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Nonprofit Policy Advocacy under Authoritarianism

Abstract: *Despite the increasing volume and significance of research on nonprofit advocacy, most studies have focused on the phenomenon only in Western countries. This article expands the scope of the literature by examining the advocacy activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in authoritarian China. This article focuses on three aspects of advocacy behavior: advocacy investment and use of insider and outsider tactics. Data analyses of an original nationwide survey of 267 environmental NGOs and semistructured interviews with 30 highlight how resource and institutional factors—government funding, government affiliation, foundation funding, and peer collaborations—shape NGO advocacy in China. The findings also suggest ways in which institutional actors may enhance NGOs’ capacity for policy advocacy.*

Practitioner Points

- If government officials want to facilitate peaceful transitions of authoritarian regimes, they need to allow more NGOs to operate and give them more support.
- Foundations operating under authoritarianism may play a more active role as change agents by building NGO capacity through the strategic use of multiyear grants and the provision of more generous overhead to deserving NGOs.
- NGOs may be able to leverage collaborative efforts among themselves as a way to enhance their overall engagement in policy investment and advocacy.

Policy advocacy is broadly defined as any attempt to influence government decisions through both direct and indirect means, including contacting government, educating the public, and mobilizing at the grassroots level (Reid 1999). While many nonprofits engage in policy advocacy, they vary in their advocacy investment and tactics (Boris and Mosher-Williams 1998; Jenkins 2006; Mosley 2011). Nonetheless, the literature has focused mainly on the advocacy activities of nonprofits in Western democratic states (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Kim and Kim 2015), with very little attention paid to nongovernmental organization (NGO) advocacy in authoritarian regimes.¹ This article expands the scope of the literature by empirically examining the following research question: given the specific context of authoritarianism, how do various institutional forces—the government, foundations, and the nonprofit sector itself—affect NGOs’ advocacy activities?

Government officials in authoritarian states have mixed views on NGOs. On the one hand, they may impose severe constraints on the development and operations of NGOs, partly driven by their fear

that freewheeling civic NGOs may become vehicles for challenging authoritarian rule (Heurlin 2010; Spires 2011a; Wiktorowicz 2002). As Bratton notes, “NGOs may sow seeds of political discontent and provide organizational channels through which opposition can be mounted against an incumbent regime” (1989, 572). NGOs in Kenya, Indonesia, Thailand, Chile, and Vietnam, for example, have mobilized to protect and expand democratic space (Clarke 1998). In response, many regimes have used various tools to regulate NGOs. In Kazakhstan, for example, the Civil Code limits political activities by narrowly defining NGOs as social or philanthropic organizations (Wiktorowicz 2002). In recent years, however, several authoritarian regimes have begun to realize that NGOs can help support service delivery and resolve social conflicts (Teets 2013). In China, for example, two distinct types of NGOs coexist: civic NGOs initiated by private citizens and government-organized NGOs (hereafter called GONGOs) that are either spin-offs of government-affiliated service organizations or direct creations of government agencies (Tang and Lo 2009). Both types of NGOs have used government funding to provide collective goods. GONGOs have traditionally been funded

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by the government; in recent years, civic NGOs have also begun to receive government funding. Because NGOs in the West are seldom formally affiliated with the government, there is virtually no discussion of how these two types of NGOs may differ in their advocacy. While Western literature has examined the impact of government funding on nonprofit advocacy, it has not empirically examined the interactive effect between government funding and government affiliation under authoritarianism.

In addition, international organizations and foundations have favored NGOs as development aid recipients (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015). For example, 86 foundations from the United States made 2,583 grants to 658 distinct grantees in China between 2002 and 2009, for a total value of \$442,925,349 (Spires 2011b, 317). Meanwhile, Chinese domestic foundations have been growing and supporting local NGOs (Spires, Tao, and Chan 2014). While Western studies have had mixed reports on how foundation funding relates to policy advocacy, with some showing positive associations while others showing negative associations (Bartley 2007; Brulle and Jenkins 2005; Delfin and Tang 2008), they have generally assumed that foundations operate in an environment without overt government influence. Yet, as argued by Mosley and Galaskiewicz (2014), even in Western contexts, foundation program officers, board members, and staff consider the political environment when making funding decisions. Under authoritarianism, it is unknown whether foundations are even more careful in avoiding funding NGO activities that may cause political trouble.

Despite institutional barriers, NGOs in authoritarian regimes seek to collaborate with each other in advancing common causes (Ru and Ortolano 2009). While Western literature suggests that collaborative networks facilitate nonprofit advocacy (LeRoux and Goerdel 2009), the extent to which collaborations help NGOs under authoritarianism advocate is unknown.

In this article, we examine the institutional influences on the policy advocacy of environmental NGOs (eNGOs) in the world's largest authoritarian country, China. We focus on three aspects of policy advocacy: advocacy investment and use of insider and outsider tactics (Child and Grønbjerg 2007; Mosley 2011). Advocacy investment is defined as the extent to which an eNGO invests its resources, time, and efforts in policy advocacy. Insider tactics refer to those that require "working openly, even collaboratively, with decision makers" (Mosley 2011, 437). Examples include participating in the drafting and revising of regulations, participating in government commissions and committees, and providing testimonies on policy issues. Outsider tactics occur outside the formal policy process and focus primarily on shaping the climate around policy making, such as disseminating policy information, writing letters or reports to the media, and engaging in politically disruptive activities.

We focus on eNGOs for several reasons. First, being increasingly viewed as "politically less harmful" (Ho 2007, 193) by the government, they have been able to gain political space to grow in recent years. In the past two decades, eNGOs have been very active in environmental education, nature

conservation, species protection, and various forms of policy advocacy. Second, although eNGOs are the most studied social organizations in China (e.g., Ho 2007; Ru and Ortolano 2009; Tang and Zhan 2008; Yang 2005; Zhan and Tang 2013), most of the studies use a case-based approach or focus on groups in major cities, limiting the robustness of the research findings.

Our study is more robust by using a mixed-methods approach that combines data from an original nationwide survey and semistructured interviews conducted in 2014–15. Our findings highlight how several key resource and institutional variables—government funding and affiliation, foundation funding, and peer collaborations—work in the authoritarian context of China in shaping NGO advocacy. The findings also suggest ways in which various institutional factors relate to NGO investment and tactics in policy advocacy under authoritarianism.

In the rest of the article, we will first highlight the political and institutional context of Chinese eNGOs and their recent development. We then present our conceptual framework and hypotheses. After that, we describe the data, methods, and findings of the empirical study. We conclude by discussing implications for understanding NGO advocacy in China and in other authoritarian states.

Policy Advocacy of Environmental NGOs in China: Framework and Hypotheses

While studies on nonprofit advocacy are abundant, most are based on human service nonprofits, which rely heavily on government funding. Studies that focus specifically on eNGOs, which depend more on other funding sources (e.g., foundations) and face distinct policy environments (Child and Grønbjerg 2007), are limited. In the Western literature, a sizable number of studies examine environmental advocacy, but most consider the issue from a social movement perspective or focus on the operations of a few large environmental advocacy organizations (Andrews and Caren 2010; Bartley 2007; Brulle and Jenkins 2005). In the literature on China, a few studies have examined eNGOs, but their major focus is not on advocacy activities (e.g., Ho 2007; Ru and Ortolano 2009; Yang 2005). Because of these limitations, we cannot rely exclusively on the current eNGO literature to develop hypotheses on eNGO advocacy in China. In this article, we draw on resource dependence and institutional theories to develop a theoretical framework that helps connect various institutional influences to NGO advocacy investment and tactics.

