

Evidence from medieval Europe and modern China suggests that cooperation with strong executives plays a larger role in early legislative development than is generally acknowledged: that under conditions of absolutism (or near-absolutism), acceptance and exploitation of subordination may be a means to organizational development. In this article, the author relies primarily on interview data and Chinese field research to show that early legislative development can occur without significantly increasing conflict with established authorities and without winning autonomy. The author further argues that legislative embeddedness, as measured by clarified and expanded jurisdiction and increased capacity, is a product less of conflict than of executive support and attention, and that support and attention in the early stages of organizational development can be understood in terms of a legislature's presence, its reliability and usefulness, and the political standing of its leaders. The article's conclusion offers a new approach to early legislative development that shifts attention from conventional measures of institutionalization and hinges on understanding the process of embeddedness.

CHINESE PEOPLE'S CONGRESSES AND LEGISLATIVE EMBEDDEDNESS

Understanding Early Organizational Development

KEVIN J. O'BRIEN
Ohio State University

In the 1980s, Chinese people's congresses entered a new era. National leaders reopened channels of consultation and rediscovered the role legislative bodies could play in translating party policy into law and oversee-

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Generous support from the Ohio State University Office of Research and Graduate Studies, the American Philosophical Society, the Committee on Scholarly Communications with the People's Republic of China, the U.S. Information Agency, and the U.S. Department of Education (Fulbright-Hays Grant PO19A00003) made this research possible. For perceptive comments on an earlier draft, I would like to thank Richard Gunther, Pat Patterson, Bill Liddle, Michael Sullivan, Donald Clarke, and Hsin-chi Kuan. Essential assistance in the field was provided by many Chinese friends and colleagues, including Ye Xingping, Tan Junjiu, Zhu Guanglei, Wang Shengming, Che Mingzhou, and Meng Xin.*

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, Vol. 27 No. 1, April 1994 80-109
© 1994 Sage Publications, Inc.

ing policy implementation, while authoritative statements reaffirmed the people's congress system and praised the contribution that popular assemblies made to "socialist democracy" and development. A new constitution and a stream of laws defined legislative responsibilities, clarified jurisdiction, and specified relations between people's congresses and other state organs. Congresses established standing committees down to the county level, deployed staff, located facilities, and poured time and resources into elections.

At the same time, the party leadership deflected most efforts to liberalize congresses or to enhance their representative character. Students and reformers who sought free, nationwide elections and open nominating procedures found little support among high party officials. Vocal, non-Marxist candidates were removed from candidate lists and efforts to call a special National People's Congress (NPC) session before the bloodshed in 1989 resulted in prison terms for several of the organizers. To this day, legislative deliberation remains tame and muted by world standards, and there are few indications that people's congresses at any level are developing into powerful foci of opposition.

Is organizational development of representative assemblies possible in an environment where conflict is minimal and autonomy is strictly limited? This article will argue that it is. Drawing on evidence from medieval Europe and a dozen years of Chinese legislative practice, I will show that cooperation with strong executives plays a larger role in early legislative development than is generally acknowledged: that under conditions of absolutism (or near-absolutism), acceptance and exploitation of subordination may be a means to organizational development. After presenting historical and interview evidence, the article will introduce an alternative approach to early legislative development that hinges on understanding the process of embeddedness. Here I will suggest that research designs that search for legislative embeddedness (rather than solely for conventional indicators of institutionalization) can reveal changes often neglected by approaches that focus on conflict and autonomy and can best explain the pattern of legislative evolution in China in the 1980s and the reform agenda of the early 1990s.

MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTS

It is rarely advisable to consider medieval Europe in the same breath with modern China. The ideologies of Marxism-Leninism and royalism and the structures of feudal and modern, mass society could hardly be more different. But for our purposes here—understanding under what conditions popular assemblies develop—the enormous contrasts pale before one essential sim-

ilarity: The nations under consideration share long histories of absolutist rule and lack experience with democratic governance. By recalling the historical evolution of medieval European representative bodies, before proceeding to modern China, we can generate hypotheses and uncover faulty, often hidden assumptions. By searching for "deep analogies" (Tilly, 1981, p. 8), we can "break out the relevant part of the narrative" (Stinchcombe, 1978, pp. 15, 21) and clarify the role that autonomy and subordination play in early legislative development.

The idea that early assemblies developed by wringing concessions out of monarchs and gradually eroding kingly power has always had a strong appeal to the scholarly and popular imagination. Nineteenth-century histories of medieval European representative bodies often highlighted parliamentary defiance and other highly visible challenges to kingly prerogative and executive power. To Victorian liberals, the noteworthy events in parliamentary evolution were ones of conflict and opposition—successfully replacing a king, refusing to grant taxes, protecting local interests. English "Whig" historians, in particular, tended to emphasize the role parliamentary assertiveness played in expanding rights and counterbalancing royal absolutism (Stubbs, 1896; for criticism, Elton, 1974, p. 30; Harriss, 1981, pp. 52-53). In this view, the history of legislative development was one of representative bodies standing up to royal power and social interests and developing a capacity to constrain executive rule. It was a history that focused on the representative aspect of representative institutions and the adversarial relationship between popular bodies and executive organs of government.

Of course, stirring acts of defiance were at times powerful engines of organizational development. No one would deny that the most admired legislatures today are those capable of sustained opposition or at least a hoot or two from the backbench, but the bulk of 20th-century historical scholarship has questioned the relevance and completeness of interpretations based on these two points. Modern medievalists reject retrospective, teleological accounts of legislative development and have demonstrated that most medieval assemblies only infrequently risked encounters with a monarch. Recent studies have de-emphasized the representative element of early popular bodies (Richardson & Sayles, 1981) and have reminded us that it is ahistorical to speak of separation of powers and checks and balances much before the 17th century (Russell, 1982, p. 206). Turning from defeating the ambitions of kings, attention has fallen on early popular assemblies as congeries of institutions formed and convened to strengthen a king's authority and to engage in positive action. Medieval representative bodies (particularly those that survived) are now seen to be organizations that cooperated with all but

the most unreasonable monarchs in the tasks of state building—participants in government that began as instruments of royal rule and only slowly evolved from curial and consultative gatherings to consent-granting bodies (Butt, 1967, chap. 1; Harriss, 1981; Holt, 1981; Major, 1980; Myers, 1981).

In the modern view, early representative bodies were largely assemblies of lordly festivity devoted to improved communication, cooperation, and policy implementation, which engaged in occasional, corrective action. Attendance implied support for one's prince, and consent was morally and ritually required and "still not so much sovereign as procedural" (Bisson, 1982, p. 196). The celebratory format that typically existed encouraged undebated acceptance of a consensus defined by the king, his prelates, and advisers. "Representation was an extension of, not an antithesis to, royal and conciliar government" (Holt, 1981, p. 22) and, under most circumstances, kings and estates coexisted and the strength of the state depended on their cooperation. French kings as late as the Renaissance saw no reason to fear representative bodies; on the contrary, they frequently permitted popular assemblies to increase their role and sometimes encouraged them to do so (Major, 1980, pp. 178-179).

Organizational development took place not only in the heat of battle, but also in periods of subservience and nonpolitics. Although the political function of the medieval British Parliament increased during the tumultuous reign of Edward II, its "most formative period" was the 50 harmonious years under Edward III (Butt, 1989, p. 354). The British Commons established many of its most important rights (e.g., freedom from arrest, freedom of speech, right to assent to legislation) during the 15th century—an oligarchical time when it had no quarrel with successive regimes and acquiesced to the power politics of the magnates. Dominant factions granted privileges to parliaments that were quiescent and nonconfrontational, and opposition politics drained out of Parliament precisely at the time it was achieving supremacy in law making and control over the king's finances. The British Parliament, as late as Henry VIII's reign, was the king's parliament, and it deftly consolidated its position through nonthreatening membership and political pliancy (e.g., willingness to pass the ecclesiastical statutes) (Butt, 1967, pp. 37-38, 1989, p. 452).

