The Contradictory Impact of Transnational AIDS Institutions on State Repression in China, 1989–2013[1]

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Existing research has focused on the extent to which transnational interventions compel recalcitrant governments to reduce levels of domestic repression, but few have considered how such interventions might also provoke new forms of repression. Using a longitudinal study of repression against AIDS activism in China between 1989 and 2013, the author proposes that transnational institutions' provision of material resources and reshaping of organizational rules can transform a domestic repressive apparatus in specific policy areas. The intervention of transnational AIDS institutions not only constrained traditional violent coercion but also generated new forms of "diplomatic repression" through (1) changing repressive motives by moving AIDS from the margin to the center of mainstream politics and (2) supplying resources, networks, and models of action that enabled government organizations to reformulate health social organizations as new repressive actors with innovative repertoires of strategies inside and outside China's territory.

External intervention to change governments' behavior in other countries is common in world politics. But efforts to decrease human rights abuses in specific policy areas are a recent development by transnational institutions. This trend has been documented with large-scale quantitative data, but

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scholars have yet to explain fully how these efforts play out on the ground or what happens to activists in repressive environments. Do external interventions matter in strong authoritarian states? And how precisely do transnational institutions affect repression?

This article examines the impact of external interventions on authoritarian repression. Recent work in international relations and human rights studies by political scientists and sociologists challenges traditional state-centered approaches to repression and highlights the significance of transnational factors. This work largely uses what I call a punitive model to demonstrate how external interventions put pressure on recalcitrant governments to correct their behavior and decrease the level of violent coercion through sanctions or naming and shaming (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Hovi, Huseby, and Sprinz 2005; Hathaway 2007; Wong 2012; Hafner-Burton 2013). This approach suggests that a given transnational institution's effects hinge on whether the targeted governments obey external demands or reject them (Finnemore 1996; Sikkink 2011; Goodman and Jinks 2013). Scholars have identified domestic conditions—such as democracy level, economic development, or a country's links to world society (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007; Simmons 2009; Kim and Trumbore 2010; Cole 2012; Helfer and Voeten 2014)—as important factors that shape compliance (or lack thereof), in addition to the strength of the transnational institutions.

The punitive model has underpinned many insightful analyses, yet the current research has been curiously one-dimensional. In focusing in the abstract on how a country's aggregate level of repression changes in reaction to external interventions, this literature has neglected concrete interactions between transnational institutions and domestic government organizations and how they may affect transnational impact. As Hafner-Burton (2012) notes, the focus on macrolevel structural factors has led to a near absence of actors and agency. This oversight is costly when studies in other areas have established that examining the outcome of transnational institutions' efforts requires attention to subnational actors and context-specific action (Yashar 2005; Liu 2006; Merry 2006). States rarely enact a single response to human rights pressure; rather, more often a multifaceted process involves multiple options and actions of government agencies. The punitive model is not attuned to how various bureaucrats interpret transnational demands and then decide how to respond.

These analytical problems are highlighted when we try to assess the impact of transnational AIDS institutions in China. In the early 2000s, China's HIV/AIDS problems raised concern around the world. Extensive external interventions pushed the Chinese government to end its repression of AIDS

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activism. Various entities—from the United Nations, the World Bank, Western governments, and foreign media, to transnational AIDS advocacy networks—invested heavily in criticizing the Chinese government and pushing it to participate in transnational AIDS programs and conventions. Starting in 2003, the pressure began to yield results. The central government opened up to external forces and drastically reduced its overt repression of AIDS advocates. But transnational engagement was not a magic bullet. Instead, external interventions triggered dual-faceted changes in the state's response to Chinese AIDS activism between 2004 and 2013: a decrease in the use of violence and the adoption of indirect, covert, and nonviolent operations to both deter and control the domestic AIDS movement.

The challenge posed by the Chinese case for theories of transnational institutions is how to examine contradictions in external interventions and their paradoxical outcomes. Conventional wisdom would predict little transnational effect in the 2000s, during which time the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) paired politically conservative moves with hardline crackdowns on dissent (Gallagher 2005; Zhao 2009). As in Russia, Iran, and Sudan, the Chinese regime's political structure is not susceptible to external pressure, especially as its military and economic power grows (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Levitsky and Way 2005; Drury and Li 2006).