Before introducing the framework, however, it is important to first outline the development of the NGO sector and the broader political environment in China. In the past two decades, China's NGO sector has grown tremendously. The total number of registered NGOs had increased from 4,446 in 1988 to 547,000 by 2013 (Bureau of Social Organization Administration 2015).

Yet the Chinese government considers NGOs a security threat that could undermine national sovereignty (Spires 2011a) and has thus devised various tools to manage or control the development and operations of NGOs (Heurlin 2010; Kang and Han 2008; Teets 2013). To formally register as a social organization, for example, an NGO must find

In the past two decades, eNGOs have been very active in environmental education, nature conservation, species protection, and various forms of policy advocacy.

a sponsoring agency and ensure that no other similar social groups exist within the same administrative area (Article 9–13, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1998). Since 2013, four types of social organizations have been exempted from having a sponsoring agency (Central Committee of the Communist Party 2013),² but many NGOs, especially those that conduct politically sensitive activities (such as those related to HIV/AIDS or labor rights), still face difficulties in meeting registration requirements. Registered NGOs are not allowed to establish local branches and are required to pass annual government reviews. In addition to legal restrictions, several nuanced and indirect mechanisms have also been used. Typical examples include incorporating certain NGOs' activities into government plans, providing funding or training, requiring NGOs to establish party-units, and cutting off the supply of critical resources (Kang and Han 2008; Teets 2013; Thornton 2013). As Heurlin (2010) notes, the Chinese government has shifted its NGO management strategies from simple exclusion to a corporatist approach, allowing some NGOs to develop under strict government guidance.

While the authoritarian state remains resilient, it is fragmented, creating meaningful opportunities for NGOs to operate (Mertha 2009; Nathan 2003). In the environmental arena, for example, government officials at different levels have begun to recognize the potential contributions of eNGOs to environmental protection; some local environmental protection bureaus, for example, have collaborated with environmental groups to monitor industrial pollution. Thus, the number of eNGOs had increased from 3,000 in 2005 to 7,928 in 2012 (Bureau of Social Organization Administration 2015).³ In recent years, these eNGOs have used various tactics to engage in advocacy. Some contact officials directly or file public interest lawsuits to help pollution victims, while others work with the media to disclose multinational firms' pollution activities, mobilize the public to block infrastructure projects, halt pollution, or demand policy change (Hildebrandt and Turner 2009; Ho 2007; Zhan and Tang 2013).

Resource dependence and institutional theories are often used to explain nonprofit policy advocacy in the West (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004; Mosley 2011). Both theories suggest that organizations are constrained by multiple pressures from the external environment, and the ways in which they respond to external demands and expectations determine their survival and development. The two theories differ in several important ways, however (see table 1). While resource dependence theory focuses on the task environment, institutional theory focuses more on norms, beliefs, and political pressure from the institutional environment. The two theories suggest different loci of external power: in the former, power is held and exercised by key resource providers, whereas in the latter, it is held by those who shape and enforce institutional rules and beliefs. According to resource dependence theory, organizations seek to manage resource flows and cope with interdependencies by maximizing others' dependence on them or minimizing their own dependence on others. In contrast, institutional theorists argue that organizations conform to existing institutional rules, cultural norms, and political pressure by imitating what appears to be prevalent and appropriate.

Table 1 Comparison of Resource Dependence and Institutional Theories

	Resource Dependence Theory	Institutional Theory
Contextual focus	Task environment	Institutional environment
Loci of external power	Those who control scarce resources	Those who shape and enforce institutional rules and beliefs
Decision criteria	Resource alternatives	Institutionally and culturally accepted schemas, e.g., rules, norms, routines
Degree of choice	Active choice behavior	Nonchoice behavior
Appropriate responses to the environment	Managing resource flows, coping with interdependencies	Adhering to rules and norms, conforming to collective norms and beliefs
Outcomes	Adaptation	Isomorphism

Sources: Malatesta and Smith (2014); Oliver (1991); Pfeffer and Salancik (2003).

Applying resource dependence and institutional theories to nonprofit policy advocacy under authoritarianism, we argue that NGOs in China face resource and institutional constraints from three sets of external actors: government, foundations, and peers. When making advocacy decisions, they must consider two major issues: how to generate enough resources from the external environment to sustain their operations and how to reduce the risk of a political crackdown by the government. The management of these two major threats drives the policy advocacy investment and strategies of eNGOs in China. In particular, managing resource availability and dependence affects the extent to which eNGOs invest in policy advocacy; managing political risks is the driving force behind their tactical choices. Next we relate each institutional factor to eNGOs' resource and political considerations and explicate how they affect their advocacy investment and tactical choices in China (see table 2).

Government Funding

From one perspective, nonprofits relying on government funding may be reluctant to “bite the hand that feeds them” because they worry that policy advocacy may endanger their relationship with the government and drive away government funding. Government funding may also shift organizational attention to securing governmental support, driving nonprofits to be more formalized and professionalized, thus reducing their political activities (Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004; Onyx et al. 2010). Hence, government funding may have a negative impact on advocacy activities, especially those that are confrontational (Guo and Saxton 2010; Schmid, Bar, and Nirel 2008).

Most empirical studies, however, find that government funding works the other way around (Berry and Arons 2003; Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004; Donaldson 2007; Kelleher and Yackee 2009; Leech 2006; LeRoux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2011, 2012).

Organizations that receive government support are motivated to advocate more to protect their existing funding streams or broker more resources. Through formal contracting, nonprofit leaders can access new pathways to interact with public officials and gain a more nuanced understanding of specific policy issues (Berry and Arons 2003; Kelleher and Yackee 2009; Leech 2006). These empirical studies suggest that nonprofits play

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Table 2 NGO Policy Advocacy under Authoritarianism: A Framework

Key Factors	Managing Resource Availability and Dependencies	Managing Political Risks
Government funding	NGOs with more government funding are more motivated to invest in policy advocacy in order to broker more resources. (H ₁)	Closer collaboration with government signals government approval of a NGO, making it use more insider tactics and less outsider tactics; however, collaboration may also create mutual suspicion, making it use less insider tactics and more outsider tactics. Thus no definite effect of government funding on insider or outsider tactics.
Government affiliation	GONGOs enjoy more institutional benefits and can acquire more resources than civic NGOs. Thus, they invest more in policy advocacy. (H ₂)	Compared with GONGOs, civic NGOs use more insider and outsider tactics when receiving more government funding, which is a sign of government recognition of their operations. (H _{2a} , H _{2b})
Foundation funding	Programmatic funding from foundations makes NGOs less likely to invest in policy advocacy. (H ₃)	Foundations seek to avoid political trouble, making them less likely to fund policy advocacy. Thus, NGOs with more foundation funding are likely to use less insider and outsider tactics. (H _{3a} , H _{3b})
Peer collaborations	Collaborations among NGOs help overcome resource barriers for engaging in advocacy. Thus, more peer collaborations lead to higher advocacy investment. (H ₄)	Peer collaborations form a bigger voice, which reduces potential political risks for individual NGOs. Thus, more peer collaborations mean more use of both insider and outsider tactics. (H _{4a} , H _{4b})

an active role in managing the resource dependence arising from a reliance on government funding.

These results appear to be compatible with the situation in China, where local governments have been increasingly involving NGOs in service delivery. NGOs, in turn, have started to seek funding from the government. In 2013, the third plenary session of the 18th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party passed a resolution to increase government purchases of public services. Accordingly, NGO–government collaboration has been increasing, providing NGOs with more meaningful opportunities to influence public policies; NGOs are able to better manage their resources and enhance capacity. In some circumstances, eNGOs have benefited from such a trend and decided to invest more in policy advocacy.

