must define and articulate the subjective scope of its obligation—whose interests ought to be given consideration. In all cases, equal consideration of interest must not be designed discriminatorily. Boggio has, however, argued that "if a distributive justice checklist is not realistic, each direction to exclude potential recipients from enjoying health development programs must be justified anytime it is made."[39] To justify these decisions, an ethically informed deliberative process that follows the conditions analyzed above will metamorphose into an ethically acceptable decision which will enable international organizations to discharge their moral duty toward Africa.

Conclusion

International organizations are moral actors that have specific moral obligations which maximize the wellbeing particularly, but not exclusively, of Africans who are living in conditions of poverty and health deprivation. We have shown that two moral principles, notably, beneficence and justice, ought to guide international organizations in discharging their moral duties. This ethically-based deliberative space differs from the existing decision-making arrangements which are predominantly technical or political. An ethically-based deliberative space expands the policy horizon by considering value judgments that are based on technical and political choices. Judgment based on technical efficiencies or political opportunities is incomplete, and values, whether based on culture, beliefs, ideologies or interest, must not be submerged within technical conclusions. This is because, value judgments speak about what people hold as important to them, that is, the attainment of wellbeing. It, therefore, goes without saying that an ethically grounded approach brings values to the surface and enables decision makers to access empirical evidence. In the final analysis, international organizations must address their moral leadership in resolving poverty and health deprivation in Africa, and ethics is the ideal, intellectual and political space for deliberating and justifying actions that ultimately lead to improving the wellbeing of those who need it the most, especially in Africa. ☑

Reference # 55J-2014-01-02-01

[39] Andrea Boggio (2009), "Health and Development: An Ethics Perspective", in Anna Ghatti and Andrea Boggio (Ed.), *Health and Development: Toward a Matrix Approach*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Activism with Chinese Characteristics: Navigating the Sloping, Uncertain Terrain of Civil Society in China

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This paper examines the behavior of NGO activists in China who work on HIV-AIDS and the environment. It finds one major difference: AIDS activists sometimes use a rights-based discourse that upsets the party-state, while environmentalists focus on advancing the agenda of the central government. But the paper notes that activists in both camps tend to police their behavior. They operate in a civil society characterized by political hierarchy and legal uncertainty. They try to gain the benefits that flow from the top of the pyramidal structure in which they operate and avoid the unpredictable punishment heaped upon those who step out of line.

There was, for many years, a vigorous debate among scholars about the nature of civil society in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Is it robust and relatively autonomous? Or is it cowed and controlled by the communist party-state?

Optimists argued that the party-state does not just tolerate but actually encourages civic engagement.[1] Specifically, they trumpeted the dramatic proliferation of organizations outside the established bureaucracy to promote and help carry out different policies. In 1988, the Chinese party-state reported that there were fewer than 4,500 'social organizations' registered to operate in that country; nearly two-and-a-half decades later, in 2012, there were 492,000. This includes three subcategories: social groups (*shehui tuanti*, of which there were 268,000), civil non-enterprise institutions (*minban fei qiye danwei;* 221,000), and foundations (*jijinhui;* about 3,000); but it does not include the many NGOs that are legally registered as

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[1] Ming Wang and Liu Qiushi ("Analyzing China's NGO Development System", *China Nonprofit Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009, pp. 5-35) represent this optimistic viewpoint. They use Habermasian language in pointing to "a continuous expansion of the public sphere" (p. 13) and "an enthusiasm for social participation in civic affairs, which is at an all-time high" (p. 16). Shawn Shieh ("Is China's Civil Society in Danger?" Posted in NGOs in China: A Blog About Developments in the Nongovernmental, Nonprofit, Charity Sector, available at http://ngochina.blogspot.com/2011/05/is-chinas-civil-society-in-danger.html, 2011) echoes this, describing China's civil society as an expanding iceberg "where only a small portion is visible." The tip protruding from the water is occupied by a small number of risk-taking activists who get all the attention, including negative attention from authorities. "Below the surface lie other activists and groups, including many NGOs, which carry out their work in relative anonymity within the boundaries permitted by the state."

businesses, or the significant (but contested) number of unregistered, truly grassroots organizations.[2]

Pessimists, on the other hand, focused on the fact that many of China's NGOs are actually 'GONGOs', Governmentally Organized Non-Governmental Organizations under the thumb of state agencies and party officials.[3] Although they are being relaxed in pilot programs in designated jurisdictions, the rules for civic activism generally remain quite restrictive. To operate legally, NGOs must not only register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), they also must obtain a government-affiliated sponsor (*guakao danwei*), a so-called 'mother-in-law', which is then responsible for the NGO's behavior. In addition, groups can only register with the local MCA bureau in the jurisdiction where they are based, thereby prohibiting affiliations across geographic regions.

More recently, a consensus seems to have emerged, one that appears to split the difference between optimists and pessimists. Ho and Edmonds[4], building on the work of Baum and Shevchenko, argue persuasively that state and society in China are mutually embedded; that is, their spheres are not distinct and separate, but actually overlap.[5] Likewise, Spires[6] and Saich[7], following Shue[8], wisely reject the claim that Chinese state-society relations represent a zero-sum game in which society must be

[2] For statistics on registered 'social organizations', see Ministry of Civil Affairs (2013), *Zhongguo Minzheng Tongji Nianjian 2012* (*China Civil Affairs Statistical Yearbook for 2012*), China Statistics Press, Beijing. Estimates on the number of unregistered groups range from a low of about 2,000 [see J Anthony Spires, Lin Tao and Kin-man Chan (Forthcoming in 2014), "Societal Support for China's Grassroots NGOs: Evidence from Yunnan, Guangdong, and Beijing", *The China Journal*, Vol. 71 (January)] to a high of about 11 million [see Jian Chen (2009), "Thoughts on Comparative Civil Society Evaluation Indices Based on China's Conditions", *China Nonprofit Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 69].

[3] J Elizabeth Perry ("Studying Chinese Politics: Farewell to Revolution?, *The China Journal*, No. 57, January, p. 21) is a pessimist who argues that the authoritarian party-state continues to shape the contours of public discourse and civic engagement in contemporary China. Citizens are encouraged to speak up, to play a significant role in society, "so long as they play by the official rules of the game." Xiaoguang Kang and Han Heng ("Graduated Controls: The State-Society Relationship in Contemporary China", *Modern China*, Vol. 34, No. 1, January, 2008, p. 51) agree that the Chinese party-state "dominates in the distribution of power ... so that it controls all of the public sphere and monopolizes all resources for collective action." But they acknowledge that the party-state uses 'graduated controls', loosening its grip on social organizations that share the government's agenda.

[4] P Ho and R L Edmonds (Eds.) (2008), *China's Embedded Activism, Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement*, Routledge, London.

[5] Baum Richard and Alexei Shevchenko ("The 'State of the State", in Goldman and MacFarquhar (Eds.), *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*, pp. 333-360, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999) earlier made this claim.

[6] Anthony J Spires (2011), "Contingent Symbiosis and Civil Society in an Authoritarian State: Understanding the Survival of China's Grassroots NGOs", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 117, No. 1, July, pp. 1-45.

[7] Tony Saich (2006), "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China", in Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu (Eds.), *China's Deep Reform: Domestic Politics in Transition*, pp. 285-301, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

[8] Vivienne Shue (1994), "State Power and Social Organization in China", in Joel Samuel Migdal, Atul Kohli and Vivienne Shue (Eds.), *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, pp. 65-88, Cambridge University Press, New York.

weak, by definition, when the party-state is strong.[9] In other words, observers now generally agree that civil society has become a vital force in China—even as it remains constrained by its complex ties with an authoritarian regime.

This breakthrough is welcome, but not analytically conclusive. In fact, it begs a more practical set of questions: How do NGO activists actually operate in such an entwined, overlapping system of state-society relations? That is, how freely or aggressively can they really advocate for the issues they care about?

Over the past six years, I have tried to answer this question by tracking a large number of Chinese organizations and interviewing dozens of their leaders and rank-and-file members. What I found is that the NGO community effectively polices itself in an environment characterized by political hierarchy and legal uncertainty.