French provincial estates of the 16th century were also characterized by low political activity and ready acquiescence to royal initiatives. For much of the 15th and 16th centuries, the administrative role of French estates grew and privileges expanded, whereas conflict with monarchs declined. Members gained freedom from arrest, kings promised to seek consent for taxation, royal officials were banned from membership. At a time most estates granted

taxes willingly, many began to develop regular procedures, permanent bureaucracies, and permanent committees. In France as in England, "the growth of self-government paralleled the growth of monarchical government" (Major, 1980, pp. 177, 200).

Organizational momentum developed because assemblies were useful and because they avoided becoming embroiled in conflict with forces that might destroy them. According to Elton (1974, pp. 31-32), the bodies that survived the 16th-century reconstruction of monarchy were ones that shared in the work of governing (the British Parliament, some estates in the low countries and France, and some active assemblies in Germany) rather than those that regarded themselves to be counterweights to government. "Assemblies that had nothing but criticism and resistance to offer died because they were useless to governments and failed to impress the powerful interests with their pointless vapourings" (p. 60). Conflict with rival organizations and powerful individuals was often self-defeating, whereas "(cooperation) gave the representative assemblies time to win established places in the hearts of the people, to develop their procedures, their permanent committees, and their bureaucracies so that they became parallel organs of government" (Major, 1980, p. 200).

RESEARCH ON CHINESE LEGISLATURES

Western research on Chinese people's congresses often echoes the whig outlook outlined above. The Communist party replaces medieval monarchs, and we search for signs of legislative feistiness and autonomy. Independence, assertiveness, and meaningful representation are key measures of organizational health and potential. Studies of elections investigate outspoken candidates, nomination procedures, and party control of personnel (Bedeski, 1986; Burns, 1988; Jacobs, 1991; McCormick, 1990, pp. 149-154; Nathan, 1985, chap. 10; Womack, 1982). Studies of legislative debates and functions note bursts of obstreperousness and "viscosity" in law making (Chang, 1987; O'Brien, 1990a, 1990b; Solinger 1982). Constitutional and prescriptive analyses highlight new legislative responsibilities and potential redistributions of power (Cheng, 1983; Kuan, 1984; Weng, 1982).

But unlike the original whig historians, whose story ends in parliamentary democracy, ours ends in one-party rule. Thus, on balance, sinologists tend to find limited evidence of legislative autonomy and meager opposition to party committees and government organs. Most students of people's congresses observe few promising signs of successfully navigated conflict and instead

see subordinate organizations that are ineffective conduits of representation. Our conclusions, as often as not, highlight what has not changed and why organizational development has faltered.

Many Chinese would undoubtedly concur with this assessment. People's congresses are weakly representative and rarely challenge party power or government decisions. It is understandable that anyone touched by the armed violence in 1989 might reject all state-managed channels of participation and await truly independent, representative bodies set up through popular pressure or by a dramatic radicalization of the reform program. Should the regime crumble or undertake thoroughgoing reform, the long-term vitality of Chinese people's congresses is far from assured. Incremental changes that occur on the eve of revolution quickly become the epiphenomena of history.

But if the regime reconsolidates and persists, or simply to shed light on the dynamics of early legislative development, much can be learned from organizational changes occurring in bodies that, like medieval European assemblies, have dubious representative credentials and an aversion to conflict with executives, yet are undergoing considerable institutional change. Using such an approach, it becomes possible to explain a process that may be common to many legislatures and a strategy employed by agents of organizations who are committed to altering the institutional structure within which they operate. We profit by redirecting attention from our expectations, activities that are not appearing and changes that may occur, to existing organizational relationships. We produce more meat to chew on than analyses that start with the lack of democracy or the lack of institutionalization and have trouble proceeding beyond deploring a China that is easy to deplore.

In the following discussion, I will present a view from inside Chinese people's congresses—a perspective gained from interviews with 39 researchers, leaders, staff, and deputies of the national, provincial, city, and district (or county) people's congresses—in five locations in 1989, 1990, and 1991. I will also draw on leadership speeches, Chinese scholarly accounts, handbooks prepared by standing committees for lower congresses, and a field study carried out in 10 provinces in 1987 (Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun, 1990).

With few exceptions, these sources exclude disaffected activists and dissidents; this is scarcely surprising insofar as people's congress deputies are mainly politically reliable cadres, intellectuals, workers, peasants, and minority representatives who accept the contour of the regime. Approximately four fifths of legislative leaders are former cadres transferred from party or state work (Yu Shi, 1988, p. 14), and tightly controlled nomination procedures guarantee that even the lowest level, directly elected deputies are rarely firebrands. Of approximately 4 million deputies nationwide, in a

five-level system that includes the NPC, 29 provincial-level congresses, hundreds of municipal congresses, nearly 3,000 county-level congresses, and tens of thousands township congresses, surveys and interviews suggest that approximately 60%-80% of all deputies are Communist party members (Bao Yu'e, Pang Shaotang, & Sun Yezhong, 1990, p. 109; Ji Yu, 1990, pp. 244-245; Xu Datong & Wu Chunhua, 1990, p. 218; Yu Keping & Wang Fuchun, 1990, p. 206; Zi Mu, 1986, p. 38; also see appendix and interviews (Ints.) 18, 24). Legislative staff are most often young or middle-aged graduates of law schools and political-legal institutes, with a sprinkling of older reassigned cadres. The academic researchers typically teach in university law schools or political science departments, although many are veterans of political education programs. Some of the younger researchers are graduates of western universities, who possess advanced degrees in the social sciences.

Relying on the words of these interested parties, I will reconstruct the process of organizational change and explain a commonly discussed strategy for further development. I will suggest that meaningful organizational development is possible and may be occurring within current constraints and that growth can continue for some time without significantly increasing conflict with established authorities and without winning autonomy. I will further argue that legislative embeddedness, as measured by clarified and expanded jurisdiction and increased capacity, is a product less of autonomy than of executive support and attention, and that support and attention in the early years of organizational development can be understood in terms of a legislature's presence: its reliability and usefulness, and the political standing of its leaders.

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT AND ATTENTION: ENTWINEMENT AND PRESENCE

Since Deng Xiaoping's (1980) speech, "On the Reform of the System of Party and State Leadership," dividing party and state has reigned as a central tenet of the reform program. To all appearances, only unrepentant Maoists and conservative opponents of reform have questioned Deng's charge to reverse over concentration of power and to put an end to substituting the party for the state. By the late 1980s, however, it became clear that this simple characterization of political fault lines was mistaken—it was not only conservatives who favored overlapping leadership and party domination of the state. In largely unpublicized conferences and internal publications, reform-minded, academic researchers and front-line state workers began to argue

that certain kinds of party-state fusion were necessary during the transition from party dictatorship: that immediate efforts to gain organizational independence and autonomy would flounder or marginalize state organs and prevent accumulation of functions.

Among others, many legislative deputies and staff came to share this view. Although all of my interviewees acknowledged party leadership and domination of people's congresses, few deemed it an insurmountable obstacle to organizational development. In fact, most respondents, particularly legislative leaders and staff, desired more attention and penetration by party committees because they sought to be nearer established authorities and were willing to sacrifice autonomy for increased assistance. Questions about conflict with executive organs often led to confusion or more typically a remark such as "why would we want to do that?" (Int. 23), or "people's congress work is done best when the party committee pays most attention to it" (Ints. 27, 32; also, Peng Zhen, 1989). Individuals on the front line of legislative work, in a word, did not see themselves to be agents of pluralization, but rather agents of an organization scrambling for jurisdiction. For all but deputies at the submunicipal level, greater attention was paid to developing as an organization than developing as a representative body.