Hypothesis 1: Environmental NGOs with more government funding invest more in policy advocacy.

Government funding, however, may not have a definite effect on eNGOs' advocacy tactics. On the one hand, government funding may signal government approval of an NGO and create a new venue for it to weigh in during the policy process, leading to more use of insider tactics and less use of outsider tactics. On the other hand, NGO–government collaboration may create mutual suspicion: government officials are concerned about NGOs threatening social stability, whereas NGO leaders fear that their activities may antagonize the government, leading to organizational shutdown

(Spires 2011a). Thus, through working with the government, NGOs may find it difficult to deal with government officials or may lose trust on them, resulting in less use of insider tactics and more use of outsider tactics.⁴ Overall, government funding may not have a definite correlation with the use of insider and outsider tactics.

Government Affiliation: GONGOs versus Civic NGOs

GONGOs in China are usually set up by the government to cope with the growing internationalization of environmental governance, channel international funding and expertise, and absorb government officials who were laid off during administrative reform in the 1990s (Wu 2003). As offshoots of government agencies, GONGOs are often led by retired government officials working with environmental scientists, scholars, practitioners, and international experts, who tend to have the necessary expertise and institutional channels for expressing policy ideas. In contrast, civic NGOs, which are similar to Western nonprofits, are organized around a group of committed individuals who often struggle to keep the organization running. Personal savings and donations from business entrepreneurs and foundations are usually their major funding sources. Most civic NGOs have no or only a few full-time staff, with most of their work carried out by part-time staff and volunteers (Spires, Tao, and Chan 2014). Therefore, many civic NGOs barely have any resources to invest in advocacy.

Hypothesis 2: Compared with civic eNGOs, GONGOs invest more in policy advocacy.

It is less clear as to how the distinction between GONGOs and civic NGOs relates to the use of alternative advocacy tactics. This is partly because many GONGOs have become significantly more autonomous in finance and staffing in the past decade (Tang and Lo 2009),⁵ and civic NGOs have also started to collaborate more with the government. Thus, the scope of activities and tactics chosen by GONGOs and by civic eNGOs can sometimes be quite similar (Ho 2001). GONGOs may mainly work from within the bureaucracy, but they may also use civic participation and community action to achieve their goals. Some civic eNGOs may want government recognition and seek to strengthen their ties to government officials. It is likely that government funding interacts with government affiliation to affect eNGOs' use of advocacy tactics. Specifically, as government funding increases, civic eNGOs are likely to increase their use of insider tactics more so than GONGOs because government funding not only signals government recognition but also provides civic eNGOs new formal channels to work with the government. On the other hand, as government funding increases, GONGOs may become more government-like and decrease their use of outsider tactics; however, civic eNGOs may be able to enhance their organizational capacity in networking and thus increase their use of outsider tactics.

Hypothesis 2a: As the percentage of government funding increases, civic eNGOs' use of insider tactics increases more than that of GONGOs.

Hypothesis 2b: As the percentage of government funding increases, civic eNGOs' use of outsider tactics increases more than that of GONGOs.

Foundation Funding

Through their funding programs, foundations can affect nonprofit advocacy. They may use programmatic grants to select or cherry-pick those with moderate goals. This selection process supports only organizations with missions consistent with preferences of the dominant social class. Thus, the advocacy practices of nonprofits relying heavily on foundation funding are affected by their patrons' ideological orientations (Brulle and Jenkins 2005). Through their funding strategies, foundations may help build an organizational field that fosters interorganizational networks and defines particular conceptions of appropriate actions. Bartley (2007), for example, shows that foundations distribute money to an array of interconnected organizations, thereby transforming traditionally radical environmental social movement organizations to ones that use market-based alternatives and institutional means to interact with firms.

Even in democratic states where foundations generally operate in an environment without overt government influence, foundations may discourage nonprofit advocacy. In authoritarian regimes, this dampening effect is arguably more significant. This is because governments in these states often equate civil society with political opposition and impose stringent regulations on it (Banks, Hulme, and Edwards 2015). Therefore, sponsors' abilities to fund contentious programs or priorities are greatly restricted; when distributing grants, they often tend to support program-oriented and apolitical activities. Furthermore, donors' narrow emphasis on "results" may constrain NGOs and transform their activities from being confrontational to palliative (Jalali 2013).

In China, for example, eNGOs rely heavily on grants from both international and domestic foundations. In the early 2000s, when local foundations were scarce, international foundations played a critical role in supporting eNGOs. Foreign foundations not only offered financial support but also provided information and expertise by organizing conferences, workshops, and lectures (Hildebrandt and Turner 2009; Tang and Zhan 2008; Yang 2005). In the past few years, however, domestic foundations have grown rapidly in size and influence, and they have become major benefactors of eNGOs (Spires, Tao, and Chan 2014).

No matter whether they are foreign or domestic, most foundations share similar preferences: they try to survive under authoritarianism and garner more positive national publicity for their individual donors (Spires, Tao, and Chan 2014). To achieve these goals, they need to deal with politics carefully. They manage to avoid potential political controversies by directing funding to politically neutral projects, such as those concerning environmental education and species conservation (Tang and Zhan 2008). Indeed, many foundations funnel their money through government entities (Hildebrandt 2012; Spires 2011b). Although some funds go directly to eNGOs, they are project based, requiring short-term and measurable outcomes and imposing heavy oversight on eNGOs. With these requirements, eNGOs that rely heavily on foundation funding tend to focus on programmatic activities and are likely to be less involved in policy advocacy in terms of investment and the use of both insider and outsider tactics.

Hypothesis 3: Environmental NGOs with more foundation funding invest less in policy advocacy.

Hypothesis 3a: Environmental NGOs with more foundation funding use insider tactics less frequently.

Hypothesis 3b: Environmental NGOs with more foundation funding use outsider tactics less frequently.

Peer Collaborations

Peer collaborations are prevalent within the nonprofit sector; they provide information, resources, and learning opportunities to participating organizations, making advocacy easier among them. Specifically, collaboration enhances organizational learning. Through partnerships, nonprofits can learn from each other about how to manage resources efficiently, deal with competing contexts and demands, build effective support networks, and use the most effective advocacy tactics (LeRoux and Goerdel 2009). In other words, collaboration helps increase a nonprofit's capacity for policy advocacy (Schmid, Bar, and Nirel 2008; Wang and Soule 2012). Collaborative networks also help member organizations build organizational infrastructures for mobilizing members, resources, and volunteers. Baldassarri and Diani (2007), for example, show that civic organizations not only have close ties to their peers but also serve as bridging ties by connecting them to civil society. These civic networks enhance nonprofits' mobilization capacity.

Collaborative efforts may be more important for NGOs in authoritarian regimes than their counterparts in the West because in the former, the political environment is more restrictive and NGO capacities are in general lower. As noted by Schmid, Bar, and Nirel (2008), when NGOs form coalitions in Israel, they attain more power and resources, which enable them to engage more in political activities.

Environmental NGOs in China have increasingly collaborated with one another. They work together to collect signatures and petitions for certain policy issues; they go to each other's meetings or salons to offer intellectual and material support; they also borrow from each other's expertise or *guanxi* networks to influence policy making (Ru and Ortolano 2009). Sullivan and Xie's (2009) study on eNGOs' virtual networks, for example, finds that these organizations are well connected to one another both online and offline. Collaborations

among eNGOs have helped them overcome resource barriers and foster collective action. Peer collaborations also form a bigger voice, which reduces potential political risks for individual NGOs.