The concept of 'political hierarchy' is used here to suggest that civil society in China is shaped like a pyramid with one parastatal organization at the top of each policy arena, a modest number of mid-sized GONGOs in the middle, and a large number of small, grassroots organizations at the bottom. Resources, including funding and information, tend to flow from the top to the bottom, through the pyramid structure of the NGO community in that issue area. This cultivates dependence on organizations and individuals with greater power, and tends to encourage conformity with the government's values. We might imagine that unregistered organizations at the bottom of the pyramid enjoy greater independence, but Hildebrandt (p. 982)[10] smartly counsels us to think again: They "are actually easier to control and will abide by the wishes of the government largely because they occupy a legal gray area. As such, they are even more dependent upon good relations than registered groups."

The party-state has taken pains to shape civil society in this top-down manner. For example, it prohibits any NGO from registering if a 'similar' organization already has set up shop in a particular jurisdiction. This ensures that organizations approved by the party-state enjoy unrivaled authority in their field. In addition, since 2010, the government has required NGOs to turn over notarized paperwork to their local bank before receiving any foreign funds. Although some have found ways to circumvent the new rule, many small groups have been handicapped by the party-state's effort to more carefully manage the flow of financial resources.[11]

[9] Although the line between state and society in the PRC may be especially fuzzy or porous, 'positive sum' relations between these entities are not uncommon. Lester M Salamon, for example, suggests that, in the tumultuous years following the US Civil War, Americans turned, for pragmatic reasons, to groups in the private sector to help carry out services that the public sector typically would provide: "Instead of a rigidly demarcated nonprofit sphere, what existed was an easy-going blending of public and private action ..." See Lester M Salamon (1996), "Defining the Non-Profit Sector: The United States", Working Paper for the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, p. 4.

[10] Timothy Hildebrandt (2011), "The Political Economy of Social Organization Registration in China", *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 208, December, pp. 970-989.

[11] Meg Davis has written about this: http://asiacatalyst.org/blog/2010/06/chinas-new-nonprofit-regulations-season-of-instability.html

By 'legal uncertainty', I mean that the party-state never explicitly spells out rules of acceptable behavior, allowing it to strike—like Link's[12] "anaconda in the chandelier"—in somewhat unpredictable and often harsh ways against those who cross the unmarked line. The following is just a brief sample of some of the many recent cases of punitive action by the party-state:

- In 2007, the government shut down two publications devoted to publicizing and promoting the activities of grassroots organizations. It accused the editor of the Beijing-based *China Development Brief* of carrying out 'unauthorized surveys'.[13] And it claimed that *Minjian* (Civil Society), published in Guangzhou, was not properly licensed.[14]
- In 2009 and 2010, authorities cracked down on three legal aid NGOs: Gongmeng (Open Constitution Initiative), which had criticized the government's policy toward Tibet; Yirenping ("Public Welfare, Kindness, Equality"), which has fought to curb discrimination, especially against people with Hepatitis B; and the Women's Legal Research and Services Center, which has provided assistance to victims of domestic violence and workplace harassment. They fined Gongmeng 1.46 mn RMB (about $237,000) for allegedly violating tax regulations, and jailed its founder on charges of tax evasion.[15] In a raid, local officials accused Yirenping of publishing without authorization.[16] And Beijing University suddenly withdrew its sponsorship of the Women's Legal Center, effectively shuttering that operation.[17]
- In 2012, local officials coordinated a campaign of harassment against 10 different labor NGOs in Shenzhen, where migrant workers have been trying to claim and defend their workplace rights. The campaign included a range of activities, from stepped up fire inspections to water and power shut-offs, from landlord evictions to mob violence.[18]

[12] Perry Link (2002), "The Anaconda in the Chandelier: Censorship in China Today", *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 49, No. 6, April 11.

[13] See the report from Nick Young available at http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/508

[14] In an 18-page letter e-mailed to supporters in November 2007, Editor Zhai Minglei explained that authorities deemed that *Minjian* was a threat to autocratic rule. "The sirens should be sounded," he wrote. "In every nation with freedom of the press, licensing is used solely for the purpose of recordkeeping. Only in China has licensing become an instrument of censorship and control, so that even internal printing requires a certificate with official approval ... The government's eye glares in every corner where information freedoms are concerned in China." One translation of Zhai's letter (by David Bandurski) was posted on the website of IHLO: http://www.ihlo.org/LRC/W/051207.html

[15] Michael Wines (2009), "Chinese Public-Interest Lawyer Charged Amid Crackdown", *New York Times*, August 18.

[16] Verna Yu (2009), "China's NGOs Fear for the Worst", *Asia Times*, August 15, available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/KH15Ad01.html

[17] Shawn Shieh (2010), "Peking University Women's Legal Aid Center Loses Its Affiliation", *NGOs in China* (a blog), April 14, available at http://ngochina.blogspot.com/2010/04/peking-university-womens-legal-aid.html

[18] Deng Jingyin (2012), "Forced to Close, NGOs Win Sympathy", *Global Times*, September 12, available at http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/732102.shtml

In each of these cases, as well as many other quite similar cases, the targeted activists did not know they had crossed a line demarcating permissible from impermissible behavior—until, that is, the party-state punished them. In other words, they were not engaging in deliberately provocative acts such as the Charter 08 initiative that challenged the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party. They were, for the most part, simply trying to do their work in a system without clearly articulated rules of conduct.

But once the party-state intervenes, the diffusion of information tends to follow a fairly clear or predictable pattern. The story of the discipline, or what Stern and Hassid[19] aptly call the 'control parable', is told and retold across the various nodes in the network of civil society, producing anxiety and sometimes fear. Whenever they hear a new story, activists try to tease out the appropriate lessons, remapping in their own minds the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable activity. The effect is also predictable: agents in civil society pull back or restrain themselves, and encourage others to do the same, so as to avoid recrimination.

By shifting the burden of control onto the activists themselves, the party-state obviously saves itself time and money. Most importantly, though, the outsourcing of police enforcement allows the government to preserve its own political capital and legitimacy. "Instead of criticizing top leaders or the CCP, control parables usually attribute repression to obstructionist local cadres or hold participants responsible for the consequences of their own actions," according to Stern and Hassid.[20]

This paper documents the various ways in which activists navigate the uncertain terrain and pyramidal structure of civil society in China. It concludes that these different institutional conditions have fostered a more collaborative (or, for want of a better term, 'Chinese') as opposed to a more adversarial (or what we might consider an ideal-typical 'Western') style of activism. My research is based not only on a review of publications by Chinese government agencies and academic institutions that monitor civil society, but—more importantly—on structured interviews with representatives of 12 different HIV-AIDS groups and 12 different environmental groups over several years, starting in 2007. I usually spoke with more than one representative of each organization and generally followed up with sources at least once, if not two or three times, over the span of six years. And I tried to use these meetings to build roughly equivalent case studies, interviewing activists at each level of the pyramid in both issue areas: parastatal groups, GONGOs and smaller, unregistered NGOs.

Although the NGOs in the AIDS and environmental fields have been around longer, and thus have had a greater impact on public policy than probably any other set of Chinese organizations, they have had different experiences along the way.

[19] Rachel E Stern and Jonahan Hassid (2012), "Amplifying Silence: Uncertainty and Control Parables in China", *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 10, pp. 1230-1254.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 1243.

Because they deal with victims of discrimination and social marginalization, HIV-AIDS activists sometimes resort to a rights-based discourse that is implicitly confrontational, putting them at loggerheads with the party-state. Environmental activists, by contrast, are less inclined to use a rights-based discourse. Instead, they tend to trumpet existing rules designed to conserve resources and curb pollution—an approach that makes them more natural allies of the central government.[21]

However, the pyramidal structure and legal uncertainty of China's active but authoritarian civil society have shaped a common set of expectations in the two camps. Most AIDS and environmental activists have learned to follow the top-down structure of power in civil society. They have learned, in other words, to 'line up', or take their place in a system of relational (or *guanxi*) ties that link them, vertically and often through intermediaries, to the party-state. In addition, they have learned to follow the shifting signals of the party-state on acceptable language and behavior. For example, most activists today do not organize across geographic regions or policy issue-areas, and do not explicitly criticize central government policy.