Success as an organization hinged on minimizing conflict with party committees and other executive organs. It meant accepting the yearly "central task" and implementing it in one's region. It also meant acknowledging that the goals of people's congresses and party committees were compatible and striving to assist local authorities at every turn. This might involve deflecting mass complaints when grain prices were increased or explaining unpopular birth control policies. It certainly entailed understanding lawmaking as an opportunity to realize party policy, viewing supervision as "support" as much as "restriction," and accepting "no interference" provisions in the routine work of government bureaus, procurators, and courts. Above all, it involved drawing influential individuals in to people's congress work and garnering attention from party committees.

Although some legislators and staff spoke of independence and dividing party and state, a significant number advocated increased entwinement and additional contacts with party committees. Effective supervision and inspection work, in particular, was said to depend on engaged and open-minded "local authorities who had a strong sense of democracy and legality" (Ints. 27, 29; Gu Laixun, Cao Wenguang, Li Jianwei, & Zhang Qian, 1990, p. 172). If party committee secretaries had harmonious relations with people's congress leaders, legislative oversight proceeded well and congress status increased. If relations were poor or if the party committee regarded a congress

to be a retirement home for aged cadres, the congress was ignored. Organizational development in the 1980s suffered greatest from neglect—from party and government officials who “didn’t care enough” (Liang Yukai, Liu Yuelun, & Li Zhaoxin, 1990, pp. 152, 159) and who “had passive knowledge of people’s congress work” (Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 168). Legislative strengthening occurred if party committees and other government bodies assisted people’s congresses when they encountered difficulties with organizations in other bureaucratic systems. With influential allies mobilized and willing to stand behind a congress, factories could be spurred to comply with antipollution statutes, fines could be levied on markets that illegally increased prices, unjust court decisions could be overturned, and corrupt cadres could be brought to justice (Bao Yu’e et al., 1990, p. 95; Ints. 5, 7, 8, 11, 17, 20, 22, 29). Where congresses enjoyed support and attention, party and government authorities respected lawmaking and oversight powers and they observed appointment and recall procedures. Equally important, when party committees spoke up for them, people’s congresses were allocated competent staff and adequate facilities as well as satisfactory budgets.

Executive support and attention at this stage of development was most closely associated with what might be called “presence”; people’s congresses had to be at the table when decisions were made. Legislative leaders had to sit in on meetings convened by the government, courts, and procurator, and concerned officials had to attend people’s congress convocations.

In accord with Central Committee Documents 8 and 9 of 1984, many local governments established procedures that allowed legislative leaders to attend their meetings and encouraged interaction among staff. In Jiangsu, a “work contact system” devised in 1986 led to improved coordination and regular meetings with the provincial court and procurator (Zhang Yongtao, Tang Jianzhong, & Zong Jianming, 1990, pp. 57-58). Judicial officials in Nanjing frequently invited city congress representatives to offer their opinions (Wang Yukai, 1990, pp. 29-30) and the mayor of Wuxi convened as many as 10 meetings a year to consider deputy proposals. In Tianjin, each relevant executive department established a small, special office to deal with advice, proposals, and criticisms from people’s congresses (Int. 37), and various city officials in Changzhou answered questions at three meetings between the mayor and deputies in a recent year (Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, pp. 10-11; also, Int. 33). By the early 1990s, Tianjin’s mayor routinely invited district legislative leaders to meet with him each year, brought his top aides, and sometimes resolved problems on the spot (Ints. 24, 33).

At the same time, ranking cadres increasingly attended people’s congress sessions and special “contact meetings.” Apart from the annual work reports that they had always delivered, new proceedings regulations called for re-

sponsible members of the government, courts, and procurator to attend bi-monthly legislative standing committee sessions (Zhongguo, 1987).¹ Although these observers might have been seen as watchdogs assigned to restrain unruly congresses, this was not a common view. Formal standing committee sessions and informal contact meetings were said to be occasions where visiting cadres and legislative leaders and staff hammered out agenda, discussed day-to-day work, and extended mutual invitations (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 92-93; Ints. 12, 13; Wang Yukai, 1990, p. 29; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, pp. 57-58).

At such gatherings, legislative leaders also solicited support. Informal discussions (*zuotanhui*) throughout the 1980s helped untangle disputes over authority, highlighted Central Committee decisions on respecting the role of people's congresses, and served to mobilize government bureaus charged with handling deputy proposals (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 88-95; Ints. 3, 7, 23, 24; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, pp. 63-64). A mayor or governor might be invited to standing committee discussions of upcoming agendas and might choose to make supplementary remarks. A recommendation to pay close attention to inflation could be easily transmitted, after which the congress would undertake research, listen to reports, conduct investigations, organize inspections, and pass decisions. Local officials might also be invited to join inspections that determined future agendas and guided local implementation. An engaged mayor or governor might enjoin relevant bureaus to cooperate and to maintain regular, close links with congresses and, in ideal circumstances, high officials might even develop a personal interest in legislative drafting (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 89-95).

In this early stage of organizational development, attendance counted. Where the presence of people's congresses was high, mutual reporting and document flows improved, organs initiating legislation provided necessary materials, and people's congress opinions received more attention (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 88-95; Ints. 12, 21). Party committees transmitted personnel dossiers and lawmaking unfolded. Where the presence of people's congresses was low, officials ignored Central Committee instructives and excluded legislative leaders from meetings (or only allowed them to attend routine discussions), held documents back on grounds of secrecy, failed to inform people's congresses of decisions promptly, and usurped lawmaking, supervision, and appointment powers (Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 169; Jiao Shiying, 1990, p. 317; Liang Yukai et al., 1990, pp. 152-154; Wang Yukai, 1990, p. 32; Yu Zhinan, 1991, p. 1).

1. Zhang Yongtao et al. (1990, p. 50) and leaders of several subnational congresses (Ints. 23, 24) noted that many congress standing committees at all levels had followed the NPC standing committee and enacted proceedings regulations.

Legislative strengtheners most vocally decried officials who attended joint meetings and listened but refused to talk, or who concocted excuses to leave early (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 89-90; Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 169; Int. 23; Wuhan Shi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, p. 133). In nearly every interview, organization builders deemed any losses in autonomy over agenda setting and lawmaking, as well as any inhibition caused by the presence of ranking cadres, a reasonable exchange for increased legislative presence and ensuing government and party support for people's congress work.

RELIABILITY AND RANK

Gaining presence (i.e., support and attention) in the Chinese political system depends on a number of factors. Here I would like to emphasize two: reliability and rank. First, people's congresses that have soberly accepted party domination and have been useful to established authorities are more likely to be drawn into political affairs and are on the road to accruing tasks and increasing capacity. Second, people's congresses blessed with influential leaders have more resources to elbow their way into political decision making and to win jurisdiction, staff support, facilities, and budgets.

Comparatively successful people's congresses offer reliability and assistance in implementing policy. They are trustworthy. If legislative leaders and staff are brought into the policy process, they do not cause what party leaders perceive to be undue trouble or intolerable delays. They may suggest good ideas, carry out arduous and technical tasks associated with turning party suggestions into law, sift out the most incompetent and unpopular leadership personnel choices, and draw attention to units that violate law or ignore policy. They may discover unrecognized problems through inspections and investigations and aid party committees in adapting policy to local conditions.

Few legislators or staff saw profit in defying party committees or state organizations. In fact, almost to a one, they claimed this was a path to marginality or destruction. Interviewees invariably conceived of congress responsibilities as revolving around "central tasks" (*zhongxin renwu*) assigned by higher authorities. People's congresses publicized documents they received and coordinated implementation of policies and regulations (Ints. 7, 13, 17, 23; Liu Yueguang, 1990, p. 77). When inflation was the focus of national work, inflation was the focus of lawmaking and oversight (at least down to the city level); when "clean government" (*lian Zheng*) became the top priority, people's congress priorities changed accordingly (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 92-93; Int. 7). Each province also had central tasks (e.g.,

flood control, improving transportation and commodity circulation, reducing loss of farmland, encouraging foreign trade), and congresses at the provincial level and below devoted attention accordingly. Sometimes legislative initiative could expand the list of priorities (e.g., improving production quality, encouraging technical transformation of enterprises), but in most circumstances, party committees used people's congresses to realize the party program (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 103; Int. 5; Special Commentator, 1987). The primary role of people's congresses was to transmit the "spirit" of higher levels and, by and large, they did so.