An often-cited example concerns eNGO advocacy to halt dam construction projects on the Nu River in 2003. According to Xie and Mol (2006), Wang Yongchen, leader of the Global Environmental Volunteers, acquired substantive environmental information on how the policy debate was unfolding within the government through her contact, a senior staff member at the State Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, Friends of Nature, a leading eNGO in China, used its access to political institutions to present scientific reports to the National People's Political Consultative Conference. These NGOs eventually succeeded in halting the project.

Collaborations among eNGOs have helped them overcome resource barriers and foster collective action.

Hypothesis 4: Environmental NGOs with more peer collaborations invest more in policy advocacy.

Hypothesis 4a: Environmental NGOs with more peer collaborations use more insider tactics.

Hypothesis 4b: Environmental NGOs with more peer collaborations use more outsider tactics.

Data and Methods

Data Sources

We collected data from two sources: a nationwide survey and in-depth interviews. When designing the survey instrument, we consulted existing questionnaires on Chinese NGOs as well as the relevant nonprofit literature (Child and Grønberg 2007; Hildebrandt 2013; Mosley 2011; Schmid, Bar, and Nirel 2008; Zhan and Tang 2013; Zhang and Guo 2012). To ensure the validity of the theoretical constructs and measurements, we invited several researchers who had studied Chinese NGOs to comment on the draft questionnaire. We also sought feedback from eNGO leaders during our interviews. After several rounds of revision, the final questionnaire consisted of 47 questions relating to basic organizational attributes (e.g., age, size, and registration), governance, funding, activities, and collaboration. The survey was administered throughout China with staff support from the Media Survey Lab at Tsinghua University. Unlike the United States, where governments compile comprehensive lists of nonprofits, China does not have an official list. We developed our own directory by consulting multiple sources, including websites, the NGO directory compiled by the China Development Brief, and the list gathered by the All-China Environmental Federation.⁶ We then edited the list based on an online search and past research experience. We deleted those that were no longer in operation and those that did not focus primarily on environmental protection. The final list consisted of 634 GONGOs and 581 civic eNGOs. This list is by no means all-inclusive, but it is by far the most comprehensive researchers have ever developed.

Each NGO on the list was contacted by phone. We introduced the purpose of our project and then invited eNGO leaders to participate in the survey. Upon obtaining consent, we sent them an e-mail with a link to the survey. The questionnaire was sent to two leaders per organization so that we could cross-check their responses. The data collection process started in October 2014 and concluded in January 2015. A total of 316 organizations (632 responses) responded through an online portal, a response rate of 26 percent. We used several criteria to assess the quality of these responses and to select the most credible response for each organization.⁷ Despite these efforts, however, 49 organizations were still deleted because their responses were so poor: they either had too many missing values or their answers to attitudinal questions were the same across all the items. In general, responses from grassroots NGOs had better quality than those of GONGOs. Our final data set consisted of 267 eNGOs, including 150 GONGOs and 117 civic eNGOs. The unit of analysis was the organization.

In addition to the survey, we conducted 30 semistructured interviews with leaders of selected eNGOs from Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Chongqing in June, July, and October of 2014.

We gathered contacts through multiple sources, such as snowball sampling and personal connections. Among the 30 organizations that were actually interviewed, 3 were GONGOs, and 27 were civic eNGOs. We had significantly more interviews with civic eNGOs than with GONGOs because the latter were often much more difficult to approach. In contrast, civic eNGOs tended to be more receptive to researchers. We also interviewed two government officials from the Chengdu Environmental Protection Bureau.

Prior to the interviews, we developed an interview protocol that covered several topics, including founding and registration processes, major projects, organizational development, and performance. We solicited additional information as needed during the interview. Each interview lasted 40 to 100 minutes. The purpose of these interviews was to understand how eNGOs operate and interact with local governments and to help shed light on the quantitative findings. The interviews conducted in June and July of 2014 also helped us further refine our survey.

These interviews may not be representative of the study population, but representation was not the goal. Rather, our goal was to achieve data saturation (Yin 2014). Our interviews proceeded sequentially: we started with the first case, from which we gained new information, and then we moved on to the second and the third. From each case, we asked similar questions and added certain new ones. We stopped the fieldwork when we felt that not much new information could be gained. Through this sequential process, we obtained an in-depth understanding of the cases under study.

We recorded and transcribed all the interviews, resulting in 285 pages of transcripts (total 323,280 Chinese characters). The table in the supplementary appendix (available in the online version of this article) provides a summary of each organization we interviewed. We used NVivo 10, a program designed for qualitative research, to facilitate data management and analyses. We then developed a coding framework and coded each interview. The framework consisted of several main categories, such as government funding and advocacy tactics, and many subcategories. We then triangulated the quantitative results with the qualitative data analysis.

Measurement

Dependent variables. The three dependent variables include advocacy investment, insider tactics, and outsider tactics. Following Child and Grønberg (2007), we measure advocacy investment as the extent to which an organization had contributed its resources, time, and efforts to policy advocacy. Respondents were asked to assess their organization's investment in advocacy on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 refers to minimal investment and 5 refers to a significant amount of investment. The average score is 3.71 out of 5.

The second and third dependent variables capture different advocacy venues. While there is no consistent measure of advocacy tactics among scholars, most agree that they fall into two categories: insider versus outsider tactics (Andrews and Edwards 2005; Mosley 2011; Reid 2006). In our questionnaire, we follow Mosley (2011) and asked respondents to report the extent to which they had used each of the eight advocacy tactics over the past three

years, based on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means rarely used and 5 means very frequently used. These items were categorized into two groups: insider versus outsider tactics. The measure of insider tactics includes four items: (1) communicating policy ideas with government officials privately, (2) participating in policy formulation and revision, (3) serving on government-organized guidance committees, and (4) engaging in environmental public litigation. The Cronbach's alpha for this variable is .85, and principal factor analysis shows that the eigenvalue for these four items is 2.25.

The third dependent variable—outsider tactics—captures the extent to which eNGOs used strategies to engage the public, the media, and other NGOs to shape the policy environment. It encompasses four items: (1) submitting policy/research reports to the media, (2) organizing collective activities such as co-signing or writing letters, (3) announcing research and policy reports to the public, and (4) collaborating with other organizations to influence public policy. Here, we did not ask eNGOs whether they engaged in protests of any kind to avoid biased responses because protests and collective actions are illegal and strictly prohibited in China. The Cronbach's alpha for outsider tactics is 0.80, and principal factor analysis shows that the eigenvalue for these four items is 2.52. Overall, outsider tactics were used slightly more frequently (3.15) than insider venues (2.97). The two variables are correlated at $r=0.69$.

Receipt of government funding. This continuous variable measures the extent to which an organization depended on government funding. It is calculated by averaging government contributions and grants (e.g., government subsidies, contracts, or government's purchases of social services) as a share of average total revenues over the past three years.⁸ On average, eNGOs received 22 percent of their funding from the government. Some interviewees indicated that this percentage is relatively low in comparison to NGOs in other fields, such as human services.

Government affiliation. This dummy variable measures whether an organization is a GONGO or civic organization. Here, GONGO equals 1, 0 otherwise.⁹

Foundation funding. This variable measures the proportion of donations an eNGO has received from foundations (versus individuals and firms) over the past three years. Ideally, we should have a direct measure for foundation grants, but we were worried that asking detailed financial information may render a low response rate. Given the fact that eNGOs in China rely largely on foundations for survival and development (Spies, Tao, and Chan 2014), we believe that donations can serve as a meaningful proxy for foundation funding.

