	-0.005	-0.008	0.001	0.001
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Third party (= 1)	-0.049***	-0.009	-0.074***	-0.072***
	(0.017)	(0.020)	(0.004)	(0.004)
FDI (log)	-0.005	-0.005	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.004)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.034	-0.037	-0.038***	-0.038***
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Population (log)	0.070*	0.067	-0.016**	-0.016**
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.043*	-0.042*	-0.015**	-0.015**
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.007)	(0.007)
RTC x upper-level defendant		-0.128***		-0.022**
		(0.037)		(0.010)
Constant	1.294***	1.316***	1.144***	1.147***
	(0.413)	(0.412)	(0.112)	(0.112)
Observations	13,487	13,487	91,909	91,909
Log Likelihood	-7,998.427	-7,994.791	-51,553.380	-51,554.640
Akaike Inf. Crit.	16,190.850	16,185.580	103,316.800	103,321.300
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	16,919.270	16,921.510	104,306.800	104,320.700

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Appendix 4: Correlates of Plaintiff Winning (Selected Administrative Management Fields and Administrative Actions)

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.022*	-0.013	0.015*	0.025***
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.028***	-0.029***	0.098***	0.098***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.037***	0.037***	0.049***	0.049***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.118***	-0.118***	-0.007	-0.007
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.010**	0.010**	0.026***	0.026***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.0001	0.00001	0.005	0.005
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	0.012*	0.012*	0.003	0.003
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Third party (= 1)	-0.058***	-0.051***	-0.078***	-0.076***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.003)
FDI (log)	0.004	0.004	0.007***	0.007***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.035***	-0.035***	-0.042***	-0.042***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Population (log)	-0.039***	-0.039***	-0.015**	-0.015**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.021*	-0.021*	-0.027***	-0.027***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.006)
RTC x upper-level defendant		-0.066**		-0.020**
		(0.031)		(0.010)
Constant	1.418***	1.418***	1.276***	1.278***
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.091)	(0.091)
Observations	36,520	36,520	139,325	139,325
Log Likelihood	-20,850.830	-20,851.110	-80,143.930	-80,145.510
Akaike Inf. Crit.	41,903.670	41,906.220	160,499.900	160,505.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	42,762.740	42,773.800	161,543.400	161,558.400

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Appendix 5: Correlates of Plaintiff Winning (No Municipality-Level Predictors)

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.027**	-0.015	0.013*	0.017**
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.024***	-0.024***	0.102***	0.101***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.037***	0.037***	0.051***	0.051***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.083***	-0.083***	0.005	0.005
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.016***	0.016***	0.023***	0.023***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.003	0.003	0.006**	0.006**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	0.009	0.008	0.006**	0.006**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Third party (= 1)	-0.061***	-0.052***	-0.081***	-0.080***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.003)
RTC x upper-level defendant		-0.076***		-0.008
		(0.027)		(0.009)
Constant	0.532***	0.531***	0.389***	0.389***
	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Observations	44,142	44,142	168,075	168,075
Log Likelihood	-24,780.300	-24,779.120	-96,129.230	-96,132.610
Akaike Inf. Crit.	49,754.600	49,754.230	192,462.500	192,471.200
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	50,598.030	50,606.360	193,485.700	193,504.500

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Appendix 6: Cases Against Police Department vs. Other Cases

	Cases against Police Dept		Other Cases	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermediate	Primary	Intermediate	Primary
RTC (= 1)	-0.686***	-0.051***	-0.024*	0.026***
	(0.225)	(0.015)	(0.013)	(0.009)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	0.094	0.050***	-0.028***	0.101***
	(0.125)	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.004)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	-0.197**	0.041***	0.038***	0.049***
	(0.098)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-	-0.084	-0.118***	-0.003
	-	(0.133)	(0.021)	(0.020)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	-0.131	0.034***	0.010**	0.022***
	(0.114)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.036	0.013**	-0.00004	0.003
	(0.085)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	0.398**	-0.010	-0.057***	-0.091***
	(0.195)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.003)
Third party (= 1)	-0.250	0.053***	0.012*	-0.005
	(0.155)	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.003)
FDI (log)	0.186	-0.001	0.004	0.010***
	(0.134)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.467	-0.012	-0.035***	-0.046***
	(0.368)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.006)
Population (log)	-0.680	-0.004	-0.039***	-0.015**
	(0.421)	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.007)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.048	-0.018*	-0.021*	-0.034***
	(0.200)	(0.009)	(0.011)	(0.006)
Constant	8.469**	0.709***	1.417***	1.412***
	(3.871)	(0.150)	(0.181)	(0.101)
Observations	85	29,141	36,436	110,184
Log Likelihood	-22.127	-12,770.570	-20,812.100	-65,815.050
Akaike Inf. Crit.	92.254	25,657.140	41,826.200	131,842.100
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	150.877	26,137.380	42,685.030	132,860.800