Party leadership of congresses was guaranteed both through prior review and personnel penetration. According to Central Committee Document 18 of 1986 and later commentary, party committees evaluated all important decisions of people's congresses to ensure correctness and authoritativeness (Liang Yukai et al., 1990, p. 160; Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, p. 13). And despite plans in 1987 to abolish party groups within state organizations, party groups remained and continued to report people's congress work to party committees. Party members who participated in people's congresses were also, according to most accounts, subject to party discipline (Jiang Zemin, 1990, p. 624; Liu Yueguang, 1990, p. 109; Peng Zhen, 1989, p. 327; Wu Wentai, 1990, pp. 199-206; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, p. 68; Zhang Youyu, 1987, p. 13).

The web of party control was pervasive and effective, and this control, to a surprising extent, may have facilitated legislative development. Congresses that were not obstructive and that were dominated by reliable cadres could be safely granted greater presence, rights of self-administration, and additional responsibilities. Their lack of threat was their ticket to resources and to institutional space.

After the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1987, efforts began to rationalize (*lishun*) relations between people's congresses and party committees. Party superiors instructed party committees to respect the organizational integrity of congresses and to cease treating them like subordinate (*lishu*) departments or temporary, special work teams that could be ordered to deploy individuals to grassroots units to carry out party tasks (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 107-109; Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, p. 138; Wu Wentai, 1990, p. 200).² National leaders and commentators argued that party committees should not issue direct orders to congresses and instead promoted division of labor and clear responsibilities. Congresses, it was said, should discuss issues before party committees made decisions, and only in the most extraordinary circum-

2. Transforming people's congresses into party departments is criticized in Jiao Shiying (1990, pp. 311-312) and Liang Yukai et al. (1990, p. 152).

stances should party committees revoke congress decisions. When party committees were in error, congresses were implored to dare to improve and correct policies that were illegal, unconstitutional, or ill-advised (Ints. 7, 21; Ji Yu, 1990, p. 252; Jiang Zemin, 1990; Liang Yukai et al., 1990, p. 160; Peng Zhen, 1989, p. 327; Wu Wentai, 1990; Zhang Pingli, 1987).

A proven record of reliability reduced the costs of extending support and attention and granting presence. But reliability also multiplied the danger of duplication and dispensability. To develop, a people's congress needed ranking cadres who had an interest in building the organization, power to ensure its continuing presence, and motivation to differentiate it from its sources of executive support and control, with which it remained entwined.

With the exception of a long debate over the wisdom of arraying people's congresses in a hierarchical system (*xitong*), no issue has drawn more attention in legislative circles than strategies to enhance the clout of legislative leaders. People's congresses throughout the 1980s continued to encounter difficulties in supervising the government, courts, and procurators because many people's congress chairmen were excluded from party committees or served as ordinary members or nonvoting delegates, whereas the heads of the government, court, and procurator were usually deputy party secretaries. Although formally subordinate to congresses at the same level, courts and procurators reported to the secretary of the political-legal committee, who was usually the public security representative on the party committee's standing committee and who typically far outranked any people's congress leader. Government chiefs (i.e., governors, mayors, and district or county heads) were always high-ranking party committee deputy secretaries (often the second-in-command), who also enjoyed higher party status than people's congress chairmen at that level (Bao Yu'e, 1990, p. 105; Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, p. 12; Wang Yukai, 1990, p. 32; Wu Wentai, 1990, pp. 206-209; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihe Yanjiushi, 1990, p. 131)

Low political standing placed congress leaders in a quandary. They had to appeal to party committees to arbitrate when their suggestions were ignored and disputes arose, but their low rank ensured that more often than not they would be outvoted by party superiors (Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, pp. 138-140). In the words of one constitutional scholar (Int. 7), one reason that NPC Chairman Wan Li's legislature could not effectively supervise Premier Li Peng's State Council was that Li outranked Wan in the party hierarchy and Li chaired meetings that Wan only attended. Formally subordinate organizations with higher-ranking leaders could easily deflect people's congress supervision and frustrate lawmaking and personnel oversight.

Proposals to address insufficient rank fell into two groups. Some reformers rejected the argument presented here and called for complete division of party and state. Advocates of this position suggested that presence of congress leaders on party committees as nonvoting delegates was sufficient, that further entwinement increased the probability that congresses would become party departments, and that preparations should be made for the day when many people's congress chairmen were not party members. These radical reformers felt that overlapping leadership had "a very strong component of rule by man and would not foster stable development of institutions" (Liang Yukai et al., 1990, pp. 160-161; also Int. 36). They implored people's congresses to show more courage in carrying out their responsibilities and suggested that the rank of congress leaders was decisive only when party leaders neglected congresses. One district chairman argued that if he served on the party committee, party discipline required him to accept its decisions; he preferred independence so that he could openly seek the committee's reconsideration of reasonable requests or appeal to higher levels to reverse mistaken decisions (Int. 32). Extreme proponents of separation advocated forbidding legislative leaders and all responsible government officials from serving on party committees and building wholly separate party and state structures (Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, p. 142; Int. 23; Jiao Shiyang, 1990).

Most supporters of reform, however, advocated further entwinement with party committees. Legislative strengtheners recognized that pleas for more courage from people's congresses, under prevailing conditions, were empty and unlikely to succeed. Instead they defended interpenetration of congresses and party committees. Some favored granting chairmen of people's congresses full membership on party committees (Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, p. 142; Int. 23; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, p. 68). "A great number of theoretical and practical workers" (Peng Shaohuai, 1991, pp. 9-10) advocated, at least temporarily, giving the congress chairman a deputy secretary position on the party committee, perhaps the number two in command (i.e., above the leaders of subordinate bodies) (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 109-110; Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 173; Ints. 24, 28; Liang Yukai et al., 1990, p. 161; Wu Wentai, 1990, p. 206). A somewhat less common view held that first-party secretaries or other standing committee members should serve concurrently as people's congress chairmen, or all responsible party leaders who lacked government responsibilities should be drawn into people's congress work (Ints. 23, 24, 29; Wu Wentai, 1990, pp. 206-209).

The thread that linked these proposals was a belief that ranking party leaders, such as new NPC standing committee chairman and politburo stand-

ing committee member, Qiao Shi, mobilized the status and the authority of party committees behind people's congresses. A deputy party secretary whose portfolio and organizational base was a people's congress brought the congress support and attention. Problems were promptly resolved, the prestige of the congress improved, and legislative jurisdiction was respected. Party leaders heard the voice of congresses and congresses reliably implemented party decisions.

By the late 1980s, most chairmen of county and district people's congresses were members of party standing committees, and a minority were party secretaries. In municipal and provincial congresses, a majority of congress chairmen were members (but not leaders) of party committees at the same level (Wang Zimu, 1990, p. 193; Wu Wentai, 1990, p. 206). Experiments in Wuxi, Shanghai, and Tianjin, which involved making district party secretaries heads of the people's congresses, reportedly led to "work unfolding well" (Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, p. 24) and were said to "be very helpful, because relevant departments then paid much more attention to the decisions of people's congresses" (Int. 23; also, Ints. 24, 37).