Peer collaborations. This variable measures the extent to which an eNGO had collaborated with its peers in sharing information, implementing projects, attending/organizing meetings, applying for financial support, improving environmental governance, holding officials accountable, and monitoring firms' polluting behaviors. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they had collaborated with their peers in the above seven areas on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means minimal collaboration and 5 means extensive collaboration. The Cronbach's alpha for the seven items is 0.88, and

principal factor analysis shows that the weight for each item is similar. Therefore, the average of the seven items is used.

Control variables. The first control variable is organizational age, which is measured by the number of years an eNGO had existed as of 2014 since its founding. Older organizations are expected to invest less in policy advocacy because they tend to be more conservative. The second is organizational size, which is measured by the natural log of the size of full time staff in an eNGO. Larger organizations are expected to invest more in advocacy, and they may use insider tactics more frequently. Registration status is a dummy variable measuring whether an organization is registered with the government. We expect that registered organizations are likely to invest more in advocacy, and they may use insider tactics more frequently because they are more legitimate players. Organizational location is a binary variable measuring whether the organization is based in Beijing. Located in China's political and cultural center, Beijing-based eNGOs are more advantaged in raising public attention, using social media, or lobbying the government. They are also more likely to connect with officials in the central government and help them deliver policy messages to local governments (Zhan and Tang 2013). Thus, eNGOs in Beijing are expected to be more likely to engage in policy advocacy than those outside of it.

Analytic technique. We use ordinary least squares regression models with robust options to test the association between the independent variables and the three measures of policy advocacy.¹⁰

Results

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics and correlations for each of the variables described earlier. Most of the key independent variables are not highly correlated, thus providing some confidence that these predictors are indeed quite distinct and that they tap into different institutional factors.¹¹ Table 4 shows the nine regression models.

The first three models examine advocacy investment. Model 1 examines the effect of control variables on advocacy investment. Together, these variables explain 8.18 percent of the variance in advocacy investment. In model 2, we add our key independent variables. Overall, the incremental variance explained by model 2 relative to model 1 is substantial: the full model explains 44.63 percent of the variance in advocacy investment. Model 3 integrates the interaction effect between government funding and government affiliation; the main results of model 3 are similar to those of model 2. Models 4–6 focus on the use of insider tactics. Our key independent variables, in combination with the control variables, explain 29.34 percent of the variance in the use of insider tactics. Models 7–9 examine the use of outsider tactics. All independent and control variables combine to explain 35.07 percent of the variance in outsider tactics. In the following sections, we explain in detail how the hypothesized resource and institutional factors affect eNGOs' advocacy by drawing on the quantitative results (table 4) and information obtained from interviews (table 5).

Government Funding

We proposed that government funding is positively related to eNGOs' advocacy investment (hypothesis 1). In our main effects models, hypothesis 1 is supported. That is, eNGOs with more government funding are likely to invest more in advocacy

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Advocacy investment	3.71	0.99	1										
2 Insider tactics	2.96	0.84	0.47*	1									
3 Outsider tactics	3.17	0.76	0.46*	0.69*	1								
4 Government funding	0.22	0.21	0.52*	0.26*	0.26*	1							
5 Government affiliation	0.56	0.5	0.29*	0.20*	0.06	0.30*	1						
6 Foundation funding	.47	.28	-0.18*	-0.13*	-0.04	-0.29*	-0.01	1					
7 Peer Collaborations	3.54	0.71	0.41*	0.34*	0.50*	0.24*	0.10	0.09	1				
8 Organization age	12.35	6.62	0.17*	0.11	-0.02	0.27*	0.34*	-0.10	0.00	1			
9 Organization size	1.87	0.98	0.25*	0.28*	0.21*	0.12	0.17*	0.14*	0.04	0.27*	1		
10 Registration status	0.77	0.42	-0.04	-0.06	-0.05	0.11	0.27*	0.11	0.09	0.25*	0.11	1	
11 Organization location	0.15	0.36	0.08	0.14*	0.14*	0.03	-0.21*	-0.08	0.02	0.07	0.17*	-0.14*	1

* $p < .05$. $N = 267$.**Table 4** Regression Results

Dependent Variables	Advocacy Investment			Insider Tactics			Outsider Tactics		
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Government funding		1.70***	1.98***		0.30	1.05*		0.51	1.26**
		(0.29)	(0.38)		(0.28)	(0.45)		(0.32)	(0.41)
Government affiliation (GONGO = 1)		0.35**	0.45**		0.25*	0.49***		0.02	0.27*
		(0.10)	(0.16)		(0.10)	(0.14)		(0.10)	(0.13)
Foundation funding		-0.39+	-0.38+		-0.43*	-0.39*		-0.20	-0.17
		(0.23)	(0.23)		(0.18)	(0.18)		(0.19)	(0.19)
Peer collaborations		0.45***	0.45***		0.35***	0.37***		0.53***	0.55***
		(0.09)	(0.09)		(0.08)	(0.08)		(0.09)	(0.09)
Government Funding* Affiliation			-0.46			-1.23*			-1.23*
			(0.50)			(0.51)			(0.51)
Control variables									
Organization age	0.02*	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.01+	-0.01+
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Organization size (log)	0.22***	0.19***	0.19***	0.21***	0.21***	0.19***	0.18**	0.17***	0.15***
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.04)
Registration status (registered = 1)	-0.22	-0.37**	-0.37**	-0.17	-0.25*	-0.25*	-0.08	-0.17	-0.17
	(0.15)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Organization location (Beijing = 1)	0.06	0.1	0.11	0.16	0.19	0.18	0.22	0.18	0.17
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Constant	3.22***	1.67***	1.60***	2.6***	1.52***	1.35***	2.97***	1.19***	1.01***
	(0.18)	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.16)	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.16)	(0.28)	(0.29)
R^2	0.0818	0.4463	0.4482	0.0956	0.2719	0.2934	0.0622	0.3306	0.3507
F -statistic	6.09***	18.85***	17.16***	5.95***	13.50***	12.86***	3.31*	13.6***	12.66***

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$. $N = 267$.

(beta = 1.70, $p < .001$). This result indicates that the conventional interpretation of resource dependence theory—that government funding suppresses advocacy—does not work here. Rather, the result supports what most empirical studies in the advocacy literature suggest: nonprofits' efforts to influence their resource flows and shape their resource environment are the driving forces behind advocacy investment.

As expected, the coefficients of government funding on the use of insider and outsider tactics are not significant, indicating that

government funding is not related to eNGOs' use of insider and outsider tactics. This is somewhat contrary to what the Western literature finds. Like the situation in the United States, government funding in China may create an additional channel for NGOs to interact with the government. Organization B14, for example, helps local conservation zones promote environmental education, and 70 percent of its revenue comes from the government. The leader believes that "collaborating with local governments, getting them to know us, and building mutual trust are important for civic NGOs."