The punitive model, in turn, would direct our attention to the rise of transnational AIDS institutions and the strong political support and resources they have garnered since 2000 (World Health Organization 2009). Transnational AIDS institutions have sought to promote a rights-based policy approach to AIDS prevention and treatment worldwide. The punitive hypothesis would anticipate a purely quantitative decline of violence against China's AIDS activism in response. Yet in China, as in other places such as the Middle East, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, the outcomes of transnational intervention have been much more diverse than fluctuations in the quantity of abuse alone (Ron 1997; Risse et al. 1999; Cardenas 2007).

We need, rather, to recognize and explain how transnational impact has also led to changes in the specific types and forms of repression. To expand the punitive model, I propose a "transnational constitutive model" that builds on scholarship in studies of the state, repression, and transnational relations. This model focuses on the mesolevel mechanisms that transmit transnational precepts to government organizations and shape their incentives and actions. Punishments matter, but external interventions do not simply constrain or correct repression. Indeed, I argue that interventions can trigger new repressive practices. More specifically, transnational institutions provide resources, networks, cultural rules, and organizational models that can reshape governments' objectives of repression and enable them to develop new repressive actors and methods. Instead of focusing only on how external interventions achieve intended correction, the constitutive model

reveals that transnational interactions can also generate unintended effects. External interventions do not lead to unified compliance or noncompliance. The state is not a unitary totality that passively accepts or objects to interventions; rather, its organizational subunits actively interpret, translate, and, in some instances, appropriate outside influences to suit their own organizational interests.

Transnational AIDS institutions not only affected the repression level against Chinese AIDS activism but also altered the repressive practices of different state units—specifically, health, police, and security departments—in various ways. To be sure, state violence decreased, but at the same time, new, nonviolent state practices emerged that reflected different repressive objectives, actors, and methods.

These paradoxical effects unfolded in two ways. First, transnational AIDS institutions changed the preferences of various state subunits by moving AIDS from the margin to the center of mainstream politics. Health departments were motivated to embrace external interventions and align AIDS programs with the requirements of transnational entities from which they received legitimacy and funds. Yet transnational expectations of civil society conflicted with the CCP's priority: defending socialist sovereignty. The reconciliation of these two agendas required a shift in the state's overall objective, from extinguishing all AIDS activism to shaping it in a particular direction.

Second, external interventions offered organizational forms, material resources, and framing language that government organizations drew on—through mimicry/copying and editing/reshaping—to create new repressive actors with new repertoires of strategies to navigate the transnational environment. Imitating and reshaping the transnational nongovernmental organization (NGO) model, government agents developed health social organizations (HSOs) as a new type of semigovernment agent to operate alongside more traditional security and police agents at both the domestic and transnational levels. The characteristics of repression also transitioned from open and direct coercion such as battery, detention, arrest, and interrogation to covert and indirect action such as surveillance, co-optation, conflict displacement, and the use of informants inside and outside China's territory. For example, HSOs used transnational funds to diminish trust and undermine transnational coalitions of local activists.

Interactions between transnational institutions and state subunits give rise to what I call "diplomatic repression"[2]—adopting and adapting transnational democratic templates and resources for the purpose of shaping, preempting, or demobilizing current and future challenges to the state, while simultaneously complying with transnational rules. External interventions

[2] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this term.

are not always a story of neatly divided antagonists, with foreign entities on one side and national governments on the other. Rather they can lead to innovations in the repressive practices of certain state subunits. Thus, although external interventions aimed to change China's authoritarian AIDS response, they mobilized Chinese bureaucrats to study transnational rules and models and reformulate them to gain external endorsement while fortifying existing authority structures in public health.

FROM INTENDED TO UNINTENDED TRANSNATIONAL IMPACT

An increasing number of foreign actors have come to invest heavily in changing the repressive conduct of national governments (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007; Franklin 2008; Elliot 2011; Kelley 2012; Fariss 2014). Scholars hold opposing views, however, about whether external interventions actually improve human rights practices (Hafner-Burton 2014; Krasner and Weinstein 2014). One way beyond this impasse, I argue, is to shift analytical focus from only the quantitative levels of abuse to how transnational institutions actually influence the behavior of government organizations responsible for repression. To do so, I draw on institutional perspectives that broaden the punitive model in order to examine both intended and unintended transnational effects on political repression.