To its supporters, personnel overlap was temporary and theoretically troubling, but necessary. "Under current circumstances we must combine rule by law and rule of man, law and authority, to construct people's congresses" (Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, p. 24). Although such reforms were a "concession to rule by man, in the present situation they would benefit people's congress work" (Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 173). In the words of one pragmatic district people's congress vice chairman, "Because many people still have traditional ideas, they think if you have important people in the people's congress it will be stronger. And they are basically right; with 'big potatoes' in charge, other departments will then listen to us" (Int. 24).

The aim was to give influential politicians responsibility for an organization and then to encourage them to develop it. Particularly for ambitious, middle-level cadres, such an opportunity would allow them to operate outside the party hierarchy, to be a chief executive, and perhaps to score successes that would enhance their career and augment the congress's prestige, reputation, and capacity. A hopeful analogy suggested by one provincial legislative leader concerned the mayoralty in Tianjin and Shanghai. Both Jiang Zemin and Li Ruihuan used the mayor's position to build their reputations and left the post a more important position with greater potential for their successors, while they cashed in on their success and were elevated to the standing committee of the party politburo (Int. 23). Whether Qiao Shi, who is often touted as a possible successor to Deng Xiaoping, can use the NPC in a similar fashion to serve both his career and the NPC remains to be seen.

Institutionalization may be a structural trait, but its potential hinges on the conditions surrounding an organization's founding and on its early leaders. In a political system where personalism runs deep, influential and well-connected leaders who possess power accumulated in a different arena and in different areas are essential to early organizational development. Congresses draw prestige from the cadres who lead them.

That these high-ranking cadres are co-opted is not the issue; of course they are co-opted. The point is that potential for autonomy may be associated with subordination in the early stages of organizational development. In other words, the means of achieving autonomy in the future may be related to doing without it now. Edward III's parliaments gained freedoms because they were unlikely to use them; Richard II's parliaments used their new stature to depose Richard. Henry VIII's compliant, aspiring gentry were granted new rights that came to bedevil his daughter 50 years later. The path toward autonomy and institutionalization and away from autocracy leads through subordination. In the early years of organizational development, independence is a chimera and irrelevance and destruction are the largest concerns. The primary goal for organization builders in China today is not to challenge party rule or to pluralize the system, but to redraw institutional boundaries—to change who in the party rules and through what organizations.

JURISDICTION AND CAPACITY

For Chinese legislative strengtheners of the 1980s, building congresses meant clarifying and enhancing jurisdiction and increasing capacity—achieving what I will call embeddedness. Throughout the decade, jurisdiction and internal differentiation grew with executive support and attention and enabled legislatures to occupy greater political space. Achieving embeddedness was the expected reward for accepting subordination and for playing a cooperative role in facilitating party rule.

Resources were an obvious need. People's congresses in the 1980s still depended on government bureaus for budgets, facilities, and staffing. Law-making required libraries, inspections cost money, and sessions and elections generated considerable travel, publicity, and labor expenses. Without sufficient goodwill, congresses were vulnerable to financial and personnel cutbacks, or to receiving second-rate staff and paltry budget increases.

The organizational capacity and complexity of people's congresses increased markedly throughout the 1980s. National, provincial, and county-level congresses established standing committees, staffed primarily by full-time legislative leaders with no other government responsibilities, and pres-

tures grew to extend standing committees to township congresses. The NPC Standing Committee gained the right to pass laws between congress sessions, and standing committees at each level set up chairmanship groups, composed of a congress's chairman, vice-chairmen, and general secretary, which usually met at least twice each month. The NPC formed seven specialized committees, and most provincial and municipal congresses followed suit, or at least set up semipermanent "work organs." Congresses invited academic experts and other specialists to join specialized committees. Staff support grew rapidly, even in the midst of efforts to reduce government size, and most congresses gained permanent homes and office space. Research offices were set up and document compendia appeared in great numbers, while liaison offices linked congresses and improved communications. Newsletters and a people's congress newspaper appeared and yearly conferences of provincial legislative leaders brought legislative personnel together to exchange experiences and discuss common problems. Some provincial finance bureaus instituted reimbursement of inspection expenses (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, pp. 99-100; Ints. 4, 11, 18, 23, 27; O'Brien 1990b, pp. 150-153, 162; Peng Zhen, 1989; Wuhan Shi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, pp. 118-119; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, pp. 47-50).

Yet critical deficiencies remained; most notably, old and incapable legislative leaders, poorly trained staff, inadequate staff deployment, top-heavy staff structure, infrequently convened specialized committees, and dependence on government for budgets, transport, and facilities (Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, pp. 141, 144-148; Gu Laixun et al., 1990, pp. 170-171, 174; Ji Yu, 1990, pp. 249-250; Liu Yueguang, 1990, p. 84; Nie Yunlin, 1988, p. 114; Peng Zhen, 1989, pp. 339-341; Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, pp. 16, 24-25; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, pp. 48-49). Suggestions to overcome these problems predictably involved "getting leaders interested in our work," "doing what we're already doing better," and "showing that we are an important part of the state structure that deserves scarce resources and high-quality personnel" (Ints. 23, 24).

The jurisdiction of people's congresses extends into three domains: lawmaking, institutional supervision, and personnel oversight. In recent years, lawmaking was clearly the area of greatest achievement. From 1979-1993, the NPC passed more than 200 laws and provincial congresses enacted more than 2,000 local regulations. Congresses formulated legislative calendars, and regulations specifying legislative procedures appeared. Legislative staff strengthened contacts with government counterparts and a division of responsibilities (based on applicable statutes) was negotiated. Deliberation became more rigorous (by the mid-1980s few laws were passed after their

first reading) and revisions increasingly raised substantive issues (Ints. 3, 18; O'Brien, 1990a, 1990b; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, p. 53).

Although party committees occasionally complained that people's congresses limited party discretion (Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 170; Liang Yukai et al., 1990, p. 153) and the relationship of party policy and state law remained murky, lawmakers strove to avoid any appearance of "seizing power from the party" or "putting on a rival show" and continued to receive support (Ints. 21, 23, 27, 28; Peng Zhen, 1989, pp. 184, 197). Party leaders, even in the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre, praised "notable achievements" in legislative work and outlined a host of laws that congresses should enact (Jiang Zemin, 1990, p. 624). Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, people's congresses played an expanding role in Chinese rule making.

As for institutional and personnel oversight, congresses had a more uneven record. Inspection cards (*shicha zheng* or *daibiao zheng*) at times opened closed doors and improved legislative investigations (Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 167; Ints. 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 22, 33), and congresses plumed and publicized instances of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, impure drinking water, unhygienic markets, polluting factories, illegal gold hordes, tax-evading entrepreneurs, price gouging, and land expropriation (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 95; Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, p. 143; Ints. 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 30; Liu Yueguang, 1990, pp. 71-74; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, pp. 126-128; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, pp. 53-55). Deputies and staff actively transmitted judicial appeals and worked to reverse incorrect verdicts (Gao Xiufeng, 1986; Ints. 23, 24; Jiao Shiying, 1990, p. 315; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, p. 127; Zhang Yongtao et al., 1990, p. 56), and a number of congresses turned down party nominees to state leadership posts and resisted rescheduling legislative sessions when asked to approve party-initiated transfers (Diao Zhenfei & Zhou Qingnian, 1990, p. 143; Int. 14; Liu Yueguang, 1990, pp. 74-75; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, p. 129; Yu Shi, 1988, p. 13; Zhao Chenggen, 1990, pp. 237-238). In two Tianjin districts, deputies even gained the right to inspect the work of top cadres based on contracts the cadres had signed listing their promises for the upcoming year, and a district government that had not drawn up a promised economic development plan was upbraided at a specially convened plenary session (Ints. 33, 37).

