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Abstract

This project explores how authoritarian regimes can meet the demands of both the ruling coalition and the public from a perspective of distributional politics. This challenge is particularly severe since authoritarian regimes face increasing pressure to expand public goods and welfare. This project proposes a theory of authoritarian distribution that addresses this challenge in the case of China. First, autocrats adopted a differentiated strategy of distribution. They allocate universalistic benefits that target the large group of people to the public while distributing the particularistic benefits, which is exclusively for a small and specific group of people, to the regime allies. Second, autocrats should offer compensation to the regime allies for their loss in the expansion of public welfare, at the expense of other public interests. Third, autocrats would create new benefits to the regime allies to compensate for their relative loss because their old privilege is no longer exclusive during the expansion of public welfare. This project utilized an original dataset of the People's Congress, the budgeting and anti-corruption data at provincial level, and a qualitative case study of membership recruitment of the Communist Party of China to test the proposed theory. In general, this project explains how authoritarian regimes maintain balances between different demands of distribution for regime survival. It also contributes to the study of authoritarian politics by bridging the gap between the literature on cooptation and the literature on the loyalty of the ruling coalition, both of which are necessary and critical explanations on the survival of authoritarian regimes.

**The Strategic Balance between the Public and Allies:
A Theory of Authoritarian Distribution in China**

by

Dongshu Liu

B.B.A., Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2012
M.Sc., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013

Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

Syracuse University
May 2020

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Dedication

To my parents: Lianfen Zhao and Hongliang Liu.

Acknowledgement

Looking back on the past five years of my Ph.D. study, I feel greatly indebted to so many wonderful people who offered their support for me to survive in this challenging journey. First and foremost, I would like to thank my doctoral committee members. It has been a great honor and pleasure to work with such a talented and helpful group of scholars. My advisor, Dimitar Gueorguiev guides me through this challenging journey and introduces me into the academia world. He always encourages me to challenge myself and to think creatively and critically. This dissertation is inspired and improved by his insightful thoughts, his deep understanding on literature and Chinese politics, his patient guidance, and his critical yet helpful warnings on every mistake I made. I cannot count how many meetings and discussions we have had, but I am sure I could not become an independent scholar without him as my mentor, coauthor, and a good friend. I am also fortunate to work with Matt Cleary. I learned a lot about democracy and authoritarianism from his class and have benefitted greatly from his strict and constructive critiques of my academic writing. His advice on balancing the theoretical ambitions and the practical limitations in conducting research is one of the most useful suggestions I received. I am also grateful to Chris Faricy and Simon Weschle, both of whom share their expertise in distributional politics from the perspectives of American and Comparative Politics. Their suggestions, based on their knowledge of areas other than China, provided a great comparative perspective in reviewing my theory and inspired me to improve my work significantly. I have also learned a lot from them about teaching when I worked as their teaching assistants, which gives me the skills and confidence needed to be a good teacher for my students. I first met Yuhua Wang in 2017 SPSA meeting and was impressed by his amiable personality. He was kind enough to share his dissertation prospectus to help me develop mine and his original dataset on anti-corruption for me to finish the key empirical chapter of my dissertation. I also would like to thank Yingyi Ma for hosting my dissertation defense. It is a great privilege to have all of them on my committee and to learn from them.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

No. 28 Fuxing Road in Beijing's Haidian District is the address of the People's Liberation Army General Hospital, commonly known as the 301 Hospital and arguably the most famous hospital in China. Much of this fame comes from its South Building, a medical building reserved for the provision of healthcare service to political and social elites of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Indeed, the most senior members of the CCP, from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping, have been treated in this building, along with other senior officials, prominent public figures, scholars, and other such elites. Even within the South Building, patients receive medical treatments according to their rank, with senior officials usually receiving the highest standard of treatment from top medical staff.¹

This kind of healthcare service privilege for cadres (*ganbu bingfang*, 干部病房) is widely seen across China.² However, healthcare represents only a tiny portion of the many privileges associated with elite membership of the CCP. From the special provision of foods or access to exclusive recreational facilities to complimentary housing or reserved spots in top primary and middle schools, the perks and private benefits of being a member of the ruling coalition of the Chinese regime are manifold. Comparatively speaking, among authoritarian regimes around the world, these kinds of privileges provide important

¹ For example, see the regulation on healthcare for cadres in the Ministry of Natural Resources: http://www.mnr.gov.cn/zt/zh/qrsy/rd/201807/t20180716_2094304.html.

² For example, see the following article: http://www.sohu.com/a/135037566_746509 (accessed on January 4, 2019).

incentives for members of the ruling coalition to stay loyal to the regime (Gandhi, 2008; Svobik, 2012, p. 163).

In the pre-reform era of the People's Republic of China, when there were shortages of many resources, these kinds of benefits seemed to be very attractive. However, it seems increasingly challenging for the regime to maintain a balance between offering valuable private incentives and providing necessary public goods in the context of the dramatic socioeconomic development of China. This dissertation, therefore, tries to provide an empirical explanation of how authoritarian regimes such as that of China develop their distributional strategies to balance private benefits and public interests. It explains a) how the Chinese authoritarian regime tries to differentiate what it offers to members of the regime coalition from what it offers to members of the public and b) how the Chinese regime maintains the attractiveness of private benefits when their value is inevitably eroded by the increasing level of public goods provisions under resource constraints. Overall, this study provides theoretical and empirical evidence of how authoritarian regimes formulate their distributional policies to serve their political needs of regime survival and what socioeconomic impacts those policies have.

1.1 The Puzzle: The Conflict between Private Benefits and Public Interests

Studies of authoritarian politics have identified two major tasks for authoritarian regime survival: to maintain the cohesion of the ruling coalition and to keep control of the masses

(Svolik, 2012). Two major groups of literature deal with these two tasks separately and provide insights into understanding autocrats' strategies to ensure the survival of authoritarian regimes as political organizations. From the perspective of distributional politics, many studies have provided numerous findings on both objectives. For the first one, scholars have identified the importance of distributing spoils and benefits to form a stable ruling coalition (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, 2003) and establishing various forms of political institutions to guarantee the credibility and functioning of the rent-sharing mechanism (Blaydes, 2010; Magaloni, 2006, 2008; Myerson, 2008). For the second objective, cooptation theory dominates the discussion and argues that authoritarian regimes have to offer benefits and concessions to the public in exchange for their political obedience and cooperation (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006). This simple “buying support” strategy has been effective in allowing the state to solicit cooperation from social elites outside of the regime in China (Yan, 2011). Autocrats have to be (somewhat) accountable to the public by offering public goods to address public pressure.

The puzzle that inspires this study, however, lies in how regimes develop strategies that can bridge the objectives addressed in these two strands of literature. The distributional requirements of the objectives inevitably present two dilemmas to dictators. The first involves direct and imminent resource constraints. Since no one has unlimited resources to satisfy all demands for benefits, all dictators have to make choices between satisfying elites or the public. In many cases, resource allocations to one group erode the ability to offer benefits to the other group. There must be a comprehensive mechanism for autocrats to

balance the distribution of benefits to the two groups; otherwise, unbalanced favorable treatment of one side may lead to the defection of the other group and thus threaten the stability and survival of the regime. This danger is recognized in Reuter and Szakonyi (2019), but as these authors admit, their study does “not [provide] a solution to it”.

The second and perhaps longer-run dilemma is the erosion of the value of private benefits with an increasing level of public good and service provision. Pressures for accountability and the need for cooptation both force authoritarian regimes to provide public goods and services to the public, and general improvements in socioeconomic development usually provide the resources to do so. As a result, many private benefits lose their value and become nonexclusive. Take the hospital case at the beginning as an example. High-quality healthcare used to be exclusive to senior officials and elites in China, and it was difficult for ordinary people to access care of the same quality. The socioeconomic development and reform of China, however, has increasingly enhanced the medical resources available to ordinary people in the postreform era. The 301 Hospital itself, for example, receives almost five million patients annually, and the physicians who accept ordinary patients are the same ones who treat senior party officials. Top medical treatments are generally commercialized: ordinary people can also enjoy the luxury patient ward and top-quality healthcare if they pay enough. With the help of private service providers, ordinary citizens can even go to more advanced Western medical institutions, such as Massachusetts General Hospital or the Mayo Clinic, for healthcare services. Although there are still differences between the public and elites in China, those differences are far less salient than they were 30 years ago.

The value of nonmaterial benefits available to political elites also seems to be diminishing. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, CCP membership guaranteed exclusive access to rewarding and reputable careers, almost all of which were state-affiliated. The development of the market economy and private sector, however, has provided abundant opportunities for bright career prospects even for those who are not party members. Although there are still many young people trying to join the CCP and start their careers in state-owned enterprises or government sectors, many more are hoping to work in private and multinational companies in the financial, commercial or IT sectors, where party membership carries little weight for career advancement.

Furthermore, pressures on the regime to respond to public demands and be accountable also reduce the privileges that members of the ruling coalition in China can enjoy; many such demands stem from the pressure to sustain the country's economic development (Y. Wang, 2015). The establishment of the rule of law in China has severely limited the discretionary power of political elites to extract private rents, and public critiques of the spoils system and the privileges associated therewith make the Chinese government reluctant to offer these benefits. For example, the anticorruption campaign conducted in Xi-era China, although quite popular among the public, has generated complaints from bureaucrats regarding the decrease in their welfare and benefits (Zhu, Zhang, & Liu, 2017).

The examples regarding healthcare, career advantages, and bureaucratic welfare all reflect the same question: What are the incentives for political elites to remain in the ruling coalition and stay loyal to autocrats? It is true that political elites, like other members of

society, have access to expanded public welfare, but they will be indifferent over whether to remain in the regime coalition if all benefits come from nonexclusive public welfare.

Authoritarian regimes need to provide unique and exclusive benefits that perfectly meet the demands of political elites. Of course, political elites may still be incentivized by ideological arguments, but any authoritarian regime is in quite a vulnerable position if it fails to provide unique material incentives for its members to remain loyal. China has to find a new way to offer innovative benefits to preserve the regime's attractiveness to political and social elites.

All these considerations combined result in a fundamental challenge for the Chinese regime—similar, perhaps, to other autocracies—in crafting its distributional politics. How does the regime maintain the value of staying in the ruling coalition while satisfying the increasing demands of the public? What are the distributional strategies deployed by an autocrat to strike a balance between allocations to the public and allocations to political elites from the ruling coalition, both of which are critical to the survival of the regime?

1.2 China: a case of authoritarian distributional politics

This study is inspired by the aforementioned puzzles observed in China, though the aim is to make a general argument about authoritarian distributional politics that can travel beyond China. The approach of exploring these puzzles in the context of China provides several advantages.

First, as a prominent authoritarian regime experiencing rapid social and economic development, China, as demonstrated above, presents scenarios where allocations to the

public and to political elites are directly in contradiction. Although this dilemma likely exists in all authoritarian systems, they are very salient in Chinese society and, therefore, provide a good case to test any theory of distribution in the authoritarian context. China faces significant pressures from both regime allies and the public regarding the distribution of benefits. Unlike many other authoritarian regimes, where the public has relatively little influence on distributional decisions, China has established several political institutions and mechanisms, albeit in limited forms, to allow public participation in decision-making processes (Stromseth, Malesky, & Gueorguiev, 2017; Teets, 2014; Truex, 2016). An ideal case in which to observe strategies for resolving distributional dilemmas is one in which autocrats have to deal with conflicting demands simultaneously, and China certainly provides such a setting.

Second, China provides good access to data that can reflect the distribution of rents. The nature of authoritarian politics dictates that the whole resource allocation process is generally secretive and difficult for scholars to observe; this is especially true of private allocations to regime allies. One feasible option is to use budgetary data to indirectly capture the distributional level, as Gandhi (2008) does in her cross-national study, but even budgetary data of good quality is quite difficult to obtain. Furthermore, the lack of state capacity in many underdeveloped authoritarian regimes makes it almost impossible to secure a complete dataset of any meaningful indicators. China, on the other hand, has enough state capacity to collect different types of data that can be used to explore distributional questions. It also offers relatively better data accessibility than many other authoritarian regimes. Thus, in spite

of many difficulties, China is still a good case with appropriate opportunities for this study.

Last, as a large country with substantial variation, China provides enormous opportunities for researchers to conduct both large-N quantitative analysis and in-depth qualitative studies. The unitary political system and uniform social and cultural background of China makes possible a within-nation study that can control for many factors that cross-national studies cannot address, while subnational variation can still provide enough leverage to study the pattern and strategies of distributional politics. This ensures that the findings of this study, although based on a single country, can still be generalized to other authoritarian regimes to some extent.

1.3 My Argument

My theory of distributional strategies in authoritarian regimes involves three sets of actors: political and social elites from the ruling coalition, the general public, and the autocrat. For the sake of argument, I call the first “regime allies”, referring to those elites who are members of the ruling coalition and have influence on the functioning of the regime and the selection of the regime leader.³ The second group of actors refers to members of the public, who have no access to the private spoils offered by the regime and are outsiders to regime institutions. Both regime allies and the public are recipients of allocations in the distributional process. The autocrat refers to the paramount leader of the regime’s ruling coalition and is the distributor in the distributional process. For the remainder of this

³ This definition can be viewed as similar to the selectorate of an authoritarian regime discussed in Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003). See a more detailed discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

dissertation, the term “authoritarian regime(s)” is, for the sake of discussion, usually used to refer to the distributor as well. Thus, it usually includes the autocrat but excludes other political elites who are recipients of allocations.

In this dissertation, I argue that the authoritarian regime in China adopts a differentiated strategy of distribution in balancing the needs of the public and regime allies. First, autocrats determine what they offer based on the type of demands made and who makes them. By selectively satisfying demands made by both groups, autocrats can maintain a balance between two sides under resource constraints. Second, autocrats should make “side payments” to offset the increased provision of public goods that address public demands and pressure. Such side payments, usually made at the expense of the public interest due to resource constraints, can be used to compensate regime allies who may suffer because of the additional provision of public goods. By making such side payments, autocrats can maintain the value of benefits to regime allies while increasing the provision of public benefits. Finally, autocrats should selectively create new incentives to attract regime allies. I argue that autocrats can achieve these goals by reemphasizing the importance of politics in certain aspects of career development, increasing the material returns of the ruling coalition, and reducing the costs associated with being a regime ally. In doing so, autocrats can successfully maintain the attractiveness of the regime during new phases of socioeconomic development.

To apply this theory to China, I expect to test the following three arguments with respect to distributional politics in the authoritarian system of China.

The Distributional Hub. The differentiated strategy of distribution implies that there

must be some mechanism whereby the Chinese regime can receive and process all demands from different sides and sectors and then distribute benefits and spoils selectively and accordingly. The hub should serve as a node in the whole distributional process and network, and inside the hub, we should observe a clear pattern of differentiated distribution consistent with my theory. In this study, I argue that the People's Congress system in China should work as one such distributional hub. This is consistent with many other studies of authoritarian regimes that view the legislature as a vehicle or institution for benefit distribution (Blaydes, 2010; Gandhi, 2008).

Side Payments of Public Benefits. As indicated, we should observe new types of private side payments along with the expansion of public benefits provision in China. Such side payments are made to compensate regime allies and thus may end up being a net loss for the public interest in general, despite the expanded public benefits. We should observe such changes in budgetary data, which reflect the general level of public good and welfare expenditure.

New Incentives in Coalition Membership. In China, and perhaps in many other authoritarian regimes as well, defining "regime allies" is usually a challenging task for the researcher. In this study, I consider several different definitions and use one of the most common for the sake of this specific argument: membership in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁴ Although China's political power is still strictly monopolized by members of the

⁴ Later, in Chapter 5, I will also discuss how membership in the eight "democratic parties" in China can be regarded as a lesser form of being a regime ally, perhaps analogous to an affiliate membership status.

CCP, party membership no longer seems to produce significant advantages in many other spheres of life for ordinary people. My argument, however, implies that the Chinese regime should try to invent new incentives to attract ordinary people to join the party. This study demonstrates how the CCP does so by creating institutionalized material rewards, emphasizing the importance of political loyalty tied with membership even in nonpolitical sectors, and reducing the costs associated with party membership.

1.4 Contributions

This dissertation aims to contribute to the following major perspectives in the literature.

First, this study tries to explore the survival strategies of authoritarian regimes from a distributional perspective and bridge the gap between the two major groups of literature that address the need to control the masses, on the one hand, and the members of ruling coalitions, on the other. This study explains how autocrats can balance these two objectives under resource constraints and how such strategies can work.

Second, this study explains how the Chinese regime maintains its attractiveness to political and social elites when many of their old privileges are no longer exclusive. By arguing that the regime makes side payments to compensate elites for the expansion of public benefits and creates new incentives for party membership, this study explains how these creative new strategies work and evaluates their effectiveness in maintaining the loyalty of regime allies.

Third, this study provides a new theoretical understanding of how politics affects the

allocation of resources. This study explains “who gets what, when and how” in authoritarian regimes broadly and in China specifically. This study indicates that members of society, including both political elites from the ruling coalition and the general public, are allocated resources and benefits based on who they are and what they ask for. It also indicates that the provision of public welfare always comes with private side payments and additional incentives provided to regime allies as compensation. The findings of this study, therefore, can also engage with the existing literature discussing the provision of public goods in China and in other authoritarian regimes (Hong, 2018; Lizzeri & Persico, 2001; Luo, Zhang, Huang, & Rozelle, 2007; Olson, 1993; L. L. Tsai, 2007).

Last, the empirical findings of this study provide new insights into some of the critical questions in the study of Chinese politics. The study of the People’s Congress system in Chapter 3 explains how local governments in China respond to different demands for benefits. Although many studies have shown that the Chinese public can participate in the policy process in general and the People’s Congress in particular, relatively less evidence has been offered on how such participation is processed by the government. Does it have a substantial effect on government decisions, and how does the government respond? This study provides empirical evidence on these questions. Similarly, the empirical findings in Chapter 4 reveal the socioeconomic impact of the anticorruption campaign in China, arguably one of the most salient political events in the Xi era. In addition to studies that confirm the effects of curbing corruption (T. Chen & Kung, 2018), this study, consistent with some other works (Erik Wang, 2019), emphasizes the adverse effect of anticorruption initiatives on

public welfare in China with respect to the mechanism of the distributional theory proposed.

All these empirical findings will contribute to scholarly understanding of some of the most important issues in China.

1.5 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of an introductory chapter, a theory chapter, three empirical chapters, and one concluding chapter. The dissertation is organized as follows.

Chapter 2 elaborates the theory of authoritarian distributional strategies and explains how it links and extends the current literature. Specifically, I argue that autocrats adopt a differentiated strategy of distribution by offering particularistic allocations to regime allies and universal allocations to the public and adjust the dynamic balance between the two types of allocations by creating new benefits for one type alongside the expansion of benefits for the other type of recipient. Applying this theory to the Chinese context, I develop the three major components of the theoretical mechanism proposed in this study.

1) The distributional hub component, which explains how local government in China selectively distributes benefits and spoils to regime allies and the public through China's People's Congress system;

2) The side payment component, which explains how the Chinese regime compensates bureaucrats for their losses in the anticorruption campaign, itself viewed as an important type of public good, by reducing public spending and increasing private bureaucratic welfare in the budgetary process; and

3) The new incentives for coalition membership component, which explains how the CCP recruits new members by creating new advantages of CCP membership, including institutionalized material rewards, demonstration of political loyalty and reliability, and a reduced cost of party membership.

Chapter 2 also reviews the existing literature on authoritarian distribution strategies and discusses several important questions in the research on distributional politics in authoritarian regimes.

Chapters 3 to 5 provide empirical evidence to support the main arguments made in Chapter 2. Specifically, Chapter 3 utilizes a unique dataset from Anhui Provincial People's Congress to demonstrate how the Anhui provincial government responds to different delegates' proposals requesting different types of benefits, a process reflecting how the government allocates resources and distributes benefits selectively to different groups. Chapter 4 analyzes data on anticorruption investigations in different provinces in China and evaluates how the investigations affect provincial spending on public welfare and bureaucratic welfare, as well as the fiscal assistance each province receives from the central government. The chapter documents the side payments created to compensate local officials in tandem with the expansions of the anticorruption campaign. Chapter 5 presents a qualitative study on the incentives and advantages associated with CCP membership based on extensive reviews of documents, fieldwork and interviews. The study summarizes the evolution of the privileges associated with party membership, compares the current incentives with the incentives in the past, and explains how the CCP creatively invents new

incentives for recruiting new elites as members of the ruling coalition. The three empirical chapters together support the main theoretical arguments proposed in the theoretical chapter.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by summarizing the major findings, addressing the major theoretical implications and the major weaknesses, and discussing how this study contributes to research on China as well as other authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 2

2 Authoritarian Distributional Theories in China

2.1 Introduction

This study is inspired by the fundamental political task of any authoritarian regime, i.e., survival. The authoritarian regime, as a form of political organization, adopts different strategies to ensure its survival and stability, and contemporary literature has already identified several important strategies. However, these strategies, although all are very useful and may even be necessary for authoritarian survival, may not be compatible with each other at all times. This study, therefore, is motivated by the scenarios where survival strategies are in conflict with each other. What scenario will autocrats choose?

Specifically, I explore this puzzle from the perspective of distributional politics. The allocation of resources, as Lasswell (2018) argues, is perhaps one of the core topics in any type of politics. The existing literature on authoritarian regimes also indicates the important role of the distributions of benefits and spoils in soliciting loyalty, support and cooperation for the survival of regimes. Inevitably, any kind of distribution would involve trade-offs and incompatibilities regarding who can get what and who cannot. The theory proposed in this study, therefore, tries to bridge the gap in the existing literature regarding how distributional politics is affected by the needs of authoritarian survival.

This chapter presents the main theory of authoritarian distributions and is organized as follows. The second section will present a major literature review on authoritarian survival and the role of distributional strategies. The third section will present the theory of this dissertation, together with major theoretical expectations and hypotheses derived from the theory that can be tested empirically in China. The fourth section briefly discusses the research design of this dissertation and some important issues related to studying distributions in authoritarian regimes that are addressed in the research design.

2.2 Authoritarian Survival and Distributional Politics

Authoritarian regimes have various challenges related to survival and stability. As Svobik (2012) summarizes, those challenges can be categorized into two major groups: keeping the social masses from revolution and keeping the members of the ruling coalition from defecting and splitting. The existing literature of authoritarian regimes provides numerous explanations on how autocrats fulfill these two tasks, and some of the explanations involve the allocation and distribution of benefits. These studies form the basis of this dissertation.

2.2.1 Control over the Masses: The Cooperation of the Public

One prominent argument for how autocrats control the public and avoid mass revolution is cooptation theory, which argues that representative institutions coopt oppositions by providing rents and policy concessions to them (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006, 2007; Malesky & Schuler, 2010). In this argument, dictators deliver both rents and seats in

legislatures to solve serious external threats from oppositions. It is noted, however, that legislative seats are not only significant for policy influence. Sometimes a seat in the legislature also provides material rewards or other benefits, such as legal protection and preferable treatment (Blaydes, 2010; Truex, 2014). Empirical evidence has shown that by providing legislative access to the opposition, authoritarian regimes can demobilize opposition supporters and thereby reduce anti-regime protests (Reuter & Robertson, 2014). Many scholars have adopted the cooptation framework to explain the inclusion of social elites in authoritarian regimes such as China (Yan, 2011), Russia (Reuter & Robertson, 2012), Singapore (Rodan, 2009), Vietnam (Malesky & Schuler, 2010) and Arab countries (Lust-Okar, 2005).

The core of the cooptation argument is that the governments of authoritarian regimes provide benefits desired by the public, regardless of whether these benefits are material rewards or non-material rewards (e.g., policy concessions or policy influences), in exchange for their loyalty, cooperation or political obedience. This logic is also shown clearly in a series of studies exploring the responsiveness of the government in China. Responding to the demands from the public is certainly a very direct form of providing desired benefits to the public, and it should demonstrate the logic of cooptation consistently. For example, J. Chen, Pan, and Xu (2016) find that “threats of the collective actions” cause local government responses, which is a clear signal of offering promises of benefits in exchange for stability. Meng, Pan, and Yang (2017) find that officials respond to citizens’ suggestions obtained from both formal and informal institutions equally if the suggestions are not antagonistic, which

suggests the importance of cooperative attitudes from the public in such cooptation relations.

In fact, in his famous argument of authoritarian resilience, Nathan (2003) proposes the establishment of “input institutions” as one of the four reasons why the Chinese regime is resilient. Such institutions, including various forms of participatory institutions identified by scholars in China (Manion, 1996, 2016a; Stromseth et al., 2017; Teets, 2014; Truex, 2016), may increase the external efficacy of Chinese citizens to increase the regime legitimacy (Nathan, 2003) and address the so-called “information dilemma” of dictators (Malesky & Schuler, 2011; Manion, 2016a; Wallace, 2016; Wintrobe, 1998). However, the functioning of such input institutions may inevitably require a certain level of accountability to the public demands to maintain voluntary information input (Distelhorst & Hou, 2016). Citizens will only participate in these institutions if they believe there is an acceptable chance that they can obtain responses. This constitutes another type of pressure for authoritarian regimes to deliver certain benefits to fulfill public demands.

Therefore, it seems clear that for many tactics identified in the existing literature, distributions to the public play a central role in ensuring the survival of authoritarian regimes. From the needs of cooptation to the functioning of input institutions, from time to time, authoritarian regimes do have strong incentives to deliver spoils or benefits, regardless of being material or non-material, to fulfill the demands of the public. This seems to be an implicit yet clear contract of survival and stability between the public and the autocrats that is seen in China as well as many other authoritarian regimes.

2.2.2 Cohesion of the Ruling Coalition: The Loyalty of Regime Allies

Another group of studies focuses on the cohesion of the ruling coalition as a crucial factor for authoritarian survival. This group of arguments believes that, for the followers inside the ruling coalition, the key is to provide incentives to keep followers loyal to the regime. Autocrats cannot run a regime by themselves; they have to share power and resources with key followers (Haber, 2008; Svobik, 2012; Wintrobe, 1998). Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) present the selectorate theory and argue that the dictator should deliver a certain amount of spoils and rents to his or her winning coalition to maintain its rule. The amount of rent a dictator has to deliver is dependent on the size of the selectorate and the winning coalition, both of which are determined by political institutions.

However, as Boix and Svobik (2013) and Magaloni (2008) argue, the dictator has to build up a credible commitment so that the supporters can trust that the dictator will continuously provide the benefits to them. To address this problem, scholars present the power-sharing mechanism, which argues that the dictator should set up institutions that allow followers to monitor the rulers and maintain credible threats to overthrow the dictator (Boix & Svobik, 2013; Magaloni, 2008; Myerson, 2008; Svobik, 2012). Many such institutions are costly and put additional restraints on the autocrats and the regime. The fact that autocrats usually need to invest hugely in such institutions to ensure the credible delivery of resources clearly demonstrates the importance of benefit distribution for authoritarian survival.

Ideally, the incentives should be some benefits that can only be achieved within the existing regime and thereby enhance the followers' loyalty. The exclusive access to political

power is certainly one of the largest incentives for ruling coalition members since authoritarian regimes monopolized political powers. Additionally, material benefits can also be seen widely in historical and contemporary authoritarian regimes, including the special provisions of food, healthcare, luxury houses, cars, and planes. All these benefits require a significant portion of resources being allocated and distributed to the regime allies, i.e., the key followers and members of the ruling coalition of an authoritarian regime.

2.2.3 The Dilemma of Authoritarian Distributions and the Gap in the Literature

Both groups of literature on authoritarian survival apparently have an important and common element of distribution. However, they also propose the dilemma of authoritarian distribution. What would happen if the two needs of distributions are incompatible and in conflict with each other? Studies have shown that the distributions to regime allies and the general public are sometimes incompatible. Satisfying the demands from one side can inevitably hurt the ability to distribute benefits to the other side when the total resources are finite. As cases in Russia show, the distribution to one side may lead to the defection of the other side and thus threaten regime survival and stability (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2019).

In general, incompatibility lies in both short-term and long-term perspectives. In the short-term perspective, autocrats face a dilemma of trade-offs under resource constraints. Since autocrats have to distribute to both sides while the total resources are finite, distributing to one side would inevitably constrain the ability to satisfy the other side. For example, Gandhi (2008) provides a detailed analysis of how the needs of coopting the public would result in an increase in public welfare spending but a decrease in spending on military forces,

an important ally of dictators. This is the immediate problem that autocrats have to think about in regard to the everyday distribution of spoils, i.e., whose demands should be fulfilled and whose should not, given the limited resources on hand.

The long-term perspective of this challenge, however, reflects a more fundamental dilemma that any autocrat has, i.e., the incompatibility between the autocrat's role as the leader of an authoritarian ruling coalition and their role as the ruler of a society who seeks to remain in power. The former role, as many studies of authoritarian regimes have suggested, requires autocrats to act to maximize the interests of the members of the ruling coalition, i.e., the small group of elites who support the autocratic rule of the country. The latter role, however, requires autocrats to improve the welfare of the public so that the public will support the ruler and not seek to overthrow the ruler by revolution or protests. The interests of the ruling coalition and the interests of the public, by definition, are incompatible because otherwise, the ruling coalition can adopt democratic institutions and still remain in power by winning the votes from the majority of the public in an election.⁵

Therefore, many strategies that have been identified in the existing literature for the satisfaction of public demands by authoritarian regimes are theoretically damaging to their goal of maximizing the benefits for a cohesive ruling coalition of elites, even though the ultimate purpose of satisfying the public is still the survival of the regime itself. For example,

⁵ It is true that by satisfying the public demands, members of the ruling coalition also get benefits through being in power. However, this study will assume that members of the ruling coalition demand more exclusive benefits for themselves than just being in power. In other words, I admit that it is possible for the members of the ruling coalition to agree on some compromise with the public in exchange for the survival of the regime, so that they can remain in power; however, they would still demand some exclusive benefits as coalition members and are not willing to give up all benefits to the public.

when authoritarian regimes have to adopt the rule of law in response to the demands from the public, they inevitably “tie their hands” regarding protecting some of the benefits of the regime allies (Y. Wang, 2015) and pursuing self-interests for regime allies (Liu, 2019b). When authoritarian regimes have to be accountable and responsive, although in a limited manner, to the public, it also constrains them from taking care of the interests of elites in small circles. The expansion of public goods and welfare, as a result of economic development, may be the core element for the logic of performance legitimacy (Zhao, 2009) and/or authoritarian cooptation (Gandhi, 2008), but it would erode the value of being regime allies inexorably because the welfare and benefits that used to be reserved for a small group of elites are now openly accessible to the public. Similarly, to take care of the private interests of the ruling coalition members, autocrats have to adopt policies that hurt public interests from time to time. From the nepotism that hurts the quality of governance to the crony capitalism that undermines the efficiency of the market economy, autocrats have to protect the benefits of their allies at the expense of public interests.

The existing literature on authoritarian regimes, however, has a gap in bridging the boundaries of the strategies for the two roles of autocrats. The literature focuses on either how autocrats can maintain an acceptable level and allocation of benefits within the circle of their allies as the leader of the regime coalition or how autocrats can solicit support and cooperation from the public as the leader of the country trying to remain in power. There is relatively little evidence on how these two tasks affect each other and how autocrats can balance them. As Reuter and Szakonyi (2019) argue, this tension is exposed, but they “have

not provided a solution to it” (p. 566).

One group of studies trying to bridge the gap seems to focus on the theory of winning coalition initiated by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003). This theory argues that the size of the winning coalition would decide the provision of private goods or public goods and the strategy of reward distribution. Selectorate theory is very insightful in connecting the distributions of the two groups by indicating the importance of group size. It also indicates the importance of spoils distributions in maintaining the stability of autocratic rule and the cohesion of the ruling coalition, as well as emphasizing a very rational logic of establishing regime loyalty by calculating the material benefits allocated to each political elite. All these aspects are critical in developing the distribution theory of authoritarian regimes.

However, I believe there are two major problems regarding selectorate theory fully bridging the gap between the needs of coopting the public and the needs of retaining regime allies.

First, selectorate theory does not talk much about the general mass public, since it fails to consider those who are “unenfranchised” (Gallagher & Hanson, 2013). Even in the updated model (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2009), in which revolutionary threats from citizens are included, the rewards received by the general population seem similar to the byproduct determined by the dynamics between the leader and the winning coalition. The changes in the benefits that citizens receive are determined by the provision of public goods, which is solely determined by the size of the winning coalition. Therefore, the regime and the leader do not design any specific strategy for rewarding general citizens. In fact, since Bruce

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2009) argue that the leader would reduce the provision of public goods in response to the revolutionary threat when the size of the winning coalition is small enough, one should expect that public goods provision would be reduced in most authoritarian regimes where the size of the winning coalition is small. This seems to be problematic in authoritarian cases since numerous studies have shown that elites or dictators do provide benefits or policies that specifically meet the needs of general populations (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Gandhi, 2008).