One caveat is in order here: As noted by Sun and Zhao[22], the party-state, like civil society, is highly organized, but not monolithic, and its divisions create opportunities for activists. This is especially true in the environmental arena. Local governments, eager to expand their revenue base by attracting new development, sometimes have interests that compete directly with those of the central government, which wants to curb pollution while also maintaining economic growth. So environmental NGOs occasionally find themselves allied with the central government against local governments that are reluctant to enforce antipollution rules. Although this is less true in the HIV-AIDS field, we do occasionally find a division between central and local governments over prevention policies.

Let us turn, then, to a discussion of various HIV-AIDS organizations, and then move to a corresponding set of observations about environmental groups. To protect them from reprisal, I use an anonymous coding system to identify most of the activists and their NGOs; a few individuals have given me permission to use their names, and the GONGOs and parastatal groups mentioned here obviously face no threat. I conclude with an analysis of 'Chinese-style' activism based on these case studies.

HIV-AIDS

At the top of the pyramid in this policy arena is the Chinese Association of STD and AIDS Prevention and Control (CASAPC), a GONGO created in 1993. Its founding

[21] Environmental NGO activists should not be confused with local (mostly rural) residents increasingly participating in violent, unorganized protests against projects jeopardizing their communities. Unlike the former, who shun rights-based discourse, the latter have embraced it. To understand the local protests, see Jun Jing (2010), "Environmental Protests in Rural China", in Elizabeth J Perry and Mark Selden (Eds.), *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, pp. 197-214, Abingdon, Routledge, UK. Natasha Gilbert ("Green Protests on the Rise in China", *Nature*, August 4, 2012) notes that these environmental protests have begun to spread from rural to urban communities.

[22] Yanfei Sun and Dingxin Zhao (2008), "Environmental Campaigns", in Kevin J O'Brien (Ed.), *Popular Protest in China*, pp. 144-162, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

chairman was Qian Xinzhong, a CCP leader and former Minister of Health, and its longtime (but now retired) president was Dai Zhicheng, director of disease control for the ministry for 11 years before moving to head up the organization.[23] The organization takes its marching orders from the government's National Center for AIDS/STD Prevention and Control (NCAIDS), itself an offshoot of the Ministry of the Health. As I discuss below, CASAPC has tried to coordinate the civil society work in this field by lending technical and financial support to groups on lower rungs of the pyramid. According to Li *et al.*[24] (p. ii69), the lead GONGO "has been playing a financial management role in 'passing through' funding to unregistered" organizations in the field, while also providing them with 'capacity building' and other forms of assistance.

One of several 'second tier' organizations closely aligned with the party-state is The Home of the Red Ribbon, an AIDS counseling and education center based in Beijing's Ditan Hospital. When I first toured the center in 2007, I encountered an entire wall decorated with a patchwork of pictures reflecting various influences. There was, for example, a snapshot of then-Premier Wen Jiabao during an official visit in 2003, when he urged the staff to register the center as an NGO, which they did the following year. (It previously had been just a wing of the hospital for AIDS patients.) There was a photo of center director Wang Kerong, dressed in her nurse's uniform, with a hammer and sickle in the background. And there was a painting of Jesus Christ.

In a government-run hospital inside an officially atheist country, I suppose I least expected to see Jesus pinned to a wall. But then I quickly discovered that two of the center's most active volunteers were Catholic nuns. Sister Ma and Sister Zha sat through an interview conducted at the center in 2007, as did Han Zhing, the head of the hospital's Community Party Youth League. For all of them, the confluence of Communism and Catholicism was absolutely unremarkable; indeed, it was as natural as rice and stir-fried vegetables. "We do good work, and it is supported by the church and the government," Wang Kerong told me.[25]

The Home of the Red Ribbon relies heavily on international donors, especially the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which supplies more than half of its total budget. It also has garnered support from Martin Gordon, a wealthy

[23] See Yiyi Lu (2009), *Non-Governmental Organizations in China: The Rise of Dependent Autonomy*, p. 71, Routledge, London. Also see CASAPC Annual Reports (especially 2004), available at http://www.aids.org.cn/

[24] Hui Li *et al.* (2010), "From Spectators to Implementers: Civil Society Organizations Involved in AIDS Programmes in China", *International Journal of Epidemiology,* Vol. 39, December, pp. ii65-ii71.

[25] Interview with the author, July 11, 2007, Beijing. I asked her to tell me a story about the center's work, a story that still generates a sense of accomplishment and pride. Wang told me about a client, an AIDS patient who let it be known that he planned to commit suicide. Wang said she tried to call him, but he wouldn't answer his cell phone. So she texted him, and offered to drive him to Henan Province to see how AIDS patients there are managing to live. If, after making the trip, he still wanted to kill himself, Wang told him she would not try to stop him. They went to Henan together, and the young man changed his mind. "He decided he wanted to live."

philanthropist from the UK who provides an annual donation, as well as the government of Sweden. (Photos of Gordon and the queen of Sweden helped adorn the picture wall at the center.) Gaining greater access to foreign funds was, according to Wang, a major motivation for government officials who pressed the hospital to turn the center into an NGO.

Wang unabashedly acknowledged the center's place in the AIDS pyramid. She used the term 'GONGO' to characterize it: "We are an extension of the government. Our boss is the Beijing Health Bureau," a local unit of the Ministry of Health, "which monitors and administers our program." She could not recall a single occasion in which she had butted heads with government officials over any major issue: "They never really interfere."

We discussed the party-state's record on AIDS, including the tainted blood scandal of the 1990s. During that decade, the virus spread tragically among villagers in the central plains, especially Henan Province, where poor farmers who sold their plasma to government-approved contractors, known as 'bloodheads', were subjected to grotesquely unsafe blood collection practices.[26] Wang enthusiastically defended the government, calling its use of unscrupulous contractors 'an historical error', and claiming it had rectified this mistake by carrying out good policies and compensating victims. She, as well as Han Zhing and the two Catholic nuns, initially seemed surprised when I informed them that the party-state had previously detained AIDS activists including Dr. Gao Yaojie, a prominent gynaecologist, and Wan Yanhai, the outspoken head of the Aizhixing Institute of Health Education, both of whom had helped expose the scandal in Henan. But then Wang offered a critique.

Dr. Gao, Wang said, "doesn't always see things in a balanced way." And Wan "looks at things differently than we do," she said. "Our focus is on the physical and mental health of our patients, our clients. His focus is legal rights. Aizhixing is surrounded by lawyers." Wang quickly added, however, that Home of the Red Ribbon and Aizhixing collaborate on some projects. For example, they co-sponsor a karaoke and quiz show night that helps raise money for people living with AIDs.

By the time I returned in 2009, Ditan Hospital had moved from a crowded and somewhat dilapidated complex in the capital's center to a gleaming new campus on the outskirts of town. Wang Kerong was much quieter in this second interview, preferring to defer to Xu Keyi, a professor and medical doctor who advises the Ministry

[26] In the early and mid-1990s, 'bloodhounds' extracted blood from poor farmers in rural China, pooled it with blood from dozens of other farmers, skimmed off the plasma to sell to their customers (usually drug companies), and then reinjected the remaining red blood cells back into the bodies of their commercial suppliers. This allowed the farmers to sell their blood several times in a single day, but it also exposed them to contamination. In Henan, one of China's poorest provinces, experts estimate that as many as 700,000 people became infected with HIV-AIDS. See Anna Hayes (2005), "AIDS, 'Bloodheads' and Cover-Ups: The 'ABC' of Henan's AIDS Epidemic", *Australian Quarterly: Journal of Contemporary Analysis*, Vol. 77, No. 3, pp. 12-16. Many villages became virtual ghost towns, populated only by orphaned children. [See Elisabeth Rosenthal (2002), "AIDS Scourge in Rural China Leaves Villages of Orphans", *New York Times*, August 25].

of Health and oversees all AIDS programs at the hospital. "The government must coordinate the fight against AIDS, but it can't do everything. Sometimes, we need a push" from the grassroots NGOs, he said in the new and more brightly lit center.[27] Xu offered the example of Anti-Retroviral (ARV) treatment. After being exposed for several years to the same regimen of ARV drugs, the virus in many Chinese patients began to develop a resistance. But the government was reluctant to spend the money to develop new drugs. "We're part of the government, so we had to keep quiet. It was the NGO community that made the difference by pressing the government to make the needed investment."