Table 5 Summary of Interview Findings

Categories	Description	# of Orgs	% of Orgs
Government funding	Environmental NGOs with government funding (e.g., mainly used to support eNGOs to conduct environmental education, facilitate rural planning and development, or conduct research)	19	63
	Government funding fosters collaboration and trust, encourages advocacy investment	4	13
	Government funding not necessarily related to specific advocacy tactics:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic hierarchy, difficult to reach government officials • Sense of uncertainty about the overall political environment 	7 12	23 40
Government affiliation	GONGOs: considered as more legitimate and trustworthy; more resources, including financial and staff support	3	10
	Civic eNGOs not well positioned in policy advocacy	27	90
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle to survive; do not have enough capacity to advocate • Concerns that advocacy may bring trouble 	9 7	30 23
	Foundations' grantmaking criteria are restrictive, e.g., limited overhead and volatile foci, and discourage advocacy	14	47
Foundation funding	ENGOS with foundation funding	22	73
	Certain eNGOs start to explore support from multiple sources, such as societal support, government funding, and income-generating venues	7	23
	Peer collaborations	23	77
Peer collaborations	ENGOS collaborating with peers: "no single org can succeed alone"		
	Peer collaboration encourages policy advocacy		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration builds capacity • Collaboration forms bigger voice 	20 9	67 30

Nonetheless, increased collaboration between eNGOs and the government does not necessarily lead to more frequent use of specific tactics. A possible reason relates to the hierarchical nature of bureaucracy. One eNGO leader said that her organization does work with the local Environmental Protection Bureau, but it is a lower-tier staff member who manages the contract. This leader tried to talk to the higher-level officials, but she had spent three months in vain. These officials either believe that NGOs are too trivial to be worth their attention or that NGOs are troublemakers that cause social instability. Another possible reason, or probably a more important one, regards eNGO leaders' sense of uncertainty about the overall political environment. The executive director at A7 explained,

In the authoritarian context of China, government officials usually have significant amounts of power to exercise discretion, and their discretionary decisions are directly related to the overall political environment. When the environment is relatively loose, these officials will give NGOs more space to grow and conduct activities. However, once the environment is tightened, NGOs may be in trouble.

This sense of uncertainty has been planted deep in the minds of many eNGO leaders, leading them to be extremely careful in their choice of tactics. To eNGO leaders, seeking public funding and working on government-supported programs are ways to establish government connections, but gaining meaningful access to the government and navigating the uncertain political environment seem to be more difficult. This sense of uncertainty about the political environment was expressed explicitly in one form or another by 40 percent of our interviewees (see table 5). As summarized by one eNGO leader, "to be a good advocate, you need to assess the situation and be strategic in tactics. It is not just about using a specific tactic forever; it is about choosing the right tactic at the right time."

Government Affiliation: GONGOs versus Civic NGOs

In the second set of hypotheses, we proposed that compared with civic NGOs, GONGOs invest more in advocacy (hypothesis 2). Consistent with our expectations, the results show that GONGOs devote more efforts to policy advocacy ($\beta = .35, p < .01$), probably because they have more preferential access to the government, and they are equipped with more expertise and resources. Even though many GONGOs have become autonomous in finance and personnel, they are still well connected to the government. They are also considered by government officials as more trustworthy. As vividly described by the department chief at A11, a GONGO in Beijing,

China is a government-led socialist state. Most of the work is done by the government. We as a GONGO are strongly connected to the government, and we can easily draw on many resources. Actually, when many local government agencies are dealing with civic organizations, they are a bit scrupled because they are not very familiar with civic NGOs, and thus are concerned about their motivations and goals. Hence, local governments would be reserved. However, we have a strong government background, and are considered as more trustworthy. This is obviously a great advantage for us.

Clearly, civic eNGOs do not have this advantage. Most government officials do not know what NGOs are and what they do. The vice president at A14 had worked in the nonprofit sector for more than 10 years; she observed,

Among government agencies, the security department worries that NGOs may potentially threaten social stability; civil affairs agencies deal with NGOs directly, but most other agencies are indifferent. What they care about is government itself and enterprises. The number of NGOs in China is just so tiny that these officials could not see.

Thus, civic eNGOs are not well positioned for policy advocacy. As table 5 shows, among the 30 organizations we interviewed, nine leaders expressed that they do not have enough capacity to advocate, and seven worried that advocacy may bring trouble.

For hypotheses 2a and 2b, we proposed that government funding and government affiliation interact to affect eNGOs' use of insider and outsider tactics. Interestingly, model 6 shows that by adding the interaction term, government funding is significant ($\beta = 1.05, p < .05$), government affiliation is more significant ($\beta = .49, p < .001$), and the interaction is statistically significant and negative ($\beta = -1.23, p < .5$). This supports hypothesis 2a. That is, GONGOs use insider tactics more frequently than civic eNGOs, but when taking into account the effect of government funding, the increase for civic eNGOs is stronger. To further demonstrate the impact of government funding and government affiliation, we predicted eNGOs' use of insider tactics (see figure 1). The graph shows that when the amount of government funding is relatively low (around 40 percent or below), GONGOs use insider tactics more frequently than civic eNGOs. However, as the percentage of government funding goes beyond 40 percent, civic NGOs use insider tactics more frequently.

Consistent with hypothesis 2b, model 9 shows that government funding is significant ($\beta = 1.26, p < .01$); government affiliation is significant ($\beta = .27, p < .01$), and its interaction with government funding is negatively associated with eNGOs' use of outsider tactics ($p < .05$). Figure 2 illustrates this finding. Overall, it shows the

divergent impacts of government funding on outsider tactics for the two types of eNGOs. As the percentage of government funding increases, GONGOs tend to use outsider tactics less frequently probably because they become more like government agencies, while civic eNGOs use outsider tactics more frequently probably because government funding helps signal their legitimacy and build their organizational capacity.

Foundation Funding

Consistent with hypotheses 3 and 3a, the results show that eNGOs with more foundation funding invest less in policy advocacy and use insider tactics less frequently ($\beta = -.39, p < .10$; $\beta = -.43, p < .05$, respectively). But hypothesis 3b, which predicted that eNGOs relying more on foundation funding use outsider tactics less frequently, is not supported. This differs from what we learned from some of our interviews that a heavy reliance on foundation funding discourages NGO policy advocacy. This difference is probably caused by a measurement limitation, that is, using donations as a proxy for foundation funding.

In our interviews, many eNGO leaders reported that they rely extensively on foundation funding. The founder of A13, for example, said that the lion's share of his organization's revenue comes from foundations. Among the 20 different sources of project funding, 15 are from foundations. The founder of A15 reported that his organization relies primarily on foundations for financial support. Indeed, consistent with what previous research has found, foundations have played a fundamental role in supporting NGO development (Hildebrandt and Turner 2009; Spires, Tao, and Chan 2014; Tang and Zhan 2008).

Nonetheless, foundations' grantmaking criteria are often restrictive. The administrative officer at A12, for example, complained that most foundations only cover 5 percent to 10 percent overhead costs, which is barely enough to support a full-time staff. Certain foundations do not cover overhead costs at all. Another problem with foundation grants is that they are mostly project based, with very detailed and sometimes complicated reporting requirements. Indeed, as table 5 shows, 47 percent of the interviewees complained that many foundation-supported projects are short term, with frequently changing grantmaking foci. For instance, the founder of B7 said,

Many eNGOs are resource-based. That is, if a foundation says that it is going to support those that work on climate change, then this eNGO will work on climate change; but tomorrow, if the foundation shifts its focus to air pollution, then all the eNGOs start to target air pollution. Civic eNGOs are just following what foundations focus on. This is a vicious cycle. Civic eNGOs cannot achieve anything if they just follow foundations.