Punitive Model

The punitive model seeks to explain state repression by looking beyond the domestic context itself to consider the influence of transnational institutions. It divides internally into two different approaches: realist versus constructivist.

The realist approach examines how external interventions can reduce repression through bilateral aid withdrawal (Neumayer 2003; Ahmed 2012; Aronow, Carnegie, and Marinov 2012) and multilateral or unilateral political and economic sanctions (Wood 2008; Peksen 2012). Assuming that states are sensitive to the distribution of power in world politics, sanctions are used to augment targeted states' repressive resources and destabilize their governing elite coalitions (Kaempfer, Lowenberg, and Mertens 2004; Lektzian and Souva 2007; Allen 2008). The outcome is ascribed to the power and strength of external constraints compared to those of targeted states (Nielsen 2013).

The constructivist approach concentrates on another form of punishment: transnational advocacy campaigns publicizing rights violations (naming) in order to press governments to change their behaviors so as to improve their reputations (shaming; Zartner and Ramos 2011; Krain 2012). Risse et al. (1999) posited an influential spiral model to describe this process. The logic

at work here is to increase the normative cost of repression (Schmitz and Sikkink 2013).

Whether theorizing transnational impact on power, money, or reputation, the realist and constructivist approaches share one core research question: Why and how do targeted countries comply? The consensus is that external interventions have higher chances of success in (semi-)democratic states (Cole 2005; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007). In authoritarian countries, external interventions often have no more than tenuous influence.

Some studies highlight the links between countries and transnational rules (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007; Murdie and Davis 2012). The more involved a government is in transnational institutions, the more likely it is to embrace transnational practice (Meyer et al. 1997; Hafner-Burton 2009). When domestic factors are not favorable, scholars also consider how transnational institutions may indirectly affect state repression by strengthening domestic mobilization (della Porta et al. 2006; Starr, Fernandez, and Scholl 2011) or changing the configuration of national political structures (Tarrow 2001, 2005).

Yet for all this research attention to how domestic conditions affect transnational impact, focus on the structural aspects of political regimes far outweighs that on domestic institutions. Studies seldom trace the concrete processes through which interventions unfold. Some exceptions find that the constellations of government organizations, their interests, power differentials, and resulting conflict dynamics are critical to the intervention outcome. Ron (1997, 2003), for example, demonstrates that various Israeli state agencies changed interrogation methods in order to continue torture but also maintain the appearance of compliance with transnational pressures. Ron's study of government organizations highlights transnational impact as neither a zero-sum game nor a unidirectional top-down process. Other studies have likewise revealed subnational variations in a given government's reaction to transnational pressure (Cardenas 2007; Shor 2008). These accounts call for more attention to substate dynamics and to state responses to external interventions as a sometimes internally contested process.

Another shortcoming is that empirical studies predominantly concentrate on the intended effect of interventions: whether the quantitative degree of repression decreases. Governments' response to external demands is thus often reduced to a dichotomy between resistance and compliance. These options, however, do not exhaust the many ways in which external interventions may shape repression. Empirical evidence indicates diverse government responses—including ones unintended by transnational institutions (Risse et al. 1999; Darden 2013). As transnational efforts decrease targeted abuse, they may simultaneously provoke innovative oppositional practices (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009). Governments shamed globally for torture, for example, often substitute imprisonment and disappearance of subjects for

torture, in order to avoid punishment (Conrad and DeMeritt 2014). Many single-party regimes respond to external pressures by increasing funding for patronage that allows them to maintain repression (Escribà-Folch and Wright 2010). We therefore need studies that look at the full spectrum of transnational effects.

Institutional Modification

The work of contentious politics scholars is useful here, for it highlights different types of repressive activities, calling the prevalent focus on violent coercion into question (Oliver 2008; Shriver and Adams 2010; Earl 2011). These studies examine the nonviolent, covert, indirect, and "softer" strategies of repression. For example, wiretaps and undercover informants can diminish trust and cause people to withdraw from activism (Marx 1974). In some extreme cases, U.K. and U.S. government agents and their informants built personal relations—including sex—with targeted activists under false pretenses to infiltrate and disrupt activist groups. Not only do states have an arsenal of repressive tools at their disposal (McPhail and McCarthy 2005; Soule and Davenport 2009), there has also been a rise in tactical innovations of repression (King and Waddington 2006; de Lint and Hall 2009; Rafail 2010; Hibou 2011; O'Brien and Deng 2013), including "a range of subtle but painful sanctions" (Slater and Fenner 2011, p. 22) conducted by both government agents and nongovernment third parties, such as ridicule, stigma, and silencing (Ferree 2005).