Yet, at the same time, jurisdiction remained unsettled and executive support for legislative oversight fluctuated. Units frequently "directed inspections like a movie" (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 112) and government bureaus failed to address problems that deputies discovered (Gao Shaolin, 1987; Jiao Shiying, 1990, pp. 312, 316; Peng Zhen, 1989, p. 216). Congresses could

request a court to change a verdict, but had no means to require reconsideration nor power to overturn a decision themselves (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 104; Int. 8). Supervision of the courts, procurator, and government was often "like a dragonfly skimming the surface of the water" (*qingting dian shui*) (Jiao Shiyong, 1990, p. 314). Review of government reports remained cursory and congresses typically studied rather than deliberated over documents (Int. 7). Retired cadres hesitated to offend friends and colleagues and were hamstrung by leadership expectations that they would support as well as restrict the bodies they supervised (Int. 23; Jiang Zemin, 1990; Jiao Shiyong, 1990, pp. 314-315, 324); Peng Shaohuai, 1991, pp. 1, 13), and baffling instructions directed congresses to supervise subordinate organs, but not to interfere with their day-to-day work (Peng Zhen, 1989; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, pp. 135-136; Xu Chongde, 1987, p. 41; Yu Zhinan, 1991).

The struggle to win an acknowledged role in appointments and recalls exemplified the delicate and controversial transfers at the heart of achieving embeddedness. On the one hand, the 1982 constitution and a 1984 central committee decision affirmed that congresses appointed and recalled state leaders. On the other hand, years of unchallenged practice dictated that organization departments controlled cadres. Legislative development in the 1980s hinged on demonstrating the compatibility of these two principles: on "(upholding) the principle of the party managing cadres and simultaneously supporting people's congresses conducting appointments and recalls" (Jiang Zemin, 1990, p. 624).

Congresses accordingly sought more nominees, rights of nomination, and contested elections for chiefs as well as deputy chiefs. They urged implementation of relevant central committee decisions. They employed secret ballots in elections, systematized cadre inspection procedures, and developed job descriptions and tests that assessed competence. Where successful, they removed famously corrupt cadres, prevented agriculture experts from becoming heads of industrial bureaus, and questioned promotion of cronies and relatives. Cooperative party organization departments provided dossiers promptly and improved nominee introductions. Party committees respected congress schedules and planned transfers accordingly (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 97; Gu Laixun et al., 1990, p. 167; Jiang Fukun, 1989; Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi, 1990, pp. 128-129; Zhao Chenggen, 1990, pp. 237-238). Where less successful, party organization departments provided perfunctory introductions and documents arrived late. Officials challenged legislative examinations and questioned the right of congresses to reject party nominees. Party committees rammed nominees through congress elections and illegal transfers occurred (Bao Yu'e et al., 1990, p. 104; Diao Zhenfei &

Zhou Qingnian, 1990, pp. 141, 149; Int. 7; Jiao Shiyong, 1990, pp. 316-318; Liang Yukai et al., 1990, p. 153; Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu, 1990, p. 13; Wang Yukai, 1990, p. 32).

In model cases, congresses exercised power without generating charges of interference or creating the appearance of diminished party personnel control. They reviewed technical and professional qualifications and left political quality and reliability to the party. They relented if party committees insisted and, in the interest of maintaining good relations, occasionally "voted against their will, because they considered the nomination a vote of confidence in the party committee's organizational bureau and because they had faith in the bureau's investigation" (Xu Zhifu, 1990, p. 188). Astute congresses avoided attacking party committees and minimized embarrassment of defeated candidates; meanwhile, they worked to mark off and enlarge legislative jurisdiction.

Throughout the 1980s, organization builders promoted laws that delimited legislative responsibilities, rights, and procedures, which ensured that powers were not usurped. They sought to extend the scope of lawmaking and to occupy a secure and meaningful position in the state system—a position accepted and supported by party committees and by formally subordinate bodies. They sought professionalization, stronger committees and better staff, more resources, and ranking leaders. Should this pattern of organizational development continue, autonomy and dramatic challenges to party rule may not increase in the near future: What should appear is greater organizational presence and entwinement, higher ranking leaders more devoted to congress work, clearer and expanded jurisdiction vis-à-vis organizational rivals, and the differentiation and complexity necessary to carry out new tasks.

LEGISLATIVE EMBEDDEDNESS

Achieving embeddedness is both a process and a strategy. It occurs as leaders, staff, and allies of an emerging legislature redraw the formal and informal rules of a political system to win a valued place for their organization. Achieving embeddedness may take decades or centuries, and it may fail even after promising beginnings. Legislatures that hope to become permanent entities must attain a threshold of embeddedness, and for some (e.g., those with electoral legitimacy and those created in response to autocratic excess or regime disintegration), this minimum may be easily and quickly attained.

The primary indicators of embeddedness are (a) clarified and expanded jurisdiction and (b) increased capacity. The main facilitators of embedded-

ness are executive support and attention. Jurisdiction is central because it implies a clear domain of responsibilities and an ability to carry out specified tasks with reduced external meddling. A legislature granted jurisdiction has turf to protect and allies to help it resist encroachment by other organizations. Jurisdiction clarifies channels of communication and delimits who may issue orders; it also guarantees that a legislature is not merely an extension of another organization.

An embedding legislature also has enhanced capacity. Its internal complexity is increasing, as witnessed by stronger and more specialized committees, improved staff support, professionalized leadership, and improved document flows. It is less and less reliant on other organizations for funds, staff, and facilities.

External support and attention are the primary means to gain and protect jurisdiction and to develop capacity. Support and attention are critical, particularly for legislatures that are injected into a political system that already has a strong center of power. Without support, an emergent legislature is easy prey for individuals and other organizations that covet its functions. Without attention, a new representative body can easily become immaterial or purely symbolic. An embedding legislature is increasingly at the table when decisions are made; it has a right to be present and sufficient elite support and organizational capability to guard its position. Its leaders are significant political figures who devote considerable time to the legislature and to promoting its fortunes.

Embeddedness shares with legislative institutionalization (Hibbing, 1988; Polsby, 1968; Sisson, 1973) attention to increasing organizational complexity, but differs from traditional understandings of institutionalization in that it downplays the significance of autonomy in the early stages of organizational development. Research that focuses on embeddedness is less concerned with member-level indexes of autonomy, such as declining turnover and lengthening apprenticeship of leaders, and more concerned with the organizational domain: the ability of a legislature to distinguish itself from competitors and to establish spheres of competence and responsibility. A newly embedded assembly is effectively woven into an existing political structure and has jurisdiction, muscle, and support more than impermeable boundaries.

An embedding legislature often benefits from association with strong individuals who bring it prestige when it has little prestige to confer. In fact, "lateral entries" may serve as the primary agents of embeddedness. New organizations need budgets, access to documents, status, and respect. Talented and well-connected people bring power, access, and personal networks to a new bureaucratic competitor. Focus on embeddedness reminds us that it

is often the Henry Clays and the Peng Zhens who enhance the position of a nascent legislature—they garner attention, accrue tasks, and build capacity.

Individuals and personal power are often engines of legislative growth. They bring organizational change in the period before the usual measures of institutionalization indicate that autonomy is increasing. (It is worth noting that Polsby's [1968, p. 147] tables measuring autonomy of the U.S. House of Representatives show no upward trend until after the Civil War.) Although institutionalization ultimately reduces the role of individuals and hardens boundaries, embeddedness typically hinges on extraorganizational power and individuals whose careers began elsewhere and who have a stake in strengthening the legislature. That many organization builders go on to higher positions after their stint in the legislature may indicate increasing embeddedness, not a lack of institutionalization.

In an organization seeking to become embedded, the agents of change seek proximity to existing centers of power (i.e., entwinement) rather than distance. They are quite willing to sacrifice control of membership and opportunities to embarrass regime leaders to gain a measure of jurisdiction and organizational capacity. They realize that independence at this point means irrelevance and that future development demands sensitivity to existing power relations.