Second, selectorate theory assumes that the leader only needs to provide benefits to the member of the winning coalition, although the provision of public goods brings benefits to the other selectorates and the public as a byproduct. Under this assumption, a selectorate would get nothing if he or she was not included in the winning coalition. Again, this seems more valid in the democratic system, which has a large amount of selectorates, than in authoritarian systems in which the number of selectorates is limited. Apparently, one should become a political elite to be qualified as a selectorate in an authoritarian system. It is true that the dictator does not need to get support from every political elite to become the leader, but it is difficult to argue that a dictator does not need the support of those elites who are outside of the winning coalition to govern. For example, in Mubarak's Egypt, it is certain that not every elite is a member of the winning coalition, but Mubarak and his regime still need to have elections to distribute the spoils to many of them (Blaydes, 2010).

Therefore, I believe that it is more appropriate to treat the selectorate theory as one theory that explains the dynamics of the ruling coalition in authoritarian regimes. It seems

better to regard the regime allies or the political elites as the selectorates in the authoritarian regimes and to regard the sub-group of the selectorates who supports the incumbent dictator as the winning coalition of that dictator. This approach provides a very good explanation of how one can become a dictator and maintain power within the ruling coalition of the regime, i.e., the group of selectorates. The mechanism of selectorate theory is very well organized in predicting the autocrat's strategies for dealing with other political elites in the ruling coalition, but it has less explanatory power in explaining how the dictator and the regime deal with the outside masses.

My innovation in this study, therefore, is to propose a theory of authoritarian distributions that can bridge the boundary between the two perspectives of authoritarian survival strategies and suggests that distributional politics is generalized. The theory developed in this study addresses the need for distributions to two sides at the same time and explains how autocrats can balance these two sides in China. More fundamentally, the theory addresses the dilemma of autocrats moving between their role as regime coalition leaders and the role of society leaders in authoritarian countries.

2.3 Authoritarian Distributional Theory

2.3.1 The Purpose of Distributive Politics

It is not surprising to see politicians use different distributive policies to gain political advantages. Literature on the U.S. and other democracies contains extensive discussions on

how politicians distribute benefits strategically to enhance their electoral returns.⁶ One significant debate in this perspective is the “swing voters vs. core voters” issue built on the ideas of Cox and McCubbins (1986) and Dixit and Londregan (1996). This issue basically argues that parties will distribute benefits to swing voters if the effectiveness of their distributions is similar across different groups of voters. However, when one party has information advantages regarding its constituencies, it will allocate goods to its core voters because the party knows what the core voters need and therefore knows how to satisfy them effectively. Instead, if the party has less knowledge about the swing voters, it may dramatically decrease the effectiveness of allocating goods to the swing voters because the party may not know whether the goods it delivers are large enough to buy the swing votes.

Susan C Stokes (2005) extends this argument by pointing out the commitment problem. Parties may renege on their promises to voters after getting elected, and voters may also renege when they are voting even if they receive benefits from a specific party. She brings forth the dynamics model to solve these problems and finds that the Peronist party in Argentina does not reward its most loyal voters. To further extend this line of argument, Nichter (2008) argues that it is important if the voters have the option of abstaining. In this way, a party will reward the swing voters if no abstaining is allowed but target its loyal supporters if abstaining is possible.

Most studies on distributive policies have focused on democracies, but it is also not uncommon to see autocrats adopting strategic distributions for their political needs. Policy

⁶ A comprehensive review of this literature can be seen in M. Golden and Min (2013)

concessions in legislature, which may involve distributive policies, is a core concept in the cooptation theory of Gandhi (2008). Numerous studies have also found distributive policies and disproportional spending in nondemocratic systems that serve specific political needs (Blaydes, 2010; Jiang & Zhang, 2015; Treisman, 1996). In this dissertation, I argue that the key political need that authoritarian distributional strategies serve is the political survival of the regime and the autocrat. To achieve such goals, autocrats have to make appropriate strategies of distributions between the regime allies and the general public.⁷

2.3.2 The Benefits to be Distributed⁸

The authoritarian distributional strategy for fulfilling the demands of both the public and the regime allies is about a choice between universalistic distribution and particularistic distribution. I follow the definitions of particularistic and universalistic benefits in the literature. Particularistic distribution provides spoils that benefit a specific and narrow group of people, while universalistic distribution offers interests that broadly increase social welfare and benefits society as a whole. Private goods such as rents and local public goods such as infrastructure projects are typical examples of particularistic distribution. General policies, legislation, social welfare, and other public goods are typical examples of universalistic distribution. A key assumption of my theory is that regime allies and the outside public masses have no preference between particularistic and universalistic benefits in terms of

⁷ For the remaining part of the dissertation, the “two sides” of the distribution will always mean the public and the allies, and “one side” will refer to either of the two, unless stated otherwise.

⁸ In this dissertation, “benefit” is defined broadly here as any kind of privilege, such as economic gains, material resources, favorable policies for accessing the decision-making process, to name a few. Some existing literature on distribution uses the term “spoils” to refer to a similar concept, and this dissertation use “benefit” and “spoils” interchangeably.

utilities. They demand all kinds of benefits in all forms. Universalistic goods and particularistic goods are different types of rewards, but they both produce utilities to the recipients. The two types are quantitatively but not qualitatively different. This assumption is consistent with the current literature (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Gandhi, 2008; Olson, 1993).

The concept of universalistic and particularistic distribution is widely seen in the literature of distributional politics regarding both democracies and non-democracies. For example, many studies have argued that legislators, who are elected by a specific local constituency, tend to be particularistic in allocating resources by conducting the so-called pork-barrel politics.⁹ Leaders of the whole society, such as the executive leaders elected by the whole national directly, are usually believed to be more universalistic than constituency-based legislators. Kriner and Reeves (2015), however, demonstrate that the president of the United States, although elected by the whole nation, is particularistic in the distribution of resources to maximize his political advantages. Similarly, scholars of authoritarian politics have also evaluated the distributional strategies of dictators in this regard. A large group of studies has explored how different social and political situations may affect dictators' choice in offering public (universalistic to the whole society) or private (particularistic to a narrow group of recipients) goods (Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Gandhi, 2008; Luo et al., 2007; Olson, 1993; S. Wang & Yao, 2007). Manion (2014) finds that members of the People's

⁹ Some examples can be seen in Barry (1990); Evans (2011); Lancaster and Patterson (1990); Shepsle and Weingast (1981, 1984); Stratmann and Baur (2002)

Congress in China are usually fighting for local public goods for their local constituencies, which is a typical particularistic kind of “parochial pork-barrel politics” that is very similar to what their counterparts do in democracies.

Based on this definition, this paper further argues that the choice between universalistic and particularistic distribution is a trade-off between broadness and fitness. Broadness reflects how largely and broadly the distributed spoils cover the recipients, while fitness reflects how well and accurately the distributed spoils can satisfy individual recipients’ needs. I argue that these two characteristics are critical for any distributional decisions because they affect the ultimate effect of spoils distribution. A distribution with broad coverage can satisfy a large group of people efficiently and in a cost-effective way, which is an important consideration behind the distributional patterns identified by Olson (1993) and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003). A distribution that specifically fits individuals’ needs can be more effective in soliciting the loyalty and cooperation from those individuals than a general distribution that does not target individual needs. Ideally, a dictator hopes to have distributions that achieve both broadness and fitness so that he or she can maximize the effect of the distributions on each individual while minimizing the resources invested.

However, broadness and fitness are usually incompatible. A distribution with broad coverage, by definition, provides a one-for-all type of spoil to a large group of people at the same time. It is impossible to offer individually tailored spoils to fit the needs of each recipient. A distribution that fits individual needs well, however, has to be tailored for and targeted at that individual specifically and, therefore, is very unlikely to apply to other

recipients. Thus, it seems clear that particularistic distributions can offer individually targeted benefits that achieve a high level of fitness while having a narrow coverage of recipients. The universalistic distributions, however, cover a broad range of recipients, but the individual recipient cannot obtain tailored benefits that fit their needs perfectly. Therefore, the choice between particularistic distribution or universalistic distribution is actually about whether the dictator hopes to achieve broadness or fitness in the distribution of spoils.

2.3.3 The Choice

For the dictator, the gain from the distributional strategies is the support and loyalty from the general public and the regime allies. A reasonable dictator should design distributional strategies that maximize the overall net gain.

Achieving fitness by particularistic distribution is a high-return/high-cost option. Fitness certainly can increase the return of the distribution. Apparently, one would be happier if the benefits received fit one's needs better. Autocrats can solicit more support and loyalty from the public and allies if the distribution can satisfy their needs precisely. The fitness of particularistic distribution, on the other hand, also requires a higher level of transaction cost compared to the broadness of universalistic distribution because of the principal-agent problem. Since high fitness means individually designed and targeted benefits, it needs to rely on a large network of agents to distribute to a large number of individual recipients. Agents, however, may not work in the way in which dictators expect.¹⁰ Therefore, the

¹⁰ Similar problems are identified in the literature of clientelism, which argues that the politicians who rely on brokers to distribute individual spoils for vote-buying may also have the principal-agent problem because the brokers may pursue their interests instead of the politician's. See Susan C. Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, and Brusco (2013) for example.

transaction cost of distributing particularistic benefits with high fitness would be high.

Universalistic distribution with high broadness, however, is a low-return/low-cost option. Since such distribution may not serve the needs of the recipient very precisely, the return of loyalty and support from the recipients would be relatively low compared to the particularistic distribution with high fitness. However, the distribution's high broadness is very effective in reducing the transaction cost because of its one-size-fits-all nature. The distribution can be directly enjoyed by a great number of recipients at the same time and therefore does not need a large agent network for distribution. To some extent, it bypasses the principal-agent problem and reduces the transaction cost.

The choice of distributional strategy is, therefore, very similar to making other choices in the real world: the high return comes with high costs while the low return comes with low costs. When autocrats design distributional strategies, they need to maximize the net utility they gain from the distribution. Based on this idea, this study argues that particularistic distribution is more effective for regime allies, while universalistic distribution is more effective for the general public.

Regime allies

I argue that particularistic distribution would be more appropriate in fulfilling the needs of autocrats for three reasons.

First, particularistic distribution is more effective for managing coalition allies.

Achieving a high return from high fitness requires a good knowledge of what people need.¹¹

¹¹ There is a similar argument in democracies regarding swing votes and core votes. See: Cox and McCubbins (1986)

Apparently, this condition can be met when autocrats are allocating benefits to their allies.

Given the relatively close connection between coalition allies and dictators, it is not difficult for dictators to understand what their allies truly need and to evaluate whether the allocated benefits work as well as expected. This is particularly true for authoritarian regimes with a well-organized party system because the ruling party is usually a very effective tool for understanding allies' needs.

On the other hand, the private good is effective in ensuring the loyalty of allies to the individual dictator. As discussed earlier, dictators need to maintain their leadership positions in the ruling coalitions. Particularistic distribution is effective in ensuring the loyalty of allies. It is usually more discretionary and, by definition, exclusive. Therefore, particularistic distribution is more likely to create a dependence on the incumbent dictator. It is uncertain that the investment in the incumbent dictator can be transferred to the new dictator to maintain a similar level of gains. In addition, since particularistic distributions are individually distributed to each political elite, the likelihood of the collective actions of ruling allies is reduced. The separate and individual distribution method ensures the information advantages the dictator has over any individual elite and reduces the needs of cooperation between different allies.

Second, autocrats may reduce the high transaction cost of particularistic distribution by utilizing the existing patronal network. As many studies have argued, the existing institution can work as an effective patronal network for spoils distribution (Magaloni, 2006). Similarly,

and Dixit and Londregan (1996).

existing institutions, such as the ruling party for an authoritarian regime, are also effective in monitoring the members of the regime. Therefore, the authoritarian regime can reduce agency costs by utilizing the effective patronal network for distribution and the party institution for monitoring the agents.

In general, particularistic distribution to the regime allies can achieve a high return while reducing some of the costs.

The general public

Authoritarian regimes need to coopt the masses, or at least they need to coopt the elites among the general public to ensure the cooperation of the society and the stability of the regime. I argue that autocrats would be more likely to distribute universalistic benefits to the public for two reasons.

First, the universalistic distribution is cost-effective for coopting outside of the social elites and the masses. Numerous studies have shown that authoritarian regimes have a so-called information dilemma regarding the public (Malesky & Schuler, 2011; Manion, 2016a; Stromseth et al., 2017; Wallace, 2016). Therefore, it is very difficult for autocrats to know the preferences of the public accurately. This makes a particularistic distribution to the public inefficient because it is very difficult for dictators to know whether the particularistic distributions are large enough and good enough to buy support from the public. Furthermore, unlike the party mechanism that can effectively allocate benefits and track their progress, authoritarian regimes usually lack a very effective network among the ordinary public. The transaction cost, therefore, would be very high if autocrats distributed particularistic benefits

to the public.

Universalistic distribution, therefore, serves as a good choice. Since universalistic distribution may reduce the transaction costs effectively, it may not require a very high level of return. Although this approach does not provide well-fit spoils (and thus cannot boost regime support as high as that of particularistic spoils), it is still appropriate for the public because it does not cost that much, although autocrats have huge difficulties in achieving a high return from the public due to the related information problem.

Second, public goods may be enough to create a commitment to the regime. Outsiders, by definition, are less powerful in determining who are the regime leaders. Their powers come from the fact that they can threaten the regime as a whole. Universalistic benefits, however, serve better in coopting the public and outside social elites to maintain their loyalty to the regime. The delivery, maintenance, and functioning of many universalistic benefits rely heavily on formal institutions, the legal system, and the governing system of the current regime. This approach, therefore, creates a very strong incentive for the public to keep investing in the current regime for its survival and stability, which significantly increases the opportunity cost of regime change. As Albertus (2013) suggested, goods that yield future payoffs can create long-term incentives for support from the recipients without additional investment in it. Many of the universalistic benefits will be popular with public masses, but its continuous value is contingent on the provision of a suitable environment and appropriate technical assistance from the regime. The public, therefore, suffers from any regime instability, and it is uncertain that such a loss can be compensated in the new regime. All

these factors, therefore, create a very strong and long-term status quo bias, which ensures the stability of the current regime.

I do not argue that dictators only want regime-level loyalty from the outside masses. It is perfectly true that they would demand personal loyalty from the masses, if possible.

However, under normal resource constraints, it may be too costly to do so. Since, in most cases, the outside masses can only threaten regime stability, it seems enough to require only regime-level loyalty from the masses so that the regime can save its resources for other tasks.

It is noted that when universalistic benefits are distributed, everyone in society, including the regime allies, have access to it. This dissertation, however, assumes that the access to the universalistic benefits will not bring significant value to the regime allies if it is not the type of universalistic benefits they expect. Since the universalistic benefits are distributed to the public, it is reasonable to assume that such distribution meets the demands of the public, and, therefore, may not provide values to the regime allies as many as it does for the public. The distribution of universalistic benefits, therefore, can still be regarded as a distribution of benefits to the public.

In general, autocrats differentiate the distributional strategies used to maximize the utility they gain from the distribution. For regime allies, particularistic distribution can provide very high utility returns, while the transaction cost of the distribution can be controlled. For the general public, however, particularistic distribution will be ineffective, since it cannot yield high returns because of the lack of information yet it incurs high transaction costs. It seems a better choice for dictators to use universalistic distribution in

regard to the public because this approach incurs relatively low cost so that the ultimate net utility gain is still acceptable, although it also cannot yield a high return.

2.3.4 The trade-off

Next, I will develop a theory to explain how autocrats make trade-offs when the two types of distribution are incompatible. Although the differentiated distributions can, to some extent, solve the problem of competing demands by offering different spoils to different sides, the problem may still exist in many cases when the universalistic distribution and the particularistic distribution are competing for the same resource or are directly contradictory to each other.

Direct conflict is common when fiscal policy is involved. For example, military spending and social welfare spending, as Gandhi (2008) indicates, are typical examples of how autocrats have to make a trade-off between the particularistic distribution and the universalistic distribution. When the total amount of money is finite, the autocrats have to choose one side over the other, regardless of how differentiated the distribution can be. As shown in many cases in the human history of dictatorship, an increase in military spending would inevitably reduce the provision of social welfare, while the removal of military privilege to promote social welfare would be very likely to cause military disloyalty that threatens regime stability.

The problem of trade-offs between the public and the small group of allies also occurs in cases where some non-monetary favorable treatments are involved. For example, Suharto, the dictator of Indonesia between 1967 and 1998, was widely reported to set favorable policies to

a small group of Sino-Indonesian businessmen inside his small nepotism circle, which gave those businessmen exclusive access to monopolized market and government contracts to make huge profits. These policies, however, were certainly against the public interest of having a fair and efficient market. In this case, the particularistic distribution of exclusive business profits to the small group of businessmen is in direct conflict with the universalistic distribution of a fair and efficient market to the public, and the two types of distribution cannot be both performed.

Apparently, the differentiated distribution of particularistic benefits and universalistic benefits are sometimes not enough to create a balance between the public and the regime allies in authoritarian regimes. This study, therefore, proposes a distributional strategy for autocrats when the demands from the public and regime allies collide. First, the autocrat should decide which group to reward. This group will be the receiving group, i.e., the group that receives benefits at the expense of the other group (the losing group). The autocrat will then distribute the corresponding benefits to the receiving group. Simultaneously, the autocrat should reduce the benefits of the receiving group in other areas to provide additional benefits to the losing group to compensate for when the total resources for distribution are limited. For example, if the public demands some kind of universalistic benefit and the autocrat decides to fulfill such a demand, then some other universalistic distribution currently enjoyed by the public would be removed to save resources to compensate for the potential losses of the regime allies by increasing their particularistic distributions, and vice versa.

In short, this theory argues that the autocrat should provide the desired benefits to the

receiving group but simultaneously reduce other benefits to provide compensation to the losing group, which follows the direct logic of materialistic exchange: when people suffer in one channel, they should be compensated through other channels. This implies that the autocrats would not increase the overall distribution of benefits to either side when the total resource is not increased. Any increase in distribution to one side would inevitably come with a decrease in other distributions to the same side.

This theory of trade-off is based on several assumptions. First, there is an equilibrium regarding how autocrats favor the public and the regime allies, and the distribution of benefits is not going to change that equilibrium. The equilibrium is formed based on the unique situation of each autocracy regarding the power balance between the public and the allies, and the purpose of distributional strategies is to maintain rather than change this equilibrium. This assumption implies that any distribution of benefits to one side is, in fact, a redistribution of the current benefits enjoyed by this side among different areas, rather than a net increase of benefits. Autocrats should only increase (or decrease) the net benefit to a specific side when the equilibrium changes, i.e., the specific side becomes more (or less) powerful in determining the regime survival than it used to be.

Second, this theory assumes that for different types of universalistic benefits and particularistic benefits, recipients should prefer certain types over the others. This assumption ensures that the redistribution of benefits on one side would generate a net positive effect. Since the increase (decrease) in one type of benefit comes with the decrease (increase) in another type of benefit, it only makes sense for autocrats to do so when the recipients prefer

the type of increased benefit over the type of decreased benefit.¹² This implies that any given distributional strategy must have an equilibrium point; the law of diminishing returns indicates that, for each of the two sides, there must be a point when the marginal benefits of an additional unit of increase in one type of spoil would become less than the marginal cost of an additional unit of decrease in the other type of spoil. That point will be the equilibrium.

2.3.5 A Dynamic Model of Authoritarian Distribution Theory

Up to now, the theory of authoritarian distribution is presented statically. It assumes an almost zero-sum approach in evaluating the distribution of resources: the total amount of resources is unchanged, and the gain on one side would be the loss on the other side. This assumption is valid in many cases, especially for the cases in which the total resources for distribution are difficult to change in a short time and/or the distribution to both sides are fairly independent with each other. The distribution of seats in Legislatures, a measure that many studies of cooptation theory use, is a typical example since the total seats are difficult to change, and each seat is exclusive. The budgeting process in any specific year is also mostly static since the total budget is fixed.

However, a dynamic process of distribution may apply to many other scenarios. In those cases, the zero-sum approach may not be applicable. For example, economic growth may increase the total resources available for distribution, and therefore solves the conflicts in the distributions. Notably, the increase in public goods provision may facilitate a stable economic

¹² In other words, the utility gain from the type of increased benefits is larger than the utility loss from the type of decreased benefits.

growth so that the autocrats will have more resources to also distribute to the regime allies, a process similar to what indicated in Olson (1993). Similarly, regime allies may also get benefit from the universalistic distributions even though those distributions do not fit their needs perfectly. It also means that the regime allies can also gain while the public benefits are increased.

Therefore, I will offer a dynamic version of the authoritarian distribution theory by relaxing on the assumption of zero-sum relations in this section. The majority parts of the theory in the static version will remain quite similar in a dynamic process, while the following paragraph in this section will focus on the differences in the dynamic model and discuss how it may affect the theory in general.

The most significant change in the dynamic model of the theory is that the absolute loss is no longer the most significant concern in the trade-off. Since we accept the premise that the total resources can be increased and/or one side can also get benefits from the distributions to the other side, it is likely the case that both sides are gaining instead of losing in the distributional process. Therefore, the autocrats face little risk of disloyalty or rebellion due to any actual loss of any side.

The centerpiece in the trade-off, however, becomes the relative loss one side may incur because of the distribution to the other side. In the dynamic model of authoritarian distribution, the utility one side can gain from the distribution is not only dependent on the absolute amount of benefits it receives but also dependent on the relative scarcity of such benefits comparing with others in society. The utility gain from a given type of benefit

becomes lower if more people enjoy the same benefit. This kind of decrease of utility is a relative loss: the absolute amount of benefit is increasing, but the relative advantage of the recipients over other people is decreasing because the benefit itself is no longer scarce or exclusive.

Take the antidote at the beginning of Chapter 1 as an example. The expansion of the healthcare system in China does not reduce the healthcare benefits that party elites can enjoy. Instead, the expanded healthcare system in China may provide better services to those elites compared to three decades ago. However, since the general public also has wide access to the healthcare system now, the party elites no longer have their relative privilege. Regime allies in the 1970s had privilege to access to healthcare service that the public could not enjoy, while they receive nothing special or additional nowadays since many ordinary citizens can enjoy the same quality of healthcare (if they pay). Even for a tiny group of political elites who can still receive extra benefits, the diminishing of return indicates that their marginal benefits received when the overall level of benefits is high is far less than that when the benefit is in scarcity.

Therefore, in the dynamic model of authoritarian distribution, the dilemma is mainly about the relative loss of the regime allies when the public welfare is expanded. Even though the share received by the regime allies may still increase, they lose their previous privileges of exclusive access to scarce resources. As long as the increase in the regime allies is not as fast as the increase in the general public, there will be a devaluation of the allies' benefits because their relative advantages over the public are narrowing. This problem is fundamental

to the authoritarian survival. The public accountability and pressure require autocrats to offer more public goods to narrow the inequality in distributions between the public and the political elites. The logic of the ruling coalition, however, is that the such inequality should be significant enough so that political elites have incentives to remain in the ruling coalition instead of opting out. That is, the economic and political development of society inevitably creates opportunities to enjoy similar types of benefits outside of the ruling coalition, which makes the benefits of being regime allies significantly devalued.

Thus, the dynamic model of distribution still requires a trade-off. The autocrats have to make sure that the increase of utility for regime allies is not lower than that for the public. This trade-off may need reallocation of resources from the public to the regime allies or some innovative ways of incentives. My theory predicts that the strategies will be similar for both the static model and the dynamic model of authoritarian distribution; the only difference is that the former deals with the absolute loss while the latter works with the relative loss.

2.3.6 Overview of the Authoritarian Distributional Theory

The theory of authoritarian distribution unpacked above provides an overview regarding how autocrats distribute benefits and spoils to regime allies and the public in a dynamically balanced manner. By selectively offering these items to the regime allies and the public, autocrats try to differentiate the distributions to the two sides to avoid direct competition for resources. This theory also allows autocrats to reallocate resources among the provisions of the two types of benefits so that the expansion of one type will come with the increase of the other type as well, although at the expense of the former type in other areas.

This theory should imply a multistep action plan for autocrats to make distributional decisions to address any potential conflicts regarding the regime allies and the public. First, autocrats should try to implement selective responses to the demands from both sides to differentiate what is distributed. Second, autocrats may try to increase the provision of one type at the expense of the other type if they have to expand the program for the other type of benefit at first. This may be the strategy when the differentiated distributions are still competing for the same resources. Finally, the autocrats may have to create new benefits for one type to offset the impact of the expansion of the other type. In the next section, I will apply the theory to China to generate three testable hypotheses based on the context of China.

2.4 Testable Hypotheses in the Authoritarian Regime of China

2.4.1 Why China?

This study conducts empirical tests of authoritarian distributional theory in China for three major reasons.

First, although the distribution of benefits should exist in almost all authoritarian regimes, the pattern of distribution seems to be most institutionalized and observable in those authoritarian regimes with strong capacity and stable institutions because the distribution of benefits itself requires many resources and capacities that a relatively weak regime may not be able to perform in an institutional and systematic way. As one of the most prominent and stable authoritarian regimes in the contemporary world, China has invested significantly in

various institutions that can address the challenges related to distributions. On the one hand, the party institution provides a robust mechanism for distributing benefits among core political elites. The Chinese regime also adopts various ways of incorporating other elites into the regime and becoming their political allies by offering a wide range of spoils and benefits (Yan, 2012). On the other hand, China has a long history of gathering and responding to public demands. From the early scholarly research on the Xinfang system (Paik, 2012) to the more recent studies on responsiveness and public participation in policies (Jiang, Meng, & Zhang, 2019; Meng et al., 2017), scholars have known for a long time that China has relatively institutionalized channels for delivering at least some benefits desired by the public. Therefore, China should provide good examples of distributions for testing the theory in this study.

Second, the theory proposed in this study requires a scenario consisting of both distributions to regime allies and the public simultaneously to test the selective distributions of different benefits. This is a challenging requirement since in most authoritarian regimes, the distributions to the elites and the regime allies are very secretive and usually do not take place at the same venue as the distributions to the public. China, however, provides a good case to fulfill this requirement. As recent literature has suggested, public participation in policies and political decisions exists from many perspectives in China. In particular, the People's Congress system in China provides an effective institution in which the public and regime allies both participate in the decision-making process and make demands for the government (Manion, 2014; Stromseth et al., 2017; Truex, 2016). Although public

participation in the People's Congress still functions in a limited manner, it is still a significant and effective channel for evaluating how the Chinese regime processes competing demands from both sides, and it is therefore ideal for testing how the Chinese regime distributes benefits selectively. This use is also consistent with studies in some other authoritarian regimes that have focused on legislature to evaluate the distributions of spoils and benefits to both regime allies and the public (Blaydes, 2010; Gandhi, 2008).

Third, evaluating the distributional pattern of a regime usually requires a relatively complete set of data with good quality. Many authoritarian regimes either keep such data confidential or fail to collect such data in an organized way. Although China also suffers these problems to some extent, the publicly available data collected by various government agencies in China still make it feasible to analyze certain kinds of distributional behaviors. For example, China has collected and published a relatively reliable and complete set of public finance data at both the local level and the central level, and public spending data are usually an important source for analyzing distributional strategies and patterns.

In general, I believe China is a theoretically representative and empirically feasible case to test authoritarian distributional theory. I will apply the theory to China and generate the following testable hypotheses.

2.4.2 Testable Hypotheses in the Chinese case

The following three testable hypotheses are generated based on the theory.

Distributional Hub Hypothesis

The theory of authoritarian distribution implies that autocrats should deliver

differentiated benefits to regime allies and the general public. This study assumes that both sides have no preference over particularistic distributions and universalistic distributions. Therefore, they will make demands of both types of benefits, while autocrats would only selectively meet their demands.

Although many such distributions to meet the demands happen privately and individually, there is still a legitimate need for authoritarian regimes to have institutions for distributing spoils and benefits (Gandhi, 2008). Following this logic, I expect that there will be an institutionalized venue for both the regime allies and the public to make requests to the autocrats and for the autocrats to process those requests and satisfy them selectively, based on my theory of authoritarian distribution.

Thus, I call such a venue a *distributional hub*. Basically, I expect that the demands for benefits are submitted to the hub by both sides, and autocrats process those demands appropriately following certain rules and principles; i.e., the demands for the universalistic benefits from the public and the demands for the particularistic benefits from the regime allies will be satisfied first, while other demands are rejected directly or indirectly. To make a metaphor, it is similar to a train station where different trains (demands of benefits) are approaching and competing for a limited number of tracks (resources) and the conductor (the autocrat) has to decide which train can enter and which cannot.

To apply this method to China, I expect the People's Congress to work as an effective distributional hub for benefit allocation. Legislatures are usually an effective venue for benefit distributions to both regime allies and the public (Gandhi, 2008), and China's

People's Congress system involves both regime allies and the public submitting their requests and demands for benefits. The delegates in the People's Congress, representing either regime allies or the public, make formal requests to the government, and the corresponding government agencies have to reply. Recently, studies have shown that those delegates, although not elected directly by their constituencies, still try to make requests that represent the interests of their local constituencies (Manion, 2014; Truex, 2016). Therefore, I believe the actions of the delegates in China can represent, although in a limited manner, the interests of either regime allies or the public. Therefore, the following hypothesis is generated:

Hypothesis 1: The Chinese regime tends to satisfy the demands of universalistic benefits from the delegates representing the public and the demands of particularistic benefits from the delegates representing the regime allies more than other types of demands in China's People's Congress system.

In chapter 3, I will offer more details to justify the selection of the People's Congress in China as a distributional hub and explain how I test this hypothesis empirically.

Private Side Payment Hypothesis

The second hypothesis addresses how autocrats compensate for one side when the benefits of the other side are expanding at the expense of the first side. Although result this can happen to both the regime allies and the public, this study focuses on the compensation to the regime allies alongside the expansion of public welfare. As discussed previously, authoritarian regimes are facing increasing pressures regarding offering more universalistic benefits, including public goods and welfare, to the public because of the increasing demands

of accountability and the fast growth of the economy. The most robust and stable authoritarian regimes in the contemporary world are conducting an expansive scale of public goods and welfare programs to satisfy the demands of their citizens and buy their support. China is not an exception. The reform era since 1978 has seen a gradual yet significant expansion of universalistic benefits and welfare that the public can enjoy as the result of dramatic economic development and the increasingly salient needs of social cooptation.

Such expansion of public welfare would inevitably erode the particularistic benefits and welfare that the regime allies enjoy. As a consequence, I expect the Chinese regime to increase private side payments as compensation to the regime allies to maintain the attractiveness of the regime to the political elites and allies. Given that the total amount of resources is finite and that the universalistic and particularistic benefits are, in many cases, mutually exclusive, the increase of those private side payments (almost all in the form of particularistic benefits) should be provided at the expenses of public interests. Therefore, I generate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: In China, the expansion of universalistic benefits to the public will occur with an increase in particularistic benefits as side payments to the regime allies, which is at the expense of public interests.

In chapter 4, I will test this hypothesis empirically by using the anti-corruption campaign, arguably a significant type of public good and benefit, and the budgetary data in China.

New Incentives Hypothesis

The first two hypotheses are about the distribution dilemma in a given time or in a short time period. Under such conditions, it is likely a static model of distribution since the total resources is unlikely to change dramatically in a short time. The last hypothesis, however, is about how autocrats can maintain the loyalty of regime allies in a long-term perspective. It deals with the relative loss of regime allies. The expansions of public welfare and other universalistic benefits seem to continue with the economic development of authoritarian regimes; thus, regime allies will keep having such relative loss because an increasing amount of their old privileges will disappear since the public goods is expanding and scarcity is broken. Some new incentives have to be created to maintain the attractiveness of coalition membership in the new era of socioeconomic development.

The forms of new incentives can vary from society to society, but the core idea is the same: to increase the value of the coalition membership while minimizing the additional resources required for such increases. There are several possible ways of accomplishing this. First, autocrats can make rewards to the regime allies more credible. This would increase the mathematical expectation of incentives while still keeping the number of resources needed at the same level. Second, autocrats may choose to offer some non-materialistic incentives to regime allies, such as reputational and ideological rewards. Although many such incentives may still be indirectly linked to material rewards (e.g., a good reputation may lead to higher salaries or income), such incentives do not directly require extra investment and thus are feasible for autocrats. Finally, autocrats may reduce the costs associated with membership so that the net value is increased even though the resources required are not.