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Appendix 7: Low- vs. High-Stake Cases

	Low Stakes		High Stakes	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Intermediate	Primary	Intermediate	Primary
RTC (= 1)	-0.087***	0.057***	0.040	0.017
	(0.031)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.023)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	0.002	-0.020	-0.041***	-0.045***
	(0.033)	(0.017)	(0.015)	(0.010)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.095***	0.006	0.031***	0.057***
	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.038	-0.002	-0.160***	0.020
	(0.076)	(0.041)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.003	0.029***	-0.014*	0.019***
	(0.017)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.048***	0.008	0.005	-0.007
	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Defendant from upper levels (= 1)	-0.112***	-0.114***	0.012	-0.127***
	(0.025)	(0.010)	(0.023)	(0.009)
Third party (= 1)	0.042	0.028	0.037***	0.024***
	(0.042)	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.009)
FDI (log)	0.010	-0.012	0.010	0.015**
	(0.014)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.091***	-0.040**	-0.057***	-0.058***
	(0.033)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Population (log)	-0.133***	0.001	-0.039**	-0.039**
	(0.037)	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.012	-0.047***	-0.043***	-0.019
	(0.027)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.014)
Constant	2.633***	1.895***	1.853***	1.593***
	(0.467)	(0.240)	(0.247)	(0.211)
Observations	4,254	14,974	13,200	18,834
Log Likelihood	-2,524.905	-9,018.273	-7,137.397	-11,823.580
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,165.810	18,176.550	14,354.790	23,735.170
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	5,534.435	18,709.530	14,654.310	24,080.280

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***p < .01.

Appendix 8: Correlates of Plaintiff Winning (Provincial Defendants)

	Intermediate Courts		Primary Courts	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
RTC (= 1)	-0.009	-0.002	0.015*	0.022***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Plaintiff was natural person (= 1)	-0.028***	-0.029***	0.102***	0.102***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff had lawyer (= 1)	0.038***	0.037***	0.049***	0.049***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Plaintiff was a group (= 1)	-0.116***	-0.116***	-0.011	-0.011
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Defendant had lawyer (= 1)	0.010**	0.010**	0.026***	0.026***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant was a group (= 1)	0.00000	-0.00004	0.006*	0.006*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Defendant from provincial level (= 1)	-0.060***	-0.054***	-0.071***	-0.062***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Third party (= 1)	0.012*	0.012*	0.002	0.001
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.003)
FDI (log)	0.004	0.004	0.007***	0.007***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)
GDP per capita (log)	-0.035***	-0.035***	-0.042***	-0.042***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Population (log)	-0.039***	-0.039***	-0.013**	-0.013**
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Real estate investment (log)	-0.021*	-0.021*	-0.028***	-0.029***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.006)
RTC x provincial defendant		-0.070**		-0.088***
		(0.030)		(0.022)
Constant	1.416***	1.416***	1.264***	1.267***
	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.091)	(0.091)
Observations	36,508	36,508	139,192	139,192
Log Likelihood	-20,841.590	-20,841.490	-80,315.420	-80,310.630
Akaike Inf. Crit.	41,885.180	41,886.980	160,842.800	160,835.300
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	42,744.210	42,754.520	161,886.300	161,888.500

*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Notes

1 Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 81–95.

2 Minxin Pei, "Citizens v. Mandarins: Administrative Litigation in China," *China Quarterly*, No. 152 (1997), pp. 832–962; Kevin O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Suing the Local State: Administrative Litigation in Rural China," *The China Journal*, Vol. 51 (2004), pp. 76–96.