Where embeddedness ultimately leads cannot be reliably predicted. Legislatures with enhanced jurisdiction and capacity need not become familiar representative bodies; a process that produced liberal democratic assemblies in Europe may produce rule-making/censorial bodies or new bureaucratic organizations in China. It may produce bodies better adapted to rectify administration than to represent diverse social interests. It may create assemblies staffed with cadres and activists who possess information rather than a popular mandate, and whose role orientation is one of reasonable and fair-minded remonstrators rather than representatives (O'Brien, in press).

The story told here has been one of interorganizational wrangling, bureaucratic articulation, and opportunistic organizational development. The historical analogy raised at the outset reminds us that even the constituency-oriented parliaments of the West passed through a stage where occupying political space was crucial and executive-legislative relations had a strongly positive-sum nature—a stage before cost-benefit calculi changed and assertiveness and conflict became conducive to organizational growth. But we should resist extending the comparison unduly and using signs of embeddedness to project a Chinese trajectory toward democracy. The potentialities, vulnerabilities, and symbolic importance of embedded assemblies differ greatly in a 16th-century monarchy and a 20th-century party-state. Early similarities do not erase the importance of differing social and political

structures and different sequencing (i.e., in Europe an ideology of representative government grew with popular assemblies; in China, the mythology of popular sovereignty has preceded reality).

In a word, proto-parliamentary development does not imply democracy and we should not replace one set of teleological assumptions with another. The range of possible systemic outcomes is great and an embedded Chinese legislature may ultimately contribute to increased state capacity and a more efficient authoritarianism. The leap to democracy requires systemic, non-incremental changes and an opening to society beyond that entailed by legislative embeddedness.

Consideration of embeddedness draws attention to a stage of development before democracy is viable and before institutionalization as usually conceived begins. It highlights struggles that occur during the years when a legislature is endeavoring to survive long enough to institutionalize—the jostling for presence and jurisdiction when elements of absolutist ideology, weak or nonexistent electoral legitimacy, and powerful rivals make survival precarious. Focus on embeddedness reminds us that in many circumstances success as an organization takes precedence over success as a representative body engaged in the hurly-burly of conflict-ridden politics. Such research recognizes the importance of peace and quiet for early organizational development and suggests that under conditions of absolutism (or near-absolutism), acceptance and exploitation of subordination may be a means to organizational development. It deemphasizes the signal events of confrontation that dominate most legislative histories and instead notes the role of executive support and attention in organizational development. It acknowledges that political reliability and utility can create incentives to shift responsibilities to an organization that formerly lacked functions and reminds us that challenging executives poses high risks for emergent legislatures.

Appendix: Interview List

The following list includes citation number, interviewee position, and interview date for 39 open-ended interviews conducted in five cities (Wuhan, Tianjin, Beijing, Harbin, and Hong Kong). All respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

1. NPC deputy and law committee member—March 1989
2. Senior political scientist—March 1989
3. Senior NPC Legislative Affairs Commission member—April 1989
4. Senior NPC general office member—April 1989
5. City and district deputy—May 1990
6. Provincial deputy—May 1990
7. Law school professor—May 1990
8. City deputy and standing committee member—May 1990
9. District deputy—April 1991
10. District deputy—April 1991
11. City deputy—April 1991
12. District deputy—April 1991
13. Provincial deputy—April 1991
14. NPC, provincial and city deputy, county standing committee member—April 1991
15. Provincial deputy—April 1991
16. NPC, provincial, county, and township deputy—April 1991
17. Chairman city standing committee and provincial deputy—April 1991
18. Chief, Secretariat division, provincial general office—April 1991
19. Section chief, Secretariat division, provincial congress—April 1991
20. City congress deputy and standing committee member (provincial-level city)—May 1991
21. Law professor, committee adviser, and former NPC deputy—May 1991
22. District deputy (provincial-level city)—May 1991
23. Vice chairman, city congress standing committee (provincial-level city)—May 1991
24. Vice chairman, district congress standing committee (provincial-level city)—May 1991
25. Director general office, city congress standing committee (provincial-level city)—May 1991
26. Head of Secretariat, city congress standing committee (provincial-level city)—May 1991
27. Senior NPC general office member—May 1991
28. Political science professor—May 1991
29. NPC deputy and former city deputy—May 1991
30. Provincial deputy—May 1991
31. District deputy—May 1991
32. Chairman, district congress (provincial-level city)—October 1991
33. Vice chairman, district congress (provincial-level city)—October 1991
34. District congress standing committee member (provincial-level city)—October 1991
35. District and city deputy (provincial-level city)—October 1991
36. City congress deputy and standing committee member (provincial-level city)—October 1991
37. District congress deputy and standing committee member (provincial-level city)—October 1991
38. City congress deputy (provincial-level city)—October 1991
39. Provincial deputy and resident of Hong Kong—October 1991

REFERENCES

- Bao Yu'e, Pang Shaotang, & Sun Yezhong (1990). Guanyu Nanjingshi renmin daibiao dahui de diaocha [Investigation of the Nanjing city people's congress]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Bedeski, Robert E. (1986). China's 1979 election law and its implementation. *Electoral Studies*, 5, 153-165.
- Bisson, Thomas N. (1982). Celebration and persuasion: Reflections on the cultural evolution of medieval consultation. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 7, 181-204.
- Burns, John P. (1988). *Political participation in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Butt, Ronald. (1967). *The power of Parliament*. London: Constable.
- Butt, Ronald. (1989). *A history of Parliament: The Middle Ages*. London: Constable.
- Chang, Ta-kuang. (1987). The making of the Chinese bankruptcy law: A study in the Chinese legislative practice. *Harvard International Law Journal*, 28, 333-372.
- Cheng, Joseph Y. S. (1983). How to strengthen the National People's Congress and implement constitutionalism. *Chinese Law and Government*, 16, 88-122.
- Deng Xiaoping. (1980). On the reform of the system of party and state leadership. In *Selected works of Deng Xiaoping*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- Diao Zhenfei, & Zhou Qingnian. (1990). Woguo xianquji renmin daibiao dahui diaocha [Investigation of our country's county and district level people's congresses]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Elton, G. R. (1974). *Studies in Tudor and Stuart politics and government* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gao Shaolin. (1987, March 10). Gaijin shicha gongzuo [Improve inspection work]. *Renmin Ribao*, p. 4.
- Gao Xiufeng. (1986, October 9). Kan Tongliaooshi renda changweihui ruhe shuli ziji de quanwei [Viewing how the Tongliao people's congress standing committee has established its authority]. *Zhongguo Fazhibao*, p. 1.
- Gu Laixun, Cao Wenguang, Li Jianwei, & Zhang Qian. (1990). Jiaqiang renda changweihui jianshe fahui renda changweihui zuoyong [Strengthen people's congress standing committee structure and bring into play the role of standing committees]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Harriss, G. L. (1981). The formation of Parliament, 1272-1377. In R. G. Davies & J. H. Denton (Eds.), *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hibbing, John R. (1988). Legislative institutionalization with illustrations from the British House of Commons. *American Journal of Political Science*, 32, 681-712.
- Holt, J. C. (1981). The prehistory of Parliament. In R. G. Davies & J. H. Denton (Eds.), *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jacobs, J. Bruce. (1991). Elections in China. *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 25, 171-200.
- Ji Yu. (1990). Guanyu difang renda daibiao suzhi de diaocha yu yanjiu [Investigation and research on local people's congress deputies' quality]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Jiang Fukun. (1989). Gaige he wanshan minzhu xuanju zhidu [Reform and improve the democratic electoral system]. *Lilun Neican*, 9, 10-11.
- Jiang Zemin. (1990). Guanyu jianchi he wanshan renmin daibiao dahui zhidu [On upholding and perfecting the people's congress system]. In Quanguo Renda Changweihui Bangongting Yanjiushi (Ed.), *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Wenjian Ziliao*