This is perhaps very similar to many marketing strategies adopted in the commercial world. First, businesses try to make their products more reliable so that the customers are more confident in getting satisfactory goods for their purchase. Second, businesses may create some non-material brand values associated with the products. This is very similar to the marketing strategies for luxury goods: although a normal handbag can perfectly perform almost the same functions, a handbag from Hermes still maintains its market value at a much higher price because of the prestigious status and reputational values associated with the brand. Third, businesses may simply cut prices for their products. Simply speaking, authoritarian regimes may adopt quite similar strategies to “sell” membership in the ruling coalition to the elites they hope to recruit.

In the context of China, I will focus on the membership of the Chinese Communist Party and explore how the CCP can keep recruiting new elites into the party.¹³ The idea behind this approach is that many old privileges associated with CCP members no longer exist or are exclusive, thus making membership in CCP look less valuable and attractive than it used to be. Recent political campaigns, including anti-corruption campaigns and those that strengthen the regulations of party members, also lead to difficulties in recruiting new regime allies (Jiang, Shao, & Zhang, 2019). One approach that CCP used to adopt in recruiting new regime allies was to provide material rewards (Truex, 2014), but this manner seems to be increasingly difficult because of the dilemma of distributions faced by authoritarian regimes,

¹³ The memberships of the eight democratic parties in China are included in the analysis in some cases. Although they are technically not CCP members, these eight democratic parties work very closely with the CCP and basically support all CCP policies. Their members, according to the definition of this study, can still be regarded as regime allies, although they may not be as close to the regime as CCP members.

as discussed above. Therefore, the following hypothesis should be expected:

Hypothesis 3: Increasing the credibility of the existing incentives, creating new non-materialistic incentives and reducing the associated costs of membership make it more likely for the Chinese regime to recruit new members to the CCP and the ruling coalition.

In chapter 5, I will review the development of the incentives associated with CCP membership, discuss its new developments in the reform era, and explain how the CCP maintains its attractiveness to new elites in contemporary China based on qualitative studies, interviews and fieldwork.

In general, the theory of authoritarian distributions yields three testable hypotheses in the context of China. I will test all of these hypotheses with both quantitative and qualitative analyses to generate empirical evidence to support the theory and demonstrate how autocrats can address the dilemma of authoritarian distributions in one of the largest authoritarian regimes in the modern era.

Chapter 3

3 Selective Distributions in People's Congress in China

3.1 Introduction

Most Authoritarian regimes receive demands from its allies in the ruling coalition and the general public frequently, and those demands needs to be fulfilled in exchange of the loyalty and cooperation from the public and the regime allies. Autocrats, however, cannot meet all demands from both sides simultaneously under the resource constraints, because distributing to one side would inevitably hurt the regime's ability to distribute to the other side. How can Authoritarian regimes distribute benefits strategically to maximize the loyalty and supports from both regime allies and regime outsiders under the resource constraints?

In this chapter, I argue that authoritarian regimes make a differentiated distributional strategy between offering particularistic benefits and universalistic benefits. Particularistic benefits refer to those interests that benefits a specific and narrow group of people, while universalistic benefits refer to those interests that increase the social welfare broadly and benefits society as a whole. Literature of distributional politics in democracies have used these two concepts widely to discuss the parochial pork barrel politics in legislative and executive branches of government, as well as electoral behavior (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; Fenno, 2002; M. A. Golden & Picci, 2008; Grossman & Helpman, 1996; Kriner &

Reeves, 2015; Lancaster & Patterson, 1990; Susan C. Stokes et al., 2013).

This chapter adopts the similar concept in authoritarian distributional politics and argues that the autocrats and the regimes tend to allocate particularistic benefits to regime allies and provide universalistic benefits to regime outsiders. In the other words, autocrats satisfy the request of benefits strategically by looking at who is making it: the requests of particularistic benefits from allies and the requests of universalistic benefits from outsiders are more likely to be satisfied than all other requests.

This paper tests the argument by looking at the legislative activities in China.

Legislature has been shown to be a critical venue for autocrats to offer spoils and policy concessions to various stakeholders (Blaydes, 2010; Gandhi, 2008; Magaloni, 2008). By looking at the People's Congress in China, the legislature in Chinese regime, this study finds that the requests of particularistic goods from delegates who are closer to the regime, i.e. allies, usually get stronger promises from government. Similarly, requests of universalistic goods from delegates who are further away from the regime, i.e. the outsiders, get stronger promises. This finding supports the first hypothesis of authoritarian distributional politics put in the theory chapter and explains how autocrats can satisfy the requests of different stakeholders strategically by distributing differentiated kinds of benefits.

The primary purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to test the theory of differentiated distribution in the setting of authoritarian legislature, with data from China. Next section provides a discussion on why and how the theory can be tested on legislature in China, the advantages and disadvantages of test on China's People's Congress system, and a literature

review of current finding on China's People's Congress System. The third section discusses the research design, including the case selection, the data, the coding strategies for quantitative analysis. The fifth section provides the quantitative results and some robustness checks. The last section will be discussions and conclusions of the key findings and possible implications of this paper.

3.2 Testing Authoritarian Distribution in China's People's Congress System

3.2.1 Why Legislature?

Analyzing the distributional strategies of authoritarian regimes is difficult. The most obvious reason is the lack of transparency in allocating resources. It is very difficult to find a reliable data source where scholars can observe a large picture of how autocrats distribute resources; in most times, only some specific cases can be observed. It is also very ambiguous to identify the distribution of resources in authoritarian regimes because there are a lot of informal rule, practices and norms. This dissertation also has a particular challenge that has to be overcome. Since this dissertation asks questions on autocrats' choices between the public and the allies, it is necessary to find a venue where two groups are demanding resources together. Needless to say, it is difficult since regime allies and the public usually have different channels to communicate with the autocrats about their demands of benefits and resources.

This chapter, therefore, choose to test the authoritarian distribution argument in

legislature for two reasons. First, legislature has been the focus of distributional politics in most literature. In democracies, legislative bills and budgets are the core targets in evaluating the distributional politics (Evans, 2011). In authoritarian regimes, legislature is also a critical venue for benefits distributions between different stakeholders and the regime (Blaydes, 2010; Gandhi, 2008). Pork barrel politics is also common in authoritarian legislature (Manion, 2014). Although it is still not as transparent as it ideally should be, legislatures in authoritarian regimes usually provide some types of information scholars can use to evaluate the pattern of distributions. The legislative system also provides a formal institution for the distribution so that the scholars can clearly identify distributions existed.

Second, legislature is perhaps the only venue where public can participate in the political process. Studies have revealed that legislature in authoritarian regimes usually consist of both regime allies and the representatives of the general public, and all of them are allowed to make direct request to the regime, although in some limited forms.¹⁴ Therefore, legislature is one of the few venues where regime faces request from both allies and outsiders at the same place. This would be an ideal setting to test the theory of this dissertation as the autocrats face direct trade-off between demands of benefits from both sides.

3.2.2 Why People's Congress in China?

This chapter focuses on the People's Congress system in China. The People's Congress system is China's official legislative system in the Party-State structures. Although it does not allow authentic multi-party structures and does not have a real opposition force, as Gandhi

¹⁴ For some examples, see: Malesky and Schuler (2010), Manion (2014), and Truex (2016).

(2008) suggests, recent studies have repeatedly shown that the People's Congress system has provided representation with limits (Truex, 2016), channels for public participation in the policy process (Stromseth et al., 2017), and opportunities for constituency-based parochial politics (Manion, 2016a). Chinese regimes seem to provide a limited but still significant spaces in its People's Congress systems to accommodate requests from different sectors of the society, incorporate opinions from different sides, and provide benefits to different actors. In this sense, the People's Congress in China is still an effective venue for studying distributional politics despite the absence of strong opposition parties.

The delegates in China National People's Congress (NPC) or Local People's Congress (LPC) at various levels usually have a five-year term. They meet annually to discuss and decide relevant issues. As delegates, they usually have multiple methods of making requests to the regime. The most common, and perhaps also the most effective, method is the delegate's proposals and motions. A motion is a proposal with at least ten delegates as coauthors and included in the official agenda of each annual congress meeting. The proposals, however, can be made by a single delegate or be co-authored by multiple delegates. The proposals are usually sent to corresponding government agencies to be processed, and the government officials are required to provide an official response to the leading delegate of the proposal. The delegate usually has the right to "rate" the response they receive, and an "unsatisfactory" rating would affect the relevant government agency's annual performance evaluation negatively.

In this chapter, I would use the proposal-response as the measurements of interest

requests and government delivery of spoils. Although delegates in NPC and LPS are not directly representing outsiders and allies, studies have found that they still have some connections with and representativeness of their “constituencies” (Stromseth et al., 2017; Truex, 2016). The proposals, therefore, can reflect the requests they made on behalf of the groups of people they represent or belong to. As Manion (2016a) indicates, many proposals in LPN are about asking benefits for local issues, or pork-barrel politics. It again confirms that the proposals made by delegates are effective in measuring the requests of benefits that a specific group of people makes.

The measurement of the distribution of benefits is the one of the challenging parts in research design. Because of the data availability, the information of benefits distribution in China, as well as most other authoritarian regimes, are very difficult to examine. One solution is to measure it roughly by the budgeting information (Gandhi, 2008). However, the budget information can only provide a very general picture of particularistic and universalistic goods. It cannot provide specific details of a specific kind of requests.

Under current data availability, I believe that the response to delegate’s proposal is one of the most effective way of observing and evaluating the delivery of benefits for three reasons. First, government response indicates the attitudes of government agency that is directly responsible for the requested issues. It is both the key players in the decision-making process about the request and the key implementor of the decisions on distributions. Their attitudes would be very insightful in estimating what government would like to delivery. Second, since the delegate can rate the response, it provides a limited but still effective

accountability mechanism. The government agencies usually have to negotiate with the delegates about the responses before sending out the final response, and they can be held responsible if the delegates are not happy with the response. Therefore, the response can be seen as a negotiated result between the delegates and the government and it should carry some seriousness. Third, although response is not the delivery itself, it usually contains promises. If the promises are strong and credible, it should be more likely that the government would satisfy the delegate's requests, comparing to the situation in which the promises in response is weak, ambiguous or even a clear rejection. Therefore, the level of promises in response can be used to approximate the likelihood of distribution.

One concern regarding evaluating the government responses as the distributions is that the response is made by corresponding government agency, and therefore it may reflect not only the considerations of authoritarian distributions but also many other factors in the bureaucratic system. I admit that this is true, but I would offer to reasons why I believe the government response is still appropriate. First, I never intend to argue that the distribution strategy is the only reason that determines how government respond to the demands made by the public and the allies; the need of distribution is one among many other factors that matter. However, we can still observe the pattern of distribution once we manage to control all other potential cofounders. Second, the bureaucratic system indeed has its own considerations in deciding how to respond to the requests, but an effective autocrat should be able to manage and control the bureaucratic system in a way that the bureaucracies work as the autocrat expected. Since no autocrat can conduct distributions all by himself, he or she has to rely on

the bureaucratic system to implement the distributional strategies desired. Thus, the measuring of how bureaucratic agency respond to the request of allocating resources would be appropriate to understand how autocrats distribute benefits in reality.

3.2.3 Who is actor?

The most important one is the definition and operationalization of “regime allies” and “regime outsiders” in authoritarian legislature. Current literature tends to separate these concepts binomially. For example, many studies in China use CCP membership as the indicator for regime allies.¹⁵ However, I feel these approaches to operationalization problematic. The CCP has almost 90 million members in China. It is hard to argue that all of them are followers of the ruling coalition that the regime cares to reward equally. Similarly, scholars have found that offering CCP membership becomes one of the cooptation strategies for social elites and people in business (Yan, 2012). Thus, I feel CCP membership does not match this concept quite well.

Instead, I would rather treat the allies/outsider dichotomy as a continuous concept. I argue that this approach and one’s occupation will be a better proxy to reflect the relations between one delegate and the regime. I have two reasons to support my argument. First, political factors are certainly important for some occupations in authoritarian regimes. It is natural to expect that key officials are usually close allies of the regime. Beyond that, it may also be reasonable to expect that certain positions in key industries may also be occupied by regime allies. This situation aligns with China, where CCP has a nomenclature system to

¹⁵ For example, see Meng et al. (2017), J. Chen et al. (2016); Su and Meng (2016).

control all sorts of important positions in society, from government officials to university presidents to hospital directors (Burns, 1994; Chan, 2004). One key feature of the nomenclature system is that people are managed by different levels of governments based on their occupation and position. It indicates that the people's relations with regimes vary because of their different occupations.

Second, occupation may reflect the economic relations with regimes, which may reflect individuals' status as allies or outsiders. Similar concepts have been adopted by scholars like McMann (2006) to evaluate people's relations with the regime. It is natural to expect that a CEO in a state-owned company will be much closer to the regime than a first-line worker in a private company. After all, people are not regime allies by default; they become regime allies because of who they are and what kind of resources they obtain. The occupations of people, therefore, should be effective in reflecting such relations.

Therefore, I define regime allies and outsiders in one continuous dimension. The one who is closer to the regime will be more like a "regime allies" and they will be treated more like a regime ally. The one who is further away from the regime will be more like an "outsider" and are therefore treated as an outsider to a larger extent. Thus, the delegates in the legislature would be examined based on these criteria to determine what groups they represent and belongs to.

3.2.4 What are Spoils?

As discussed above, the distributional politics in democratic legislatures usually involve a balance between providing universalistic goods and particularistic goods and through pork

barrel politics (M. A. Golden & Picci, 2008; Kriner & Reeves, 2015; Lancaster & Patterson, 1990). In authoritarian legislatures, Manion (2016a) finds a similar phenomenon of parochial politics in the LPC in China. I will follow these studies in defining requests and spoils in the legislature. Thus, anyone's request that is specifically benefiting the narrow constituencies he or she represents, no matter geographically or occupationally, is regarded as a request for particularistic spoils, and particularistic distributions are cases when the autocrats and the regime meet such requests. On the contrary, universalistic goods are defined as those policies delivering benefits to a larger group of the citizenry, and universalistic distributions should offer benefits for groups of people that are larger than the group the delegate represents. In other words, the policy concessions for universalistic goods offer policy access to and the influence on the decision over distributing resources to large social welfare beyond the benefits of any specific sub-group of the society. On the contrary, the policy concession for particularistic goods and spoils offer influences on the decisions that distribute resources to those parochial projects or provide privileges to a specific group of people.

3.2.5 What to expect

In general, this chapter test the differentiated distributional strategy by using the delegates proposal and the corresponding government responses in China's People's Congress system. Chinese government tends to respond to the particularistic demands from the regime allies and the universalistic demands from the public. The following hypotheses are, therefore, made:

H1a: Delegates from the public get stronger response from the government than

delegates from the regime allies regarding the proposals requesting the universalistic benefits in China's people's congress system.

H1b: Delegates from the regime allies get stronger response from the government than delegates from the public regarding the proposals requesting the particularistic benefits in China's people's congress system.

3.3. The Role of People's Congress System in China

Numerous studies have been made to understand the role of China's people's congress system and how politically influential it is. Traditional view believes that the People's Congress system in China is largely window-dressing, or so-called "rubber stamp". However, recent studies start to find a more substantial political influences of the Peoples' Congress in China.

One group of literature, largely followed the cooptation theory proposed by Gandhi (2008), argue that the People's Congress system may be an effective tool to incorporate social elites to the regime.¹⁶ In this argument, government allows the delegates in the People's Congress to be influential (although limited) in decision-making to incorporate them into the establishment and make sure that they will support the regime. This represents a typical cooptation argument that argued by many scholars in different authoritarian states (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006).

Another group of literature suggest that the People's Congress in China can solve the

¹⁶ For example, see: Yan (2011) and Dimitrov (2013).

information dilemma of the dictator. In this argument, the People's Congress is a channel for autocrats in China to collect information regarding their governance and policies so that the government can make appropriate decisions (Manion, 2016a; Stromseth et al., 2017; Truex, 2016). In this sense, the authoritarian regimes adopts specifically designed institutional mechanism to encourage delegates to make input on information (Manion, 2014; Truex, 2016). As consequences, the government has to allows some political influences as incentives to the continuous information input from the delegates (Distelhorst & Hou, 2016). Similar study in Vietnam finds that delegates would, indeed, provide information as autocrats expect (Malesky & Schuler, 2010).

Beyond these studies, some other theories, although lacks the direct empirical evidence in China, may also be insightful. One example is the power-sharing theory that emphasize that the legislature is a venue for power-sharing among regime allies to create credible commitment and mechanism for spoils distribution among coalition (Blaydes, 2010; Magaloni, 2008; Myerson, 2008). Although China does have other institutions for credible power-sharing (e.g. the party institution), it is also expected that the regime allies in the People's Congress should be treated favorably in order to maintain their loyalty to the autocrats and the regime. Studies in other authoritarian legislature indicates that the defection of political elites are likely when the benefits distributed to them is not satisfying (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2019).

To sum up, current literature has indicated that the delegates in China's People's Congresses seem to be more than just rubber stamp. They do have some influences over the

policies, and Chinese government has incentives to fulfill their demands. This chapter, therefore, take this opportunity to see how Chinese regime would do when it faces demands from both the public and the regime allies that they cannot all meet.

3.4 Data and Coding Strategy

3.4.1 Data

This chapter uses proposals and the corresponding government responses of the 12th Provincial People's Congress in Anhui for a quantitative analysis. Anhui province is largely a part of Eastern China. It has a land area of around 140000 km² and a population of 66 million. It ranks 13th place in all 31 provinces of Mainland China in terms of GDP, while its per capita GDP ranks at 25th place. Comparing with other provinces, Anhui has a moderate economic growth rate, and it has larger shares of agricultural industry in its economy. The eastern part of Anhui province is adjacent to the Yangtze River Delta Region, one of the wealthiest regions in China. The western part of Anhui, however, is a part of the Central China region that has significant poverty problems. Culturally speaking, Anhui Province is diverse. Its northern part belongs to the so-called Central Plain culture in China, while its southern part demonstrates clear characteristics of Southern China cultures. Anhui has Han Chinese and another 52 out of the 55 minority ethnicities in China. Politically, Anhui has a moderate level of importance. Its provincial leaders are usually at other provincial positions before being transferred to Anhui, but most of them also end up remaining at the provincial level until retirement. For a few of them who are promoted, they usually have to be

transferred to other more important provinces before being promoted to the Central level. In general, Anhui Province seems to be a typical province in China politically, economically, and culturally.

There are both advantages and disadvantages of focusing on one provincial congress. Anhui province publishes all of its proposals and government responses for 2013 and 2016, while publishing the proposals for all other years between 2012-2017. Because of the political sensitivity of publishing these reports, it is almost impossible to obtain similar data from the NPC and almost all other provinces. The data from Anhui, therefore, provides a very rare opportunity to evaluate the dynamics of responses and distributions of any kind of authoritarian legislature with detail. In addition, delegates in the LPCs usually perform more pork-barrel politics than delegates in NPC because of the political sensitivity and control of the latter, which makes the activities in LPCs more useful in evaluating distributional politics. Therefore, I can perform an in-dept analysis with the proposal-response data from Anhui province that I cannot perform on any other data. The largest challenge here, however, is representativeness. Although current studies demonstrate similarities between NPC and LPC in many perspectives, and I can see no reason why Anhui's People's Congress would perform differently than NPC and LPCs in other places, I still have to admit that the evidence produced with one provincial congress is not representative and can only be generalized with caution.

In sum, provincial People's Congress is a good option considering the balances between representativeness, the depth of analysis, and data quality. It is true that the findings based on

this data is not representative, but I believe it can still provide insightful and in-depth information on how the distributional politics work in China and other authoritarian legislatures.

3.4.2 Coding Strategies

The dependent Variable is the level of promises in government responses. I developed a four-scale index of promise level. One (1) signifies a clear and direct rejection to the request. Two (2) signifies a rejection of the request but a promise to consider it in the future or agreement with the proposal but rejection taking action. Three (3) signifies a promise to take the actions mentioned in the proposal but not provide the schedule of the actions and/or clear measurable target. Four (4) signifies a clear and credible promise to take action with a specific schedule and measurable goals. The higher the value is, the stronger the promise is in the responses.

Two independent variables are included. One is the level of universalistic interests made in each proposal. It is a three-scale measurement. One (1) represents the geographically particularistic interests. Two (2) represents the occupationally particularistic interests, which are the interests benefiting the specific occupation that the delegate belongs to. Three (3) represents universalistic interests that are about general social welfare and benefit the public broadly.

I divided particularistic interests into two categories for two reasons. First, although delegates are found to have parochial behavior for their geographic constituencies (Manion, 2016a), they also have incentives to fight for particularistic interests for their occupational

groups because the delegate selection process also considers the occupation of delegates to achieve an accurate representations of the whole society. Therefore, many delegates are elected by the party-state because they are representative of their occupational industries. In this sense, appealing their occupational groups is also useful. Second, the delegates of the Provincial People's Congress are elected by the LPC delegates of each municipal region in the province. Therefore, their ties with their geographic constituency should still be stronger than their tie to the occupational groups because it is their constituency that ultimately elects them. Thus, I think the geographical interests should be more particularistic than occupational interests.

The other independent variable is the index of regime allies and regime outsiders. Instead of using a binary variable, I developed a seven-scale index to measure the distance of a delegate to the regime core based on the delegate's occupation. One means the closest position to the regime core, hence the closest regime allies. Seven represents the furthest position to the regime core, so the furthest regime outsiders. The details of this measurement are in the appendix.

The level of promise in government responses and the level of interest in proposals were coded by two coders independently. Each coder read each proposal and response and coded them according to the standard discussed above. I made the final decision on the items that the two coders differed on with each other. This approach helped ensure the objectivity of the coding. I also developed a database of all the delegates in Anhui's 12th Provincial People's Congress, including their constituency, gender, occupation, title, age, CCP membership,

education level, and ethnicity. Each proposal was matched with its leading delegate's information in the delegate database.

The control variables included all demographic information for each proposal's leading delegate. In addition, whether the proposal was co-authored by multiple delegates and whether the proposal was directly requesting money was also included as a control variable. The fixed effect of each individual delegate and the corresponding government agencies are also included.

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Main Findings

This analysis used the data from the 3rd Annual Conference (2014) and the 6th Annual Conference (2016) of the Anhui Provincial People's Congress. In the 2014 meeting, 870 proposals were submitted by 389 delegates out of the total 708.¹⁷ Of the total, 856 proposals have their corresponding responses available for public, while the others are classified. About 81.07% of these proposals are submitted by delegates working in government or state-owned organizations, i.e. regime allies. Regarding the types of requests, 207 proposals (24.18%) are requests for constituency interests, 251 proposals (29.32%) are requests for occupational interests, and 398 proposals (46.5%) are about universalistic encompassing interests. In the 2016 meeting, 910 proposals were made by 369 delegates, while only 879 proposals have their responses un-classified. From this meeting, about 79.29% proposals were made by

¹⁷ The number of delegates exclude delegates from People's Liberation Army section, who already do not submit proposals. The details of delegate of 12th Anhui Provincial People's Congress can be seen in appendix.

regime allies. For types of requests, 263 proposals (29.92%) are for constituency interests, 230 proposals (26.17%) are for occupational interests, and 386 proposals (43.91%) are for universalistic encompassing interests. These figures indicate that the composition of delegate proposals and their characters remains very similar across different years.

I then used OLS regression to analyze the data in 2014 and 2016 separately. Table 1

Table 1 OLS Regression for Regime Distance and Request Interests on
Response presents the regression results for both years. Model 1 and 4 presents the results
with only independent variables. Model 2 and 5 includes key control variables. Model 3 and
6 include two additional control variables: the age and education level of delegates.

Table 1 OLS Regression for Regime Distance and Request Interests on Response

Year of Meeting	2014			2016		
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regime Distance	-0.388*** (0.047)	-0.416*** (0.060)	-0.445*** (0.067)	-0.520*** (0.053)	-0.517*** (0.085)	-0.537*** (0.089)
Universalistic Interests	-0.527*** (0.068)	-0.547*** (0.089)	-0.578*** (0.101)	-0.718*** (0.081)	-0.658*** (0.107)	-0.666*** (0.121)
Distance#Interests	0.165*** (0.020)	0.168*** (0.026)	0.175*** (0.029)	0.244*** (0.023)	0.246*** (0.032)	0.254*** (0.037)
Co-sponsorship		-0.021 (0.071)	0.015 (0.072)		0.011 (0.081)	0.034 (0.089)
Request for Money		0.081 (0.070)	0.044 (0.077)		0.138 (0.076)	0.166* (0.079)
Gender		0.013 (0.071)	0.040 (0.079)		0.020 (0.075)	-0.000 (0.085)
Ethnicity		0.107 (0.142)	-0.085 (0.123)		0.112 (0.157)	-0.038 (0.191)
Political Affiliation		-0.040 (0.039)	-0.045 (0.040)		0.054 (0.042)	0.052 (0.048)
Education Level			0.068 (0.061)			-0.074 (0.081)
Age			-0.008 (0.005)			0.003 (0.005)
Responding Agency		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Constituency		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Constant	4.043*** (0.158)	4.293*** (0.251)	4.989*** (0.442)	4.117*** (0.178)	3.293*** (0.341)	3.381*** (0.489)
Observations	856	723	618	879.000	786.000	673.000
R2	0.077	0.208	0.242	0.112	0.261	0.273

Distance varies from 1-7, in which 1 means closest. Interests varies from 1-3, in which 1 means geographic particularistic, 2 means occupational particularistic and 3 means universalistic benefits. Political Affiliation varies from 1-3, in which 1 means no affiliation, 2 means members of Eight Democratic Parties and 3 means CCP members. Fixed effect of responding agencies are included in all models. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The results indicate that the distance to the regime is negatively associated with the level of responses when the level of interests is below 3, which indicates particularistic interests. However, when the level of interests is 3 or higher (universalistic interests), the distance to

the regime becomes significantly positive on response level. This pattern is consistent across different models and different years. To get a clear idea of the interaction effect, I show the marginal effect of distance to regime on response level for model 2 and 5. Figure 1 and Figure 2 present the marginal effect of 2014 and 2016 data, respectively.

Figure 1 Marginal Effect of Regime Distance (2014 Meeting)

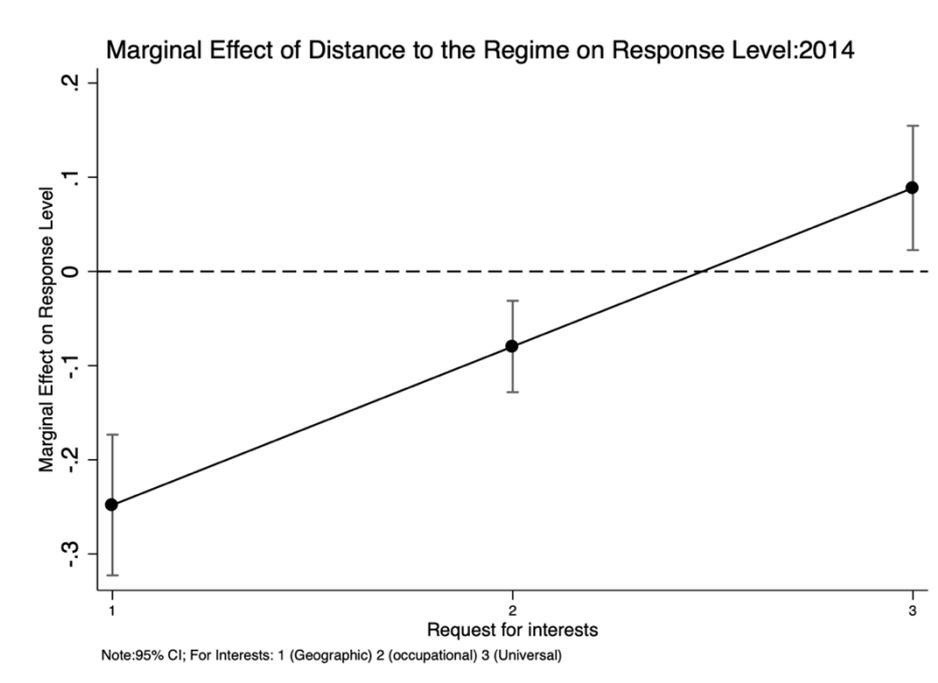
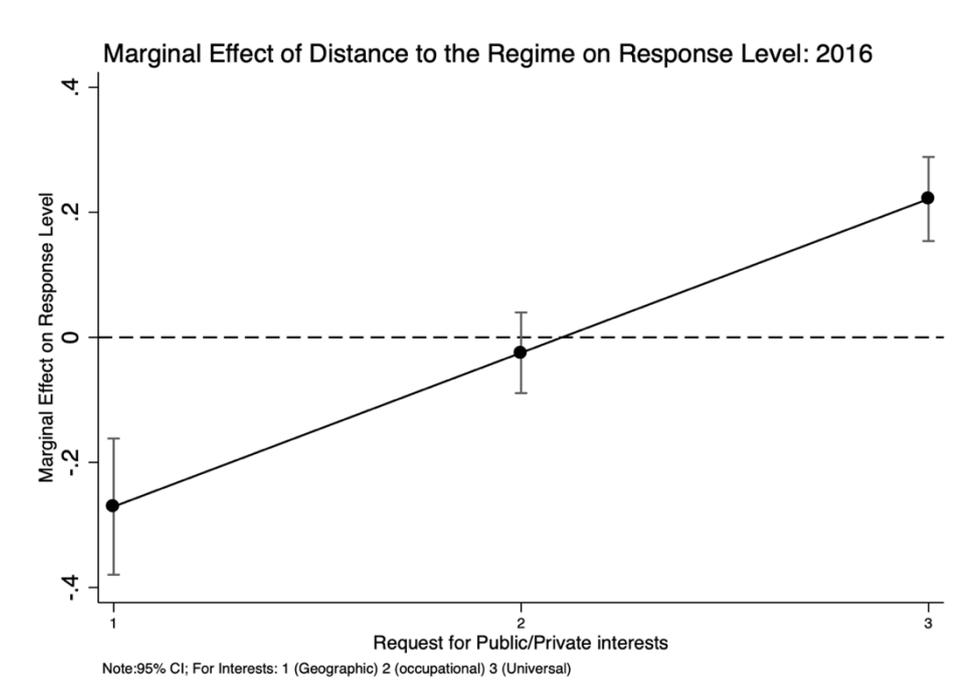


Figure 2 Marginal Effect of Regime Distance (2016 Meeting)



Looking at both regression results and marginal effect, a very consistent story is presented. One delegate being further away from regime core reduces the level of responses his or her proposals can get from the regime when the proposals are asking particularistic benefits. Such negative effects are larger when the request is more particularistic. However, when the proposal is about universalistic benefits, being further from regime actually increases the level of responses one delegate can receive. Put simply, being closer regime allies has a higher response level if the proposal is particularistic, while being further regime outsiders receives higher responses for proposals asking universalistic benefits.

To further demonstrate such effects, I predicted the value of the response level for each type of request based on regime distance. Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the results. For the 2014 meeting, the average response level for constituency benefits, the most particularistic benefits, drop from about 3.4 when the delegate is a government official to about 2 when the delegate is categorized as the furthest regime outsiders. At the same time, the average response level for universalistic benefits requests increased from about 2.6 to 3.1. For the 2016 data, the average response level for constituency benefits drops from slightly above 3 to around 1.5, while responses for universalistic benefits increase from about 2.2 to about 3.5. Since “2” represents an indirect rejection while 3 represents a promise to deliver without a concrete schedule in my coding of response, these changes are substantial and dramatic because they indicate a clear change of attitudes from acceptance to rejection for particularistic benefits and vice versa for universalistic benefits.