This line of research meshes well with an organizational account of repression not as a "homogeneous block" (Shor 2008, p. 122) predetermined by a country's overall political structure. Repression is also affected by institutional expectations and organizational practices (Davenport and Loyle 2012). Cunningham (2004), for example, shows that the complicated organizational structure and culture of the Federal Bureau of Investigation directed its motives and strategies of repressive operations (see also Cunningham and Browning 2004). Lee and Zhang (2013) also highlight the importance of examining bureaucratic processes through which government agents interact with aggrieved citizens and protesters. Soule and Earl's (2006) study further demonstrates that local agents act on behalf of their own organizational interests rather than those of the political regime.

By analyzing repression as a varied, even internally conflicted, series of organizational practices, this scholarship explores what larger governance goals are pursued via repression in differing domains and what substantial politics are at stake (Davenport and Sullivan 2013). For example, Gamson (1989) shows that the expansion of covert action in the United States is connected to the expansion of the national security bureaucracy. Meanwhile, in authoritarian contexts like China, government officials handle environ-

mental activism differently from other activism, given the different decision-making structure in environmental governance (Friedman 2009; Xie and Van der Heijden 2010). Although few in number, these studies question the presence of unified domestic political elite principals and recognize the heterogeneity of repression practices across issue domains in a given country.

The move toward disaggregating the monolithic repressive apparatus fits an institutionalist view of states as complex organizations with coercive power (Skocpol 1979; Alford and Friedland 1985; Weir and Skocpol 1985; Laumann and Knoke 1987; Hooks 1990; Lieberthal and Lampton 1992). According to this perspective, a state is composed of multiple heterogeneous policy domains that operate more or less autonomously. They have their own central issues, processes, government organizations, and important stakeholders (Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005). This approach contrasts with the structural approach prevalent in the literature on non-Western countries, which views the state as a single unitary entity, within which the administrative characteristics of state agents are evenly distributed (Kohli 2004). The latter viewpoint assumes that the state responds to challenges in a coherent way based on macrolevel political structural factors such as state strength and capacity (Fearon and Laitin 2003). In contrast, institutionalist analyses are attentive to within-state variations. They ask how self-interested government organizations are attuned to the particular institutional arrangements and practices in their policy domain (Irons 2006; Steinman 2012).

These lines of analysis make two points. First, government organizations are creative agents that choose between and develop different types of repression. Second, shifts in their institutional environments may lead those organizations to change the forms of their repressive practice. Repression studies and the institutionalist theory of the state attend primarily to domestic context. A transnational constitutive model integrates institutional modification with transnational studies in order to expand the punitive model.

Transnational Constitutive Model

I follow Earl in using Tilly's broad definition of repression as "any action by another group which raises the contender's cost of collective action" (Tilly 1978, p. 100; cited by Earl [2003, p. 46]). The core proposition of the constitutive model is that transnational institutions may constrain existing authoritarian repressive practices and enable new ones by provoking changes in the institutional environment. This approach expands the punitive model by shifting the analytical focus from the national to the subnational level, from the quantity to the form of repression, and from the corrective to the generative effects of transnational impact.

In particular, the model is attentive to government organizations' responses to external interventions. First, external interventions may cause

changes in the environment of certain policy domains, thus mobilizing subunits of governments to alter repression. I refer to it as the *mobilizing effect* of transnational constitutive impact. Second, transnational institutions supply material and network resources, as well as cultural rules and organizational models that government organizations may use to change their repressive practices through mimicry/copying (imitation) and editing/reshaping (transposing and reappropriating). I refer to these as the *institutional effects* of transnational constitutive impact.[3] Building on Earl's (2004) analysis, I argue that the first mobilizing effect alters the particular ends to which repressive action is put (repressive motives); the second institutional effect changes the organizational models (repressive actors) and strategies (repertoire of strategies) available to government organizations (see fig. 1 for a summary).