While Xu gave credit to Aizhixing, in particular, for leading the way on this policy change, he otherwise seemed to dismiss the group, and several other grassroots NGOs, as political lobbies representing different 'special interests'—gays, sex workers, drug users, and so on. "We don't fool around with interest group politics. We work on behalf of patients," he told me.

Aizhixing, based in Beijing, is undoubtedly the best-known grassroots NGO fighting on behalf of people living with AIDS in China. It was founded in 1994, when Wan Yanhai traded his position at a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Health for a role in advocacy. The group has tackled the issue by educating other Chinese, including officials of the party-state, promoting legal and social justice for victims, and exposing unsound policies and unsafe practices. Indeed, it was instrumental in publicizing the crisis in Henan. Global donors such as the Open Society Institute were impressed by the group's pluck and showered it with donations. Over time, Aizhixing grew larger and stronger, emerging as a benefactor, both financially and organizationally, for smaller and poorly endowed AIDS organizations. But over the same period, it also emerged as a target of the party-state. Wan was detained numerous times—sometimes for a couple of days, sometimes for a couple of weeks. The office of Aizhixing ('Love, Knowledge, Action') was subjected to a seemingly endless series of visits from different arms of the party-state—the tax office, the commerce and industry bureau, the fire department, all looking for a reason to restrict the group's activities.

I first met Wan in December 2002, when he was a Fulbright scholar in the United States. Although he had spent nearly a month in detention that fall for allegedly divulging state secrets, he retained a boyish appearance. By the time I met him again in Beijing in July 2007, Wan looked much older. He said he also had become much wiser: "We are much less independent today than we used to be. You could even call us a GONGO. My goal now is security, not independence. I have become quieter, more cautious, in order to survive."[28]

[27] Interview with the author, August 10, 2009, Beijing.

[28] Interview with the author, July 11, 2007, Beijing.

When I repeated this comment to others in the fractious family of HIV-AIDS NGOs, they laughed. A lightening rod for criticism from not only a conservative party-state, but also from stodgier members of the community, Wan may be constitutionally incapable of being quiet or cautious. He is a 'Western-style' activist: unabashedly outspoken. And Aizhixing is as far from being a GONGO as any group in China could be. Despite his pledge to 'toe the line', Wan continued to fight hard on behalf of people with AIDS, especially those who had contracted the disease due to government malfeasance. During my 2007 visit to Aizhixing, I met a dozen of the hundreds of such victims receiving shelter, food and legal assistance from the group. Poor farmers from Xuzhou in Jiangsu Province, these men and women had become infected with HIV while receiving medically unnecessary blood transfusions at a public hospital. All indicated they had been subjected to severe discrimination—including, in several cases, outright ostracism—from fearful neighbors. Three of them did appear quite sickly. Unable to receive any help from local officials, whom they blamed for their misfortune, they had traveled thousands of miles to Beijing to petition the central government. Between tears, one of the rural women expressed her gratitude to Aizhixing: "We had nowhere else to go."

Two years later, in August 2009, I revisited Wan in Beijing. He was clearly fed up—with the party-state, with international organizations such as UNAIDS, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Global Fund, as well as many of his colleagues in China's NGO community. Among other things, he complained bitterly that these different groups had conspired to limit the role of genuine grassroots organizations in China's 'country plan' to use international funds to combat aids. "The system has become slow, stupid, and rude," he told me. "It does not work well with groups like ours that are firmly rooted in the community, groups that represent some of the most despised, some of the most vulnerable people in all of China. We stand up for them, and so we tend to stand out."[29]

Personified by its founder, Aizhixing does indeed stand out. In the vast community of grassroots organizations working on the AIDS problem in China, one tends to be either pro-Wan or anti-Wan. This roughly equates to being antigovernment or pro-government. A US-based human rights activist who worked for many years in this divided community called it a "sharks versus jets sort of thing," with pro-government and anti-Wan groups locked in near-mortal combat with antigovernment and pro-Wan groups over legitimacy and resources.[30] Let me introduce you to the two sides of this community, which comprises the bottom of the AIDS policy pyramid in China.

A is one of many activists trained and mobilized by Aizhixing. He was imprisoned in September 2010 for confronting an official in a mostly rural province of central China, where he, as a nine-year old, contracted HIV from a blood transfusion. In a fit of anger, A pushed office equipment reportedly worth $750 off the official's desk.

[29] Interview with the author, August 10, 2009, Beijing.

[30] Telephone interview, August 31, 2009.

But the young activist had attracted the attention of the government for many years before that incident. He had petitioned local officials for compensation in his case, and had demanded better treatment for other AIDS victims as well. In 2009, he called on the National Peoples Congress, the closest thing to a deliberative body in China, to appoint people with HIV/AIDS to serve as representatives. These efforts brought harassment, house arrest, and detention. A year before his arrest for property damage, A speculated that "the government considers me a troublemaker and a source of possible unrest in society."[31] He blamed the party-state for 'indifference and hostility' in the face of a growing AIDS crisis in China, and accused it of engaging in 'lawless' behavior. "The government does not view itself as a public servant but more as a ruler. It refuses to live in equality with civil society, but insists on controlling and commanding it."

And then there is B, an advocate for male sex workers in southeast China. Although his organization represents some of China's most socially marginalized citizens, it avoids confrontational discourse and behavior about AIDS. For example, B's group will not organize demonstrations in front of party or state offices. And it will not carry out activities at what he called 'sensitive times', such as June 4th (the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989). "We try to keep our heads down," he explained, seated before a conference table adorned with an ashtray in the shape of a large penis.[32]

B is a reformer who thinks a moderate approach is the best way to advance the interests of people living with AIDS and people in jeopardy of contracting AIDS, like sex workers. "For us, this is a long march" toward civil rights and social justice, he offered. "We have to move slowly. It would be rather easy for the government to shut us down. And if they managed to do that, we couldn't provide services to people in need."

B's organization is small; it has only three full-time employees. Although it does not have a government sponsor and thus is not officially recognized as a "social organization," it is registered as a commercial enterprise. B says he has reached a kind of 'social compact' with the party-state; he now has a number of contracts with public universities and agencies. "The government doesn't want to acknowledge that there are thousands of sex workers in China, so they like it when we keep a low profile. But they also realize we do valuable work—encouraging people to get tested, providing the names of helpful clinics and doctors, handing out brochures with information on how to protect yourself so that you don't contract the virus. Because we do work that saves lives, the government tolerates us, and maybe even appreciates us."

[31] Interview with Qin Yiyuan, Research Assistant, August 20, 2009, Beijing.

[32] Interview with the author, August 13, 2009, Shanghai.

Between A and B are numerous grassroots groups that try to avoid taking sides. In Xi'an, an inland center and ancient capital of China, I met the leader of one such organization. C became infected with the virus when he was a soldier in the People's Liberation Army. Several years later, when he began to meet others struggling with the disease, he decided to create a local group to advocate on behalf of HIV-positive patients and provide information about AIDS via brochures, a telephone hotline, and even theatrical productions.

Like B's organization, C's is small (also three employees). And it too is not registered as a social organization because it cannot find a government agency willing to sponsor it. But unlike B's group, it is not registered as a commercial enterprise because it cannot afford to pay the required taxes. For a long time, this spelled trouble. C told me how he once tried to hold an educational workshop in a Shaanxi village, where some rural farmers had contracted AIDS and others feared they might. Local government officials refused to issue a permit, and even warned villagers not to attend the workshop. "They told everyone we wanted to sell their blood," recalled C.[33] In the end, he had to pay off local government officials before they would authorize the workshop. On another occasion, he had to pay a fee to a government official who had been dispatched to monitor the organization's various activities.