- Huibian, 1949-90* [Document and materials collection of people's congresses, 1949-1990]. Beijing: Zhongguo Minzhu Fazhi Chubanshe.
- Jiao Shiyang. (1990). Shilun difang renda quanli jizhi gongneng de gaishan [Discussing improving local people's congress power mechanism and functions]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Kuan, Hsin-chi. (1984). New departures in China's Constitution. *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 17, 53-68.
- Liang Yukai, Liu Yuelun, & Li Zhaoxin. (1990). Guanyu jinyibu gaishan xian renda changweihui de zhineng zuoyong he zuzhi jianshe de yanjiu baogao [Research report on further improving the functions, role and organizational construction of county people's congress standing committees]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Liu Yueguang. (1990). Guanyu Wuhanshi renda xingshi jiandu zhineng de diaocha baogao [Investigation report on the Wuhan city people's congress exercise of supervisory powers]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Major, J. Russell. (1980). *Representative government in early modern France*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- McCormick, Barrett L. (1990). *Political reform in post-Mao China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Myers, A. R. (1981). Parliament, 1422-1509. In R. G. Davies & H. H. Denton (Eds.), *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Nathan, Andrew J. (1985). *Chinese democracy*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Nie Yunlin. (1988). *Zhongguo Shehuizhuyi Minzhu Zhidu de Fazhan he Xiankuang* [China's socialist democratic system's development and current situation]. Shijiazhuang: Hebei Chubanshe.
- O'Brien, Kevin J. (1990a). Is China's National People's Congress a conservative legislature? *Asian Survey*, 30, 782-794.
- O'Brien, Kevin J. (1990b). *Reform without liberalization: China's National People's Congress and the politics of institutional change*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Brien, Kevin J. (in press). Agents and remonstrators: Role accumulation by Chinese People's Congress deputies. *China Quarterly*, 138.
- Peng Shaohuai. (1991). Dui jiaqiang guojia quanli jiguan jiandu gongzuo de jidian renshi [Several points to understand about strengthening state organ supervision work]. Typescript, Wuhan People's Congress Standing Committee Research Office.
- Peng Zhen. (1989). *Lun Xin Shiqi de Shehuizhuyi Minzhu yu Fazhi Jianshe* [On socialist democracy and legal development in the new period]. Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe.
- Polsby, Nelson W. (1968). Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives. *American Political Science Review*, 62, 144-168.
- Richardson, H. G., & Sayles, G. O. (1981). *The English Parliament in the Middle Ages*. London: Hambledon.
- Russell, Conrad S. R. (1982). Monarchies, wars, and estates in England, France, and Spain, c. 1580-c. 1640. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 7, 205-220.
- Sisson, Richard. (1973). Comparative legislative institutionalization: A theoretical exploration. In Allan Kornberg (Ed.), *Legislatures in comparative perspective*. New York: David McKay.
- Solinger, Dorothy J. (1982). The Fifth National People's Congress and the process of policy-making: Reform, readjustment and opposition. *Asian Survey*, 22, 1238-1275.

- Special Commentator. (1987, August 22). Gaishan dang dui renda gongzuo de lingdao [Improve party leadership of people's congresses]. *Zhongguo Fazhibao*, p. 3.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. (1978). *Theoretical methods in social history*. New York: Academic Press.
- Stubbs, William. (1896). *The constitutional history of England*, Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Suzhou Daxue Zhengzhixi Ketu Zu. (1990). Difang renda xianzhuang guji ji gaige de jiben silu [An assessment of the current situation and fundamental thinking behind local people's congress reform]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Tilly, Charles. (1981). *As sociology meets history*. New York: Academic Press.
- Wang Yukai. (1990). Zhiyue difang renda zuoyong fahui de zhuyao zhangai jiqi gaige de duice [Important obstacles that restrict local people's congresses from playing their role and reform countermeasures]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Wang Zimu. (1990). Wanshan xianqu xuanju de ruogan wenti tansuo [Exploring certain issues in perfecting district and county elections]. In Quanguo Renda Changweihui Bangongting Yanjiu Shi (Ed.), *Lun Woguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Zhidu Jianshe* [On construction of our country's people's congress system]. Beijing: Zhongguo Minzhu Fazhi Chubanshe.
- Weng, Byron. (1982). Some key aspects of the 1982 Draft Constitution of the PRC. *China Quarterly*, 91, 492-506.
- Womack, Brantly. (1982). The 1980 county-level elections in China: Experiment in democratic modernization. *Asian Survey*, 22, 261-277.
- Wu Wentai. (1990). Guanyu dang zuzhi he renda guanxi de jige wenti tansuo [Exploration of several issues concerning party organizations and people's congresses]. In Quanguo Renda Changweihui Bangongting Yanjiu Shi (Ed.), *Lun Woguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui Zhidu Jianshe* [Construction of our country's people's congress system]. Beijing: Zhongguo Minzhu Fazhi Chubanshe.
- Wuhanshi Renda Changweihui Yanjiushi. (1990). Nuli jianshe you quanwei de difang guojia quanli jiguan [Work hard to establish a local power organ with authority]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Xu Chongde. (1987). *Renmin daibiao bibe* [Essentials for people's deputies]. Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe.
- Xu Datong, & Wu Chunhua. (1990). Guanyu Tianjin quxianji renda daibiao qingkuang de diaocha yanjiu baogao [Research report on district and county level people's deputies in Tianjin]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Xu Zhifu. (1990). Renda daibiao zai minzhu zhengzhi jianshe zhong de zuoyong [The role of people's congress deputies in democratic political construction]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Yu Keping, & Wang Fuchun. (1990). Beijingshi Haidianqu, Dongchengqu renda daibiao suzhi wenti de chouyang fenxi [Beijing's Haidian and Dongcheng districts sampled analysis of issues in people's deputy quality]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Yu Shi. (1988). She xianji renda changweihui shi yixiang zhongyao gaige [Establishing county-level people's congress standing committees is an important reform]. *Neibu Wengao*, 23, 12-14.
- Yu Zhinan. (1991). Fahui quanli jiguan zuoyong yingzhuyi de wenti [Issues to pay attention to in bringing into play the role of power organs]. Typescript.

- Zhang Pingli. (1987, October 31). Yao jiaqiang renda de falij jiandu [We must strengthen the NPC's legal supervision]. *Renmin Ribao* (Overseas Edition), p. 2.
- Zhang Yongtao, Tang Jianzhong, & Zong Jianming. (1990). Guanyu Jiangsusheng renda changweihui de diaoyan baogao [Investigation report on the Jiangsu province people's congress standing committee]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Zhang Youyu. (1987, November 2). Dangzheng fenkai shi zhengzhi tizhi gaige de guanjian [Dividing party and state is the crux of political institutional reform]. *Shijie Jingji Daobao*, p. 13.
- Zhao Baoxu, & Wu Zhilun (Eds.). (1990). *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda* [Democratic politics and local people's congresses]. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Zhao Chenggen. (1990). Hangzhoushi renda daibiao diaocha fenxi [Investigation and analysis of the Hangzhou people's deputies]. In Zhao Baoxu & Wu Zhilun (Eds.), *Minzhu zhengzhi yu difang renda*. Xian: Shaanxi Chubanshe.
- Zhongguo renmin daibiao dahui changwu weiyuanhui yishi guize [Proceedings regulations of the National People's Congress Standing Committee]. (1987, November 25). *Renmin Ribao* (Overseas Edition).
- Zi Mu. (1986). Shixian woguo zhengzhi minzhuhua de biyou zhi lu shi wanshan renmin daibiao dahui zhidu [Perfecting the people's congress system is the only way to realize our country's political democratization]. *Jingji Yanjiu Cankao Ziliao*, 161, 29-39.

Kevin J. O'Brien is an associate professor of political science at Ohio State University. He is the author of Reform Without Liberalization: China's National People's Congress and the Politics of Institutional Change (Cambridge, 1990) and his current research focuses on village political institutions, state-society relations, and Chinese political reform.