Understanding the mobilizing effect of transnational interventions requires recognizing that transnational institutions aim to influence specific government organizations rather than the general political structure in targeted countries. Transnational institutions are "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations" (Krasner 1983, p. 2). They are new forms of regulation that are no longer confined to hierarchical state activities. Nonstate actors, both for-profit and nonprofit, participate in policy making at multiple levels in areas such as health, environment, labor, and trade (Keohane 2002; Bartley 2007, 2014; Chorev 2012*a*; Lim and Tsutsui 2012; Reinecke, Manning, and von Hagen 2012). Transnational institutions are composed of expectations that delimit "the range of legitimate or admissible behavior" (Rittberger 1993, p. xii) and material and network resources that help to realize those expectations. For example, transnational AIDS institutions are "a blueprint for financing, resourcing, coordinating and/or implementing disease control across at least several countries in more than one region of the world" (Brugha 2008, p. 72) that sustains regular interaction across national boundaries between state and nonstate organizations. External sources of funding continue to account for almost half of all HIV-related spending in low- and middle-income countries, which heavily affects how individual health systems govern HIV/AIDS.[4]

Repressive motives.—Transnational institutions may affect government organizations' repressive motives—their definition and perception of the threat posed by domestic social movements. I argue that repressive motives

[3] I extend the terms from transnational mobilization (Kay 2005) to repression.

[4] "Donor Government Funding for HIV in Low- and Middle-Income Countries in 2016," Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Joint United States Program on HIV/AIDS, July 2017.

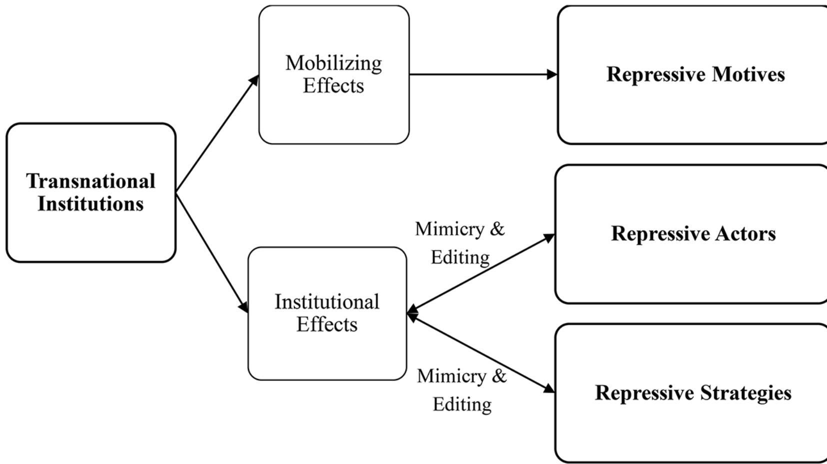

FIG. 1.—The constitutive impact of transnational institutions on repressive practice

cannot be derived solely from the intrinsic attributes of activism itself, because government organizations do not necessarily have preordained adverse relations with social movements. Rather, examining the threat perception of activism bears on how a given government organization diagnoses the challenges, chooses what interests to pursue or defend in repression, and decides how to succeed. These choices in turn guide the organization's selection of repressive agents and actions. Repressive motives change along three axes: the perception of the type of activism (nonpolitical/political), its scale (local/cross-regional), and the amount of pressure it exerts (low/high).

Not all government agencies experience external interventions in the same way. As the punitive model points out, transnational institutions can challenge a state's authority. Nevertheless, without threatening to transform the political structure as a whole, external interventions can convince some groups of domestic elites that they might actually benefit from transnational engagement (Krasner and Weinstein 2014). In some authoritarian countries, domestic political elites have adopted external democratic practices adverse to their political ideology because such practices serve their objective: retaining or expanding power (Wright 2009).

The mobilizing efficacy of transnational institutions thus hinges on how external interventions can alter what is at stake for certain government agencies. Transnational AIDS institutions did not have the leverage to push the Chinese state as a whole to change. But external interventions were able to propel health departments—facing resource scarcity and bureaucratic marginalization at the time—to care about transnational AIDS institutions

and respond to human rights pressure. Because transnational institutions prioritize civil society engagement and the CCP fears public displays of social discontent, how health departments responded to these seemingly incompatible demands changed their goals of repression.