In response, certain eNGOs have started to restructure their funding sources. The executive director at A7 noted that his organization had broken out of the traditional donor-driven pattern and developed one with clear missions and strategies. Seven out of 30 eNGO leaders all mentioned that they had realized the problem of relying too much on foundations and had started to explore new funding sources. Currently, however, most civic eNGOs remain

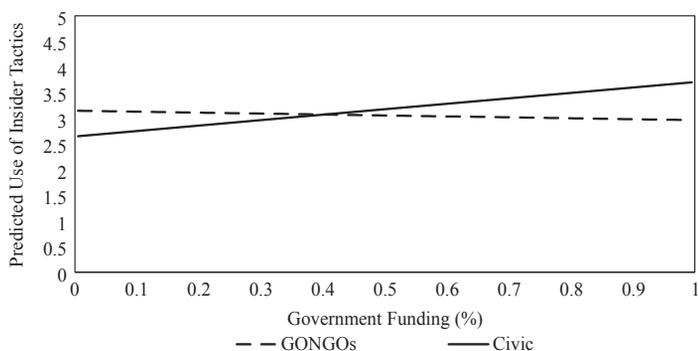


Figure 1 Predicted Use of Insider Tactics by Government Funding by Government Affiliation

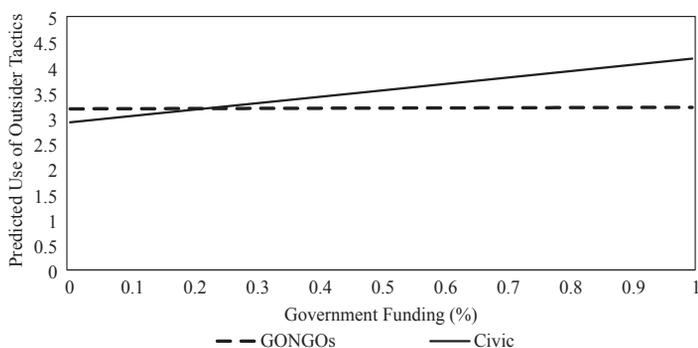


Figure 2 Predicted Use of Outsider Tactics by Government Funding by Government Affiliation

dependent on foundations for survival. Foundations' short-term vision and grantmaking strategies have negatively affected eNGOs' policy advocacy.

Peer Collaborations

Collaboration is positively related to all the three aspects of policy advocacy. Environmental NGOs with higher levels of collaboration invest more in policy advocacy and use both insider and outsider tactics more frequently ($p < .001$). This confirms what we learned from the interviews. Almost all organizations reported that peer collaborations are prevalent in such activities as holding conferences, signing letters, conducting projects, or mobilizing collective events.

As table 5 indicates, 67 percent of the interviewees expressed that peer collaboration helps build organizational capacity. For instance, A5 provides legal assistance to other civic eNGOs in public litigation. The founder said,

As eNGOs, you need to understand laws. Or how are you going to argue with others? If you claim that the government makes a mistake, you need to point out what the mistake is. You need to ground your argument on the basis of laws and regulations.

He realized that most civic eNGOs lack solid legal knowledge, and they cannot afford to hire lawyers. Thus, he organizes annual legal training for eNGO practitioners. He also appoints lawyers to work closely with eNGOs in public litigations.

Indeed, most civic eNGOs are embedded in some form of networks in which they know each other well, learn from each other, and draw on each other's expertise. For example, A8 is an organizer of a formal climate change network that consists of over 20 organizations. A9 has a senior staff managing a network of eNGOs in order to enhance NGO capacities and collaborations. A10 organizes a group of organizations that focus on river protection. A15 is a member of Green Choice Alliance, which is organized by the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs to facilitate green supply chains and production. These formal and informal networks have built up organizational infrastructures, based on which eNGOs can mobilize resources and support. Nine out of the 30 interviewees expressed that peer collaborations help form a bigger voice (see table 5). Overall, collaboration encourages civic eNGOs' policy advocacy.

Control Variables

Among the control variables, organization size is positively associated with eNGOs' policy advocacy. Holding other factors constant, larger organizations (measured by the size of full-time staff in log) invest more time, effort, and money in policy advocacy ($p < .001$), and they use both insider and outsider tactics more frequently than smaller organizations ($p < .001$ and $p < .001$, respectively). Compared with unregistered NGOs, registered ones invest less in policy advocacy ($p < .01$) and use insider tactics less frequently ($p < .05$). This challenges Hildebrandt's (2012) argument that registered organizations have higher autonomy than unregistered ones and thus are likely to advocate more.

Discussion

This article examined nonprofit policy advocacy in the authoritarian context of China. Extending the application of resource dependence and institutional theories in Western contexts to authoritarian regimes, we argued that NGOs in China face resource and institutional constraints from three sets of external actors: government, foundations, and peers. When making advocacy decisions, they must consider two major issues: managing resource availability and dependencies and managing political risks. In particular, the former consideration affects eNGOs' advocacy investment, and the latter drives their tactical choices. We then explained how each of the four resource and institutional factors—government funding, government affiliation, foundation funding, and peer collaborations—connects to eNGO advocacy investment and tactical choices.

Based on the data analyses of an original nationwide survey of 267 eNGOs and semistructured interviews with 30, we found that eNGOs with more government funding are likely to invest more in advocacy. However, this does not necessarily lead to more use of either insider or outsider tactics. The hierarchical nature of bureaucracy and NGO leaders' sense of uncertainty about the political environment are possible explanations. In addition, compared with civic eNGOs, GONGOs devote more effort to policy advocacy because they are considered more trustworthy by government officials. As the percentage of government funding increases, civic eNGOs' use of both insider and outsider tactics increases more than that of GONGOs. Moreover, foundations' grantmaking criteria discourage NGOs' advocacy investment and tactics. Lastly, peer collaborations enhance NGOs' organizational capacity and collective influence and thus are positively related to their policy advocacy.

Overall, our study suggests that a particular interpretation of resource dependence theory—that government funding suppresses advocacy—does not work in China. Rather, our study supports what most empirical studies in the advocacy literature suggest:

nonprofits' efforts to manage their resource environment are the driving force for advocacy investment. Our study also shows that the authoritarian setting in China has shaped foundation funding priorities and strategies in such ways that they have a dampening effect on NGO advocacy. This is consistent with the arguments in the Western literature that foundations discourage policy advocacy.

The authoritarian setting in China has shaped foundation funding priorities and strategies in such ways that they have a dampening effect on NGO advocacy.

More importantly, the study shows how institutional environments shape the development and activities of the nonprofit sector (Smith and Grønberg 2006). Under extreme versions of authoritarianism, a political regime may seek to destroy civil society by closing off institutional opportunities for individuals and social groups to organize for mutual benefits and common political purposes (Scott 1998). However, as exemplified by the case of China, many authoritarian regimes in the contemporary world have adopted a softer approach; they allow for a limited development of civil society but use various means to strictly control it. In order to survive and grow, NGOs in these regimes must navigate a government-

dominated institutional environment (Zhan and Tang 2016). NGOs seek to engage in policy advocacy, but they strategize in response to the types and intensities of pressure they face from the institutional environments.

Specifically, government affiliation signals institutional benefits and legitimacy. Thus, compared with civic eNGOs, GONGOs invest more in policy advocacy. Government affiliation also interacts with government funding to affect advocacy tactics. Therefore, government affiliation is an important institutional variable. As NGOs in the West are seldom formally affiliated with the government, and the discussions on GONGOs and civic NGOs in authoritarian states are often isolated, our study opens up a new venue of research.

Even though the distinction between insider and outsider tactics is an important issue in the Western literature, in the context of China, at least in its current stage of development, the distinction seems to be less important in some respects than others. For example, if the key concern is about how to avoid political trouble, an eNGO will likely steer away from both insider and outsider tactics. If foundations want it to stay away from political trouble as a condition for funding, an eNGO is likely to avoid using insider and outsider tactics, both of which carry some political risk. In relation to government affiliation and government funding, the issue is less about avoiding political trouble and more about gaining government approval and building capacity to participate in the policy process. In this respect, the distinction between insider tactics and outsider tactics becomes more important; for example, as our empirical analysis shows, as government funding increases, civic eNGOs' use of insider tactics increases more than that of GONGOs.

Our study adds to the emerging discussion on collaborative networks and shows that in an inhospitable political and institutional environment in which information acquisition is difficult and overall NGO capabilities are low (Wang 2016), collaborations help mitigate resource barriers and build mobilization capacity, leading to more policy advocacy.