Figure 3 Predicted Response level (2014 Meeting)

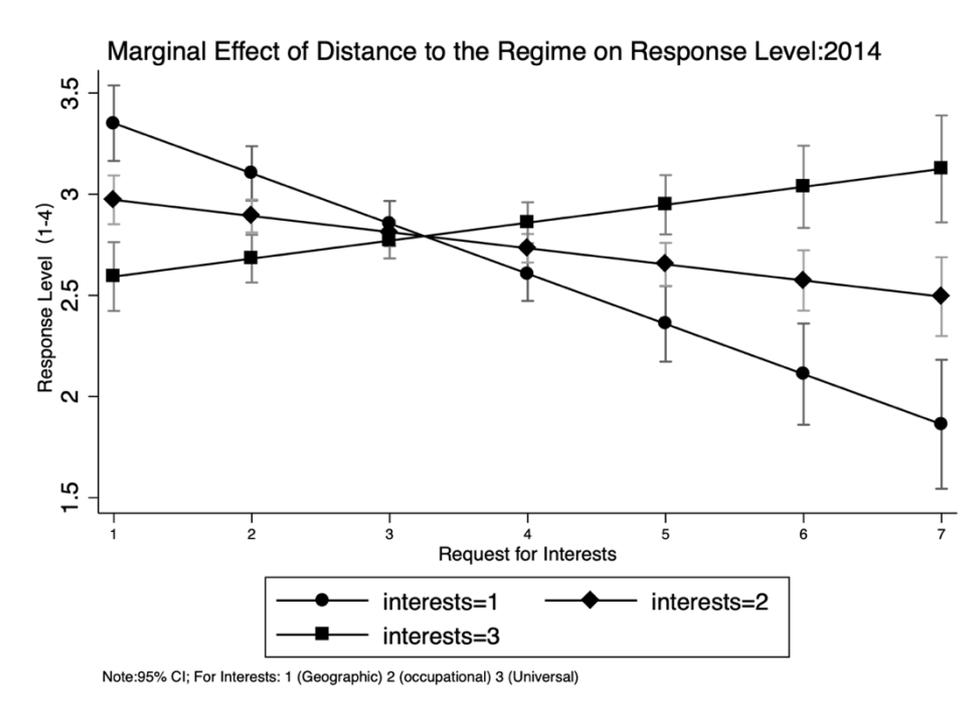
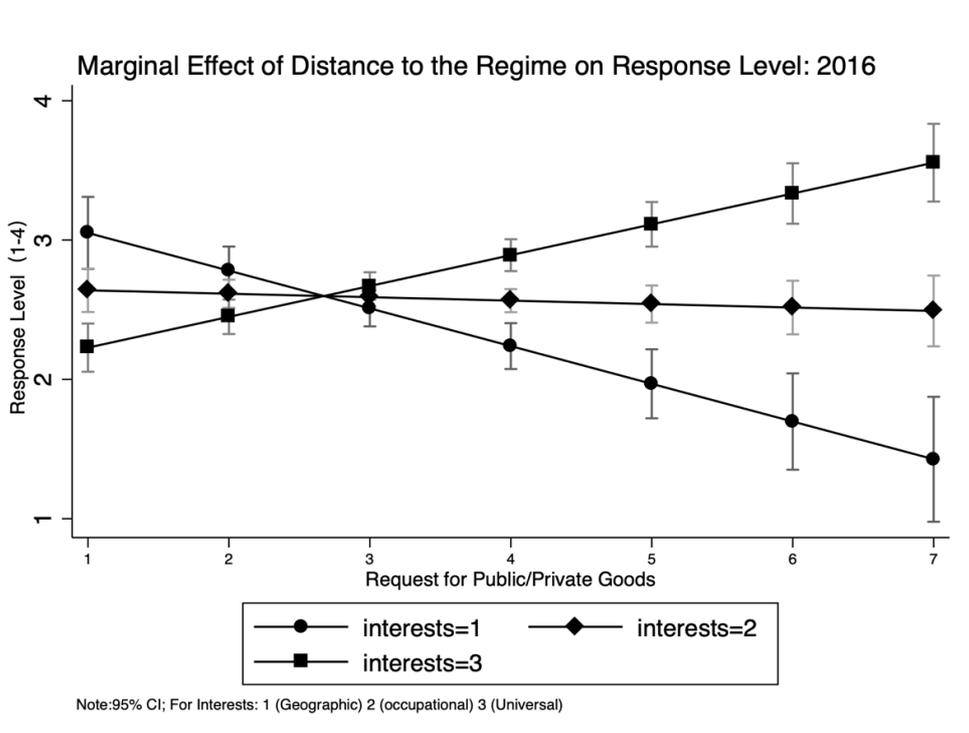


Figure 4 Predicted Response Level (2016 Meeting)



In general, the delegate proposals and corresponding government responses in 2014 and 2016 provide consistent and strong evidence to support my theory. They indicate that being

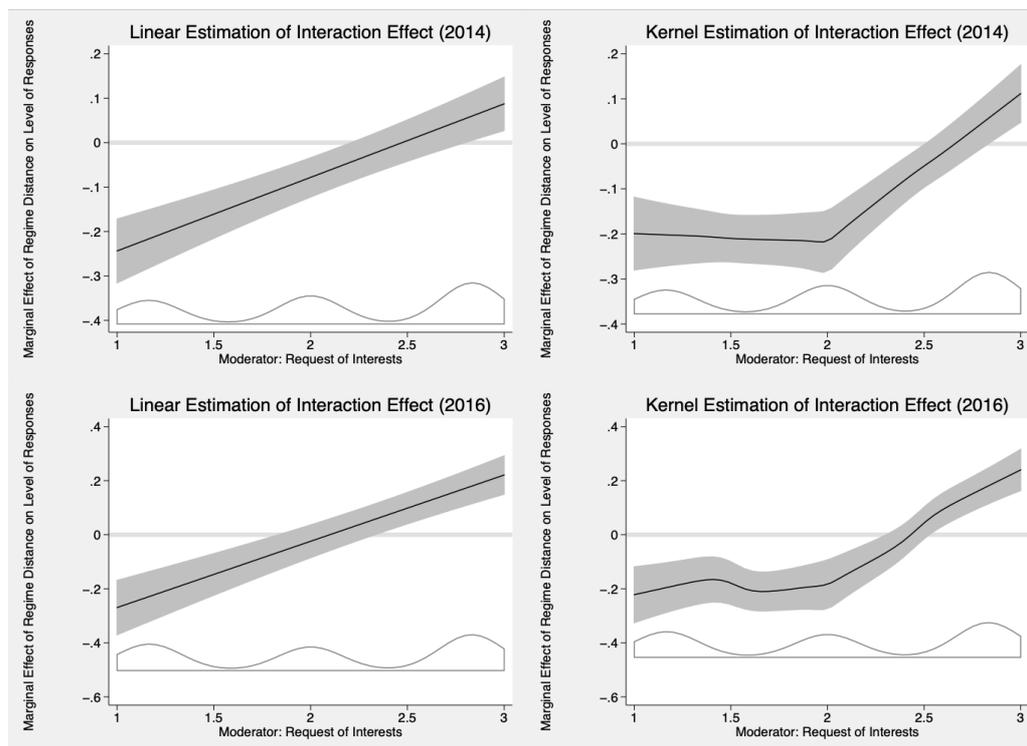
closer to the regime gives one a huge advantage in making particularistic requests, while being further away from the regime core is an advantage in asking for universalistic benefits. In the other words, the authoritarian government tends to respond to particularistic benefits from allies and universalistic benefits from outsiders.¹⁸

3.5.2 Robustness Check

The first robustness check was to re-evaluate the interaction effect by following the suggestions in Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2018). Figure 5 demonstrates the results of analysis using the strategies recommended in Hainmueller et al. (2018). The linear estimation model and kernel estimation models were used for the 2014 and 2016 meeting data separately. The results remained the same: the proposals with universalistic benefits requests received stronger response when made by regime outsiders while particularistic interests received stronger responses when delegates are closer to the regime. It indicates that the findings of this paper are valid even if I relax the linear interaction effect assumption and consider the potential “model dependency that stems from excessive extrapolation” (Hainmueller et al., 2018).

¹⁸ I also conducted ordinal logit regression by treating response level as an ordered variable from lowest and highest. The results remain similar, indicating that the findings are consistent across different modeling assumptions.

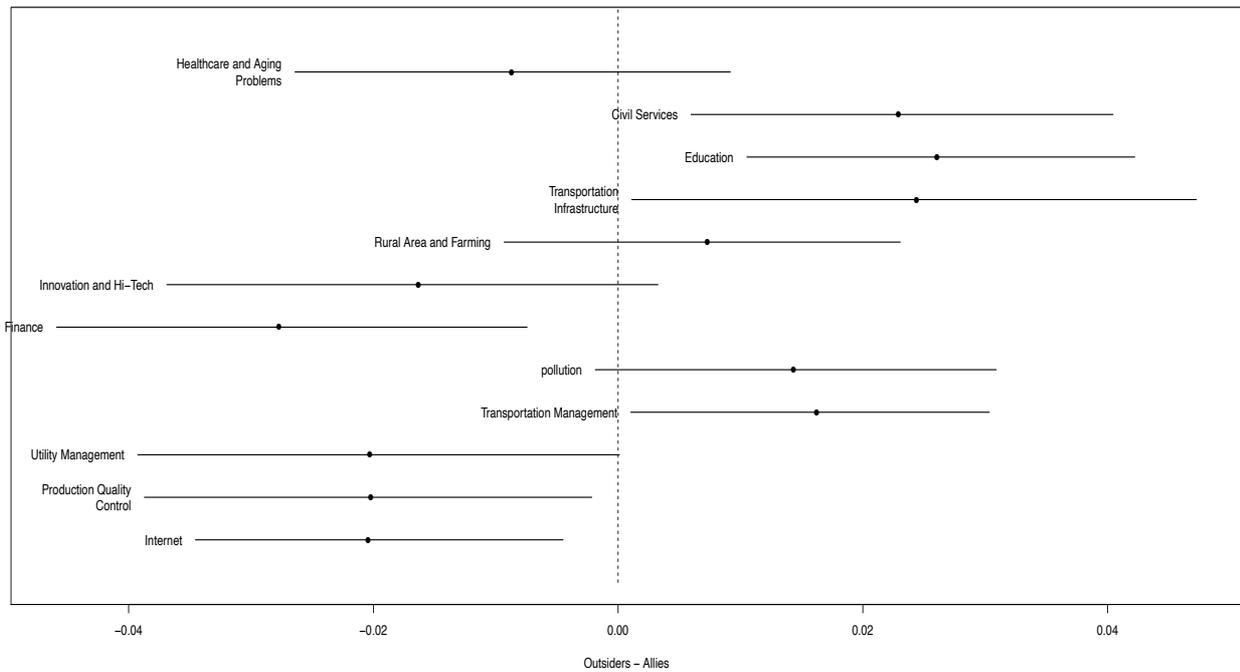
Figure 5 Interaction Estimation following Hainmueller et al. (2018)



Secondly, I would like to explore whether the regime allies and outsiders are making similar types of requests. This is an important question because if they are requesting similar benefits, the regime can practically meet demands from both sides by only responding to one side, since satisfying one side would also satisfy the other. To explore this question, I conducted a text analysis of all delegate proposals by using the Structural Topic Model. The results are shown in Figure 6. In total, 13 different topics were identified. Regime allies and outsiders are focusing on different topics: regime allies focus more on issues related to civil services, education, transportation infrastructure, pollution, and transportation management, while regime outsiders are more interested in innovation, finance, utility management, production quality control and Internet development. Only in healthcare and rural areas do

both sides share similar levels of interest. These findings indicate that the regime does need to carefully respond to different interest requests, as satisfying one side cannot make the other side happy as well.

Figure 6 Difference of Topic Proportions between Allies and the Public (K=13)



One major concern is the reliability of coding. Although differences between types of interests are distinct and relatively easy to code, the differences between response levels are sometime ambiguous, especially when bureaucrats deliberately provide ambiguous responses. Therefore, I recoded the level of responses as a 3-scale variable by coding two neighbor levels as one and then re-running the OLS regression. Six different models of OLS regression with response level recoded were conducted.¹⁹ The results, in Table 8 in the appendix, remained the same, which indicates that my findings are not subject to coding strategies.

¹⁹ I ran three models on each year. The first one treats level 3 and 4 in original 4-scale as one level; the second model treats level 2 and 3 as one same level; the third model treats level 1 and 2 as one same level.

To further test the robustness, I conducted near-neighboring matching for each year. I created a binary variable indicating whether one delegate is a regime outsider or not. Distance 1-4 were regarded as allies, while distance 5-7 were outsiders. The matching was based on the following covariates: whether the proposal requests money, whether the proposal is co-sponsored, the gender of delegate, the political affiliation of delegate, ethnicity of delegate and the constituency of delegate. The results are consistent with other findings and are shown in Table 9 in the appendix. For two delegates with very similar demographic situations and proposal characters, the outsider-delegate receives stronger responses for universalistic benefits proposals, while receiving lower responses for particularistic benefits proposals, comparing to the allies-delegate. In general, it indicates that the findings are robust regardless of model specifications and assumptions.

Another concern is the potential selection bias. I will address these concerns from two perspectives. The first perspective is that delegates may also know the government's preferences and then will only submit proposals that are more likely to be responded to strongly. If this were true, we should expect the further away the delegate is from the regime, the more "encompassing" the proposals would be. To address this concern, I ran the logit regression between the level of interests and the distance to regime of delegates. The results in

Table 2 indicate that there is no significant relation between regime distance and submitting universalistic proposals. In the other words, allies and outsiders are equally likely to submit proposals for universalistic interests, but the responses they received are different.

Table 2 Binary Logit Regression of Regime Distance on Proposal Type

	Universalistic Proposal	
	2013	2016
Regime Distance	-0.014 (0.074)	-0.051 (0.080)
Co-Sponsorship	0.008 (0.222)	-0.068 (0.207)
Request for Money	-0.070 (0.249)	-1.006*** (0.205)
Gender	-0.536* (0.242)	-0.561* (0.242)
Ethnicity	-0.049 (0.466)	0.458 (0.352)
Political Affiliation	0.005 (0.135)	0.063 (0.147)
Constituency	Yes	Yes
Responding Agency	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.751 (0.860)	2.077 (1.107)
Observations	675.000	772.000
pseudo-R2	0.154	0.207

This is a binary logit regression result table. Standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a proposal is universalistic or not. Fixed effect of responding agencies and local constituencies are included in all models. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Another perspective of selection bias concern is the missing data. Although delegate proposals are made available for all years between 2012-2018, the term of the 12th congress, the government responses are only fully available in two of the years. Although there is a potential bias problem since we do not know the responses for other years, I feel it may not be a significant problem because there is no theoretical reason to think 2014 and 2016 are two particular years that the government in Anhui should perform differently than other years. In addition, as Truex (2016, p. 94) suggested, it is more likely to be laziness that makes only a selection of years available. The fact that all proposals and response are just uploaded

as a copy-and-pasted single Word File with little organization and editing also implies a lazy workstyle. Readers can make their own decisions, but I believe that the selective availability of the data is the result of insufficient labor and laziness on behalf of the sources rather than potential bias.

3.6 Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides a theory of authoritarian distribution to both regime allies and regime outsiders under resource constrain and they test the theory based on data from China. It indicates that autocrats do intend to reward particularistic benefits to regime allies, i.e. their core supporters, and reward universalistic benefits to regime outsiders, i.e. the people with potentials to be co-opted. By making this strategic distribution, autocrats make sure that the distribution to one side would not damage the potentials of distributing to the other side. Therefore, autocrats can maintain the loyalty of ruling coalition and the cooperation of regime outsiders simultaneously.

This results may indicate that autocrats do have preferences over types of spoils when facing different groups of people. Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) suggest the autocrat have no preference of giving out private spoils or policy concessions. This study, however, suggest that autocrats may prefer to provide policy concessions concerning universalistic benefits and public goods when they need to co-opt social elites and other regime outsiders, while keeping private rents for regime allies when they need to work for coalition loyalty.

Current literature has shown that authoritarian regimes rely on representative systems to

gather information and to improve the quality of governance (Truex, 2016). Following this approach, it is natural to expect that regime provide better response to the content that brings good information. This paper, however, indicate that the content is not the only story. Regime responses are highly dependent on the identity of the delegate who makes that content. In the other words, it is not only what the proposals speak, but also who speaks, that determines the response from the government.

This study also provides insights on understanding the behavior of authoritarian legislatures. Numerous studies in China and Vietnam have shown that local delegates work very hard to speak for local interests (Malesky & Schuler, 2010; Truex, 2016) and participate in the parochial pork-barrel politics for their local constituency (Manion, 2016a). The effects of such activities, however, are not studied well. This paper suggests that regime outsiders may fight for local benefits tirelessly, but they seem unable to get credible promises from regimes for those local benefits. It is in contrast with the logic in democratic pork-barrel politics, in which delegates with strong geographical connection get more “pork” than those at-large delegates (Lancaster, 1986). Instead, the regime allies in China, who are selected as delegate because of their occupational capacities rather than geographical basis, are the ones who have advantages in bring “pork” back to local constituencies. These findings also provide insights on public good provisions in authoritarian regimes. For encompassing public goods, such as social welfare, participations from regime outsiders seem to be effective. For local public goods that benefits a specific group of people narrowly, public participation and pressures seem to be ineffective, although the public are eager to participate (Malesky &

Schuler, 2011; Manion, 2014).

In conclusion, authoritarian regimes respond to different demands from regime allies and the public by offering differentiated distributions of spoils and benefits. It may reduce the tensions between two sides, but the fundamental challenge of resource constraints remains. In many cases, the particularistic distribution and the universalistic distribution may rely on the same group of resources ultimately and, therefore, still pose a critical trade-off to autocrats. In other words, this study provides us some idea on who gets what and when, but scholars of authoritarian regime still need to ask the “how” question, especially when the demands from the public and the regime allies are incompatible.

Chapter 4

4 Private Side Payment of the Public Welfare Expansion: Evidence from China's Anti- Corruption Campaign

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, I demonstrate that the autocrats should take a differentiated distributional strategy to offer particularistic benefits to the regime allies and universalistic benefits to the public. It can avoid direct conflicts between two distributions. However, as discussed in chapter one and two, the public demand for more universalistic benefits is increasing year by year. We do see a rapid expansion of public goods and welfare in China in recent decades. Since the total resources for distribution are inevitably finite, the conflicts between two types of distributions seem unavoidable. How should autocrats maintain the loyalty of regime allies when the expansion of universalistic benefits takes resources away for particularistic distribution?

A vast body of the literature on democracies has already revealed strategies for politicians to distribute resources for different kinds of demands and requests. Current studies, however, provide relatively little evidence of what authoritarian regimes would do in response to the expansion of public welfare and the consequential losses and angers among regime allies. This chapter utilizes the rare opportunity provided by the anticorruption campaign in China to explore this question. Anticorruption is desired by the public because it provides a clean and

transparent environment that the general public can enjoy and may increase the quality and efficiency of governance. However, anticorruption will inevitably reduce the spoils that local officials can obtain and thus create potential dissatisfaction and anger among bureaucrats, one of the regime's key allies. Therefore, the anticorruption case in China provides a good opportunity to explore how autocrats change distributional strategies when the demands from the public and regime allies collide.

This chapter argues that the Chinese regime appeases their allies during the anticorruption campaign by creating new private side payments for particularistic distribution. In particular, this chapter argues that the Chinese regime distributes more fiscal and political benefits to officials through the budgetary process and spend less on social spending, which would indicate that while the anticorruption campaign may reduce the spoils officials receive from informal means, regimes would compensate them, at least partially, by providing more opportunities for benefits from institutionalized channels, e.g., government funding and budgets. Thus, the spoils of officials and regime allies during the anticorruption campaign may not be reduced as expected to provide incentives for loyalty.

This research relies on the data from the anticorruption campaign in China launched by the Xi Jinping administration in late 2012 to test this theory. Empirically, this research found that an increase in the numbers of corruption investigations in any given province is associated with a decrease in public spending, an increase in suspicious bureaucratic welfare spending, and an increasing level of fiscal help from the central government in financing local budgets, while the total expenditure of that province is not affected by the investigation numbers. In

short, this finding may provide feasibly strong evidence to suggest that local governments in the anticorruption campaign in authoritarian regimes are allowed to save more money from public spending to increase the benefits of local officials. This finding also suggests that the central government would provide more fiscal and political rewards to local provinces with more anticorruption investigations.

This research seeks to support the theory of this dissertation by revealing the distributional strategy of autocrats to address the trade-offs among competing survival needs. Authoritarian regimes need to distribute resources to regime allies in exchange for loyalty, but they cannot allocate too much to allies because they also need to provide benefits to the public for cooptation (Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006). This chapter contributes to the body of literature by providing a test for the dynamics between the distributions to two sides. In addition, this chapter shows that authoritarian regimes may satisfy the public demand for anticorruption but simultaneously reduce other types of benefits to the public in response to the internal pressure from allies who suffer during the anticorruption campaign.

In addition, this chapter also provides a possible explanation of how autocrats manage the potential cost of anticorruption. Authoritarian regimes need to curb corruption but have to ensure that anticorruption would not provoke either officials or allies by excessively reducing spoils, because the diminishing expectations of spoils would make the elite allies defect from the ruling coalition, and thus pose a significant threat to regime survival (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2019). This chapter notes that autocrats actually compensate local officials' losses from anticorruption by providing more welfare and rewards, possibly with the money saved from

public spending. The approval to divest public spending to enhance bureaucratic welfare and reward local officials would significantly reduce the risk of disloyalty during the anticorruption campaign.

In general, this chapter questions the conventional literature regarding the consequences of external pressure on the provisions of public goods and provides a new theory of how politics affect resource distribution in nondemocratic contexts. Conventional cooptation theory suggests that external threats would force autocrats to make policy concessions to the public, which usually result in an increase in public goods and social welfare (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006). Many studies on authoritarian regimes have made argument based on similar logic: autocrats will constrained themselves and offer more public goods in response to public pressure because it helps their survival. However, this chapter indicates that while external pressure may increase the public welfare in certain aspects, the overall public welfare may not increase because the autocrat might need to create private side payment at the expense of public interests to compensate for the loss of regime allies. In short, the increase in public goods may not come from the decrease in private spoils to autocrats and ruling coalitions; however, it may come from a decrease in other public goods. The finding in this chapter, therefore, remind the students of the authoritarian politics the other side of the story regarding the expansion in public welfare provisions. The offer of cooptation comes with a price in addition to political obedience: the gains in public welfare are, at least partially, at the expense of other forms of public welfare.

4.2 Conflicting Demands of Corruption and Anticorruption

Authoritarian regimes have incentives to curb corruption. The current literature provides numerous answers for why authoritarian regimes curb corruption, such as improving the quality of bureaucracy and governance (Bäck & Hadenius, 2008; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016); solving some problems regarding economic development (Quade, 2007); settling power struggles and elite competition (Zhu & Zhang, 2017; Zhu et al., 2017); or simply enhancing public support for the regime. Although some of the benefits of anticorruption are purely political, many of these benefits, such as better public service, more public goods and a fair environment, would increase the overall social welfare that is strongly desired by the public. Therefore, regimes usually face strong public pressure to reduce corruption. For example, even in the early 2000s, studies had already found that rural Chinese citizens would support mass mobilization when they are increasingly impatient about the failure to control corruption (Li, 2001). Thus, the public usually has extensive demands for a less-corrupt environment, and a corrupt rule is often one of the main causes of mass revolutions and regime collapse.

Autocrats, however, also have incentives to tolerate a certain degree of corruption. The conventional literature on authoritarian regimes has revealed how autocrats use the distribution of spoils to keep the loyalty of regime allies. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) argue that private benefits are especially effective for autocrats to keep their ruling coalition loyal and stable when the winning coalition size is small. Magaloni (2006) reveals how different institutional settings in Mexico's nondemocratic regimes would help to shape the distribution

of spoils among elites to maintain the regime's survival. Corruption and other types of privileges are usually important incentives intentionally allowed by the regime, especially when bureaucrats are underpaid (Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Shirk, 1993). Moreover, the tolerance of corruption provides autocrats with some flexibility: they do not need to distribute all the spoils themselves; rather, they allow allies to obtain private benefits on their own.

The assumption that corruption can solicit loyalty from regime allies is widely shared by many studies on authoritarian regimes. For example, a series of studies argue that personalistic dictatorship is more corrupt than other types of nondemocratic regimes because personalistic dictators rely on the corrupt distribution of spoils to solicit support (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith, 1999; Chang & Golden, 2010). Apparently, these studies all assume that corruption serves as an effective way of distributing spoils in exchange for loyalty.

If the utility of corruption in soliciting allies' support is pervasive, then how autocrats can manage the potential backlash from their allies and bureaucrats when autocrats begin to enforce anticorruption to fulfill the public need? The current literature provides limited evidence to answer this question. The one explanation may be the work by scholars such as Svoboda (2012) and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), who argue that it may be too costly to leave the ruling coalition and the sunk cost of investing in the current regime cannot be transferred to the new one. Following this argument, we should assume that the cost of exiting the ruling coalition is larger than that caused by the anticorruption. However, there are still two possible points that this argument cannot fully cover. First, even if officials would not leave the regime,

it is likely that they may start an indirect and passive resistance. This resistance would result in a low overall performance, which is detrimental to the regime. Second, even if the incumbent dictator is powerful enough to repress all potential rebellions, this situation would still be very costly and risky, especially when large-scale anticorruption causes a large number of angry allies. Therefore, it is still in the interests of the incumbent to establish further strategies to appease their allies. In short, autocrats have to create a balance between the public and bureaucrats.

4.3 Private Side Payments for the Anti-Corruption

This chapter proposes a distributional strategy for autocrats when the demands from the public and regime allies collide. The basic assumption is that the autocrat has to maintain a strategic balance between two groups to ensure that no group will receive disproportionately favorable treatment. First, the autocrat should decide which group to reward. This group will be the receiving group, i.e., the group that receives benefits at the expense of the other group (the losing group). The autocrat will then distribute the corresponding benefits to the receiving group. Simultaneously, the autocrat should reduce the benefits of the receiving group in other areas to provide additional benefits to compensate for the losing group when the total resources for distribution are limited. In short, the autocrat should provide the desired benefits to the receiving group but simultaneously reduce other benefits to compensate the losing group, which follows the direct logic of materialistic exchange: when people suffer in one channel,

they should be compensated through other channels.²⁰

To apply this theory in the context of anticorruption in China, we should expect a simple response from autocrats to handle the backlash from allies and officials. The regime should reduce other benefits that the public is currently enjoying, e.g., public goods and public welfare, when they conduct more anticorruption investigations in response to public demands. Simultaneously, the regime should increase spending on bureaucratic welfare and provide other rewards to local officials to compensate for their losses from anticorruption and appease their anger. In summary, the Chinese regime will create a balance between public and local officials regarding anticorruption by providing more welfare and rewards to bureaucrats and allowing less spending on public welfare in areas with more anticorruption activities.

One may question the point of anticorruption if the dictator still provides spoils to his or her allies. Moreover, it seems meaningless if regimes need to give private benefits to officials to prevent them from taking money from their public office. However, there are still three advantages that the incumbent dictator can enjoy by using this strategy. First, providing more government funds would not affect other purposes of anticorruption. As scholars have noted, anticorruption may also serve other political considerations, such as power signaling or elite competitions (Manion, 2004; Zhu & Zhang, 2017; Zhu et al., 2017). These purposes should hardly have anything to do with money and therefore should still be fulfilled by anticorruption, even if the regime needs to provide other benefits to officials. Second, it may be more

²⁰ The officials being punished because of corruption certainly do not get the compensation. The logic here is that the officials who remain in office but feel panic and angry about the anti-corruption have to be compensated by the autocrats.

controllable from the incumbent's and the regime's perspective to allow officials to receive private spoils from government funds rather than bribery or other secret forms of activities that the regime cannot oversee. If using spoils to incentivize officials is unavoidable, it may be better if the regime can have a certain level of control over what and how much spoils the officials can receive, rather than having a blind view of the scale of spoils and benefits. Last, public preference regarding different issues may not be equal. There may still be a net-gain for conducting anticorruption measures and reducing other forms of public welfare simultaneously if the public prefers anticorruption to other public goods.

4.4 Anticorruption Campaign in China

China has been working on anticorruption for an extended period of time and has set up a large system called "the Party Disciplinary Inspection Commission" from the central to the local level to curb corruption (Manion, 2004; Wedeman, 2005). However, the effectiveness of China's anticorruption work is severely hindered by several structural, institutional and cultural factors (Guo, 2014); thus, corruption has become increasingly significant in China (Zhu, 2018). Consequently, the new Xi Jinping administration, starting in late 2012, has launched a massive anticorruption campaign that is more intense than previous ones in terms of scope and duration (Manion, 2016b). According to the working report of the Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission, approximately 72000 officials were disciplined between 2012 and 2017, including 440 officials ranked at or above the ministerial level.²¹ Another report revealed that

²¹ See: http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-12/13/c_1123850237.htm; the vast majority of officials (63000) were at the county-level, and this figure does not differentiate between those in a criminal process and those received party disciplinary

approximately 1.34 million officials below county-level were disciplined.²² Compared to previous anticorruption measures, the current campaign covers a broad range of officials across different levels of governments in all localities and central government agencies. Although some studies argue that there are political motives behind this (Zhu & Zhang, 2017), the current anticorruption campaign is still widely believed to be a full-scale effort that affects almost all officials of the Chinese regime, regardless of rank.

This large-scale anticorruption campaign caused dissatisfaction in local officials. According to Zhu et al. (2017), in several interviews, officials explicitly expressed their “unhappiness towards the campaign because some of their basic welfare... were prohibited”. The Party’s official newspaper, the People’s Daily, also posted an article indicating that some local officials were slack in their work to resist and put pressure on the anticorruption campaign, partly because their welfare was damaged.²³ This situation precisely reflects the challenge of conflicting demands. While anticorruption satisfies the demands of the public and relieves external public pressure, the welfare of bureaucrats is reduced and thus makes local officials resistant and disloyal. This effect creates strong internal pressure for the Chinese regime. A widespread statement precisely describes the dilemma of the regime: “You will lose the party if you curb corruption while you will lose the regime if you do not.” Apparently, the Chinese regime is challenged with balancing the strong public demand for anticorruption and the increasing level of dissatisfaction among bureaucrats.

actions.

²² <http://china.huanqiu.com/article/2017-10/11312177.html?agt=15422>

²³ <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2014/0914/c70731-25656069.html>

4.5 Data and Empirical Strategies

This chapter evaluates the effect of anticorruption on the distribution of benefits across China. To measure the level of anticorruption, this research utilizes a dataset of corruption investigations collected by Y. Wang and Dickson (2018) based on an online database provided by Tencent.com. This dataset contains detailed information for each investigation from 2011 to 2016 based on publicly available information from the Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission and various levels of the court and prosecution systems. To measure the distribution of benefits, this chapter used fiscal data from government budgets, a common approach used by the conventional literature for distributional studies. I create a panel of data that include the number of corruption-investigations for each province in each year and match this with the government budget of each province in each year obtained from the National Statistical Bureau and the Annual Statistical Book of the Ministry of Finance.

4.5.1 China's Budgetary System

Budgetary data are widely used in studies of distributive strategies in both democracies and authoritarian regimes. This chapter focuses on provincial budgetary data to measure the distribution of the benefits to the public and officials.

China adopted the “Tax Sharing System” in 1994, which had a specific design of a central tax and local tax. Adoption of this system was an effort to “recentralize fiscal revenues, as well as improve regional revenue mobilization and equalization” (Lü & Landry, 2014). Under this system, the central government of China greatly strengthened its tax collection ability, while the local government incurred serious fiscal imbalance problems (Bernstein & Lu, 2003).

The budgetary system in China is separated into different levels of government. According to the information published on the website of the Ministry of Finance, the different levels of government in China form their own budgets.²⁴ Local governments, including those at the levels of province, municipal, county and township, set their own budgets and decide the amount spent on each item in their jurisdictions.

To address the financial burden of local officials deriving the tax sharing system, the central government in China returns a large amount of money to the local governments in the form of a central fiscal transfer. Data from the Ministry of Finance in 2012 indicated that approximately 43% of local budgetary expenditure was provided by the central fiscal transfer.

This chapter uses the budgetary data of each province in China to explore the distributional strategies for two reasons. First, many spending items, such as healthcare or education, are planned and discretionarily decided at the provincial level. The unit for calculating and distributing the central fiscal transfers is also provincial. Second, the budgets of provinces follow the same accounting principles set by the National Statistical Bureau so that similar items of spending across different provinces are comparable. By contrast, municipal budgets in different provinces may be incomparable since they follow different accounting principles.

The provincial budgetary data published by the National Statistical Bureau contains 22 different spending categories, including public safety, education, transportation, etc. In the appendix, I list all 22 categories and their definitions. This chapter will select some of those

²⁴ See: http://www.mof.gov.cn/zhuantihuiyu/czjbqk2011/cztz2011/201208/t20120831_679747.html

categories to measure the distributions of benefits.

4.5.2 Measurement of Benefits to the Public

I use budgetary data on public spending to measure public goods and benefits for two reasons. First, compared to the actual numbers of public goods (e.g., length of roads or number of schools), public spending encompasses a broader range of public goods that cannot be directly quantified. The spending on such items, however, can reflect the level of provision. Second, the actual level of public goods provision is also dependent on the efficiency of the bureaucratic systems. Spending on public issues, however, is a direct reflection of how much the government invests in public benefits. In the current literature, using public spending to measure the provision of public goods and benefits is common²⁵.