The party-state, he said, continues to harass the organization, but not as routinely—nor as severely—as before. "We have earned the trust of local people, so we don't depend on the government anymore for help with introductions, with opening doors." Indeed, as C's group has attracted more and more support from international donors, the balance of power has shifted noticeably. "The government doesn't just put up with us. Sometimes, it even collaborates with us because it wants access to our financiers."

Li Dan is a well-known AIDS activist who has tussled with both Wan Yanhai and the party-state. In 2001, as a graduate student in astrophysics at the Chinese Academy of Science, he heard about the tainted blood scandal in Henan Province and traveled there to help families cope with the growing AIDS crisis. A year later, he returned to Beijing and served as Wan's lieutenant. But the two had a falling out, and in 2003 Li launched an independent effort to open a school—Dongzhen ("Eastern Treasures")—for AIDS orphans in Henan's Shuangmiao village.[34] Although he himself was a member of the Communist Party, the young activist faced steady and strong resistance from local officials. But he kept pushing back. When they initially thwarted his bid to register Dongzhen as a social organization, he responded by registering as a commercial enterprise instead. When officials demanded a licensing fee of 1 mn RMB (about $150,000) to open the school, he managed to raise money

[33] Interview with the author, July 14, 2007, Xi'an.

[34] For this narrative, I relied not only on my interview with the author, but also a variety of media and institutional sources. These include Sara Davis (Meg) (2005), "Restrictions on AIDS Activists in China", a Report by Human Rights Watch, available at http://www.hrw.org/reports/2005/06/14/restrictions-aids-activists-china-0

from international donors. When they forcibly shut down the school, he and other activists organized protests, petitioned the central government in Beijing, and rallied the national media to their side.

The showdown between the party-state and Dongzhen activists reached a climax in August 2004, when local authorities detained and beat Li Dan. "We learned our lesson," he told me.[35] "The media are good for fund-raising, but they also bring trouble from the government. So we decided to operate more quietly after that."

Between 2004 and 2007, when I met him in Beijing, Li Dan moved away from issue activism and toward philanthropy, social work, and education. He channeled funds from international donors to rural families impacted by HIV-AIDS, helped to build community centers and libraries in hard-hit villages, and traveled around the country to inform others about the virus and the people infected by it. In a nutshell, the group focused less on policy and more on attitudes. "If we spend all our time and energy confronting the government, we may be able to move it a centimeter or two," Li confided. "But if we use that time and energy to challenge the culture, we may able to transform Chinese society."

This new approach opened up opportunities and offered greater freedom of maneuverability, but it did not completely end the hostilities between Dongzhen and the party-state. In 2007, Li Dan was detained again for trying to bring together foreign and domestic experts in Guangzhou to discuss an evolving AIDS crisis. Authorities effectively banned the conference.

When I met him a second time in 2009, Li told me that the government continued to restrict the activities of grassroots groups like his. "They want to keep us from growing too large, too independent," he said, pressing one hand down—like a lid—over a fist.[36] But he said he no longer relished the fight. "The consequences of confrontation are just too great."

China's AIDS policy community remains divided. A few years ago, the Global Fund launched a new initiative that looked, to both the party-state and Wan Yanhai, like a big opportunity for each. It announced that it would spend millions of dollars to nurture and empower grassroots NGOs working on the AIDS issue in China. Eager to capitalize, Aizhixing began campaigning with its grassroots allies in an election to revamp the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) used to oversee the process by, among other things, spelling out the rules for capturing and using funds. But CASAPC, the GONGO at the top of the AIDS policy pyramid, persuaded the Global Fund to allow it to serve as the lead organization overseeing the program. By 2009, the number of NGOs signing up to vote in CCM elections had more than doubled.[37]

[35] Interview with the author, July 13, 2007, Beijing.

[36] Interview with the author, October 4, 2009, Waterville Maine.

[37] See Amy Gadsden (2010), "Chinese Nongovernmental Organizations: Politics by Other Means?", a Project of the American Enterprise Institute, July, available at http://www.aei.org/paper/100129

But CASAPC was also supplanting international donors as the major source of new funding for AIDS-related work.[38]

Jockeying intensified between grassroots groups supporting Wan Yanhai and moderate groups loyal to the party-state. So did the name-calling and finger-pointing. D, a Shanghai lawyer who represents HIV-positive patients as well as AIDS activists, found himself, uncomfortably, in the very center of this messy conflict. He was hired by the Chinese CCM to oversee the August 2009 elections to decide who would implement the Global Fund's Round Six project to promote civil society development in China, and he blames Wan and his allies for stirring up controversy. Wan, he said in a voice that grew increasingly agitated during this part of our interview, "thinks he is the big man on the block (in the HIV-AIDS community). Yes, he was a pioneer in this field—I'll grant him that. But now he has acquired a lot of foreign friends, and thinks he is number one. He has become arrogant and intolerant, attacking just about everyone who disagrees with him."[39]

But Wan's supporters countered that D is too cozy with the party-state. They noted he has been a legal adviser to the government, and that his NGO had been a GONGO affiliated with a public university. By contrast, D described his role in the AIDS community much more positively. "I view myself as a bridge between the grassroots organizations and the government. The two sides need each other, and quasi-governmental organizations like mine are an essential ingredient in the mix." I personally can vouch that D has close ties with the party-state. Two days after our interview, a representative of the government's Legal Affairs Bureau in Shanghai contacted me. He said D had notified him that a scholar from the US was in China asking questions about the AIDS NGO community; the government official asked me to come to his office and share my research findings. I told him I was on my way out of town, but would try to meet him on a future visit.

During the long battle over the Global Fund's project in China, the party-state maintained its pressure on Aizhixing. Local police barged into the organization's annual meeting in February 2009, demanding to see the ID of all participants. Authorities began to staunch the flow of foreign funds to grassroots organizations aligned with Wan Yanhai, first by squeezing local banks and then by promulgating new financial regulations. And they leaned on mainstream groups, including universities and other NGOs, to distance themselves from Aizhixing. By May 2010, this campaign of intimidation and harassment had reached a breaking point. Wan and his wife fled China for the United States, where he told a reporter that "the attacks from the government had become very serious for my organization and for me personally. I had concerns about my personal safety and was under a lot of stress."[40]

[38] See Li *et al.* (2010), *op. cit.*

[39] Interview with the author, August 12, 2009, Shanghai.

[40] Peter Ford (2010), "Another AIDS Activist, Wan Yanhai Flees China", *Christian Science Monitor*, May 10.

Meanwhile, the Global Fund began to question its efforts in China after auditors reported that the party-state was not honoring its pledge to pass money onto truly grassroots organizations. In November 2010, it froze payments on a $283 mn grant.[41] Although the financial pipeline thawed in September 2011, it carried only half as much money as before. Slowly but surely, CASAPC moved to cement its position at the top of the AIDS policy pyramid in China.

Environmental Organizations

I had become accustomed to meeting activists in small, dark spaces in older office buildings. So it was a shock to visit the All-China Environmental Federation (ACEF), a parastatal organization that occupies the top spot in the pyramidal structure of environmental advocacy in this rapidly growing, badly polluted country. A so-called 'mass organization' designed to ground the communist party more firmly in society (like the All-China Federation of Trade Unions or the All-China Women's Federation), ACEF is housed in a smartly renovated building in Beijing protected by security guards. A brightly lit sign welcomed me, and a smiling secretary escorted me into a large conference room. Clearly, this interview was a big deal for ACEF. The director of international cooperation introduced me to the organization with a Powerpoint presentation, and the deputy secretary general carefully answered questions while a photographer snapped photos for the group's website.

ACEF does not try to conceal the umbilical cord connecting it to the party-state. Its chairman is Song Jian, a former member of the state council who served as an advisor to Jiang Zemin; its vice chairman was until recently Zhou Shenxian, who became the state environment minister. All of its senior staff, including my primary source (Xie Yuhong, now deputy secretary general), have been seconded from the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). On a website, it shares with MEP, the organization says it aims to implement the strategy of sustainable development, achieve the goal of environment and development as set out by the State, and to safeguard the environmental interests of the public and the society. The major tasks are to keep contacts with influential and high-profile senior personages, unite a variety of social groups, and play the role of solidarity and coherence; put forward proposals on government environmental decision making; provide services on environmental laws for the public and the society; enable the public and the society to get access to environmental information, and conduct activities for environmental publicity and education; promote the sound development of China's environmental NGOs and help them build and obtain their due position in international communities; and undertake other work as entrusted by the government and relevant organizations.[42]

[41] Sharon LaFraniere (2011), "AIDS Funds Frozen for China in Grant Dispute", *New York Times*, May 20.