3 Tom Ginsburg, "Administrative Law and the Judicial Control of Agents in Authoritarian Regimes," in *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*, edited by L. Tom Ginsburg and Tamir Moustafa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 58–72.

4 Haibo He, "Kundun de xingzheng susong" (The Predicaments of Administrative Litigation), *Huadong zhengfa daxue xuebao* (Journal of East China University of Political Science and Law), Vol. 81 (2012), pp. 86–96.

5 Kwai Hang Ng and Xin He, *Embedded Courts: Judicial Decision-Making in China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1–30.

6 Carl F. Minzner, "*Xinfang*: An Alternative to Formal Chinese Legal Institutions," *Stanford Journal of International Law*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2006), pp. 103–180; Tangbiao Xiao, "Xinfang zhengzhi de bianqian ji qi gaige" (The Evolution and Reform of the Politics of Xinfang), *Jingji shehui tizhi bijiao* (Comparative Economic & Political Systems), No. 1 (2014), pp. 127–136.

7 Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu quanmian shenhua gaige ruogan zhongda wenti de jueding (Decision of the CCCPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reform), 12 November 2013, http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2013-11/15/content_2528179.htm.

8 However, the general reform that sought to "centralize" the Chinese judiciary to the provincial level may still have been unable to rid the local courts of the influence from their respective local governments. See Yueduan Wang, "'Detaching' Courts from Local Politics? Assessing the Judicial Centralization Reforms in China," *China Quarterly*, No. 246 (2020), pp. 545–564.

9 Compared with the administrative courts in Germany and several other European countries, the proposed Chinese administrative courts would act as a separate court system under the SPC's centralized command rather than as a court system on its own. See Bixin Jiang, "Zhongguo xingzheng shenpan tizhi gaige yanjiu" (Research on China's Administrative Adjudication System Reform), *Xingzheng faxue yanjiu* (Administrative Law Review), No. 4 (2013), pp. 3–11; Huaide Ma, "Xingzheng shenpan tizhi gaige de mubiao: Sheli xingzheng fayuan" (Creating Administrative Courts for the Reform of Administrative Litigation System), *falü shiyong* (National Judge College Law Journal), No. 7 (2013), pp. 8–11. Jiang and Ma, serving as the

SPC's Vice President (2007–2020) and the Chairperson of the Chinese Administrative Law Society (2012–present), respectively, were the leading advocates for the Chinese experiment with administrative courts.

10 Haibo He, "How Much Progress Can Legislation Bring? The 2014 Amendment of the Administrative Litigation Law of PRC," *The University of Pennsylvania Asian Law Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2018), pp. 137–190.

11 With very few exceptions, the majority of RTCs had to establish an administrative division before they could begin accepting and hearing administrative cases.

12 Exiang Wan (ed.), *Zhuanmen fayuan gaige de lujing yu chengxiao* (The Paths of Specialized Courts' Reform and Their Effects) (Beijing: People's Court Press, 2013), pp. 104–108.

13 Björn Ahl, Lidong Cai, and Chao Xi, "Data-Driven Approaches to Studying Chinese Judicial Practice: Opportunities, Challenges, and Issues," *The China Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2019), pp. 1–14. Recent studies have applied a variety of advanced quantitative methods to study different samples of administrative cases. See Yanglong Chang, Xiaoning Long, and Lei Meng, "Yidi shenli sifa dulixing yu faguan caijue" (Off-Site Trial, Judicial Independence, and Judge's Verdict), *Jingjixue jikan* (China Economic Quarterly), Vol. 19, No. 1 (2019), pp. 101–120; Hui Zhou, Junqiang Liu, Jiang He, and Jianxin Cheng, "Conditional Justice: Evaluating the Judicial Centralization Reform in China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 30 (2021), pp. 434–450.

14 Ng and He, *Embedded Courts*; Juan Wang and Sida Liu, "Institutional Proximity and Judicial Corruption: A Spatial Approach," *Governance* (2021), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/gove.12594.