Conclusion

This article has examined potentially key elements for a theory of NGO policy advocacy under authoritarianism. It analyzes how government funding, government affiliation, foundation funding, and peer collaboration affect the way Chinese eNGOs manage resource dependencies and political risks. It also shows the limitations of using exclusively a narrow interpretation of resource dependence theory to understand NGO advocacy under authoritarianism. While resource considerations may shape advocacy investment, political and institutional pressures often play a more significant role in shaping NGO advocacy tactics in such a setting.

The study carries important policy implications. First, NGOs can play a role in facilitating peaceful transitions of authoritarian regimes. Government officials in these transitional regimes need

to realize that social and political landscapes are changing, and the old system may not be able to cope with many emergent challenges. A vibrant civil society is not a threat to the party-state but rather a bridge between government and society. Allowing more NGOs to operate and giving them more support are reasonable strategies for improving governance. Second, no matter whether they are international or domestic, foundations operating under authoritarianism must be careful to avoid political trouble. It is difficult to expect them to turn suddenly to supporting highly politically sensitive issues. Yet within the existing political constraints, foundations may still play a more active role as change agent, especially by building NGO capacity through the strategic use of multiyear grants and provision of more generous overheads to deserving NGOs. Lastly, NGOs themselves need to pay special attention to building internal organizational capacity and external channels for participating in the policy process.

These are no easy tasks, especially in the authoritarian context of China, in which some kinds of government affiliation and support have always been key factors for policy advocacy. Yet there has been increasing evidence suggesting that NGOs may be able to leverage collaborative efforts among themselves as a way to enhance their overall engagement in policy investment and advocacy. Further exploration, however, is needed to determine what types of peer NGO collaborations are feasible in China's authoritarian context and more efficacious in its policy process.

The study has several limitations. First of all, the quantitative analyses of this study were mainly drawn from a survey, which may result in self-reporting and common-source biases (Groves et al. 2009). Another limitation is that our study focuses exclusively on environmental NGOs, and one may wonder whether these groups are representative of the whole nonprofit sector in China. We share this concern, but we believe that as the leading civil society groups in China, the political and institutional environment eNGOs are facing as well as the difficulties they are encountering are similar to NGOs in other fields. Nevertheless, future research may study NGOs in other policy fields and examine how resource and institutional considerations affect their advocacy behavior. In addition, cross-national comparisons are needed to examine how variations in political regime features affect NGO advocacy.

As the data are cross-sectional, we are unable to capture change in the institutional contexts and in the development of the NGO

sector over time and cannot claim causality. For future research, it is better to build a panel data set so that systematic change in eNGO advocacy and factors causing this change can be examined. Lastly, the study has focused mainly on eNGOs' advocacy investment and tactics; it did not address the efficacy of policy advocacy, that is, whether eNGOs are making a difference in the current authoritarian state. As Jenkins (2006) points out, advocacy is a question of articulating a position and mobilizing support for it, a topic different from actual influence.

For future research, we will look into the impact of NGO advocacy under authoritarianism.

While resource considerations may shape advocacy investment, political and institutional pressures often play a more significant role in shaping NGO advocacy tactics in such a setting.

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Notes

1. According to Anheier and Salamon (2006), compared with the term “nonprofit organization,” the term “NGO” is a narrower concept mostly used in the developing world. It denotes a more conflictual view of NGOs, which are often seen as vehicles for organizing citizen protests against power elites. In this article, we use the term “nonprofit” in the Western context and the term “NGO” in non-Western contexts.
2. The four types of NGOs that are exempted from having a sponsor agency are industry associations, science and technology organizations, charities, and community service organizations.
3. Available statistics only report the overall trend of the NGO sector as a whole, without detailed breakdowns into different fields. The numbers we reported here are the best we could find.
4. Outsider tactics refer to those involving such mild activities as information dissemination and coordinated efforts with other organizations; overt oppositional activities are not included because these are the activities that eNGOs seek to consciously avoid (Ho 2007).
5. Since the 1990s, led by the slogan “small government, big society,” the Chinese government has initiated extensive reform efforts to restructure government bureaucracy and reshape state–society relations. One of the efforts was to turn GONGOs into self-financing, private nonprofit organizations. As a result, many GONGOs have become more autonomous in financial and personnel arrangements.
6. The China Development Brief was founded in 1996. It serves as a support center to NGOs, foundations, and researchers, providing communication, research, and networking opportunities to NGO practitioners. The All-China Environmental Federation is a GONGO that focuses on environmental protection. It was founded in 2005, and its supervising agency is the Ministry of Environmental Protection. This organization compiled a list of eNGOs in 2008. We obtained this list through personal connection.
7. First, we classified respondents into four tiers of positions (top management, administrative, staff, and part-time level). In general, we considered the responses from those with a higher position to be more credible. Second, we compared the responses by examining their answers to basic organizational attributes. If two responses were consistent according to the foregoing criteria, we chose the one with more complete answers (with few or no missing data); if the responses were inconsistent, we checked the organization online and chose the one that was more consistent with the online information. Third, we examined the answers to several open questions. Compared with those with no answers or very short responses, questionnaires with longer responses to open questions were retained. If all the above criteria did not work, we followed up with eNGO leaders by phone.
8. Most of the previous studies on nonprofit policy advocacy treated government funding as a binary variable and examined whether the presence/absence of government funding affects policy advocacy. Here, our measure of government funding is a ratio because we thought it might be more interesting to look at the

dependence of government funding on policy advocacy. Nonetheless, we did follow the previous studies and examined the effect of government funding as a dummy variable. We found that holding other variables constant, eNGOs with government funding invest more in policy advocacy ($\beta = .46, p < .01$) compared with those without such support. In addition, government funding as a binary variable is positively associated with eNGOs’ use of insider and outsider tactics ($\beta = .68, p < .001$; $\beta = .38, p < .01$). These results are consistent with what the Western literature finds. Our findings here—that government funding as a continuous variable is positively associated with eNGOs’ advocacy investment but does not have a definite effect on tactical choices—is more interesting given the restrictive nature of the authoritarian context.

9. As two distinct types of NGOs in China, GONGOs and civic NGOs exhibit different characteristics. According to our sample, GONGOs on average are older than civic eNGOs. Their average ages are 14.31 and 9.83, respectively. GONGOs often have more staff than civic eNGOs. On average, for a typical GONGO, 28 percent of its funding comes from government support, whereas for a typical civic eNGO, 15 percent of its funding is from the government.
10. The Heckman selection models may seem appropriate for our research because one presumably should first determine factors affecting whether or not eNGOs engage in advocacy and then examine why they invest in advocacy and use tactics differently. However, this analytic technique is not a good fit here because (1) sample selection is not a serious issue in our data, meaning that policy advocacy (which is defined broadly) is a popular practice among eNGOs, and (2) the variables affecting whether eNGOs engage in advocacy as well as why they invest in advocacy and select tactics differently are almost the same, making the selection equation and the outcome equation almost identical. Nonetheless, we tried the selection models and found that the selection model and the outcome model are not significantly different. This justifies that the Heckman selection models are not appropriate with our data.
11. We also ran regressions with centered variables. The correlation table shows that the correlation between government affiliation and the interaction term is much smaller ($r = 0.19$), but the correlation between government funding and the interaction term remains high ($r = 0.79$). The regression results are similar to the ones with un-centered variables except that the coefficients for government affiliation and intercepts are different. Also, no matter whether we center or not, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) are both below 2, suggesting that multicollinearity should not be a major concern.

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Supporting Information

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