[42] http://english.sepa.gov.cn/About_SEPA/Social_Organizations/200708/t20070814_107914.htm

Created in 2005, ACEF is not just well-connected; it is also well-financed and well-staffed. In truth, though, the organization represents much more than just a shiny façade for the party-state. It routinely pressures local governments to enforce environmental policies more comprehensively, and more consistently. It carried out an investigation of pollution in one of China's largest freshwater lakes (Dongting), pushing officials in Hunan Province to take action based on its research findings. It even sued a local government in Guizhou Province for ignoring established land use law.[43]

In her presentation to me, Xie Yuhong emphasized the ACEF's role as a coordinator of public and private efforts to protect the environment. "We want to unite all social forces in China to work together toward the twin goals of conservation and sustainable development."[44] The parastatal organization hosts an annual forum attended by representatives of thousands of environmental groups around the country, and it publishes an annual summary of the community's work. This inclusive style helps explain why China's environmental community is less contentious than its AIDS community.[45] Xie said that even the smallest, most grassroots NGOs appreciate ACEF's efforts to coordinate these efforts because, by teaming up with the quasi-official organization, they are able to secure funding, technical support, and influence over the policy-making process. "We are able to offer them unique resources."

Global Village of Beijing (GVB) is one of the many NGOs that cooperates without much tension under this pyramidal structure. It has been praised by ACEF for its efforts to promote "Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability," thus serving as an example of an environmental group that has developed beyond "mere preaching to awareness raising."[46]

The organization, legally a non-profit commercial enterprise, was founded in 1996 by Liao Xiaoyi, who became well-known in China for the environmental education programs she produced and presented at CCTV, the government-owned television broadcasting network. In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in summer 2008, she was hired to serve as the government's 'green games' adviser. By working with, rather than against, the party-state, Liao "has been incredibly influential," said her friend and colleague, Zhang Hong, a project manager for GVB.[47] "She knows where the line is, and she never crosses it."

[43] "Court Backs Environment Group", *China Daily*, January 20, 2012, available at http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-01/20/content_14479255.htm

[44] Interview with the author, August 7, 2009, Beijing.

[45] There may be other explanations. The competition for funding clearly has aggravated tensions within the HIV-AIDS community, which includes a number of strong personalities.

[46] ACEF (2008), "Summary Report on the Development of China's Environmental Civil Society Organizations", October.

[47] Interview with the author, August 11, 2009, Beijing. We spoke a second time on July 20, 2011.

Although GVB has helped mobilize opposition to some development projects, it prefers to focus its resources on what Zhang called 'constructive ways' to protect the environment, including programs to educate the public about how to "reduce, reuse, recycle, rescue, and reevaluate." In this way, it enjoys good relations with the MEP, which shares the same goals. For example, GV worked with the government to set up a 'Green Tourism' program to promote environment-friendly travel. It collaborated with Dachengxiang, a community in Beijing, to create a waste-sorting plan. It created a 'Green Angels' program that reached nearly a million Chinese children, prodding them to push parents and teachers to make their homes and schools more sustainable. And it partnered with the Railway Ministry to implement a 'Green Train' program, distributing thousands of 'green pamphlets' on the Beijing-Yunnan line.

The benefits of cooperating with the party-state have become evident over time, Zhang said. "Twenty years ago, we worried about being prosecuted. Now we worry about losing government support," he explained. "You don't want to mess up relations with the government. If you do, you lose all kinds of opportunities." Zhang gave the example of an environmental summit meeting organized by GVB and attended by about 30 newspaper editors. "Even though we did all the work, we needed the government to actually take the lead. If the appropriate officials at the right levels had not stepped forward, the editors would have looked at us and asked, "Are you kidding? Are you trying to insult us?" We must always pay careful attention to the existing structure of power."

GVB is not unique. I visited several other environmental organizations that shun advocacy and embrace the party-state as a kind of partner. For example, A considers itself a charity because it works with the poor, especially impoverished youth, encouraging them to maintain and improve the environment. In its early days, the group recruited volunteers to plant trees in areas that have been deforested, and it printed cards with pictures of animals such as porcupines that have lost critical habitat or been threatened with extinction. More recently, however, the group has 'adopted' children in poor areas impacted by pollution; in exchange, these 'adoptees' are expected to care for the environment. This choice of activities is a pragmatic one, according to A's founder who doubles as a travel agent in Beijing. "Western NGOs like to spend their time protesting or lobbying," he told me. "But that doesn't work here. We want to get things done, and you can't get anything done if you are fighting the government."

A's founder said he follows Chinese tradition by "being humble, doing good things without patting yourself on the back afterwards." A was started in 1998, but was unable for years to secure a government sponsor; it finally registered as a social organization in 2006. "We are now able to meet openly, to advertise, to raise funds legally." A's founder said the organization receives most of its funding from a wealthy Chinese businessman, but that it also obtains financial support from the party-state. He said that it collaborates with the government on various projects, including public opinion surveys. "On the whole, we want to cooperate [with the party-state] for the betterment of China. We want to achieve win-win outcomes."

Down the road is the Global Environmental Institute (GEI), which describes itself as a "think-and-do tank."[48] It began operations in 2003 with the support of the Blue Moon Fund, a US-based foundation, and became a registered social organization a year later. Although the organization is still headquartered in Beijing, it now has regional offices in Sichuan Province, Tibet, and Sri Lanka. GEI is led by Jin Jiaman, who has solid *guanxi* connections with the party-state and with environmental groups around the world. Before launching the organization, she spent more than two decades working for the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences and, before that, was a manager at the United Nations Environmental Program's Beijing Earth Station.

GEI carries out 'market-based initiatives' to conserve energy and protect environmental resources, according to B, one of its staffers.[49] Its very first project in Lijiang County, Yunnan Province developed biomass digesters for organic agriculture, allowing local farmers to quit using pesticides and thus reduce harmful waste water runoff. The organization has also collaborated with the party-state on a 'Clean Development Mechanism' to import Western technology to use in reducing carbon emissions in metallurgy, road paving and other domestic industries. Likewise, it is working with MEP to create guidelines for Chinese timber companies operating overseas. And it is paying local governments to do what they are supposed to be doing, but often are not doing—protecting their nature reserves. Finally, it has developed a curriculum for communist leaders who, until recently, have graduated from the central party school without any formal training in environmental policy.

"Due to the nature of our projects, which tend to be pro-development, we rarely, if ever, find ourselves in opposition to the government," said B. "The government generally likes what we are doing."

In Shanghai, as well, environmental organizations tend to get along well with the party-state. Grassroots Community (GC), located in a run-down neighborhood (Zhabei) near the railroad station, began in 2000 as an all-volunteer organization stitched together by students from Fudan University. Four years later, as older workers and residents began to join the ranks of volunteers, it registered with the government as a social organization and intensified its efforts on behalf of migrant workers in Zhabei. The local chapter (*tuanwei*) of the Chinese Communist Party Youth League agreed to sponsor GC.

It was the summer of 2009 when I met C, one of the leaders of GC and father of one of the early student volunteers. He stressed that GC does far more than environmental work, and emphasized that its fundamental goal is building citizenship—"serving as a platform for participation in the community"—rather than

[48] See comments by Ren Peng, GEI program coordinator, available at http://www.comcapint.com/Chinese%20Perspective%20to%20Due%20Diligence%20and%20Governance%20on%20Natural%20Resources.pdf

[49] Interview with the author, July 17, 2007, Beijing.

merely carrying out its diverse array of programs.[50] These range from free legal advice to computer training (primarily in Microsoft Word and Excel). GC's major environmental effort, funded largely by the Canadian International Development Agency, aims to educate migrant workers and other residents on reducing waste through recycling and reusing. Friends of Nature (FON), China's oldest environmental NGO, is a partner on the project. And so is the local Communist Party Youth League, which puts environmental educators in touch with neighborhood waste stations.