I identify seven categories of social spending: expenditures on education, healthcare, community construction, public house programs, public service, social security and unemployment, and environment protection. These seven categories are selected based on the definitions provided by the National Statistical Bureau. Categories with definitions too ambiguous to determine whether they are related to public welfare only or a mixture of both public and private benefits are excluded to ensure that all measurements are clear enough to cover only public spending. Because of the large variations across different provinces in terms of funding and the fast growth of the economy, I use the per capita figure of each spending to reflect the true level of expenditure in each category.

²⁵ For some examples, see: Gandhi (2008); Milesi-Ferretti, Perotti, and Rostagno (2002); L. L. Tsai (2007); S. Wang and Yao (2007).

4.5.3 Measurement of the Particularistic Benefits to Bureaucrats

The major measurement of benefits distributed to local officials is the fiscal assistance provided by the central government to the provincial government in this chapter. I choose this measurement for two reasons. First, the central fiscal assistance provided to each province comes from taxes and other central income collected nationwide, which is widely regarded in the literature as a reward to the specific region that receives the fund.²⁶ Even though the money may also be used to finance local public goods and services, the core idea of central fiscal assistance still fits with many other types of rewards to bureaucrats and local elites identified in the literature, from the classic pork-barrel behavior (Ames, 1995; Evans, 2011; Lancaster & Patterson, 1990) to clientelism in elections (Susan C. Stokes et al., 2013). Second, since local governments usually face a significant financial burden (Jin, Qian, & Weingast, 2005; Enru Wang, 2010), the central assistance is a significant reward to local officials. Fiscally, this helps the local government to finance the budget, reduces the burden of revenue collection, and saves local revenues over which local officials have strong control to divert to other purposes (Stromseth et al., 2017). According to the definition of the Ministry of Finance, a significant portion of the central fiscal transfer is “general fiscal transfer,” which does not specify the purpose and allows the local government to use such money discretionarily.²⁷ Central money, therefore, gives provincial officials a large amount of flexibility and help in financing local budgets. Politically, local officials will find it easier to implement policies and avoid potential

²⁶ For instance, a similar example can be seen in Kriner and Reeves (2015) concerning how U.S. federal funds are used to target specific states by the president.

²⁷ For example, see “Notification on the General Fiscal Transfer in 2002, Ministry of Finance, Finance and Budget Document No. [2002]616” (财政部关于下达 2002 年一般性转移支付数额的通知, 财预[2002]616 号).

social problems if the central government provides more help to finance local expenditures, which will translate into political advantages in terms of performance evaluations and career advancement. For example, a portion of the central fiscal transfer is used to help local officials finance the retirement pensions of workers and deficits in rural village budgets. Since these two issues are among the most common reasons for social instability, fiscal assistance from the central government seems to also be a political reward that can help local officials to avoid potential social protests. Some studies, such as Jiang and Zhang (2015), have utilized the fiscal transfer received by the local government as a measurement of the patronage benefits distribution. Similarly, I will use the fiscal assistance from the central government as the measurement of benefits distributed to local officials.

Specifically, I use two measurements related to fiscal assistance from the central government. One measurement is the net central fiscal transfer, which is equal to the money received from the central government minus the money submitted to the central government. The total amount of the net central transfer of each province in each year included in this analysis is used. The second measurement is the percentage of central assistance in local expenditure. Compared to the absolute value of the central transfer, the percentage reflects the relative level of assistance provided by the central government to local officials, controlling the needs of expenditure by local officials. As previous studies in China's budgetary system indicate, the higher the percentage of central funds in financing local budgets, the stronger the support from the central government. To address the heteroskedasticity problem, the figures in the analysis are used in the natural log format.

Another possible measurement is “other expenditure.” Although the government does not explain what qualifies as “other expenditure,” there are some hints indicating that officials usually put expenditures they do not want the public to know about under “other expenditure” so that they do not need to share those details. Many of these “secret expenditure” items include welfare, luxury eating and drinking, tourist-like “official visit” and expenditures “not suitable for the public.” In addition, since there is no category on the budget sheet representing the salaries and other benefits of bureaucratic systems, it is highly possible that those expenditures, which are directly related to the private benefits of local officials, are categorized as “other expenditure.”²⁸ This is not a perfect measurement of the complete private benefits obtained by local officials, but given that measuring the direct private benefits of bureaucrats in authoritarian systems is nearly impossible in China, this may still indicate the level of private spoils. Since this is also a government spending, I use the per capita amount for analysis.

4.5.4 Investigation of Corruption

The dataset is from an investigation from 2011 to 2016. Since Tencent stopped collecting new cases in the middle of 2016, the data for 2016 are incomplete and therefore excluded. Although this database is far from complete, it covers cases with a certain level of severity since these cases are all published on the websites of enforcement agencies. According to Y. Wang and Dickson (2018), this is the most comprehensive publicly available dataset of corruption investigations, they performed an independent internet search to verify

²⁸ For example, see the article published by Xinhua News Agency in 2011 on how local officials use “other expenditure” to hide their unsuitable expenses from government auditing: <http://news.sohu.com/20110411/n280212883.shtml>. This article also indicates that salaries of civil services and “administrative expenditure” are usually included in the “other expenditure”.

all the cases. Therefore, although I acknowledge the potential weakness of this dataset, it is still the best one available for measuring the intensity of corruption investigations. A summary of the investigation numbers for each province in each year is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Investigation Numbers

Province	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Tibet	0	0	0	26	18	2	47
Tianjin	0	0	5	35	60	1	104
Qinghai	0	0	6	45	53	5	124
Beijing	0	6	16	41	64	5	141
Ningxia	0	0	8	36	85	4	156
Shanghai	0	4	25	66	40	2	160
Chongqing	0	1	17	37	112	11	180
Jilin	0	2	27	50	82	0	185
Xinjiang	0	1	13	70	120	11	239
Liaoning	0	1	43	108	89	2	266
Neimenggu	0	1	39	84	137	11	303
Heilongjiang	1	1	38	109	124	1	320
Hainan	0	0	6	109	226	8	349
Gansu	0	1	25	148	160	8	360
Shaanxi	0	1	14	125	237	35	434
Hebei	0	1	21	203	266	2	546
Jiangxi	0	4	31	229	302	16	637
Hunan	0	6	86	233	353	38	716
Fujian	0	6	41	211	409	5	721
Guizhou	0	1	17	230	426	75	784
Shanxi	3	9	79	228	409	2	836
Yunnan	0	0	24	227	459	81	896
Anhui	0	10	67	335	400	14	916
Zhejiang	1	8	148	267	420	6	984
Guangxi	0	1	47	287	576	76	1,004
Hubei	1	6	51	299	632	26	1,028
Shandong	2	5	171	374	408	15	1,148
Jiangsu	0	12	130	439	570	31	1,259
Henan	3	11	120	385	527	18	1,270
Guangdong	2	12	136	482	670	72	1,395
Sichuan	0	2	77	524	742	53	1,439
Total	13	113	1528	6042	9176	636	18947

Data in 2016 is not complete. Based on Wang and Dickson (2018)

4.5.5 Models

I use the time-series regression model with both random effects and fixed effects on the panel data. The random effect model emphasizes cross-province comparisons, and the fixed effect model emphasizes within-province comparisons. Both models include the year fixed effect, and the fixed effect model also includes the province fixed effect. The dependent variables are social spending, other expenditure, amount of central fiscal transfer and percentage of central transfer in local expenditure. The main independent variable is the number of corruption investigations in the previous year (one-year lagged). The control variables include the geographic area of each province, the population, the GDP and the urbanization rate of each province in each year²⁹. In the robustness check, I also add other control variables, including the total expenditure, the FDI, the percent of state-owned enterprises of the total GDP and the political rank of the provincial party secretary, to address other possible factors. A summary of the main dependent and independent variables is presented in

²⁹ These figures are in the natural log format only for the regression analysis of the percentage of central assistance.

Table 4.

Table 4 Summary Statistics of Main Variables on Budget and Investigation

	mean	sd	min	max
Education	1933.18	749.87	1142.28	5162.65
Healthcare	843.21	314.66	436.66	2113.90
Community	1318.95	1262.87	253.00	7339.82
Public House	488.08	352.42	67.80	2216.67
Public Service	1151.08	904.26	636.60	6889.12
Social Security	1469.01	781.37	547.71	6298.19
Environment	363.31	280.40	116.36	1754.01
Other Expenditure	301.48	501.76	11.51	4021.65
Net Central Transfer	1671.60	818.21	369.78	4029.6
Investigation (1-Year Lagged)	108.85	164.66	0	742
Observations	155			

All spending data are per capita basis in Yuan (CNY); Central Transfer data is in 100 Million Yuan; The unit is one province in one year.

4.6 Results

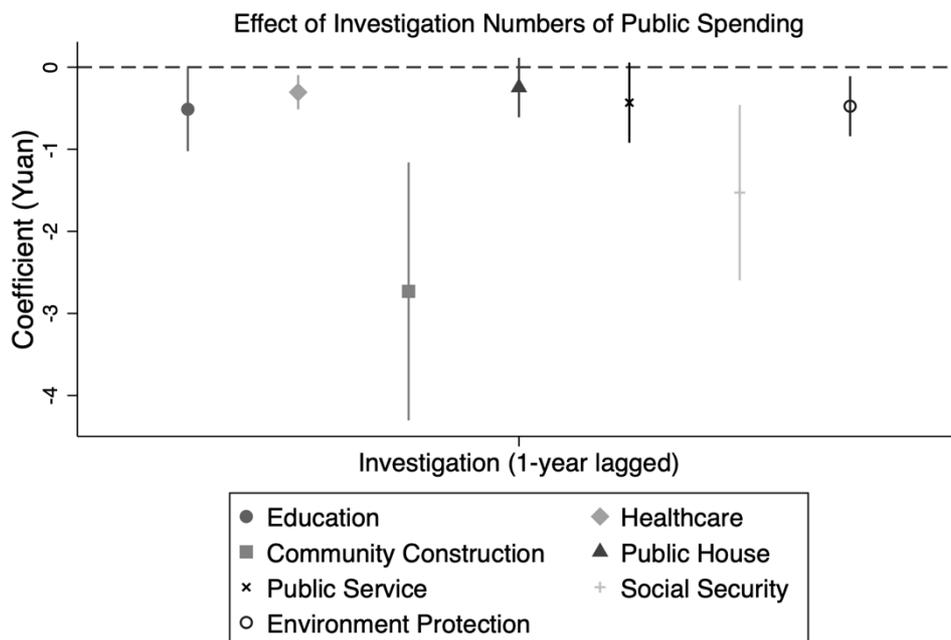
Figure 7 and

Figure 8 present the effects of corruption investigations on the effects of per capita social spending in all seven categories under the random effect model and fixed effect model.

Although a few of them do not pass the conventional significance level, all of them

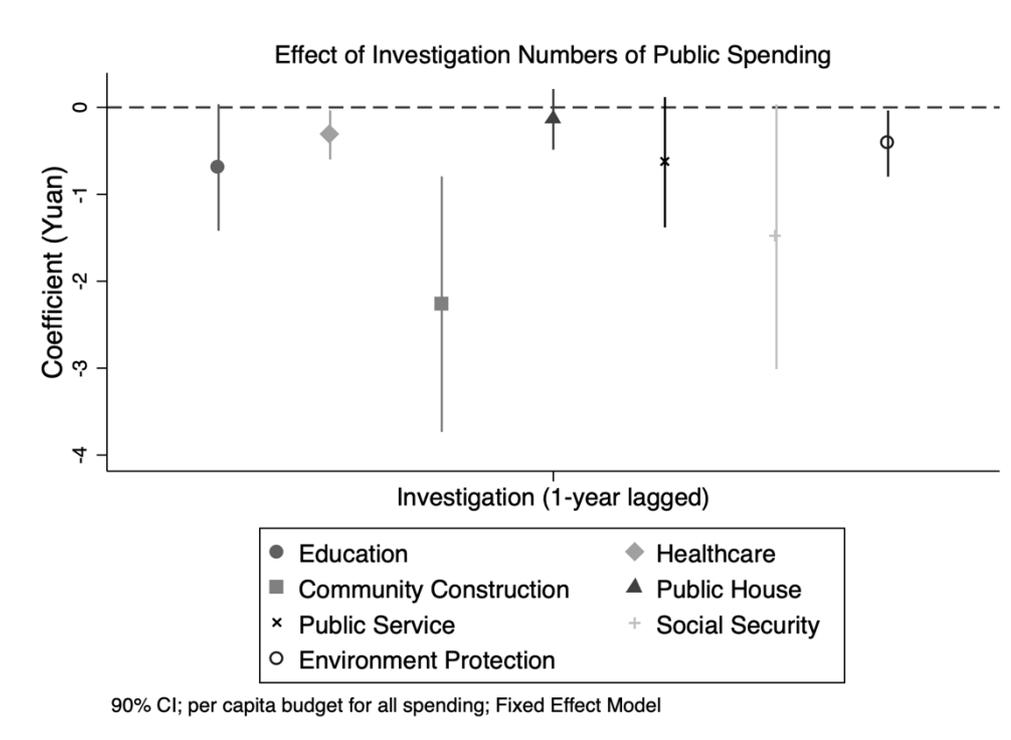
demonstrate a consistently negative effect on per capita spending. The more investigations of corruption one province had in the previous year, the less the province would spend on social welfare issues in the current year. The decrease per investigation varies from 0.25 RMB to 2.78 RMB under the random effect model and 0.14 RMB to 2.26 RMB under the fixed effect model. Given that there are hundreds of officials investigated each year in the dataset, the decrease is substantial. Table 5 demonstrates the average decrease of per capita social spending based on the estimated effect, the average number of investigations, and the average per capita spending in each category. This finding indicates a decrease from approximately 3% to 22.5% in various types of per capita social spending.

Figure 7 Effect of Investigation on Public Spending (Random Effect Model)



90% CI; per capita budget for all spending; Random Effect Model

Figure 8 Effect of Investigation on Public Spending (Fixed Effect Model)



It is noteworthy, however, that the per capita spending for each public goods category is increasing yearly, which is consistent with the trend that the Chinese regime is increasing spending on social welfare. Therefore, regarding this finding, it can be interpreted that despite the pressure of the regime to increase social welfare, spending on various social issues does not increase as expected. Corruption investigations, because of the internal pressure to maintain the loyalty of regime allies, actually slow the increase of benefits distributed to the public rather than enhancing it.

Table 5 The Average Negative Effect of Investigation on Social Spending

	Random Effect Model		Fixed Effect Model	
	Coefficient	Change	Coefficient	Change
Education	-0.51	-2.87%	-0.69	-3.89%
Healthcare	-0.31	-4.00%	-0.32	-4.13%
Community	-2.73	-22.53%	-2.26	-18.65%
Public House	-0.25	-5.58%	-0.14	-3.12%
Public Service	-0.43	-4.07%	-0.63	-5.96%

Social Security	-1.53	-11.34%	-1.49	-11.04%
Environment	-0.48	-14.38%	-0.42	-12.58%

All spending data are per capita basis in Yuan (CNY). The effect of the change is estimated based on the average number of investigation cases.

Next, I present the regression results of corruption investigations into central fiscal assistance. Figure 9 presents the effect of the number of investigations on the net central fiscal transfer, with both the random and fixed effect model controlling for either GDP or GDP per capita. The estimation is that one additional investigation can bring approximately 20 to 80 million more RMB in central transfers, depending on which statistical model is used. Figure 10 presents the effect of the number of investigations of the percentage of central fiscal assistance of total local budgets. Similarly, this finding indicates that the more investigations are conducted, the higher the percentage of central fiscal assistance in local expenditure, which means the central government is taking more responsibilities for financing the local province's budget. This finding fits my theory and indicates that when there are more investigations, the central government tends to distribute more benefits to local officials to reward them.

Figure 9 Effect of Investigation on New Central Transfer

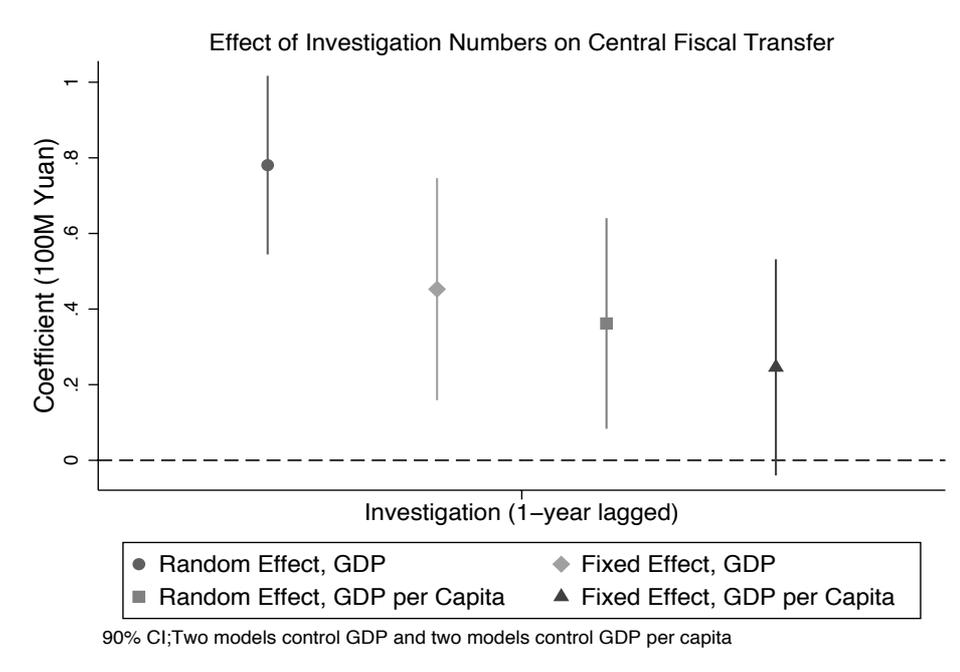
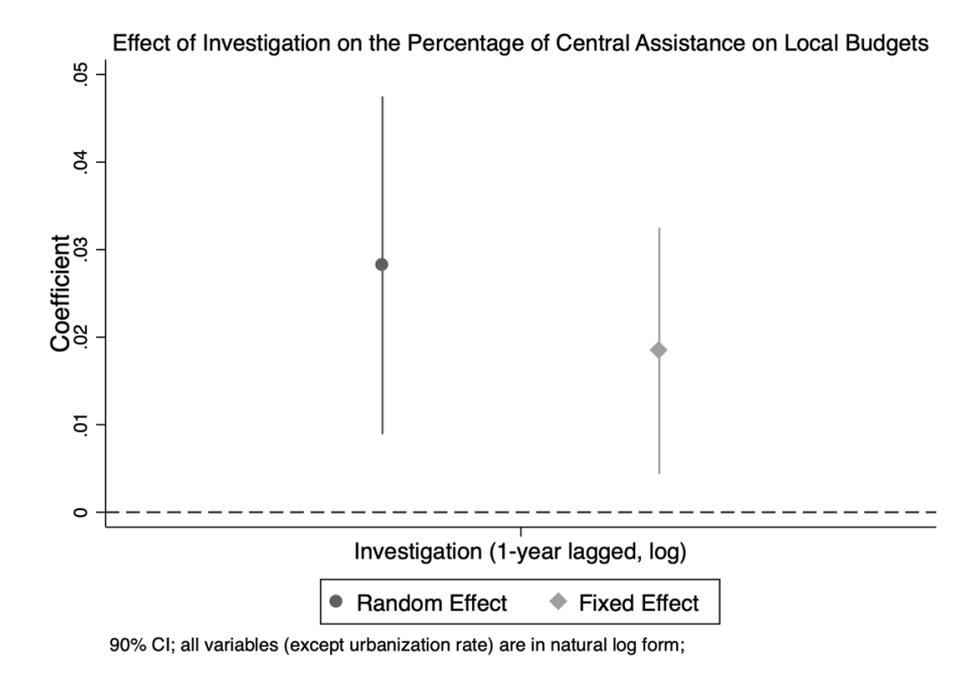


Figure 10 Effect of Investigation on the Percentage of Central Fiscal Assistance



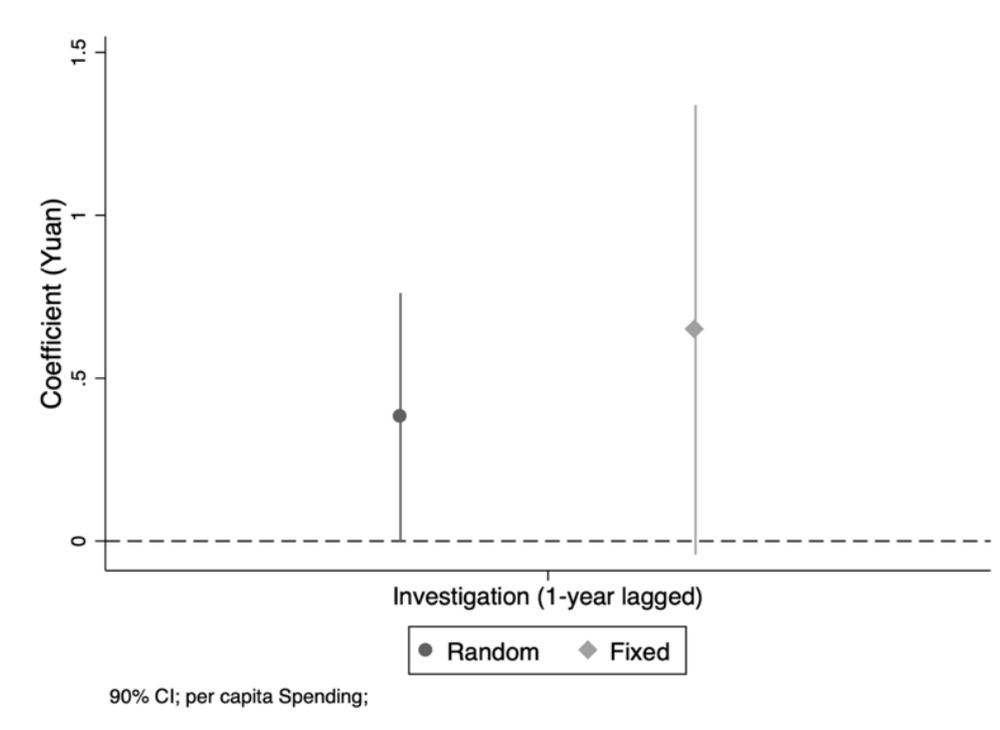
I then present the regression results of the corruption investigations on “other expenditure” in Figure 11. In both the random effect model and the fixed effect model, a positive association between the number of investigations and per capita other expenditures is observed. The effect is also substantial, although it did not pass the conventional significance

level. For example, one additional investigation seems to lead to an increase of approximately 0.5 RMB in per capita “other expenditure.” It is particularly noteworthy that other expenditure per capita is one of the very few categories in provincial budgets that does not monotonically increase across the time frame of this analysis. Other expenditure dropped in almost all provinces when the anticorruption campaigns started, which indicates that the other expenditure category does include some expenditures targeted by the anticorruption campaign. Nevertheless, even if I admit that this is weak support for a positive relationship between other expenditure and the investigation, the fact that the increase in anticorruption investigation cannot reduce the level of the highly suspicious other expenditure at any statistically significant level is still surprising. This result may further suggest that the government may distribute more particularistic benefits to officials via institutionalized channels such as salaries and welfares.

Last, I test the robustness of the results by dropping potential outliers. One possible outlier is the year 2011. The investigation data from Y. Wang and Dickson (2018) contain the year 2011, the year before the anticorruption campaign began, and it is possible that the media report, on which the dataset is based, was still restricted in reporting corruption cases in 2011. If this is the case, the number of investigations in 2011 would not be comparable with other years. Another possible outlier is Tibet. Since Tibet has a much lower population compared to other provincial regions, the per capita spending figure in Tibet is usually higher than in other provinces. The tables in the appendix present the regression results of the number of investigations on social spending by dropping the data from 2011 and dropping the

data from Tibet, respectively. The results remain similar and are reported in the appendix.

Figure 11 Effect of Investigations on “Other Expenditure”



In general, this chapter reveals that the increasing intensity of anticorruption makes the provincial government in China spend less on public welfare, more on other expenditures suspiciously related to the personal perks of officials and receive more fiscal help from the central government. This finding demonstrates that the authoritarian regime in China is creating a strategic balance between the public and bureaucrats: the regime performs more anticorruption investigations in response to public demands while reducing public benefits to particularly reward bureaucrats. Consequently, the loyalty of both sides remains intact.

4.7 Extended Analysis

4.7.1 Difference-in-Difference Test

To further test the causal mechanism, I adopt a difference-in-difference (DiD) test to evaluate the effect of anticorruption on the distribution of resources. Rather than using the numbers of investigations, I use investigations of senior officials as the “treatment” in the DiD design. I define senior officials as one of the three categories: 1) ministerial level and above; or 2) vice-ministerial level with positions in a provincial government and/or a provincial party standing committee; or 3) alternative member of the CCP Central Committee and above. The idea is that investigations of high-level officials are a unique feature of the current anticorruption campaign in China that is different from previous ones. In the past, officials with a rank of ministerial level or above were rarely investigated. Officials ranked at vice-ministerial levels were also rarely investigated, and most of those being investigated were in less powerful institutions, such as local people’s congresses. Therefore, investigating senior officials who used to be almost immune from anticorruption should be a very strong signal to local officials that the current anticorruption campaign is different and threatens their privileges and spoils.

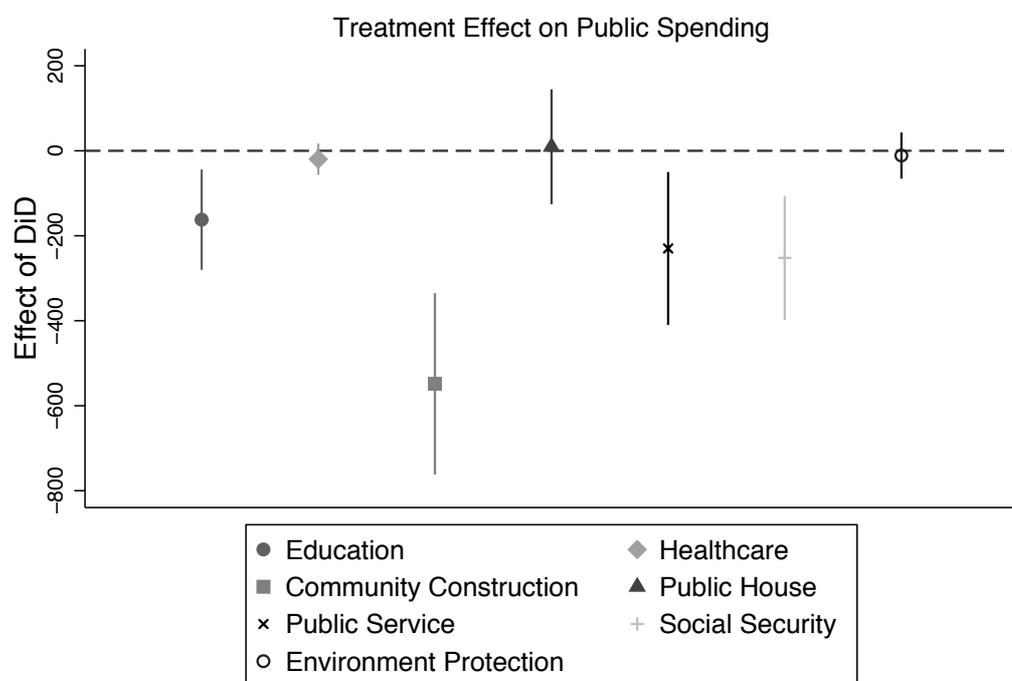
To set up the DiD analysis, I use the year of 2012 as the starting point of the treatment period. All provinces with at least one senior official being investigated between 2012 and 2016 are included in the “treatment group,” while other provinces are placed in the control group. I then include the budgetary data from 2008 to 2016, four years before and after the starting year. GDP, geographic area, population and urbanization rate are still included as covariates.

The results of the DiD analysis largely coincide with the main results and are shown in

Figure 12

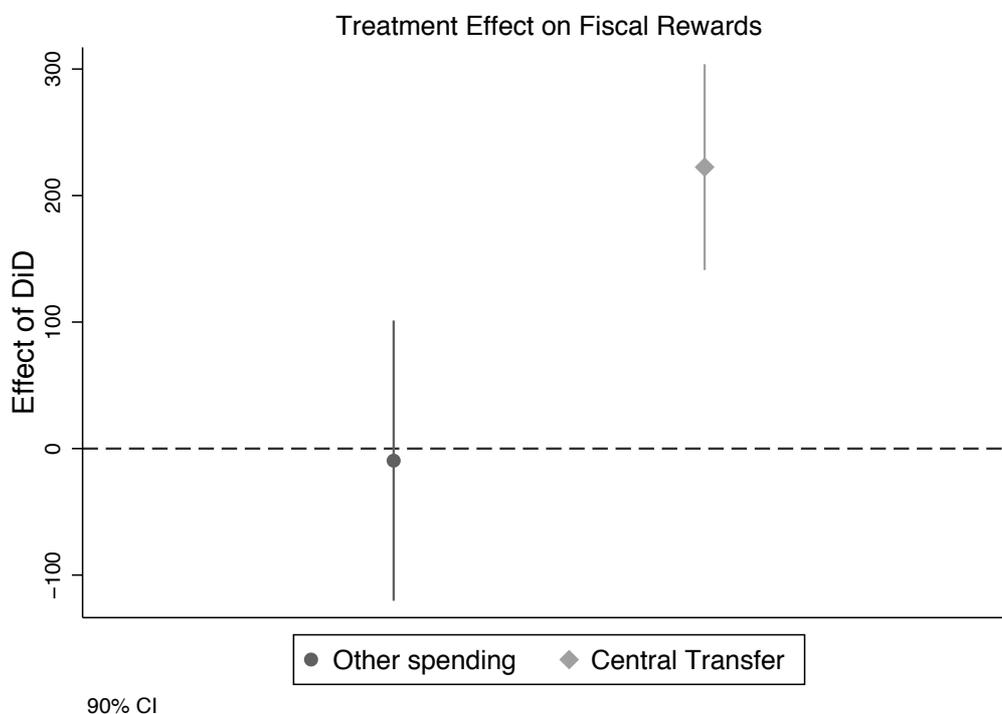
Figure 13. Compared to provinces without any senior officials being investigated, provinces with such investigations spend less on public welfare and public issues and receive more net central transfers to finance local budgets. Specifically, provinces with senior officials being arrested would spend approximately 200 to 600 RMB less in various per capita public spending items and receive approximately 20 billion RMB more in central fiscal transfers compared with provinces without senior official investigations. This finding reflects that in provinces with severe threats to bureaucratic benefits, the Chinese regime usually needs to offer more rewards to local officials by reducing public spending in that province.

Figure 12 Effect of Senior Official Arrest on public spending (DiD Test)



90% CI

Figure 13 Effect of Senior Official Arrest on Bureaucratic Rewards (DiD Test)



It is noteworthy that the treatment effect of senior arrests on other expenditure is not significant. One possible reason for this result is that even for provinces with no senior officials being arrested, the expenditure on bureaucratic welfare still needs to be increased because low-level officials may still need to be appeased. It is possible that senior officials obtain most of their benefits from sources other than government budgeting; thus, whether senior officials are arrested would not greatly affect other expenditure because the compensation for senior officials will not be included in other expenditure. However, further data are needed to explore the mechanism of anticorruption activities and the effect on other expenditure.

4.7.2 Alternative Explanations

In this section, several additional analyses are presented to address some alternative

explanations and concerns.

The first possible alternative explanation is that an investigation conducted in one province would affect other actors in determining social spending. For example, state-owned enterprises (SOE) and foreign investors are regarded as two important players other than the government in social spending (Hong, 2018). It is possible that corruption investigations would cause foreign investors to worry about political instabilities and thus reduce their willingness to invest. Since foreign investors usually have strong demands for better social services for labor efficiency, a reduction in foreign investment may reduce the pressure for providing social spending. Similarly, SOEs usually contribute to local social programs. Since many leaders in SOEs are also targeted in the anticorruption campaign, SOEs may also be affected in terms of local social spending provisions. To address this alternative explanation, I add the FDI figure and the percent of SOEs in provincial GDP as control variables. The results presented in the appendix indicate that neither the FDI or SOE scales can alter the results between the investigation numbers of social spending. The major conclusion still holds.