15 The Railway Transport High Court existed briefly upon the reintroduction of the RTCs, but was abolished in 1987.

16 See SPC, Ministry of Railway, etc., "Guanyu tielu fayuan jianchayuan guanli tizhi gaige ruogan wenti de yijian" (Opinions on Several Issues Concerning the Reform of the Management System of the Railway Court Procuratorate), tie zheng fa (2010) 238, 7 December 2010.

17 SPC Administrative Division, *Xingzheng susong kuaquhua guanxia gaige shijian yu tansuo* (The Practice and Exploration of Cross-regional Administrative Litigation Reform) (Beijing: People's Court Press, 2018). The SPC Administrative Division documented all RTCs with administrative divisions prior to 2018. We conducted additional research to locate other instances that took place between 2018 and 2019.

18 Appendix 1 provides the respective number of LPCs and RTCs, as well as the number of administrative cases filed at each across different provinces.

19 The variation across different provinces in terms of the RTCs' exact jurisdiction over administrative cases is one of the reasons for our decision to employ multilevel models.

20 Jindong Yang and Hui Zou, "Beijing sizhongyuan zhaokai jianyuan liang zhounian xinwen tongbao hui" (The Beijing Fourth Intermediate People's Court Held the Press Conference for Its Second Anniversary), *China Court*, 5 January 2017.

21 Chao Ma, Xiaohong Yu, and Haibo He, "Dashuju fenxi: Zhongguo sifa caipan wenshu shangwang gongkai baogao" (Big Data Analysis: Report on the Publication of Chinese Judicial Decisions on the Internet), *Zhongguo falü pinglun* (China Law Review), No. 4 (2016), pp. 195–246; Jinjing Yang, Hui Qin, and Haibo He, "Caipan wenshu shangwang gongkai de zhongguo shijian: Jinzhan, wenti yu wanshan (China's Practices on the Publication of Judicial Decisions on the Internet: Progress, problems and perfection), *Zhongguo falü pinglun* (China Law Review), No. 6 (2019), pp. 125–147.

22 https://wenshu.court.gov.cn/

23 Benjamin L. Liebman, Margaret E. Roberts, Rachel E. Stern, and Alice Z. Wang, "Mass Digitization of Chinese Court Decisions: How to Use Text as Data in the Field of Chinese Law," *Journal of Law and Courts*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2020), pp. 177–201. See also Chang, Long, and Meng, "Yidi shenli sifa dulixing yu faguan caijue" and Zhou, Liu, He, and Cheng, "Conditional Justice."

24 More specifically, we include all cases that were filed and provided first-instance judgments between 2015 and 2019. We do not include judgments delivered in 2020 because many local courts have yet to release their records.

25 In our analysis, we do not consider judgments delivered by specialized courts, such as the intellectual property courts and the courts in special economic development zones.

26 A large part of the administrative cases ended up with the plaintiff's withdrawal, which was usually resulted from the court's mediation. For discussion on judicial practice in the previous years, see Haibo He, "Litigations without a Ruling: The Predicaments of Administrative Law in China," *Tsinghua China Law Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2011), pp. 257–281; Michael Palmer, "Mediating State and Society: Social Stability and Administrative Suits," in *The Politics of Law and Stability in China*, edited by Elisa Nesossi , Flora Sapio and Sarah Biddulph (London: Edwin Elgar, 2014), pp. 107–126.

27 According to the most recent ALL, the courts can provide one of the following four types of judgment in favor of the plaintiff. More specifically, they can amend the original administrative decisions that triggered the litigation in the first place (*biangeng*). A court may also revoke the original judgment (*chexiao*) or require the defendant to carry out actions promised by it or mandated by law and/or provide compensation to the plaintiff (*zeling*). Finally, the court may confirm that the administrative decisions in question are unlawful or even void (*queren weifa huo wuxiao*). We code these

situations as the plaintiff "winning" the case. In contrast, judgments that deny the plaintiff's demands are coded as a plaintiff defeat.