C said the party-state is generally supportive of GC. "As long as we clear everything in advance, we don't have any problems." This was why, he explained, I had been asked to submit all my questions in writing several days before our interview; local party officials wanted to know what I was hoping to learn from the organization.

Not too far from GC, tucked into a tiny corner of a Shanghai university, one can find a small birding organization. A computer sits on top of a solitary desk in a cramped office; wooden birdhouses are stacked beneath it. D, a young birder who does multimedia computing for a publishing company, is the secretary general of this largely volunteer organization. (It has one part-time staffer, a graduate student who comes into the office a few times each week to maintain the organization's records). Office rent, D explained, is paid by donations from a member of the Audubon Society who read about the organization in a major US publication. The group is officially affiliated with a Chinese GONGO.

In the past, this environmental NGO operated much like the US Audubon Society, mobilizing members to oppose development projects that would destroy habitat or otherwise threaten birds. "But now we mostly do educational work," D confided.[51] Why the change? "The government came to us and asked us to work directly with them and quit agitating in writing or on the Internet. So we have adopted a new approach that is generally less confrontational." For the most part, D is satisfied with the results. Prodded gently by his organization, the government has preserved some threatened wetlands and has restricted bird hunting in some sensitive areas.

But Shanghai birders still grow impatient from time to time. They would like to develop an effective national organization, a Chinese Audubon, but are blocked by the party-state. And D said they are unable to complete needed survey work in critical areas outside Shanghai because they do not have jurisdiction. Meanwhile, the party-state keeps a close eye on the group. "They always know what we're up to," D said. "Government officials invite me out for coffee every two or three months to talk about what we're doing. They're very curious. If two or three months go by and I haven't heard from them, I know I soon will. It's pretty much like clockwork."

As it turns out, even international environmental groups find themselves unable or unwilling to challenge the party-state. A good example is Greenpeace, which has

[50] Interview with the author, August 13, 2009, Shanghai.

[51] Interview with the author, August 14, 2009, Shanghai.

garnered a long-standing, global reputation as a feisty advocate for natural resources and wildlife, but which tends to play it safe in China. The organization is registered as a commercial enterprise, not as a social organization, thereby allowing it to skip the burdensome registration requirements. It mobilizes against private projects such as industrial logging and electronic waste dumping—but rarely against public projects. "We only take on campaigns we can win," explained E, a Greenpeace organizer. "I don't think we could get very far if we were fighting the government."

In the late 1990s, the group mounted a protest in Tiananmen Square, unfurling a banner against government-sponsored nuclear power. Police came immediately to take it down. "I am pretty sure that was the shortest non-violent action in Greenpeace's history."

E noted that the organization, which grew from three employees in 2002, when it opened its Beijing office, to 100 employees just five years later, has enjoyed great success during its brief operation in China. For example, it has persuaded the big computer manufacturers, including Lenovo, the Chinese firm that purchased IBM's PC division in 2005, to dramatically reduce their e-waste. E said the central government "supported our efforts, either openly or tacitly, because local governments had done such a lousy job" regulating e-waste. Beijing recognizes that environmental rules are flouted routinely by local governments, which have a financial incentive to attract as much as investment as possible to their jurisdictions; the central government has increasingly turned to NGOs as partners in the enforcement of its antipollution regime. "There's a saying here," E told me. "'If you are an activist in China, you are probably also an environmentalist.' There are more and more of us these days."

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is another cautious partner with the central government in Beijing. In 1980, it was invited by the party-state to set up shop as an advocate for conservation in the PRC. F, a spokesperson for the organization, told me WWF-China continues to work closely with the government, and is officially under the thumb of the State Forestry Administration (SFA).[52] "We really can't do anything that SFA doesn't want us to do," F said. "Our relationship (with the government) is very solid. It has stood up well over many, many years, and we aren't about to jeopardize it by doing anything wild or crazy that might get us into trouble."

The WWF official cited the example of a conflict over a planned trip to Qinghai, an interior province on the Tibetan Plateau. Local officials, upset when they learned that foreign journalists had been invited, initially refused to authorize the research expedition. But the WWF-China operations manager reached out to a classmate in

[52] WWF-China was more reluctant to grant an interview than any other organization we approached. A spokesman for the global behemoth explained that because it was hoping to become a legally registered social organization, it was desperately trying to maintain good relations with the party-state.

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who intervened and resolved the conflict by proposing that all the journalists sign a pledge that they would not try to enter Tibet. "In the end, everyone was happy."

It would be incorrect to suggest that environmental activists have reached an across-the-board accommodation with the party-state. Their agitation on some issues has brought sharp but unpredictable repression. For example, Yu Xiogang, founder of Green Watershed, an environmental NGO in Yunnan Province, was barred from traveling overseas in 2004 for his efforts to organize villagers against the construction of dams on the Nu River.[53] Sun Xiaodi, who had protested radioactive contamination at a uranium mine in Gansu province, was detained in 2005 and again in 2009.[54] And Wu Lihong has been harassed for years (and finally imprisoned in 2007) after blowing the whistle on the chemical pollution of Lake Tai in Jiangsu Province.[55]

But the community of environmental organizations, assembled as a pyramid under the ACEF, is generally cooperative. Groups that become too large, or too feisty, are usually "tamed." That may be what happened to FON. This pioneering NGO, which draws members from around the country (though half reside in Beijing) and communicates with them regularly via a *Slick* national magazine, "used to serve as a platform to bring together individuals and groups impacted by local environmental problems," according to a former director who spoke with me in 2007.[56] But the party-state has barred it from setting up local branches, and has restricted the group's outreach efforts. The former director described a Shanghai workshop that was sponsored by FON, but busted up by local security agents. "I think the problem was that we invited many other NGOs to attend; the government thought we were trying to create an expanded coalition for action, and I suppose we were."

Friends of Nature emerged in 1993 and registered as an NGO in 1994—long before most other environmental organizations got started in China. It benefitted from the social ties (*guanxi*) of its founder, Liang Congjie, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Culture, and a member of a politically powerful family. In its first decade of operation, FON led several high-profile conservation campaigns, including struggles to preserve the Tibetan Antelope and the Golden Monkey. Media outlets, staffed by sympathetic reporters (who in some cases were friends with FON staff), showered the organization with positive (puff) pieces.[57]

[53] http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Citation/CitationXiaogangYu.htm

[54] http://www.hrichina.org/content/319

[55] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/world/asia/14china.html?pagewanted=all

[56] Interview with the author, July 18, 2007, Beijing.

[57] FON is not the only environmental NGO to enjoy good relations with prominent editors and reporters in China's increasingly assertive news business. Indeed, Liu Haiying and Zhang Dongqing ["*Zhongguo Huanbao NGO yu meiti: Xieshou Tongxing*" (China's Environmental NGOs and the Media: Marching Hand in Hand), in Wang Yongchen (Ed.), *Gaibian: Zhonguo Huanjing Jizhe Diacha Baogao* (Changes: Investigations by Environmental Reporters), p. 279, Salian Publishing House, Beijing] have described the Chinese media as 'NGO-ified'.

But the ground beneath this group has shifted. Many more ENGOS have emerged, and ACEF has corralled most of them into its network. "We need to find a way to grow with society, to develop our core business," explained Li Bo, the new and more efficiency-minded director of FON.[58] The organization has decided to avoid work that confronts the government, such as protests against hydroelectric dams and incineration plants. Instead, Li said, it is collaborating with local governments to improve municipal solid waste management, and is developing an education program that will encourage young Chinese to get out and enjoy nature. "These issues are not as sensitive, or at least they can be framed in a safe, legal context. It would be difficult to get into too much trouble on these issues."

At the same time, however, FON has teamed up with Chongqing Green Volunteer League to sue a private chemical company in Yunnan Province. Although a local government agency (the Qujing City Environmental Bureau) has joined as a co-plaintiff, demanding that the Luliang Peace Technology Co. establish a fund to help clean up the chromium sludge and compensate victims of pollution, the two NGOs are hoping the case will prompt the National People's Congress to amend the Civil Procedure Law to allow non-governmental organizations to initiate public interest litigation on their own.[59]

But the FON director believes the group is still on solid ground. Li said he has carefully watched the party-state crack down on different activists and organizations, and is learning the difference between what is permissible and what is prohibited. "We are trying to stay within the government's comfort zone."