The second possible explanation is the political career of local cadres. Studies have shown that the provision of resources is shaped by the patronage relationships between leaders and their followers (Jiang & Zhang, 2015). For example, it is possible for a province with a powerful provincial party secretary to obtain more resources so that more can be spent on social issues. It is also possible that a powerful party secretary would be able to protect his or her followers in his or her province to have fewer corruption investigations. If so, then the negative relationships observed between the investigation and social spending may only reflect the

political nature of provincial leaders. To address this potential explanation, I include the rank of provincial secretary for each province in each year and whether the provincial secretary was promoted in the 2018 Party Congress as control variables to measure the powerfulness of provincial leaders. The results indicate that neither the political rank of provincial party secretary nor the promotion status of party secretaries in the 2018 Party Congress changed the negative associations between investigations and per capita social spending.

The last possible explanation is the chilling effect of the corruption investigation. As studies have shown, local officials may be fearful of the anticorruption campaign (Anechiarico & Jacobs, 1998; Flinders, 2011; Erik Wang, 2019). Thus, they may become extremely cautious in their daily work and reduce the public goods and services that the government can provide. Although this problem may be partially addressed by including GDP as a control variable because the ineffectiveness of bureaucracy would inevitably affect GDP, I offer discussions here to address this alternative explanation further. Theoretically, measuring the output of social welfare by social spending should avoid this problem much better than measuring it by an actual number of public goods provisions, because the budget of social spending for one year is usually determined before bureaucrats perform their work in that year. The budget is usually determined by a government plan at the beginning of the fiscal year rather than how bureaucrats carry them out. Therefore, it is unlikely that the budget is affected by the ineffectiveness of bureaucrats due to the fear of anticorruption. Since the per capita figure of social spending is still increasing the strong demand from the central government on local government is improving the social welfare and public goods provision and indicates that local

officials may still need to increase their expenditure and services to provide social benefits to the public. Empirically, I conduct two additional analyses to address this problem. First, I replace GDP with total expenditure in the control variable to control for the potential fear effect in the overall expenditure level. The result shown in Appendix indicates that this replacement does not alter the negative relationship between the investigation and per capita social spending. Second, I run the same regression between the number of investigations and total expenditure to determine whether provinces are spending less because of the corruption investigations, controlling for their sizes, GDP and population. The results presented in appendix indicate that the number of investigations has no significant effect on expenditure. Again, this result indicates that the decrease in social spending may not be the consequence of the fear effect on overall government spending. Last, it is noteworthy that other expenditure, which should be the most sensitive category to the fear effect of anticorruption, is not negatively affected by the number of anticorruption investigations. This finding may indicate that the fear effect may not have the same direct impact on budgeting that it has on bureaucratic behavior and performance.

However, I do not argue that the fear effect does not exist. It is very likely that anticorruption has a chilling effect on local officials so that they would not perform at their usual efficiency. What I am arguing here is that the chilling effect may not affect how much money government plans to spend, but only affect how efficient the bureaucrats perform with the given amount of money, i.e., how many public goods provided with the given budgets. Moreover, the concerns and worries among local officials may actually be one of the reasons why Chinese regimes need to allow the removal of social spending from the budget to

compensate bureaucrats because the regime has the incentive to appease local officials, relieve their anxieties and motivate them to have a better working performance to ensure the quality of governance. This is exactly the theory of this chapter: the regime has to provide other types of benefits to maintain the loyalty and cooperation of local officials when they are deprived of the perks from corruption.

4.8 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter tries to explain how autocrats maintain the loyalty of regime allies and local officials when their demands for benefits collide. This chapter, with evidence from China, argues that autocrats can maintain a strategic balance between two sides and compensate for the loss of one side by other forms of benefits by removing some benefits from the other side. In China's anticorruption cases in which the public interest of clean governance is hurting the private welfare of bureaucrats, the Chinese regime would allow local officials to spend less on public issues while providing more money to local government. In addition, this chapter also found that the strength of corruption has a positive effect on spending under the "other expenditure" category, a highly suspicious category that is related to the provision of benefits and welfare to bureaucrats. These results may suggest that the Chinese regime is providing more materialistic and political benefits and rewards to local officials to appease their anger, which is derived from the anticorruption campaign, with funds saved from reductions in public spending and obtained from central fiscal assistance.

This chapter does not deny the effect of the anticorruption campaign in China. Moreover,

scholars have shown that the anticorruption campaign reduces the corruption in land transactions and the patronage between the central and the provincial leaders (T. Chen & Kung, 2018), which should be an effective response to the strong public demand for clean government. However, this chapter reminds people to be cautious in claiming the effectiveness of anticorruption in improving social welfare. A decrease in some types of private spoils gained by bureaucrats, which is what the anticorruption campaign is supposed to do, does not necessarily mean an increase in social spending that can improve the overall social welfare and public goods provision. The overall effect of anticorruption on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public goods and services may not be as large as it first appears.

Regarding the distributional strategies for authoritarian survival, this chapter address a crucial trade-off between coopting the public and rewarding the regime allies for autocrats in benefits distribution. Current literature agrees that autocrats need to use spoils-sharing to solicit supports from both regime allies and the public, while it provides little answers to how autocrats can balance the demands of spoils from different side. This chapter shows that the survival strategies may compete with each other and the autocrats have to make balance between them. It indicates that the abilities for autocrats to distribute benefits for regime stability may not be as large and effective as many conventional literature assumes. A concession to the public may be effective in reducing the external threats of uprising, but it may also make the regime allies disgruntled, and thus leads to an unclear overall effect on regime survival.

Similarly, this chapter also demonstrates that the provision of public goods and services

is also subject to autocrats' need for internal stability within the ruling coalition. It is widely discussed by scholars that the provision of public goods is subject to the external pressures placed on autocrats, such as elections (Luo et al., 2007), informal institutions (L. L. Tsai, 2007), or external threats and needs for external cooperation (Gandhi, 2008). This chapter, however, suggests a dynamic process of distributing resources for providing public welfare and private spoils. External pressure and subsequent policy concessions may result in an increase in some public welfare, but it usually comes with losses in some other areas of public interest. Autocrats need to allocate more resources to allies even though the external demand for public goods and services are strong because of the pressure from the internal coalition. This finding, therefore, suggests a complicated dynamic process of the strategic distribution of resources to balance the interests of the public and allies. In short, external pressure may lead to the increasing provision of public goods and services, but this usually comes at the expense of other public benefits provided those extra public goods are hurting the regime allies' private interests. Any policy that is designed to increase the provision of public goods must consider its consequences on the bureaucratic systems, and a careful balance of benefits between the public and bureaucrats is necessary.

To the chapter of Chinese politics, this chapter also reveals the complicated dynamics of regime survival, especially during the era of the economic slowdown in China. Most literature has argued that the Chinese regime needs to offer more public goods, such as the rule of law (Y. Wang, 2015), and be more responsive to the public demands (J. Chen et al., 2016; Su & Meng, 2016; Truex, 2016) in order to sustain economic growth and maintain good governance.

It is more crucial during the period of economic slowdown because the regime may also need to appease the public to maintain its performance legitimacy formula. However, such measures would inevitably constrain the ability of the Chinese regime in distributing benefits to regime allies, and the slow economic growth further restricts the total resources available for distribution. It posts a fundamental dilemma for regime survival and stability in China. Moreover, if we follow the current literature and assume that the Chinese regime has to continue being responsive to the public demands and offering more public goods and welfare, it will become a fundamental challenge for CCP to find a new way to solicit the loyalty and solidarity of the regime allies and the ruling coalition. It might not be a very severe challenge in the past because the economy had grown so rapidly that everyone's share of the pie is increasing. However, the pie cannot increase indefinitely, and the new way to satisfy the regime allies while not depriving the public too much will become a crucial challenge to China sooner or later. After all, such trade-off is a fundamental challenge that China, and perhaps all authoritarian regimes that rely on performance legitimacy and cooptation to solicit public supports, has to take.

Chapter 5

5 New Incentives: How Does CCP Keep Membership Valuable?

5.1 Introduction

How can the Chinese regime recruit new members from the elites to the ruling coalition under the new socioeconomic era when many old privileges are no longer exclusive or attractive? This chapter addresses this question by reviewing the development and evolution of China's strategies for offering exclusive benefits to regime allies and discuss how some new types of incentives are created in the new era.

Regime allies need to be satisfied with various kinds of benefits; this is to provide them enough incentives to remain in the ruling coalition. In Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), the very bold logic of materialistic calculation is presented to explain the choice of regime allies: they choose not to defect from the incumbent regime because what they can gain from incumbent regime is larger than what they may get from the potential challengers. It implies a very direct requirement for any autocrat to maintain the loyalty of regime allies. Authoritarian regimes must keep an advantage of benefits offering against their major challengers; otherwise, their allies would shift the challengers' coalition and try to crack down on the incumbent regime. This is actually not confined to only authoritarian politics. Studies have consistently revealed the strong need for particularism for politicians to disproportionately

provide benefits to small groups of recipients to maintain their power base in U.S. electoral politics.³⁰ Therefore, it seems safe to say that distributions of benefits are the core for political alliance and coalitions across different political systems.

China is no exception from this, as the privilege has existed in a long time in CCP's history. However, as the theory of this dissertation and the previous two chapters suggested, there is an increasingly significant challenge to maintain the advantage of benefits offered to China's regime allies. The expansion of universalistic welfare, both as the results of China's rapid economic development and the responses to the increasing demands from the public, not only takes away the resources for particularistic spoils reserved for regime allies but also makes many of those spoils non-exclusive and valueless. The increasing public awareness of such privileges, partly thanks to the development of new technologies that expose many of those cases to the public eye, also leads to more and more severe public infuriation towards those particularistic benefits, which creates even more pressures for the Chinese regime to offer them. As a consequence, it seems reasonable to question the value of being regime allies if it is indifferent from being outsiders regarding benefits received. Why should elites choose to join the CCP, and broadly, the Chinese regime's ruling coalition?

In this chapter, I argue that the strategies for CCP to offer the particularistic incentives for attracting elites evolve and adaptive to the changes in socioeconomic conditions. The Chinese regime has adopted new strategies for maintaining its attractiveness: 1) enhancing the institutionalized material benefits to increase the credibility and certainty of particularistic

³⁰ For example, see an summary by M. Golden and Min (2013); also see Kriner and Reeves (2015)

distribution; 2) to create new incentives by reviving and expanding the non-materialistic rewards; 3) to reduce the costs associated with the membership. All these measures can increase the value of particularistic benefits reserved for the regime allies while minimizing the additional resources invested.

This chapter is organized as the following. The second section outlines the research strategy I adopt to explore this question. The third section demonstrates the evolution of particularistic benefits for regime allies alongside the history of CCP and the Chinese regime. The fourth section provides the theoretical framework to understand the new incentives for the Chinese regime to recruit regime allies and then support the argument by empirical evidence. The last section provides discussions and conclusions that address some alternative framework and some potential implications in the future development of the Chinese regime.

5.2 Research Strategy

5.2.1 Whom Does the Chinese Regime Recruit?

As discussed in the previous chapter, regime allies consist of various kinds of elites across different occupations, political affiliations and backgrounds. Although the strategies for recruiting them into the ruling coalition may share some common cores, they are certainly different in many perspectives. For example, one important mechanism for recruiting social elites into the ruling coalition is through the United Front, while party institutions, such as the organization department, play a critical role in recruiting and managing new political elites.

This chapter will focus on the membership of the Chinese Communist Party. As the

ruling party of the Chinese regime, the CCP certainly has strong needs to keep recruiting the most promising political and social elites. The party membership structure and institutions, as Svulik (2012) argues, provide a very effective mechanism to keep the incentives for key regime allies and followers. Absorbing new members into the party, therefore, is critical to keep the loyalty of those elites. The CCP also cannot maintain its survival and functioning without the continuous recruitment of new members. All these, as discussed in the theory of this dissertation, require the adequate provision of benefits.

As a party with almost 90 million members, however, it is certainly unreasonable to expect a one-size-fit-all strategy for providing benefits to attract members. CCP members have a quite diverse background and, thus, may be applicable for different kinds of strategies. Therefore, this study argues that at any given time, there will be a set of strategies for keeping the loyalty of party members.

One point to note is that, for the sake of analysis, this chapter treats the memberships of the eight Democratic Parties as an extension of CCP membership for some analysis. There are three main reasons to believe this. First, although technically being different parties, those eight democratic parties in China fully support the ideology, agenda and policies of CCP, and therefore, are widely regarded as a part of the establishment in China (C. Zhang, 2018). Second, the party activities, including the recruitment of new members, of these democratic parties are under the guidance and supervision of the United Front Department of CCP.³¹ Third, these eight democratic parties are regarded as important partners of the CCP and a part

³¹ For example, see: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64171/65717/65718/4455937.html>

of the ruling regime. Their members usually have reserved seats in the People's Congresses, the Political Consultative Conferences, and the government. In fact, many of the members of the democratic parties are also CCP members.³² Therefore, it seems appropriate to view them as key parts of regime allies in some contexts.

5.2.2 Empirical Strategy

This chapter deals with the new incentive hypothesis proposed in Chapter 2 and demonstrates how CCP creates new values for the benefits distributed to the regime allies in the new era. There are two major questions that this chapter aims to explore. First, how do the benefits offered to the CCP members evolve and what are the challenges in the new era? Second, how does the CCP maintain the attractiveness of the benefits to recruit new members and maintain the loyalty of existing members?

This chapter relies primarily on qualitative materials to explore the research questions proposed. The main sources of materials will be historical documents, official documents, Chinese scholarly articles regarding the welfare of party officials, interviews, and fieldwork. The documents involved in this study are collected from the University Service Center for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The interviews are conducted between August to December 2019 in Xi'an, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Hong Kong.

The interviewees are recruited via personal connection, but I try to have a diverse pool of interviewees consists of both elderly CCP members and young CCP members. The idea is

³² A webpage from the United Front Department of CCP clearly explained under what conditions such "dual-membership" is allowed: <http://www.zyztz.gov.cn/tzb2010/wxwb/201801/08f3592d6b844f40a3e993e0e62174c5.shtml>

that I can compare the experiences of CCP members in different generations to track the developments and changes of the perks provided by their party membership. While the young members recently recruited into the party are the most relevant group to study the new incentives in the current era, elderly party members, who are usually holding senior positions, can also provide insights on the membership recruitment process from another perspective. In addition, elderly party members usually have wide connections with other party members so that they can share stories and experiences from other party members. However, in order to ensure the accuracy of the materials, only the experiences from the direct relatives are included.

5.3 The Evolution and the Challenge of CCP Membership Perks

5.3.1 Membership Benefits in Pre-Reform era

In the early period, membership perks for CCP members are quite similar to what has been found by scholars in many other authoritarian systems. In many cases, party membership in an authoritarian regime is usually associated with various kinds of benefits, from career advantages to the exclusive access to education and healthcare resources (Voslenskii, 1984; Walder, 1995). This is the same case in China before the Reform Era. Generally speaking, the perks associated with party membership can be categorized as material and non-material benefits.

Material Benefits

Material benefits usually involved various kinds of exclusive access to resources, many of which were in scarcity in the pre-reform era of China. Before economic reform in 1978, China had a strict planning economy, and many resources were rationed or were in short supply. In this situation, the exclusive access to those resources seemed to be a very valuable perk for regime allies.

The scarce resources exclusively offered to CCP members have very broad coverage, but they are usually confidential since CCP does not want to reveal the information to the public (W.-H. Tsai, 2016). Some of these material benefits, however, were widely provided so that they were relatively easier to identify and observe than other benefits. This chapter will demonstrate the exclusive access provided to CCP members by those types of privileges that are open for the public to examine.

The special Provision of Food, or so-called *Tegong* in Chinese, is perhaps one of the most well-known privileges that CCP members enjoy.³³ In the pre-reform period, when food supply was in shortage, the special provision of food was very critical for the survival of the members themselves and their families. According to a report submitted by Qi Yanming, the vice minister of the Ministry of Culture in 1960, and approved by the CCP Central leadership, senior officials in Beijing could get from half to one kilogram of white sugar each month.³⁴ White sugar, however, was so scarce in the 1960s that most ordinary people could

³³ See W.-H. Tsai (2016) for a comprehensive review of the development of the special provision of food to CCP members.

³⁴ Central Party Literature Office, “The Selection of Important Documents after the Establishment of PRC (*Jianguo Yilai Zhongyao Wenxian Xuanbian*, 《建国以来重要文献选编》)” (in Chinese), Vol. 13, pp. 683-686, First Edition, May 1996, Beijing: Central Party Literature Press

not even have it; instead, ordinary people used Saccharin, a cheap alternative product with no nutritional value and suspicious association with bladder cancer. Similarly, the report also indicated a two-to-six-kilogram egg supply per month, which is even higher than the average egg consumption of Chinese in 2016.³⁵ Apparently, this kind of food supply was abundant for daily consumption for elite CCP members and thus kept them healthy, especially during the great famine in China in the early 1960s.

In addition to food, there were many other examples of exclusive material benefits. For example, senior CCP members and officials were entitled to free housing or housing with relatively low rent. Even Deng Xiaoping himself criticized the construction of houses for Mao Zedong and other party leaders since 1958.³⁶ The elite party members were also entitled to specially reserved healthcare facilities, as shown in the opening case of this dissertation.

It was noted, however, that these benefits were never directly associated with party membership. It is understandable because CCP keep claiming itself as a party serving the ordinary Chinese people, and having privileges tied with party membership would certainly damage their legitimacy as a party serving and representing the interests of normal people in China. Instead, the material benefits were tied with certain occupations. For example, W.-H. Tsai (2016) identified that cadres with certain administrative ranks and personnel carrying important tasks (e.g., athletes or missile scientists) were among the major groups who can receive the special provision of food. However, since most of the occupations require CCP

³⁵ In 2016, the average egg consumption of individual Chinese is 17kg per year, or roughly 1.4kg per month, according to the China Meat Association (<http://www.chinameat.org/index.php?a=detail&id=1455>, accessed at January 19, 2020)

³⁶ "Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, Vol 2 (in Chinese)" (*Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan*, 邓小平文选, 第二卷), p.330, People's Publishing House, 1994

membership, the benefits were de facto associated with party membership.

Furthermore, although most available evidence points to senior members who enjoyed the benefits, it was actually not that selective. One interviewee, whose parents were a middle-level cadre in a local state-owned factory, once described her personal experiences in the teenage period to me. Although she did not admit the existence of any exclusive access to resources, she described a personal experience of attending a good high school without exams and seldom worrying about hunger, both of which are very different from the depiction of ordinary Chinese life in the 1970s.³⁷ It reflects that mid-to-low level CCP members also enjoyed a certain degree of material benefits, although being less than what senior officials enjoyed. This reflection is consistent with the finding that the material benefits within CCP are associated with rank in the nomenklatura system (W.-H. Tsai, 2016). It also reflects the idea proposed by Svolik (2012) that an authoritarian party should delay the significant portion of benefits to the senior stage of membership to keep the incentives for staying in the regime coalition.

Non-Material Benefits

Unlike material benefits, non-material benefits do not take lots of actual resources in many cases and thus can be widely provided. Therefore, unlike materials benefits that were selective in distribution, non-material benefits were broadly enjoyed by almost all members of CCP.

Most of the non-materials benefits associated with party membership were non-tangible

³⁷ Interview with a retired cadre from Shenzhen, December 9, 2019 (Interview 191209A)

values. One of the most significant benefits associated with party membership was its reputation. Because of the heavily ideological propaganda, being a party member was very glorious. One interviewee, who worked in a factory during the cultural revolution before attending college in 1979, explained:

“I felt very glorious comparing to my fellow co-workers because I join the party. In fact, I feel I may even have advantages in marriage [because of my party membership].”³⁸

Another interviewee also provided similar reflection:

“I believe at that time [the 1970s] we joined the party purely because it was a glorious thing. We were not looking for any actual benefits [for being party member].”³⁹

Career advantage was certainly another big non-material advantage, given most senior positions were either in government or state-affiliated organizations. However, it seems a little difficult to say whether the party membership created such advantages. In many cases, one should be good enough to be approved as a party member, and such good performance may also qualify him or her for being promoted. According to the description of interviewees, party membership is more like a necessary condition and qualification for career advancement, while the political beliefs and work performances were still the determining factors for both career advancement and party membership.⁴⁰

The non-material benefits were critical for maintaining CCP's attractiveness to the elites because they did not require lots of resources invested. In the pre-reform era, when China had

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Interview with a retired cadre from Shenzhen, December 9, 2019 (Interview 191209B)

⁴⁰ Interview 191209A and 191209B

a severe problem of resource shortages, it would be impossible to provide abundant material benefits to all political and social elites the regime hopes to recruit into the ruling coalition. The non-material benefits, therefore, serve as an effective alternative to keep the loyalty of regime allies.

Membership: A positional Good

Based on the analysis above, I argue that CCP membership can be regarded as a positional good, whose value is only determined by how it is distributed among the population. Originally as a concept proposed by Hirsch (2005), positional good rests on a core idea of scarcity. Its value would be lower to the owners when there are more consumptions of it from other people (Vatiero, 2011). The non-material benefits clearly fit into this definition because those values are associated with a status symbol that is only prestigious when not many other people have it.⁴¹ However, even the material benefits fit the definition of positional goods. Although the material resources, such as eggs, sugars and houses, have absolute value themselves, the reason they are so valuable to party members is that other people cannot get them. If everyone can get eggs, it makes no additional values to eggs received as CCP members, even though eggs still provide nutritional value. Therefore, scarcity is at the core of party benefits – either because the total supply of resources is limited or because the resources, although not in short supply, are exclusively distributed to some people but not others.

⁴¹ This is in no difference with luxury goods or prestige club membership which can charge very high price simply because the ownership of those demonstrate elite social status.

As a consequence, I would argue that the key to maintaining the attractiveness of membership is to maintain scarcity so that membership keeps being a positional good. The next section will explain the challenge of membership values in the reform era based on this argument.

5.3.2 Evolution and Challenges in Reform Era

The economic reform since 1978 has brought significant socioeconomic changes to Chinese society. In terms of particularistic benefits associated with party membership, China's rapid economic development has undermined the values of CCP membership in three major perspectives.

First, the economic growth of China led to a dramatic increase in all sorts of resources, which broke the scarcity that the value of CCP membership relies on. The abundant supplies of daily necessities make many of the exclusive access to resources no longer meaningful. For example, China officially canceled its rationing system for food in the early 1990s when the food supply was not in shortage. As a result, having exclusive access to some foods was no longer meaningful as a benefit. A similar situation happens to many types of benefits from housing to healthcare. Although the privileges are still there to some extent, they are far less significant than they used to be in the pre-reform era.

More importantly, market reform and the commercialization of many products fundamentally change the mechanism of distribution. Ordinary people can also have full access to many products in a market economy if they have money. For example, good education and decent housing are not reserved for a small group of political elites; they are

widely commercialized so that any people with an adequate amount of money can get them. Such market reforms significantly alter the foundation of CCP membership as a positional good: since more and more people have access to those benefits, the values of CCP membership and the benefits tied with membership status inevitably decrease.⁴²

Second, the non-material values associated with the CCP membership also declined. Since communist ideology is no longer dominant in Chinese society, being a party member became less valuable than it used to be. As one interviewee described,

*“I feel the new party members nowadays are not as pure as we were in the past. We believed in communism and felt glorious for being party members, but new members nowadays seem not.”*⁴³

Apparently, the emphasis on economic development shifted how society views glory. The famous slogan of “being rich is glorious” clearly marked such shifts and indicated that there might be many other ways to gain reputations than joining the party. For example, one would understandably expect a rich person to be at a more advantageous position in the marriage market compared to a party member with an ordinary amount of wealth, which is totally different from the situation described by one interviewee previously. In addition, party membership seems to be less selective than it used to be. One interviewee expressed his dissatisfaction towards this:

“I think we recruit new members too easily. I understand that grassroots party units

⁴² This is independent from the effect of increasing supply. Even if the supply of a given product is not in significant shortage, it still adds values to the CCP membership if such product is exclusively accessible to only party member. However, since most products are open for the public in market economy, such prestige no longer exists.

⁴³ Interview 191209A

have to fulfill their tasks of party development by recruiting a certain number of new members, but I disagree with their unscrutinized approach.”⁴⁴

Apparently, this may further defame party membership in general society, especially when membership is not selective and not regarded as an honor. One interviewee described what she observed for the young colleagues in her workplace before she retired:

“Many of them do not bother to join the party because they do not feel it brings anything valuable. I think they feel it (party membership) causes more burdens because they have to attend lots of party activities if they were party members.”⁴⁵

Even the career advantages of being a party member are undermined. The market reform and privatization created a large non-state sector that does not care much about party membership. Unlike the situation in the pre-reform era when almost all career options were state or state-affiliated, young people in the reform era have lots of non-state career options and do not need to become a party member to gain career advancement. In fact, there has been a long time that no party unit exists in those new sectors, such as private firms and foreign firms. As my interviewee admits:

“They (young people) only gain advantages in career development if they want to be officials; otherwise, party membership does not help them at all.”⁴⁶

The diverse socioeconomic situation and career options, again, changed the situation of scarcity and the distribution of those non-material benefits. Since more and more people can

⁴⁴ Interview 191209B

⁴⁵ Interview 191209A

⁴⁶ Ibid

get similar non-material benefits via a different path, the value of party membership, as the positional goods, is diminishing because what it can offer is no longer exclusive. For many people, especially young people with good education, wealth, and social status, who should have been the key target of party recruitment, joining in CCP does not make a big difference in further escalating their social status, networks, reputations, and career perspective. It certainly reduces the incentives of being a part of the party.

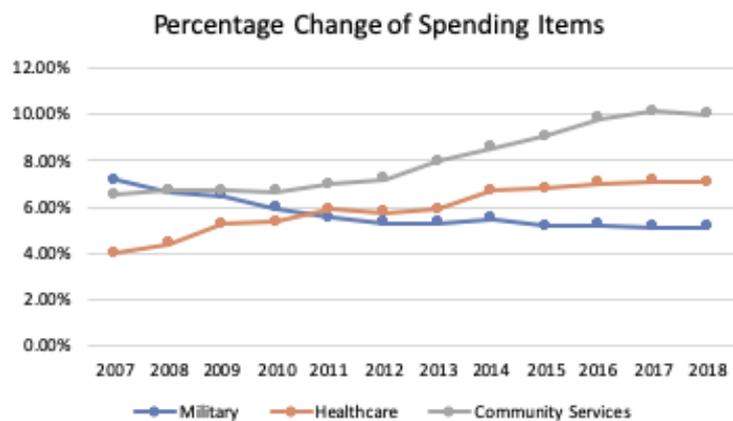
At last, economic development inevitably led to the social and political change that requires more modernized governance. Such changes have two significant consequences on the distributions of spoils to regime allies. First, it requires huge investments in public welfare to satisfy public demands in exchange for their cooperation. For example, the national educational expenses in 2017 were more than 3.4 trillion, almost 14 times more than that in 1998. The number of beds in general hospitals in 2017 was more than triple of that in 1998.⁴⁷ All these improvements have dramatically increased the living quality of the general public, but it inevitably takes lots of resources away from regime allies. For example, Figure 14 demonstrates the changes in percentages of military, healthcare and community service spending on total annual budgets from 2007 to 2018. Here I follow the approach of Gandhi (2008) to use military spending as a proxy to the spoils distributed to the regime allies. The other two items are spending on public welfare. We can see a clear trend in the last decade. The spending on particularistic spoils is declining percentage-wise, while the spending for universalistic public welfare is increasing. Apparently, the increasing need for universalistic

⁴⁷ Data source: National Statistical Bureau (For the education and hospital numbers)

welfare is inevitably eroding the abilities to distribute to the regime allies.

Second, the public is increasingly sensitive about the privileges that CCP members and other political elites enjoy. It usually becomes a huge public relation crisis when some of such privilege is exposed to the public. The Chinese government has repeatedly denied the existence of many privileges despite evidence that shows otherwise.⁴⁸ The increasing level of public participation and the requirement for information disclosure also make it easier for the public to monitor privileges. Some political campaigns, such as the anti-corruption campaign discussed in chapter 4, also reduces the likelihood for regime allies to obtain lots of spoils. All these measures to accommodate public demands further constrain the benefits provided to the CCP members and other political elites.

Figure 14 Percentage Change of Military, Healthcare and Community Spending



Therefore, there is a clear challenge for the CCP to maintain its attractiveness to elites by offering benefits associated with its membership. As Nee (1989) argues, the reform after 1978 has made the privileged class no longer better than ordinary citizens. However, as many

⁴⁸ For some example of denial, see: <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2011/07-04/3154301.shtml> (Access on January 20, 2020)

other scholars point out, the needs for survival requires the regime to keep the superior status for political elites even in the reform era (Bian & Logan, 1996). The example of the special provision of food in contemporary China revealed by W.-H. Tsai (2016) is just one example of how CCP tries to maintain the privileges, but it certainly meets more and more challenges.⁴⁹

5.4 New Incentives for the Membership: A Theoretical Perspective

The challenges CCP faces are significant regarding maintaining the value of its incentives for elites, so how would CCP react? This section will provide some theoretical discussions on how to address those challenges. The key to all strategies is that the party has to address the problem with a minimum level of additional resources invested under the resource constraints.

5.4.1 Enhanced and Institutionalized Material Benefits

One of the most obvious ways to create new incentives for membership is to increase material benefits. Generous monetary rewards and welfare are usually very attractive to elites. Many other authoritarian regimes adopt similar strategies to maintain the incentives of their regime allies. For example, the Singaporean government has provided a generous package of rewards and welfare for political elites who wants to join the ruling party and the

⁴⁹ For example, the value of the special provision of foods, according to W.-H. Tsai (2016), is heavily dependent on the fact that China has food safety problem. Such problem creates a new scarcity – the scarcity of safe food (instead of food in general) – to keep the value of membership as a positional good. However, such scarcity cannot persist forever; the huge public pressure would force Chinese government to improve the food safety. When most ordinary people can consume foods as safe and high-quality as those in the special provision systems, the value of such privilege is inevitably diminished.

government. Ministerial positions in Singapore have an annual salary of at least 700,000 USD dollars, almost 1.5 times the annual salary of the U.S. president. The First Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, openly claimed that they should offer salaries as similar to what top executives in multinational firms earn to attract the best elites to the government and ruling party.⁵⁰ This is certainly a very effective and direct solution.

However, as repeatedly discussed above, the resource constraints and the bad public reaction, from time to time, prevent an authoritarian regime from offering a very high level of rewards to its regime allies. One solution to this, I argue, is to increase the credibility of such rewards by institutionalizing them. Note that when uncertainty is brought into the calculation of benefits received, what is actually used is the *mathematical expectation* of benefits, not the absolute value of those benefits.⁵¹ Increasing the credibility would, therefore, increase the expected value of benefits even if the absolute amount of benefits are increased in a limited manner.

As the existing literature suggests, institutionalization is one crucial way of ensuring credibility, because the informally-distributed spoils can be taken away discretionarily (Magaloni, 2008). Institutionalized benefits can also protect regime allies from public pressure. Take the anti-corruption cases in chapter 4 as an example. If most CCP members are underpaid but allowed a certain level of corruption as a part of their spoils (Shirk, 1993), it

⁵⁰ See a news article on Lee's Speech in Singaporean Parliament, published in November 1, 1994 by the Straits Times: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/in-his-own-words-higher-pay-will-attract-most-talented-team-so-country-can-prosper> (Access on January 20, 2020)

⁵¹ For example, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) explicitly calculate the total benefits received by individual Selectorate based on the level of uncertainty and the absolute amount of benefits offered by the dictator, i.e. the expected value of benefits.

creates an unstable situation because those benefits can be taken away by the anti-corruption campaign as a response to strong public pressures. The elites themselves may be put in jail because of corruption. The institutionalized benefits, however, will be legal and thus much safer and more difficult to be taken away. As a result, the total expected value of benefits received by the party members is increased even though the absolute resources invested are not.

5.4.2 The Expansions of Non-Material Benefits

The non-material benefits are associated more with non-tangible and symbolic values. Recall that the main reasons for the devaluation of party membership in China are the ideological shifts and the diversified sources of reputations. To respond to these challenges specifically, two possible strategies can be adopted.

First, CCP can adjust its “brand image” to cope with social values. It can try to re-brand itself to better reflect social values or what the general public admires. It can also utilize propaganda machine to re-educate the general public to re-establish the brand reputation of the party. I expect a mix of both strategies in re-establishing the reputable image of the party.