28 According to the official statistics in the *Law Yearbook of China*, plaintiffs won about 31 and 31.5 percent of administrative cases in 2015 and 2016, respectively, whereas our data show a slightly higher percentage of plaintiff winning in both years (36.9 and 38 percent). Further research reveals that the discrepancies result from how CJO releases judgment records. If the plaintiff and/or the defendant decided to appeal, and the court ruled rules to overturn the first-instance judgment, CJO would show the record of the second-instance judgment alone. Given that in practice it is usually the plaintiff that decided to appeal a case, our dataset may exclude a fair number of administrative cases won by government agencies. It is thus possible that we would overestimate the positive effect of the RTCs if we found them more likely to render judgments in favor of citizens. However, our conjectures remain largely speculative. The *Law Yearbook of China* stopped reporting comparable judgment statistics after 2017, for one thing. Also, the yearbooks did not break down the statistics by the level of court jurisdiction, so we cannot be certain whether such bias is more prevalent among the intermediate or primary courts. It should also be noted that the yearbooks did not divide the statistics by court type (i.e., LPCs versus RTCs).

29 He, "Kundun de xingzheng susong," pp. 90–91; and Zhou, Liu, He, and Cheng, "Conditional Justice," p. 440.

30 Chang, Long, and Meng, "Yidi shenli sifa dulixing yu faguan caijue"; Zhou, Liu, He, and Cheng, "Conditional Justice."

31 In our dataset, each case is assigned a distinct administrative management field, as well as a specific administration action. All regression models include these two categorical variables.

32 Zhou, Liu, He, and Cheng, "Conditional Justice," pp. 445–447.

33 Ji Li, "Suing the Leviathan: An Empirical Analysis of the Changing Rate of Administrative Litigation in China," *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2013), pp. 815–846.

34 Studies of American public opinion have extensively employed multilevel models to improve their estimations of voters' ideological and political preferences with a variety of individual and geographical variables. See Devin Caughey and Christopher Warshaw, "Public Opinion in Subnational Politics," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2019), pp. 353–363.

35 Richard Breen, Kristian Bernt Karlson, and Anders Holm, "Interpreting and Understanding Logits, Probits, and Other Nonlinear Probability Models," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 44 (2018), pp. 39–54.

36 We have also carried out the same analysis with multilevel logit models as one of the robustness checks. The results are similar in terms of the sign of the estimated coefficients and the level of statistical significance.

37 The ANOVA test suggests that including the interaction term significantly improves the model fit for both subsamples ($p < 0.05$).
38 We have also performed carried additional analysis with both restrictions (i.e., provinces with at least one RTC and the type of cases judged by the RTCs) in place. The main results still hold.
39 Elizabeth Williamson, Ruth Morley, Alan Lucas, and James Carpenter, "Propensity Scores: From Naïve Enthusiasm to Intuitive Understanding," *Statistical Methods in Medical Research*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2011), pp. 273–293.
40 Matthew Blackwell and Soichiro Yamauchi, "Adjusting for Unmeasured Confounding in Marginal Structural Models with Propensity-Score Fixed Effects," The Annual Summer Meeting of the Political Methodology Society (2021), https://arxiv.org/pdf/2105.03478.pdf.
41 Zhou, Liu, He, and Cheng, "Conditional Justice," pp. 445–447.
42 To streamline our discussion, here we only focus on the results of the baseline model (i.e., the model without the interaction term).
43 The results should be taken with caution, however, given that we only have few observations in Model (1).
44 Yongshun Cai, "Local Governments and the Suppression of Popular Resistance in China," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 193 (2009), pp. 24–42.
45 Wang and Liu, "Institutional Proximity and Judicial Corruption."
46 The complete regression table is available in the appendix 8.
47 Dennis A. Rondinelli, John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema, "Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience," *World Bank Management and Development Series*, No. 8 (1983), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/868391468740679709/Decentralization-in-developing-countries-a-review-of-recent-experience.
48 Justin Yifu Lin and Zhiqiang Liu, "Fiscal Decentralization and Economic Growth in China," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1–21; Jean C. Oi, *Rural China Takes Off: Institutional Foundations of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1999); Chenggang Xu, "The Fundamental Institutions of China's Reforms and Development," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2011), pp. 1076–1151.
49 Daron Acemoglu, Tristan Reed, and James A. Robinson, "Chiefs: Economic Development and Elite Control of Civil Society in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (2016), pp. 383–412; Daniel Mattingly, "Elite Capture: How Decentralization and Informal Institutions Weaken Property Rights in China," *World Politics*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (2016), pp. 383–412.

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