Conclusion

Contrary to reports in western media, Chinese NGOs enjoy considerable freedom to operate, to advocate the issues they care about. The party-state clearly recognizes the need for groups that can help it to more efficiently govern this vast country by sharing the burden of educating citizens and providing necessary services. It knows that by collaborating with NGOs, it can streamline the public bureaucracy, enhance its own legitimacy, and tap into global financial networks.

In both of the policy arenas examined here, the party-state has expressed enthusiasm about the work being done by civil society groups. For example, in late 2009, then-President Hu Jintao acknowledged that government alone could not stem the spread of HIV: "China still faces a severe AIDS problem and we should mobilize the forces of all social sectors to tackle the problem persistently."[60] Likewise, Pan Yue, a top administrator in the MEP, wrote in 2004 that the government should cooperate

[58] Interview with the author, August 8, 2009, Beijing.

[59] China Development Brief has written about the legislative petition in English, available at http://www.chinadevelopmentbrief.cn/?p=1116 and in Chinese http://cdb.org.cn/newsview.php?id=5611

[60] Xinhua (2009), "President Hu Vows to Mobilize Society to Improve AIDS Control", *China Daily*, November 30, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-11/30/content_9081444.htm

more closely with social organizations sharing its goal of a greener China: "The majority of China's environmental NGOs, except for a very small number who take an extreme western environmentalist line without considering the country's special characteristics, are positive and healthy, especially the youth groups who are volunteering for the environment."[61]

But the party-state fears autonomous NGOs as much as it welcomes helpful ones. To maintain its grip on power, to circumvent a 'color' or 'jasmine' revolution,[62] it has taken pains to nurture a civil society that is more compliant or cooperative than adversarial, a civil society 'with Chinese characteristics'. What might this actually look like? Yang Tuan, deputy director of social policy studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS), a government think tank, has contributed a body of work that begins to spell out an answer.[63] She divides every modern country, conceptually, into the following: a first sector made up of private/market actors; a second sector comprised of public/state actors; a third sector made up of activists who are neither market-oriented nor 'public-minded'; and a fourth sector comprised of activists who use market mechanisms such as management incentives to efficiently carry out work on behalf of the broader community. Western countries, she argues, tend to have a larger third sector in which NGOs advocate on behalf of narrow 'special interests', while China is cultivating a vibrant fourth sector, one in which social organizations cooperate with the party-state and advance common goals. In an interview, Yang elaborated: "These are social organizations that provide services needed by the country as a whole. You could call them 'development NGOs'."[64]

Most of the activists featured here work for such development NGOs, operating squarely in Yang's fourth sector. In general, they follow the government's lead and refrain from challenging the Communist Party. Chinese NGOs act this way not because they are 'Chinese', or culturally predisposed to cooperate, but because they have been induced to do so. The party-state has laid the foundation for a civil society characterized by political hierarchy and legal uncertainty. Social groups generally police themselves carefully because they hope to reap the benefits that flow from the top of the pyramidal structure in which they operate and because they hope to avoid the unpredictable punishment heaped upon those who step out of line.

[61] See an excerpt from his 2004 statement on the China Dialogue website: http://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/604-The-environment-needs-public-participation

[62] Media have referred to pro-democracy uprisings in eastern Europe as "Color Revolutions". These uprisings, led by groups in civil society, included the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia in 2003 and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004. In 2011, after the "Jasmine Revolution" erupted in Tunisia, Chinese activists used offshore websites and twitter to try to organize similar protests in Beijing and other cities. But Chinese authorities moved quickly to shut them down.

[63] See, especially, Tuan Yang (2004), "*Tan Suo 'Di Si Yu'*" (Discovering the 'Fourth Sector'), *Xuehai*, Vol. 4, pp. 1-13.

[64] Interview with the author, July 17, 2007, Beijing.

In both the HIV-AIDS and environmental policy arenas, Chinese activists know how to survive, and sometimes even thrive. This means taking advantage of vertically layered *guanxi* ties, linking themselves to higher-ups in a system dominated by the party-state. Ho and Edmonds[65] have called this 'embedded activism', and note that it is especially common in the environmental field. It also means shunning the discourse of human rights, with all its 'Western' connotations, opting instead for the more acceptable discourse of public service. This approach, too, is more widely adopted by environmental organizations, which do not represent victims of discrimination or marginalization.[66] In the end, NGOs have learned that, to survive and even thrive, they must keep a watchful eye on themselves, as well as on one another, adopting a conservative interpretation of acceptable advocacy.

Our survey did, of course, reveal exceptions, especially in the HIV-AIDS policy arena. But Wan Yanhai and his allies are perhaps the exceptions that prove the rule. 'Outsiders' either find themselves deprived of the resources embedded in the pyramidal structure of Chinese civil society, or they find themselves in hot water—socially, politically, and legally. Wan, for example, was the target of both gossip and slander by his rivals in the NGO community, and also the target of harassment and intimidation by the party-state. Unlike most of his peers, he refused to police himself—and ultimately concluded he had to flee the country. ☑

Reference # 55J-2014-01-03-01

[65] Ho and Edmonds (2008), *op. cit.*

[66] In surveys, Chinese NGOs often describe themselves as 'service providers'. For example, 43% of NGOs in a 2008 poll reported that were engaged in social service. *See* Xiong Wei and Qin Meng (2008), "An Analysis of Chinese NGOs' Weak Capacity and Solutions to this Problem", in *Chinese Thought Network* (June). Likewise, 45% of 1,500 NGOs polled in 2001 indicated that they were carrying out 'social work'. See Ming Wang (2002), "2001 Nian Zhongguo NGO Yanjiu" (2001 Survey of Chinese NGOs), Tsinghua University NGO Research Center for UNCRD Research Report, No. 43 (p. 9).

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Focus

Africa entered the 21st century as the poorest, the most technologically backward, and the most marginalized region of the world. Many African countries, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, are lagging behind in economic development and continue to stagger under extreme poverty. The lack of basic amenities like nutritious food, clothing and housing, poor health services, widespread prevalence of diseases like HIV/AIDS, persistent drought, endemic corruption, bad governance, weak institutions and so on are some of the foremost development challenges of Africa.

Most of the African economies are import-dependent and debt distressed, and still rely a lot on foreign aid. The international financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF, and western countries like the US, Japan and European Union have provided billions of dollars in aid to the poorest countries in Africa. Several initiatives have also been taken to eradicate poverty. In spite of these measures, there is still a long way to go and much remains to be done. The first two papers of this issue examine some of the development challenges of Africa.

Joshua Olusegun Bolarinwa, in the paper, "Reforms and Development Initiatives in Africa", opines that many African countries, despite huge deposits of mineral wealth and significant agricultural resources, are still in their early stages of economic development and face a unique developmental challenge. African countries are bedeviled by a host of severe problems like crushing debt, mass unemployment, weak institutions, poor leadership, decline in human welfare, corruption, etc. The author assesses the level of reforms in relation to development initiatives in Africa and considers that reforms need high-level leadership, commitment and political will and are likely to succeed if undertaken through consultations with the stakeholders, i.e., those likely to be affected by them.

Benjamin Uchenna Anaemene, in the paper, "Beyond Human Rights: International Organizations and the Challenge of Health Development in Africa", investigates the important health challenges that Africa is facing today. Poverty, malnutrition, high fertility, high infant mortality and morbidity, HIV/AIDS epidemic, malaria and recrudescence of tuberculosis are ravaging Africa. The author argues that international organizations have a moral obligation to redress underdevelopment and improve the health and wellbeing of Africans. They should tackle the health challenges from an ethical dimension by adopting the principles of beneficence and justice.

Walter Hatch, in the paper, "Activism with Chinese Characteristics: Navigating the Sloping, Uncertain Terrain of Civil Society in China", examines the nature and behavior