Second, CCP may try to expand its influence to other sectors which used to care less about party membership. By expanding to other sectors, CCP actually reduces the number of sources for reputation and social status, and thus recreates the scarcity required to maintain its membership values. As discussed in the previous section, the privatization and market reform create a lot of new social sectors with less party influence. By the expansion into these sectors, CCP can create advantages for its members in these sectors, in both career and

reputational perspective. It will certainly create new incentives for social elites in these new sectors to join and remain in the party.

5.4.3 Reduced Cost

The last strategy CCP can use is to reduce the cost associated with party membership. There are two types of costs commonly associated with party members. First, transaction costs for party development as an institution. As a party with strong political disciplinary regulations and control, CCP has invested lots of resources for building a cohesive and institutionally strong internal party system. Many of these tasks require conferences, learning activities, group discussions and other types of extra works. As some of my interviewees say, the additional workload as a party member is an important reason why young people are hesitant to join the party.⁵²

Second type of cost is associated with advancement within the party. As Svobik (2012) explains, authoritarian parties usually delay the benefits to the later stage of membership period to create incentives for members to stay in the party. The nomenclature system of CCP also indicates that one can get more benefits when one advances to the senior level within the party. Therefore, this creates a huge incentive yet keen competition for advancement. Such competition usually requires lots of additional resources and energies from party members invested in joining, maintaining, and connecting with the patronage network, including but not limited to the resources spent for connecting to the upper-level leaders and expanding their own patronal network and power base. It may also deter some elites from joining the

⁵² Interview 191209A

party.

In general, any reduction in these two types of costs may be useful in increasing the net value of party membership. I do not try to argue that the cost is the major reason for the diminishing of membership value; however, when the Chinese regime has struggled in creating additional benefits for party members under resource constraints, reducing the costs may also provide additional points for maintaining the attractiveness. I would still expect to observe relevant strategies adopted by CCP.

In general, this section provides some theoretical discussion on how CCP may address the challenges to maintain the incentives for recruiting and keeping party members in the ruling coalition. The next section, therefore, will provide some empirical evidence to explain how such strategies are adopted by CCP in contemporary Chinese society, especially in the new Xi era.

5.5 New Incentives for the Membership: An Empirical Perspective

5.5.1 Salary and Welfare Increase

The CCP members in the government and state-affiliated organizations have been underpaid for a long time. As discussed in chapter 4, many of them rely on corruption and other types of informal income distributed or tolerated by the regime to gain an adequate level of benefits for them to stay in the regime coalition. The anti-corruption campaign, as

well as the increasing public demands for transparency and good governance, has made it more and more challenging to sustain a satisfactory level of particularistic benefits to those regime allies and party members via informal channels.

In addition to the measures revealed in chapter 4, CCP has adopted a series of policy changes to increase the welfare within the legal institutions. For example, the general office of the Central Committee of CCP issued an official document to the whole party titled “The Opinion on Further Motivate Cadres in New Era” on May 20, 2018.⁵³ In the document, there is a clear and specific requirement on “enhancing the cadre’s incentive system, improving the mechanism for salary adjustments and implementing the subsidies and bonus system.” It also promises to establish medical examinations, paid holidays for cadres, and legal welfare. A commentary made by the *People’s Daily* on this document argues that the party should help in taking care of children and elders in the cadres’ family so that the cadres can fully devote to their work.⁵⁴

In fact, the increase in salary and welfare started even before the issuance of this document. A reported pay-rise for cadres has been implemented since 2014 with a 60%-to-100% increase in basic salary.⁵⁵ The reform also starts to provide monetary subsidies instead of actual welfare to cadres. For example, instead of providing apartments or cars, cadres are giving a housing allowance and transportation subsidies. It again makes the welfare more

⁵³ See: http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-05/20/c_1122859959.htm (关于进一步激励广大干部新时代新担当新作为的意见, access at January 21, 2020)

⁵⁴ “Let the cadre work happily and safely” (Rang Ganbu Gande Kaixin Pinde Anxin, 让干部干的开心拼的安心), Fifth Page, May 31, 2018, the People’s Daily: <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0531/c1003-30024330.html> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁵⁵ See: https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2015/01/150119_analysis_china_public_servants_payrise (Access on January 21, 2020)

institutionalized and formal, because the monetary subsidies come with clear guidance and regulation, so it is more credible compared to the actual welfare provided by the government discretionarily.

At the same time, the reforms also tighten the regulation of welfare facilities to ensure better service to the cadres. For example, a retired cadre in Shenzhen said that the Retired Cadre Recreational Center of their work unit, once had a large scale of services open to the general public, now has reserved more programs and resources for cadres. She can now enjoy very cheap courses on singing, painting and dancing and take recreational activities every week at the center.⁵⁶ Many such welfare facilities used to run a large scale for-profit program for the general public to finance themselves, inevitably reducing their resources to invest in serving the cadres. The new regulations and reforms gradually stop such practices and make those welfare facilities more like a social club only for the club members – the cadres and party members with certain administrative ranks.

Similarly, as the pre-reform era, the material benefits are not directly linked with party membership but with the administrative level within the civil service system. However, since it is almost necessary for one to have CCP membership or, at least, democratic parties' membership to be promoted to a certain level to be eligible for those benefits, these perks are, again, de facto associated with the membership. However, the enhanced and institutionalized salary and welfare do provide more credible benefits with the higher expected value to the party members. With this, the party aims to make the cadres “do not dare to, unable to, and

⁵⁶ Interview 191209A

unwilling to” corrupt.⁵⁷ Although the official frame is still emphasizing on the “education” party to make cadres unwilling to corrupt, it also admits that providing adequate benefits is important.⁵⁸ Since the Chinese regime may not be able to invest lots more resources for such increases, the institutionalization to increase the credibility and expected value seem to be a good solution.

5.5.2 Party Education, Political Loyalty, and Expansion to Private Sectors

CCP has adopted various ways to enhance the non-material benefits it can offer to its members. In general, three approaches are identified empirically: the adjustment of the party to the social value, the new importance of political loyalty in Chinese society, and the expansion of influence to non-state sectors.

The Adjustment of Party

The Party has certainly made adaptive changes to its self-positioning in society and cope with the gradual changes in social values and ideology. In the early 2000s, the “Three Representative” principle proposed by Jiang Zemin indicated the change of the party from a pure revolutionary party representing certain ideological groups to a more governmental party representing social elites. Such change is explicitly discussed by scholars within China.⁵⁹ In recent years, in response to the China dream proposed by Xi Jinping, the propaganda machine deliberately brands CCP as the pioneer of the Chinese rejuvenation.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-11/22/c_1125261634.htm (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁵⁸ <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0911/c78779-25643594.html> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁵⁹ For example, see: http://www.cssn.cn/zx/xsxx_zzx/wxl/201511/t20151112_2577853.shtml?COLLCC=4032954933& (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁶⁰ See one article from Qiushi, the Official Publication of CCP Central Committee: http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2018-09/01/c_1123362680.htm (Access on January 21, 2020)

All these efforts seem to try to link the CCP member to the most elite, successful, or morally-admirable people among Chinese society. For example, when Jack Ma, one of the most successful businessmen in China who founded the e-commerce giant Alibaba, was reported as a CCP member, the *Global Times*, China's most famous nationalist tabloid, published an article deliberately claiming that "the best people in most of China's social sectors are CCP members" because "CCP is the core of China's development." It further argues that "it is undoubtful that Chinese society is giving very positive evaluation on CCP members."⁶¹ It seems a little weird for a communist party to link itself with wealthy businessmen deliberately, but such linkage is certainly creating an image of CCP members valued in contemporary Chinese society with great emphasis on wealth accumulation.

At the same time, the party does not give up its traditional approach of promoting the CCP members as the most advanced elite in society. A large propaganda campaign, called "Pioneers in Our Era" (*Shidai Xianfeng*, 时代先锋), was launched in recent years to promote the stories of pioneers in different sectors who are also CCP members. According to the website of this campaign, the core is about their selfless contributions and sacrifice as the pioneer in their occupations.⁶² All these propaganda seem to create a very positive image of CCP members. Although there is still no quantitative survey evidence, it seems reasonable to expect the reputational values of being CCP members should increase because of the propaganda. CCP members are not glorious because they are the most ideologically advanced

⁶¹ "Jack Ma is not the only private businessmen to be CCP members" (中国民营企业家, 岂止马云是党员), *Global Times*, November 28, 2018: <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKf19v> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁶² <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/64104/213676/213768/index.html> (Access on January 21, 2020)

revolutionary soldiers as they used to be branded in the pre-reform era; instead, they are glorious because they are simply the best, most elite and most morally admirable pioneers who are leading China's rejuvenation. Such branding seems to be consistent with the increasing nationalist rhetoric in China.

Political Loyalty

China is never a totally free society, and political loyalty is always important in China. The old practice, however, is more like a bottom-line approach: people will be fine if they are not directly and explicitly anti-regime. However, such situations seem to change gradually. Just avoiding confrontation with the regime is not enough; there is an increasing pressure to demonstrating political loyalty to the Chinese regime by explicitly showing one's support to the regime and disagreement with other politically incorrect groups, such as "foreign countries that hope to undermine China" and "some public intellectuals who hate the communist party." Even celebrities in the entertainment industry will suffer in a huge blow to their career if they are accused of being "unpatriotic."⁶³ One interviewee working in the entertainment industry in Beijing told me:

*"The best way for many fans to crack down on the the competitors of their idols is to report the competitors' unpatriotic behavior to media or expose that behavior on social media. Regardless of whether it is true or not, it will bring lots of troubles to the competitors."*⁶⁴

⁶³ See: <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-49008166> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁶⁴ Interview with an employee of a entertainment company in Beijing, August 8, 2019 (Interview 190808)

Such a harsh political atmosphere might be a problem for many people, but it, although perhaps being unintentional to some extent, creates an additional advantage of being a CCP member, especially for those people who have studied or worked outside China, usually are also relatively elite in society. For example, a late-20s new party member, who got his bachelor's degree in Hong Kong and is now working for the Hong Kong branch of a state-owned financial institution, chose to join the CCP via the party organization in the Shenzhen Branch of his company and explained his reasons to me.⁶⁵

*"It's about political correctness and loyalty! If I want to come back to work for State-Owned Enterprises or government agencies after several years, how can I make my leader trust me that I am not anti-regime and sympathetic to Hong Kong Independence? If I am a party member, then they know they can trust me for sure."*⁶⁶

The same viewpoint is collaborated by my interviewee in Shenzhen and her story of her only daughter. Her daughter graduated from Columbia University and now works in government. Her son-in-law also got a degree from a U.S. university and now works for an SOE in Shenzhen, but has to go to Hong Kong for work from time to time. My interviewee explained:

*"She [the daughter] does not want to join the CCP, but the leader is very difficult to trust her because of her U.S. degree and her husband's connections with Hong Kong. So I told her to join one democratic party."*⁶⁷

⁶⁵ CCP do not have party activities in Hong Kong, so the interviewee has to apply for party membership via Shenzhen branch.

⁶⁶ Interview with an employee and party member of a SOE in Hong Kong, December 5, 2019 (Interview 191205)

⁶⁷ Interview 191209A

As discussed previously, the membership of democratic parties is, on many occasions, the light version of CCP membership. My interviewee, based on her experiences in China's bureaucratic system, clearly hopes to find a way for her daughter to gain trust from leaders. The strategy pays off: her daughter was one of the 30 young cadres being promoted in her work unit in 2018 and the only one without CCP memberships.

The CCP membership, in all these cases, provides a robust advantage of demonstrating political loyalty. The increasing nationalist propaganda, although maybe unintentionally, creates stronger demands of political loyalties and thus creates the scarcity of things that can demonstrate such loyalty. CCP membership is one of them, which give the membership a new benefit that many people may want. Given the fact that there are more and more young Chinese studying abroad or working outside China, there seems to be an increasing level of demand, and thus an increasing level of scarcity. It is certainly something people in the past two decades of reform era did not care much about, but it seems to have become important now. Interestingly, this is a little similar to what party membership could offer in the cultural revolution period when the family background of one person could largely determine one's fate. Those who had a "bad family background," e.g., capitalist, landlord, etc., usually tried very hard to become a party member to "clean their name." However, it is still different, and perhaps also ironic: people in the pre-reform era had to demonstrate their loyalty before they were allowed to join the party, but people in contemporary China seem to join the party first for demonstrating their loyalty. Nevertheless, the non-material premium of CCP membership is significant in both settings.

The Expansions to Non-State Sector

CCP also has made a gradual but steady expansion to many non-state sectors in recent years. One phenomenal example is the establishment of grassroots party organizations in private firms, which used to have almost no party organization.⁶⁸ It marks a significant expansion of party into non-state sectors, as CCP becomes much more important even if the sector has little connection with the state. Jack Ma's party membership is another obvious example. Although Alibaba is a private company with its largest shareholder being Japan's Softbank and conducting a business that largely relies on ordinary consumers rather than government money, Jack Ma still chooses a very close position with the CCP by becoming a party member and establishes the party organization in Alibaba as early as 2000. It even has open recruitment for conducting party activities within the group and having a liaison with upper-level party organization.⁶⁹

Such expansion to private sectors indeed reduces non-party sources for young elites to gain social status, which creates scarcity for party membership. This chapter draws evidence mainly for career perspectives. One interviewee, who is not a party member and is looking for jobs in the financial industry, described one of his group interview experiences for a position of traders in an investment bank in Beijing as follows.

“Their party secretary was sitting there during our group interview. After all the questions, he [the party secretary] jumped in and asked who were CCP members. Two of us

⁶⁸ For example, see: https://www.guancha.cn/politics/2017_10_23_431863.shtml (Access on January, 21, 2020)

⁶⁹ The job advertisement can be seen at: <https://job.alibaba.com/zhaopin/PositionDetail.htm?positionId=76080>; The author saved the webpage for check after the recruitment expires and webpage becomes unavailable. Note that the position requires a party membership because it is a position within the party organization of Alibaba.

were. The secretary then asked those two whether they agreed to work for the party organization for two years before being transferred to the trader position. One male interviewee simply replied that he would follow the party's instruction. The party secretary smiled after listening to this answer, and everyone else in the recruitment team smiled, too. I immediately sense that this man is hired.”⁷⁰

The interviewee's experience coincides with widely spread stories that mainland financial institutions imposed upon CCP members who are willing to perform party jobs after being hired. Since the financial industry is a very internationalized industry with lots of people getting their bachelor's or master's degree overseas, CCP membership used to be a less important factor in the industry, unless one is working for the senior leadership position for those large state-owned banks. For the first-line position as a trader, a degree from an elite university used to be far more important than political affiliation.⁷¹ However, in the story of my interviewee, the male CCP member got the job, even though his degree does not come from the “targeted schools” and the job market in financial institutions in 2019 is terribly disastrous due to the economic slowdown in China.

This is now just for investment banks. Large private companies are increasingly seen to prioritize party membership for recruitment and promotion. For example, Country Garden, one of China's largest real estate companies, openly claim to promote party members first if

⁷⁰ Interview with a Master of Finance Degree (from a highly ranked foreign university) holder who is looking for financial job, Hong Kong, December 23, 2019. Interview 191223

⁷¹ The widely believed rumor is that large investment banks in China, like their counterparts in Wall Street, have their lists of target schools for recruitment, including only top five universities in China and ivy-league and similar level universities in U.S. and U.K. (i.e. Stanford, MIT, Oxford, Cambridge etc...). Even UCL and Imperial College London, according to my interviewee, is less qualified, as one managing director told him.

everything else being equal despite being a private company.⁷² In Chizhou, Anhui, the local government deliberately encourages local non-state companies to hire party members first to meet the needs of establishing party organizations in private companies.⁷³ The priority of CCP members in career advancement in private companies is, in fact, openly encouraged and acknowledged by CCP officials.⁷⁴ All these efforts expand the career advantages of CCP members to private sectors, which used to be the areas that party membership brought no significant advantages. As discussed previously, such efforts would inevitably reduce the likelihood for ordinary people to advance their career and social status from non-party sources, and thus create the scarcity and value for party membership.

5.5.3 Lessen the Burden

Although CCP has worked to enhance the material and non-material benefits for members, it also seems helpful in reducing the costs associated with party membership. During my fieldwork, I see two types of evidence for lessening the burden of party members.

First, the party is emphasizing the reduction of unnecessary party activities, including learning activities, conferences, forms to fills, and administrative checks. The official documents issued by the General Office of the Central Committee of CCP on March 11, 2019, titled “the Notice to solve the problem of Symbolism and reduce the grassroots’ burden,” explicitly make requirements to all local governments to lessen the burden at the

⁷² See: <https://finance.sina.com.cn/manage/magazine/2019-07-17/doc-ihycitm2615654.shtml> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁷³ See: <http://news.12371.cn/2017/05/26/ARTI1495781408312103.shtml> (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁷⁴ See an article written by the Head of Party Organization Department in Haining City, Zhejiang: <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0529/c117092-31109114.html> (Access on January 21, 2020)

local level.⁷⁵ My interviewee compared what she observed currently and what she experienced in the past and claimed that the conferences seemed to be much less than what she used to have in the past.⁷⁶ Although this is not a big improvement, it does reduce the burden of being a CCP member.

More importantly, a series of anti-corruption campaigns also reduces the burden of relatively lower level CCP members for their patronal network. They currently have much less need to network with their leaders, to eat and drink with other officials to develop their patronal network, and to send gifts to others. One interviewee described his happiness about the changes:

“We no longer need to gather with others for eating and drinking because all are banned. It is true that I no longer have free dinners when I visit other cities for official business, but it is very nice that I do not need to attend those boring dinners when officials from other cities come to us. I personally feel it is much easier and relaxed to do the job in this way. Nobody really wants to attend those dinners every day and maintain those personal networks tirelessly!”⁷⁷

Although my interviewee here may not represent all party members since many of them do feel angry about being unable to eat and drink at government expense (Zhu et al., 2017), he certainly can represent part of them. For some of the young party members, they have to wait until being promoted to a higher position to enjoy many of the perks and benefits

⁷⁵ 《关于结局形式主义突出问题为基层减负的通知》, March 11, 2019. Url: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-03/11/content_5372964.htm (Access on January 21, 2020)

⁷⁶ Interview 191209A

⁷⁷ Interview 191209B

associated with party membership. All costs associated with a promotion is actually an investment with the expectation of getting returns upon reaching a higher level. Of course, the reduction of investment required for getting a certain amount of return yields to a better Return on Investment rate, which indeed increases the attractiveness of a given asset, i.e., CCP membership in our case.

In general, this section tries to demonstrate empirical evidence to explain how CCP maintains the attractiveness to new members and elites by enhancing and institutionalizing material benefits, creating new non-material benefits and lessening the burden associated with membership. The core of these strategies, again, is to create scarcity by offering something uniquely tied with CCP and reducing other sources that can offer similar alternatives. In these ways, CCP keeps maintaining its values for new social elites and continuously recruits them into the ruling coalition of the Chinese regime.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter intends to offer some preliminary analysis of how CCP maintains attractiveness to new party members in the new era. It, however, have some limitations. One limitation is the target of this study. The theory of this dissertation implies that the target of this study should be regime allies. As Chapter 3, regime allies are broader than CCP members. This chapter, however, focuses on a subset of regime allies for two reasons. Theoretically speaking, CCP member is the core of the regime allies, including almost all

officials at the middle level and above in both government and important social organizations. CCP members also play a leading role in SOEs, which controls the critical sectors of the Chinese Economy. As the ruling party, CCP relies on its grassroots party mechanism to control society, which relies on appropriate party members for functioning. Therefore, the party member is arguably the most important part of the ruling coalition. Practically, regime allies are a useful analytical concept, but there is no concrete organization or group in China called the ruling coalition. Party membership is the most clearly defined sub-group of regime allies. It is difficult to see why someone joins the ruling coalition as the ruling coalition is a conceptual thing, but it is practically feasible to explore why someone is joining the party. Therefore, this study chooses to focus on CCP membership. However, I admit that the discussion in chapter 3 is still valid here, and there are limitations to this choice. The Chinese regime may have a different set of strategies for recruiting and maintaining those regime allies who are not CCP members. Some CCP members also may not be important enough for the party to take special measures to maintain. In fact, many of the strategies identified in this chapter are not applicable to all party members; they are usually specific to certain conditions and thus are applicable only to a portion of CCP membership. Therefore, this chapter should read more like an illustrative starting point rather than conclusive findings, and further studies should be conducted.

Another limitation is that I have very little evidence to measure the effectiveness of these strategies in a large-scale quantitative way. It is true that the effectiveness of these strategies is collaborated by the evidence collected from interviews, official documents and

fieldwork, but, to my knowledge, there is no systematic data to evaluate the effects on a large group of CCP members or potential CCP members. I have tried to diversify the sources of evidence to avoid potential bias, but the readers are still reminded that the findings in this chapter are exploratory, and any further generalization should be performed with caution.

The last limitation is that I cannot completely rule out an alternative explanation. The CCP may simply attract new members by ideological appealing. The nationalist rhetoric of the party may be well suited to hardline nationalists who expect a strong and powerful China. It is, at least, the official explanation of why CCP remains popular among Chinese people. This study has no evidence to refute this explanation, and, in fact, I have no intention to refute it, either. Instead, this study simply argues that ideological appealing cannot solve the attractiveness problem alone. Any successful autocrats, like the Chinese Communist Party, would probably adopt both ideological appealing and benefit distributions to recruit political elites. This chapter, as well as this dissertation, focuses on the distributional perspective; the readers, however, are reminded that the ideological perspective of CCP's strategy should always be considered when evaluating its survival and stability.

Nevertheless, this chapter has demonstrated that the CCP is trying to create new particularistic benefits as incentives to keep the loyalty of the party members. Since the expansion of universalistic benefits to the general public is unlikely to reverse, it seems to be critical for CCP's future. The question, however, is whether such strategies can be successful in the long run. Although I currently do not have enough scholarly evidence to make a conclusive argument, I am cautiously pessimistic about its long-run effect. Since the core of

such strategies is to create scarcity by either making uniquely new benefits that the public cannot enjoy or reducing the alternative sources for the public to get similar benefits, such strategies seem to have no big difference from what I described in chapter 4. The Chinese authoritarian regime is still taking away some of the benefits, which the public should have enjoyed, to compensate the regime allies for their losses because of the expansion of the universalistic benefits. Such strategies might be effective in the near future, but they do not solve the fundamental dilemma of distributions between the public and the regime allies, which lies in the dual roles of autocrats as the leaders of the ruling coalition and the leader of the nation that are institutionally incompatible. China, and perhaps many other authoritarian regimes, still need to find a long-term solution to it.

6 Conclusion

This dissertation studies the distribution of resources in authoritarian regimes with empirical evidence from China. It explores a fundamental dilemma in authoritarian politics: the incompatible need to both coopt the public and maintain cohesion among regime allies. Under resource constraints, the distribution of resources to one group inevitably harms the ability to offer benefits to the other. Since the cooperation of the public and the loyalty of regime allies are both crucial to the survival of authoritarian regimes and autocrats themselves, all autocrats have to address this dilemma carefully by striking a delicate and strategic balance.

This problem is deeply rooted in the strategies of authoritarian survival revealed by the existing literature. Conventional arguments on authoritarian survival emphasize the importance of cohesion in the ruling coalition—that is, the loyalty and support of a small group of key political elites. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that divisions within authoritarian regimes can instigate regime transition. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) directly explain how the distribution of resources can maintain the cohesion of the ruling coalition and ensure the survival of autocrats. Arguments on authoritarian resilience, however, emphasize the role of benefits distributed to the public to satisfy the needs of cooptation (Gandhi, 2008), responsiveness (Distelhorst & Hou, 2016), or accountability (Stromseth et al., 2017). These two strands of literature are summarized in the two challenges faced by authoritarian regimes discussed in Svobik (2012).

The dilemma of authoritarian distributional politics, in fact, reflects the incompatibility of these two challenges. It is almost impossible for the interests of the ruling coalition in an authoritarian regime to be completely aligned with the interests of the general public, which is why the ruling elites choose a dictatorial approach to governance. There are many occasions when the interests of regime allies and the public are different. Since such differences are impossible to avoid in an authoritarian system, the dilemma will always exist in authoritarian distributional politics; the trade-offs and balances in terms of “who gets what, when and how” will always be a question for autocrats.

This dissertation, therefore, provides a theory of authoritarian distributional strategies to address this dilemma. It argues that the autocrats adopt a differentiated strategy of distribution to balance the needs and demands of the public and regime allies. Specifically, this dissertation argues that authoritarian regimes distribute universal benefits to the public and particularistic benefits to regime allies. Furthermore, this dissertation argues, in Chapter 4, that the expansion of universal benefits, including public goods and welfare, inevitably leads to the creation and increase of particularistic side payments to regime allies at the expense of the public interest. In this way, authoritarian regimes balance two crucial priorities and ensure that the loss suffered by regime allies due to the increased provision of public goods and welfare is compensated. To further address problems of morale and loyalty among regime allies, new and innovative incentives are created to recruit new elites into the coalition. In the empirical evidence from China examined in Chapter 5, this dissertation demonstrates that the CCP creates new value for its membership by institutionalizing material

benefits, creating nonmaterial benefits through expansion into the private sector and reducing the costs associated with membership. The general strategy identified in this dissertation is to reduce other sources of benefits, whether material or nonmaterial, so that ruling coalition membership becomes much scarcer and more valuable than it used to be for elites who hope to obtain those benefits. In this way, the Chinese regime ensures that the regime's ruling coalition is still attractive to elites even when many of their privileges and benefits have become publicly available.

This dissertation aims to answer the question of how autocrats address competing strategies for regime survival from a distributional perspective. However, there is no doubt that authoritarian regimes rely on many survival strategies other than the distribution of spoils and benefits. For some authoritarian regimes, cohesive repression, ideological control and information censorship may be more frequently used than the distribution of spoils to maintain regime survival, and thus, the dilemma of distribution may not be as urgent as it is in some other authoritarian regimes that rely heavily on spoils for survival. This dissertation does not argue that the distribution of benefits is the only important strategy for authoritarian survival. It also does not argue that the failure to address the dilemma of authoritarian distribution effectively will definitely result in the failure of the regime. It simply argues that the challenge of balancing the demands of regime allies and the public is always there in authoritarian distributional politics and that all autocrats who design distributional strategies in authoritarian regimes have to think about this dilemma to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in distribution.

In general, this dissertation theorizes one solution to the dilemma of authoritarian distributional politics. By differentiating what to distribute and creating new particularistic benefits, autocrats manage to maintain a balance between demands of the public and regime allies and, in particular, address the challenge of maintaining the loyalty of the latter when their previous privileges are eroded by the expansion of public welfare and government accountability. My theory offers a solution from a distributional perspective to the question of how authoritarian regimes reconcile two contradictory yet crucial survival strategies.

This dissertation, therefore, engages with the literature on authoritarian survival from the perspective of distributional politics. It bridges two major lines of argument, namely, how the distribution of benefits can maintain the cohesion of the ruling coalition (Blaydes, 2010; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Magaloni, 2008) and how it can elicit cooperation and support from the general public (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006). The findings of this dissertation indicate that the strategy of distributing benefits is dependent not only on the situation and demands of the intended recipients (the public or allies) but also on the considerations of other distributional objectives. The results demonstrate that distributional politics in authoritarian regimes are almost always a three-actor process; any interaction between the regime and one actor must also consider how it may affect the interactions between the regime and the other actor.

This dissertation may also have implications for the discussion of the provision of public goods in authoritarian regimes. Various arguments have been made explaining the provision of public goods under such regimes. A central theme of those arguments is that the provision

of public goods is a kind of response through cooptation (Gandhi, 2008) to public pressure exerted through formal institutions (Lizzeri & Persico, 2001; Luo et al., 2007; X. Zhang, Fan, Zhang, & Huang, 2004), informal institutions, and cultural norms (L. L. Tsai, 2007), as well as a reaction to the need for human capital in economic development (Hong, 2018). The core idea is that the more constraints and pressures put onto autocrats, the more public goods authoritarian regimes offer. This dissertation agrees with these arguments but further argues that such an expansion of public goods comes with the creation of private side payments to regime allies at the expense of the public interest. We may observe an increase in certain kinds of public goods, but there are probably some decreases in other kinds of public goods to save resources for side payments to regime allies. The overall level of public goods and welfare, therefore, may not increase because of external pressure and constraints, and the effect of such pressure and constraints on overall public welfare in authoritarian regimes may need further examination.

Limitation

The empirical evidence of this dissertation is exclusively on China, which offers some advantages as discussed above but also generates several limitations for this study. First, the limitation of the data may still affect the validity and generalizability of the findings. Although China has made available many types of data of good quality, this study may still suffer from the data limitation problem given the authoritarian nature of the Chinese regime. For example, the distributional vehicle hypothesis can only be tested quantitatively in the People's Congress in one province because Anhui Province is the only province that

publishes a full register of all delegate proposals and government responses. As noted in Chapter 3, the fact that Anhui is the only province to do so may indicate that Anhui is unique, thus making the finding based on evidence from Anhui Province less generalizable. A similar situation applies to Chapter 5: The findings based on an interview and documentation may have potential biases because the interviewee and document access are obtained based on personal connections and a snow-balling method rather than on probability sampling. The findings may not reflect the whole picture of the Chinese regime's conduct.

This dissertation takes two approaches to addressing the data limitation problem. First, I fully acknowledge the existence of the data problem and admit that caution is needed for generalizing the findings. However, this dissertation argues that the finding may still be insightful for understanding the distributional strategy of the Chinese regime, especially because there seems to be no theoretical reason to believe that other parts of the regime behave very differently from the part I observed in this study and tested with empirical evidence. Second, this dissertation generates three different testable hypotheses and tests the theory in three different research settings. All tests, despite their different approaches and basis on different sets of empirical evidence, provide similar results that support the general theory. That the evidence collected with several different approaches all points to the same conclusion allows for greater confidence in my theory, even though the data are not perfect.

Another limitation is that this dissertation only focuses on limited types of benefits distributed in China. Authoritarian regimes can offer various kinds of benefits, and it is impossible for any single study to examine all of them. This study examines several common

types of benefits that can be found in many other studies. Chapter 3 examines policy concessions and responses to the public and regime allies, and Chapter 4 focuses on monetary resource allocations. These are very similar to how Gandhi (2008) conceptualizes benefits in authoritarian distributional politics. In Chapter 5, I try to evaluate several material and nonmaterial benefits associated with membership of the ruling coalition, which is commonly seen and discussed in Chinese society. Although the benefits and allocations discussed in this dissertation are far from complete, there seem to be no theoretical reasons to suspect a different pattern for the distribution of other benefits that are not covered. However, further research on other types of benefit distribution would be helpful.

This dissertation also assumes rational thinking on the part of autocrats in formulating distributional strategies. In other words, I assume that authoritarian regimes engage in cost-benefit analysis and intentionally design distributional strategies to maximize their returns. Although this assumption largely holds, it is also possible that some patterns of distribution are simply the unintentional results of path dependence, interactions between politicians and bureaucratic systems, and the bounded rationality of some or all actors in the distributional process. It may be the case that some practices of distributions are not in the best interest of regime survival or that they are but are not intentionally designed by autocrats. Additional studies may be done to address those unintentional aspects of the formation of distributional strategies in authoritarian regimes.

The last limitation is the uniqueness of the Chinese system. This dissertation aims to develop a general theory of authoritarian distribution based on empirical evidence from

China. Although China is an authoritarian regime, it may have some unique features that many other authoritarian regimes do not have. This uniqueness may affect how applicable the findings of this dissertation are to other authoritarian regimes. For example, China has a very strong and institutionalized party system that reaches the very grassroots level of society. Although the literature on decentralization in China has found that party organizations at the grassroots level of Chinese society have been weakened (Landry, 2008), the CCP remains a comparatively effective institution. This characteristic may have different effects on the objectives and dilemmas of distribution. On the one hand, the strong party institution and network may make China much more effective in distributing benefits than many other authoritarian regimes. This may change the cost-benefit calculation underpinning the distributional strategies that the theory of this dissertation elaborates upon. On the other hand, China may rely less on benefit distribution for regime survival than many other authoritarian regimes because the effective party organization can ensure strong control over the public and political elites. For example, China has established a very comprehensive system to maintain social stability and repress collective action, censor information, and monitor public opinion.⁷⁸ China certainly faces less pressure to distribute benefits if its regime survival can be ensured by those repressive and monitoring mechanisms. Therefore, strategies for distribution in China may be different in some respects from those in other authoritarian regimes.

⁷⁸ Some examples can be seen on Cai (2008); Cai and Zhu (2013); King, Pan, and Roberts (2013); and Xu (Forthcoming).

While fully acknowledging the uniqueness of China, this dissertation still tries to provide a generalized theory of authoritarian distribution. How could this theory be applicable to other authoritarian regimes with different conditions? I argue that the theory elaborated in this dissertation can be regarded as a general framework for understanding the strategic calculation behind distribution in authoritarian regimes. The logical foundation of authoritarian distribution theory relies on two key assumptions: 1) autocrats face a significant problem of resource limitations, so that trade-offs in distribution are necessary, and 2) authoritarian regimes rely heavily on the distribution of benefits for survival. Distributional politics in any authoritarian regime for which these two assumptions do not hold may not be explicable by the theory proposed in this dissertation. For example, if an authoritarian regime has relatively abundant resources for distribution, the dilemma of authoritarian distribution may be less severe because the regime can appropriately satisfy demands from both sides. This may imply that for natural resource-rich countries, autocrats may easily distribute appropriate benefits to both regime allies and the public without the need to make trade-offs. Similarly, if an authoritarian regime can control the public without offering benefits, the dilemma of distribution may also not exist. For example, an authoritarian regime can control the public by adopting heavy ideological and/or religious doctrines or by imposing strict and massive systems of repressive social control. All these factors may make it unnecessary for autocrats to offer a large number of benefits to the public and address trade-offs. Since this dissertation develops and tests the theory based on evidence from China, it is expected that the theory of authoritarian distribution should be applicable to any authoritarian regime with

an equal or lower amount of resources for distribution than China and with equal or less ideological indoctrination or social control than China. Since China has the largest economy among all authoritarian regimes and ranks almost at the bottom among all countries in its level of freedom, it seems that the theory proposed in this dissertation may be applied to quite a large number of authoritarian regimes.⁷⁹ They may have different political and social conditions from China, but they are likely to also formulate their strategies of distribution based on the same mechanism laid out in the theory of authoritarian distribution proposed in this dissertation.

The Long-term Perspective

The findings of this dissertation may highlight the long-term sustainability of authoritarian regimes. The increasing body of literature on authoritarian resilience has pointed out that the long-term survival of authoritarian regimes depends on continuous economic development (Zhao, 2009), increasing levels of the rule of law and other forms of accountability to the public (Y. Wang, 2015; Whiting, 2017), increasing public participation (Liu, 2019a; Stromseth et al., 2017; Teets, 2014), and a significant level of government responsiveness (Distelhorst & Hou, 2016; Jiang, Meng, et al., 2019; Meng et al., 2017; Su & Meng, 2016). All of these, however, inevitably diversify the sources of benefits and privilege and break the monopoly of the small group of political elites over those material and nonmaterial rewards. As noted in Chapter 5, all of these commitments to the public are fundamentally contradictory to the logic of authoritarian regimes, which put the interests of a

⁷⁹ Data source: Freedom House 2019 (<https://freedomhouse.org/report/countries-world-freedom-2019>).

small circle of political elites (i.e., the ruling coalition) before the interest of the general public.

This dissertation theorizes one short-term solution to this dilemma in the distribution of benefits, but the long-term solution is still unclear. Autocrats cannot create new incentives and side payments unlimitedly; there must be a point in the future when the loss of regime allies due to the expansion of public welfare can no longer be compensated by provision of additional incentives and benefits to the detriment of the public interest. Will regime allies remain loyal to the regime and the autocrats at that time? Furthermore, the findings of this dissertation imply that autocrats may only selectively meet the demands of the public and remove some resources from the public to compensate regime allies for expansions of public welfare. Will the general public be happy with such selective responsiveness and the give-and-take-away game?

As noted previously, autocrats usually hope to address problems of distributional conflict by increasing the total resources for distribution. Robust economic development may temporarily ease parts of this problem since everyone's share of benefits increases under rapid economic development. In other words, to make the pie larger is one solution to solve conflicts over how to divide the pie. The problem, however, is that the pie cannot increase forever; nor can total resources and the economy. Distributional conflicts will become severe again when growth slows down or halts. Furthermore, the dynamic model of authoritarian distribution may even indicate that such a solution is still problematic. Relative devaluation always exists even when both sides gain. Autocrats must continuously look for new

incentives to address relative losses and devaluation. The ultimate question, however, is whether this approach can last in the long term. After all, since the conflict of interests between regime allies and the public seems to be very unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future, autocrats in China as well as in other authoritarian regimes need to look for a long-term solution.

Appendix

A1 Appendix for Chapter 3

Table 6 Delegates and Constituencies

Constituency	Number	Percentage
Tongling	19	2.68%
Chizhou	23	3.25%
Huangshan	23	3.25%
Ma'anshan	29	4.10%
Huaibei	31	4.38%
Xuancheng	33	4.66%
Huainan	36	5.08%
Wuhu	41	5.79%
Bengbu	41	5.79%
Chuzhou	48	6.78%
Bozhou	53	7.49%
Suzhou	58	8.19%
Anqing	59	8.33%
Lu'an	62	8.76%
Hefei	70	9.89%
Fuyang	82	11.58%
Total	708	100.00%

Table 7 Ordinal Logit Regression for Regime Distance and Request on Response

Year of Meeting	2014			2016		
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regime Distance	-1.115*** (0.136)	-1.260*** (0.188)	-1.385*** (0.215)	-1.210*** (0.125)	-1.356*** (0.234)	-1.434*** (0.261)
Universal Interests	-1.542*** (0.195)	-1.707*** (0.276)	-1.859*** (0.321)	-1.671*** (0.183)	-1.724*** (0.282)	-1.833*** (0.335)
Distance#Interests	0.471*** (0.057)	0.511*** (0.080)	0.547*** (0.091)	0.556*** (0.054)	0.629*** (0.090)	0.671*** (0.107)
Co-sponsorship		0.179 (0.188)	0.098 (0.212)		0.327 (0.170)	0.388* (0.183)
Request for Money		-0.029 (0.199)	0.055 (0.213)		-0.013 (0.185)	0.048 (0.212)
Gender		0.012 (0.195)	0.085 (0.228)		0.091 (0.165)	0.028 (0.196)
Ethnicity		0.346 (0.414)	-0.227 (0.366)		0.244 (0.362)	-0.091 (0.470)
Political Affiliation		-0.104 (0.107)	-0.117 (0.114)		0.103 (0.091)	0.102 (0.110)
Education Level			0.181 (0.169)			-0.125 (0.180)
Age			-0.025 (0.013)			0.011 (0.011)
Responding Agency		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Constituency		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
cut1						
Constant	-6.992*** (0.513)	-8.211*** (0.814)	-10.68*** (1.410)	-5.544*** (0.439)	-4.470*** (0.896)	-4.508*** (1.212)
cut2						
Constant	-4.460*** (0.472)	-5.387*** (0.766)	-7.875*** (1.362)	-3.953*** (0.421)	-2.691** (0.846)	-2.726* (1.187)
cut3						

Constant	-1.916*** (0.448)	-2.621*** (0.743)	-4.946*** (1.323)	-1.906*** (0.402)	-0.424 (0.819)	-0.359 (1.173)
Observations	856	723	618	879	786	673
R2	0.039	0.112	0.133	0.050	0.124	0.132

Dependent Variable is the level of response, ordered 1-4, in which 4 is the highest order of response that represents the most credible promises. Distance varies from 1-7, in which 1 means closest. Interests varies from 1-3, in which 1 means geographic particularistic, 2 means occupational particularistic and 3 means universal benefits. Political Affiliation varies from 1-3, in which 1 means no affiliation, 2 means members of Eight Democratic Parties and 3 means CCP members. Fixed effect of responding agencies are included in all models. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 8 Regime Distance and Request on Response (Recoding Response Level)

Year of Meeting	2014			2016		
Model	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Regime Distance	-0.230*** (0.044)	-0.186*** (0.030)	-0.416*** (0.060)	-0.346*** (0.061)	-0.170*** (0.035)	-0.517*** (0.085)
Universal Interests	-0.285*** (0.061)	-0.263*** (0.045)	-0.547*** (0.089)	-0.413*** (0.078)	-0.245*** (0.047)	-0.658*** (0.107)
Distance#Interests	0.096*** (0.018)	0.072*** (0.013)	0.168*** (0.026)	0.166*** (0.024)	0.080*** (0.014)	0.246*** (0.032)
Co-sponsorship	0.059 (0.051)	0.022 (0.037)	0.081 (0.070)	0.071 (0.059)	0.067 (0.034)	0.138 (0.076)
Request for Money	0.020 (0.055)	-0.042 (0.032)	-0.021 (0.071)	0.030 (0.061)	-0.019 (0.036)	0.011 (0.081)
Gender	0.037 (0.054)	-0.023 (0.032)	0.013 (0.071)	0.053 (0.058)	-0.034 (0.033)	0.020 (0.075)
Political Affiliation	-0.035 (0.030)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.040 (0.039)	0.028 (0.032)	0.026 (0.018)	0.054 (0.042)
Ethnicity	0.025 (0.102)	0.082 (0.069)	0.107 (0.142)	0.080 (0.109)	0.032 (0.077)	0.112 (0.157)
Constituency Responding Agency		Yes Yes	Yes Yes		Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Constant	3.633*** (0.179)	1.660*** (0.125)	4.293*** (0.251)	2.658*** (0.245)	1.635*** (0.153)	3.293*** (0.341)
Observations	723	723	723	786	786	786
R2	0.181	0.211	0.208	0.234	0.192	0.261

This is OLS regression results with response level being coded as 3-scale. Model 1 and 4 treats level 3 and 4 (in original 4-scale coding) as one level. Model 2 and 5 treat level 2 and 3 as one level. Model 3 and 6 treat level 1 and 2 as one level. Distance varies from 1-7, in which 1 means closest. Interests varies from 1-3, in which 1 means geographic particularistic, 2 means occupational particularistic and 3 means universal benefits. Political Affiliation varies from 1-3, in which 1 means no affiliation, 2 means members of Eight Democratic Parties and 3 means CCP members. Fixed effect of responding agencies are included in all models. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 9 Near-Neighbor Matching

2014 Meeting	M=1	M=2	M=4	M=8
<i>Particularistic</i>				
Outsider	-0.76*** (0.15)	-0.71*** (0.11)	-0.66*** (0.10)	-0.64*** (0.10)
Observations	403	403	403	403
<i>Universal</i>				
Outsider	0.31** (0.14)	0.40*** (0.12)	0.42*** (0.11)	0.47*** (0.11)
Observations	320	320	320	320
2016 Meeting				
<i>Particularistic</i>				
Outsider	-0.52*** (0.17)	-0.50*** (0.15)	-0.46*** (0.13)	-0.48*** (0.14)
Observations	458	458	458	458
<i>Universal</i>				
Outsider	0.49*** (0.14)	0.55*** (0.13)	0.55*** (0.13)	0.52*** (0.12)
Observations	328	328	328	328

This table presents the results from matching methods. Each coefficient represents the average treatment effect on the population (ATE) of being regime outsiders. The matching is based on the following covariates: whether the proposal requests money, whether the proposal is co-sponsored, the gender of delegate, the political affiliation of delegate, ethnicity of delegate and the constituency of delegate. In columns (1)–(4), non-exact matching methods of specified number of matches for each treated unit (M) are used. The upper section shows the matching results of 2014 meeting, while the lower section of the table reflects the matching results of 2016 meeting. Robust standard errors are in the parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

A2 Appendix for Chapter 4

Table 10 Regression Results of Investigation on Public Spending (Random Effect)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.51* (0.31)	-0.31** (0.13)	-2.73*** (0.96)	-0.25 (0.22)	-0.43 (0.30)	-1.53** (0.65)	-0.48** (0.22)
Geographic Area	6.34 (4.24)	1.21 (1.45)	-1.43 (3.85)	2.22** (1.08)	10.46 (8.26)	4.91 (4.11)	1.12 (1.50)
GDP	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.07*** (0.03)	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
Population	-0.21*** (0.04)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.50*** (0.15)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.17*** (0.06)	-0.09*** (0.03)
Urbanization Rate	14.80*** (5.49)	0.97 (2.96)	7.91 (16.00)	-14.47*** (3.91)	-1.39 (6.04)	7.24 (6.34)	-3 (2.28)
Year				Baseline			
2013	-9.21 (43.70)	70.70*** (8.03)	94.33** (41.01)	-18.34 (25.05)	94.02*** (34.54)	110.29*** (23.43)	15.38 (16.29)
2014	81.82 (75.12)	223.54*** (16.29)	233.35*** (68.63)	49.69 (45.32)	41.37 (39.25)	274.15*** (53.50)	52.20*** (17.63)
2015	361.69*** (130.05)	409.44*** (39.12)	840.35*** (223.49)	121.53** (53.97)	159.68 (114.98)	746.02*** (124.67)	227.51*** (68.54)
2016	466.26*** (155.31)	516.46*** (53.36)	1265.78*** (343.43)	216.62** (94.70)	290.15* (159.07)	1173.50*** (279.11)	236.59*** (77.13)
Constant	1287.85***	758.99***	1359.3	1458.62***	1200.17***	1132.27**	614.66***

	(345.40)	(173.65)	(998.83)	(267.06)	(452.94)	(468.56)	(187.81)
N	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01. Per capita data for all spending categories.

Table 11 Regression Results of Investigation on Public Spending (Fixed Effect)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.69 (0.43)	-0.32* (0.17)	-2.26** (0.87)	-0.14 (0.21)	-0.63 (0.44)	-1.49 (0.90)	-0.42* (0.22)
GDP	0.02** (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.06** (0.03)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01* (0.00)
Population	0.09 (0.61)	-0.03 (0.35)	0.15 (1.50)	-0.07 (0.42)	0.07 (0.46)	-0.33 (0.67)	-0.14 (0.37)
Urbanization Rate	51.75 (53.39)	3.03 (18.64)	-165.48 (110.06)	-43.47* (23.84)	46.8 (45.14)	7.9 (84.58)	-11.39 (28.31)
Year (2012)	Baseline						
2013	-54.4 (68.07)	68.51*** (23.34)	268.95** (127.20)	13.27 (31.96)	37.88 (35.01)	109.98 (95.19)	27.15 (36.83)
2014	-4.13 (100.84)	219.25*** (42.97)	575.86** (253.32)	110.16* (63.11)	-66.3 (90.11)	272.23 (162.14)	73.62 (62.92)
2015	252.41* (137.32)	403.68*** (57.15)	1296.56*** (404.10)	198.32** (90.66)	20.89 (83.40)	739.72*** (165.89)	252.19** (108.53)
2016	320.75* (180.49)	508.82*** (78.66)	1879.34*** (566.68)	319.08** (145.95)	104.69 (104.59)	1163.73*** (210.26)	268.96* (153.39)
Constant	-1792.81 (3646.91)	468.16 (1872.88)	7915.08 (9035.10)	2825.07 (1944.87)	-1904.88 (2863.01)	1930.49 (5227.56)	1329.21 (1692.48)
N	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; Per capita data for all public spending categories

Table 12 Regression Results of Investigation on Central Fiscal Transfer

	Random Effect		Fixed Effect	
Investigation (1-year lagged)	0.78*** (0.14)	0.36** (0.17)	0.45** (0.17)	0.25 (0.17)
Geographic Area	7.05*** (1.41)	3.39 (2.48)		
GDP	-0.04*** (0.01)		-0.02*** (0.01)	
GDP per Capita		-0.02*** (0.00)		-0.01*** (0.00)
Population	0.36*** (0.04)		0.06 (0.51)	
Urbanization Rate	1.3 (3.82)	12.42 (8.97)	49.58*** (11.83)	41.95** (16.42)
Year	Baseline			
2012				
2013	114.39*** (24.35)	118.61*** (24.79)	40.55* (23.49)	69.13** (31.01)
2014	230.55*** (37.25)	252.82*** (41.63)	97.00** (38.80)	159.46*** (55.15)
2015	309.00*** (45.92)	387.77*** (57.00)	156.76*** (53.10)	267.49*** (76.12)
2016	439.44*** (59.49)	557.92*** (83.13)	238.42*** (75.55)	395.66*** (108.13)
Constant	282.28 (321.12)	1492.51*** (521.82)	-1111.48 (2314.69)	-194.06 (960.44)
N	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; Dependent Variable is the total central fiscal transfer each province received in each year.

Table 13 Regression Results of Investigation on the Percentage of Central Assistance

	Random Effect	Fixed Effect
Investigation (1-year lagged, log)	0.03** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
Geographic Area (log)	0.19*** (0.04)	
GDP (log)	-0.90*** (0.15)	-0.75*** (0.14)
Population (log)	0.70*** (0.13)	-2.45 (1.56)
Urbanization Rate	0 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Year		Baseline
2012		
2013	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.11*** (0.03)
2014	-0.12* (0.06)	-0.14*** (0.05)
2015	-0.18** (0.08)	-0.19*** (0.06)
2016	-0.1 (0.08)	-0.13* (0.06)
Constant	4.31*** (0.83)	29.87** (12.53)
N	124	124

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; The dependent Variable is the percentage (logged) of Net Central Fiscal Assistance in total local expenditure of each province in each year

Table 14 Regression Results of Investigation on Other expenditure

	Random	Fixed
Investigation (1-year lagged)	0.38+	0.65
	-0.23	-0.41
Geographic Area	2.69	
	-1.8	
GDP	0	-0.02
	-0.01	-0.02
Population	-0.03	0.33
	-0.06	-0.51
Urbanization Rate	20.51	-15.5
	-13.88	-18.07
Year (2012)		Baseline
2013	28.08	85.43*
	-23.37	-47.77
2014	20.84	123.23
	-24.61	-74.03
2015	-27.41	85.38
	-42.98	-94.56
2016	-292.56**	-144.24*
	-129.35	-76.32
Constant	-673.51	50.29
	-794.41	-1888.51
N	155	155

Note: +p=0.101; The dependent variable is the per capita figure of other expenditure

Table 15 Regression results of Investigation on Public Spending (with SOE percent)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.5 (0.31)	-0.31** (0.13)	-2.73*** (0.97)	-0.24 (0.23)	-0.43 (0.30)	-1.55** (0.65)	-0.48** (0.22)
Geographic Area	6.7 (4.56)	1.21 (1.50)	-1.3 (4.17)	2.32* (1.24)	10.57 (8.31)	4.3 (4.20)	0.91 (1.67)
GDP	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.07*** (0.03)	0.01** (0.01)	0.01* (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01** (0.01)
Population	-0.23*** (0.04)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.51*** (0.16)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.15** (0.06)	-0.09*** (0.03)
Urbanization Rate	13.53** (6.03)	1.02 (3.16)	6 (15.23)	-14.77*** (3.86)	-1.53 (5.99)	8.06 (6.31)	-2.65 (2.43)
SOE in GDP	-5.66 (6.62)	0.1 (2.84)	-4.14 (14.02)	-1.55 (3.59)	-1.3 (5.79)	7.63* (4.21)	2.67 (3.29)
Year (2012)	Baseline						
2013	-18.87 (43.63)	70.87*** (9.86)	86.93* (44.98)	-20.91 (22.85)	91.70** (37.81)	122.66*** (25.13)	19.78 (17.81)
2014	67.63 (67.59)	223.78*** (19.35)	222.93*** (79.53)	45.87 (41.27)	37.88 (45.56)	292.56*** (59.53)	58.74** (23.19)
2015	340.62*** (120.94)	409.79*** (43.62)	826.29*** (249.93)	115.66** (56.18)	154.45 (121.49)	774.68*** (136.25)	237.59*** (74.69)
2016	441.82*** (144.97)	516.85*** (58.08)	1249.91*** (370.66)	209.75** (101.05)	284.00* (165.80)	1206.93*** (289.73)	248.36*** (86.92)
Constant	1644.82*** (524.06)	751.52*** (249.43)	1682.02 (1154.52)	1553.42*** (334.08)	1273.01** (569.03)	708.13 (556.46)	461.95** (218.97)
N	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; Per capita data for all public spending; Random Effect Model; SOE in GDP is calculated as the percent of

SOE in provincial GDP. Time-Series Cross-Sectional OLS is used.

Table 16 Regression results of Investigation on Public Spending (with FDI)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.53* (0.29)	-0.32** (0.13)	-2.68*** (0.90)	-0.15 (0.21)	-0.5 (0.31)	-1.47** (0.68)	-0.42** (0.19)
Geographic Area	6.15 (4.21)	1.13 (1.40)	-1.23 (3.70)	2.67** (1.08)	9.6 (7.91)	5.17 (4.09)	1.4 (1.49)
GDP	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.07*** (0.03)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
Population	-0.22*** (0.04)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.49*** (0.16)	-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.14*** (0.04)	-0.16*** (0.06)	-0.08*** (0.03)
Urbanization Rate	13.84** (6.11)	0.7 (3.07)	7.96 (16.74)	-13.53*** (3.50)	-5 (5.81)	7.68 (6.50)	-2.47 (2.37)
FDI	0 (0.04)	0 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.10)	-0.03* (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)
Year (2012)	Baseline						
2013	-10.83 (50.48)	69.11*** (10.64)	101.65* (58.11)	-3.92 (26.33)	85.25** (37.02)	118.87*** (21.78)	24.12 (17.55)
2014	79.38 (91.00)	220.83*** (21.87)	246.32** (114.41)	74.48 (49.58)	26.99 (45.75)	289.05*** (45.56)	67.34** (28.52)
2015	360.11** (147.37)	406.70*** (44.13)	854.80*** (272.51)	147.25** (57.44)	146.45 (119.26)	761.90*** (116.87)	243.48*** (79.35)
2016	467.89*** (158.71)	516.36*** (53.71)	1268.61*** (350.69)	220.70** (94.57)	296.55* (161.30)	1176.44*** (279.20)	239.06*** (80.41)
Constant	1345.57*** (358.68)	773.25*** (169.78)	1372.34 (1021.55)	1429.19*** (248.88)	1406.40*** (442.64)	1122.18** (472.69)	599.37*** (186.76)
	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; Per capita data for all public spending; Random Effect Model; Time-Series Cross-Sectional OLS is used.

Table 17 Regression results of Investigation on Public Spending (with Total Budget)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.57** (0.28)	-0.33*** (0.12)	-3.09*** (0.87)	-0.36 (0.24)	-0.45 (0.28)	-1.73*** (0.63)	-0.49* (0.26)
Geographic Area	6.38 (4.61)	1.2 (1.54)	-2.51 (4.11)	1.76 (1.30)	10.97 (8.77)	4.17 (4.17)	1.06 (1.70)
Total Budget Expenditure	0.12*** (0.04)	0.04** (0.02)	0.50*** (0.17)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.13*** (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Population	-0.19*** (0.04)	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.45*** (0.12)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.20*** (0.04)	-0.08** (0.04)
Urbanization Rate	19.49*** (5.36)	2.25 (2.57)	17.51 (16.55)	-13.79*** (4.34)	3.27 (6.64)	5.19 (5.47)	-1.04 (2.69)
Year (2012)	Baseline						
2013	-25.93 (48.04)	63.97*** (9.69)	15.8 (56.12)	-39.68 (26.85)	86.80** (38.06)	81.04*** (26.12)	8.36 (22.26)
2014	57.13 (81.71)	213.73*** (18.45)	122.04 (86.75)	20.14 (46.84)	29.18 (44.32)	234.27*** (58.14)	42.05** (20.56)
2015	282.51** (141.66)	382.09*** (44.11)	518.69*** (187.22)	43.99 (45.99)	126.07 (125.65)	663.51*** (127.92)	189.63*** (63.42)
2016	384.10** (167.33)	488.16*** (57.05)	937.92*** (299.77)	138.70* (72.43)	252.88 (168.40)	1091.77*** (273.41)	197.71*** (63.26)
Constant	886.16** (346.49)	644.03*** (150.14)	304.06 (795.38)	1302.05*** (280.90)	874.71* (498.06)	1144.53*** (391.48)	434.90** (189.60)
N	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; per capita data for all public spending; Random Effect Model

Table 18 Regression Results of Investigation on Total Budget Expenditure

	Total Budget Expenditure	
	Random	Fixed
Investigation (1-year lagged)	0.96 (0.61)	0.39 (0.39)
Geographic Area	2.9 (3.20)	
GDP	0.12*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.02)
Population	0.01 (0.16)	4.48** (1.66)
Urbanization Rate	-11.04 (16.44)	-148.49*** (49.68)
Year (2012)	Baseline	
2013	180.93*** (42.54)	224.44*** (55.92)
2014	254.17*** (78.48)	375.87*** (106.21)
2015	653.54*** (124.52)	890.82*** (183.62)
2016	662.80*** (181.64)	1000.01*** (214.07)
Constant	1601.44 (1071.95)	-1.00E+04 (6702.16)
N	155	155

Note: * p<0.1 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01; The unit of analysis is province-year.

Table 19 Regression Results of Investigation on Public Spending (Political Rank)

	Education	Healthcare	Community	House	Public Service	Social Security	Environment
Investigation (1-year lagged)	-0.55* (0.31)	-0.31** (0.13)	-2.72*** (0.97)	-0.24 (0.23)	-0.43 (0.30)	-1.53** (0.66)	-0.48** (0.23)
Geographic Area	4.87 (4.19)	0.96 (1.47)	-0.89 (4.74)	2.47** (1.26)	10.52 (8.12)	4.7 (3.85)	0.76 (1.66)
GDP	0.02*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.00)	0.07*** (0.03)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01* (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01** (0.00)
Population	-0.22*** (0.04)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.50*** (0.15)	-0.14*** (0.03)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.17*** (0.06)	-0.09*** (0.03)
Urbanization Rate	6.13 (5.84)	-0.52 (3.04)	11.05 (29.83)	-13.00** (5.16)	-1.06 (6.48)	6.03 (6.80)	-5.11* (3.07)
Political Rank	355.31*** (132.06)	66.71 (49.94)	-145.96 (651.06)	-66.13 (174.82)	-32.56 (87.15)	50.7 (187.62)	89.39 (104.51)
Year							
2012				Baseline			
2013	-2.07 (44.07)	72.03*** (7.42)	91.36** (39.44)	-19.62 (25.44)	93.53*** (35.18)	111.23*** (23.63)	17.11 (15.87)
2014	98.61 (77.12)	226.61*** (16.11)	226.61*** (72.07)	46.7 (46.28)	40.3 (40.60)	276.34*** (56.13)	56.25*** (20.11)
2015	391.94*** (134.68)	414.89*** (39.93)	828.66*** (242.26)	116.18** (55.74)	157.86 (118.16)	749.92*** (131.48)	234.78*** (73.11)
2016	520.21*** (162.27)	526.26*** (55.55)	1244.68*** (374.27)	206.97** (99.61)	286.54* (164.65)	1180.60*** (291.04)	249.68*** (88.58)
Constant	1375.91*** (332.60)	767.31*** (173.19)	1350.07 (1068.23)	1451.14*** (265.29)	1222.20*** (453.27)	1143.14** (461.34)	632.11*** (197.68)
N	155	155	155	155	155	155	155

Note: * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$; per capital spending on each public spending item; Political Rank measures whether a provincial party secretary is Politburo Member; Random Effect Model

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Education

Syracuse University, May 2020

- Ph.D., Political Science
- M.A., Political Science, 2017

London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013

- M.Sc., Comparative Politics (Research)

Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2012

- B.B.A, Major in Management and Minor in Applied Mathematics

Publications

- Liu, D. 2020. Advocacy Channels and Political Resource Dependence in Authoritarianism: Non-Government Organizations and Environmental Policies in China. *Governance*, 33(2), 323-342
- Liu, D. 2019. Punishing the Dissidents: The Selective Implementation of Stability Preservation in China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 28(119), 795-812
- Shao, L., **Liu, D.** 2019. The Road to Cynicism: The Political Consequences of Online Satire Exposure in China. *Political Studies*, 67(2), 517–536

Under Review

- Racial Competitions and Partisanship within Racial Minority Groups: The Case of Asian Americans (with Nathan Carrington)

Working Papers

- Strategic Distribution in Authoritarian Legislature: the Evidence of China
- When the Public and Bureaucrats Come into Conflicts: Autocrat's Distributional Strategies in China's anti-Corruption
- Specific Propaganda, Censorship and Defense against External Criticism in China? (with Li Shao and Fangfei Wang)
- Theatrical Performance: Visibility and Policy Implementation in China (with Li Shao)
- Domestic Obstacles of China's Belt and Road Initiative (with Li Shao)
- Everyday not resistance: motivation of satirists in China (with Li Shao)
- Club Goods in China (with Dimitar D.Gueorguiev)
- Through the Looking Glass: How Mainland Chinese see the Hong Kong Protests

Conferences and Invited Talks

- "Through the Looking Glass: How Mainland Chinese see the Hong Kong Protests"
 - Western Political Science Association Annual Conference, Los Angeles, April, 2020
- "When the Public and Bureaucrats Come into Conflicts: Autocrat's Distributional Strategies in China's anti-Corruption"
 - Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, Puerto Rico, January, 2020 – University of Macau, September, 2019
- "Theatrical Performance: Visibility and Policy Implementation in China"
 - Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, Puerto Rico, January, 2020
- "Domestic Obstacles of China's Belt and Road Initiative"
 - Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Boston, March 2020
- "Specific Propaganda, Censorship and Defense against External Criticism in China"
 - American Political Science Association Annual Conference, Washington DC, August, 2019
 - 17th Chinese Internet Research Conference, Singapore, June, 2019
 - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago IL, April, 2019
 - Harvard Experimental Political Science Graduate Conference, Harvard University, March 2019
 - Moynihan East Asian Program Speaker, Syracuse University, March, 2019
 - Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, Austin TX, January, 2019

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- “Strategic Distribution in Authoritarian Legislature: the Evidence of China ”
 - Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, October 2019
 - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago IL, April, 2019
 - 15th Graduate Seminar on China, Chinese University of Hong Kong, January, 2019
 - “Racial Competitions and Partisanship within the Racial Minority Groups: The Case of Asian Americans”
 - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago IL, April, 2018
 - “Punishing the Dissidents: The Selective Implementation of Stability Preservation in China”
 - Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago IL, April, 2017
 - Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, New Orleans LA, January, 2017
 - “Road to Cynicism: Political Satire’s Effects in China,”
 - Chinese Internet Research Conference, Fort Worth TX, June, 2017 (*Honorable Mention* in the Best student paper competition);
 - Association of Chinese Political Science, Tianjin China June, 2017
 - “Everyday not resistance: motivation of satirists in China,”
 - Moynihan East Asian Program Speaker, Syracuse NY, November, 2016
 - Association of Chinese Political Science, Monterey CA, October, 2016
 - Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago IL, April, 2016

Research Experiences

- Syracuse University
 - Research Assistant for Prof. Dimitar Gueorguiev (Fall 2019, Fall 2015)
- The University of Hong Kong
 - Research Assistant for Prof. Xiaojun Yan (April 2014 - June 2015)

Teaching Experience

- Syracuse University:
 - Instructor, Authoritarian Regimes in the Contemporary World, Summer 2019
 - Teaching Assistant, Race, Ethnicity and Politics, Spring 2019

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- Teaching Assistant, Media Politics and Public Opinion, Fall, 2018
 - Teaching Assistant, The Judicial Process, Spring, 2018
 - Teaching Assistant, Intro to Political Analysis, Fall 2016-Fall 2017
 - Teaching Assistant, Politics of China, Spring 2016

Awards & Fellowships

- Travel Grant, American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 2019 (\$200)
- Koff Award, Dept. of Political Science, Syracuse University - *Best Graduate Student Paper in Comparative Politics*, 2019
- Syracuse University Graduate School Summer Dissertation Fellowship, 2019 (\$4000)
- East Asia Summer Research Grant, Syracuse University, 2019 (\$1750)
- Stonecash Award, Dept. of Political Science, Syracuse University - *Best Graduate Student Paper in American Politics*, 2018
- Roscoe Martin Fellowship, Syracuse University, 2018, 2017 (\$1200 each year)
- Prestage-Cook Travel Award, SPSA Annual Conference, 2017 (\$300)
- Best Graduate Student Paper (Honorable Mentioned), 15th CIRC, 2017
- Department Graduate Student Travel Grant, Syracuse University, 2016-2019 (\$500 each year) Graduate Student Scholarship, Syracuse University, 2015-

Service

- Referee: *Governance*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Journal of Contemporary China*
- Conference Chair and Discussant: SPSA 2020 (section chair and discussant)
- University Internationalization Council, Syracuse University, 2018-2019
- University Academic Integrity Panel Member, Syracuse University, 2018-
- Officer, Political Science Graduate Student Association, 2016-2019
- CNPolitics (2014-), Blogger on educating social science to Chinese general audiences, <http://cnpolitics.org/author/liudongshu/>

Language & Skills

Chinese (Native), English (Proficient)

Stata, SPSS, R, L^AT_EX, Qualtrics, Nvivo