Let us turn next to the institutional effects of transnational interventions. Government organizations do not comply passively with external pressures or object to them directly; rather, they decide what meeting the external demands entails and devise their responses accordingly. It is important to note that transnational institutions may bolster the capacities of government organizations. One exceptional study by Dale and Samara (2008) finds that transnational legal systems were instrumental to the George W. Bush administration in overcoming obstacles and running the Extraordinary Rendition Program for torture. Indeed, relations, practices, and discourses embodied in transnational institutions may act as a remedy for a lack of bureaucratic mechanisms at the national level and help to create new repressive actors and strategies. The issue here is the array of government organizational responses through which repressive practice can be deconstructed, reformulated, and reconsolidated.

The interface between transnational and domestic entities is not predetermined or linear but dynamic, situated, ambiguous, and contingent (Shachar 2001; Campbell 2004; Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007; Larson and Aminzade 2007). Empirical evidence reveals that any treaty, convention, program, protocol, or practice from overseas has to be transmitted into domestic settings at particular historical moments, provoking negotiation and conflict among domestic actors (Long 2001; Merry 2006; Brysk 2013). Scholars suggest concepts such as translation and editing to demonstrate how domestic actors may reconstruct elements drawn from outside (Boyle 2005; Mosse 2005; Sahlin and Wedlin 2008; Suárez and Bromley 2016). As I outline further below, I use the terms “mimicry” and “editing” to capture the processes by which Chinese government organizations engaged with transnational institutions to give rise to new repressive actors and strategies to effect diplomatic repression.

Repressive actors.—Transnational institutions indicate the relevant actors and the circumstances under which they operate, especially at the transnational level in a specific policy domain. Transnational engagement thus challenges traditional repressive actors such as police and security forces in authoritarian contexts. One of the major issues for authoritarian regimes is how to police transnational advocacy activities that often exist beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the nation-state (Wiest 2007).

Just as transnational engagement can restrain current domestic actors, so too can domestic government organizations play transnational interests to their advantage (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). For example, government or-

ganizations may make use of transnational institutions not only to modify how repressive actors affiliate with the government and transnational organizations but also to create wholly new actors. As I will show, in China, health departments previously repressed AIDS activists in cooperation with police and security departments. Now health departments use material resources from overseas to imitate transnational organizational models and blend them with existing socialist organizational elements. Specifically, semigovernmental HSOs were reformed to cope with the transnational audience and repress AIDS activism.

Repertoires of strategies.—Repressive actors select from a repertoire of actions available to them at any given time. They are strategic choice makers, but with constraints. Transnational institutions open up new battlegrounds of conflict beyond national boundaries, shaping what action could and should be taken in which domain for what purpose. In particular, transnational institutions fuel the development of supranational networks and spaces through which activists can learn new skills and ideas (Tarrow 2001; Sikkink 2005; della Porta et al. 2006). Government organizations can draw on the same networks and spaces—such as international conferences and forums (Smith et al. 2007)—to expand their repertoire of repressive strategies.

The extant forms of repressive strategies reflect the configuration of distinct domestic institutions. Diplomatic repression takes an array of elements from transnational institutions and repurposes them into repressive action, under the guise of compliance. This strategy does not seek to eliminate opposition directly; it misdirects, discredits, neutralizes, or suppresses activism indirectly. It involves not only sanctions but also rewards arising from transnational engagement.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

This article answers the call for more empirical research on authoritarian countries. Transnational influence cannot easily reach these difficult cases, especially outside Latin America and Eastern Europe (Hafner-Burton 2012). As one of the strongest authoritarian countries, China is a methodologically useful case. It renders transnational explanations falsifiable and allows me to build a more robust model of the impact of transnational institutions on domestic repression. China, and the effects of transnational AIDS institutions therein, is a strategic research site (Emigh 1997; Kiser and Cai 2003) with which I can build a single-case sequential comparison (Haydu 1998) of government responses to AIDS activism before and after external interventions occurred in the early 2000s.

This article is based on fieldwork I conducted from 2006 to 2013. As della Porta (1996) points out, the analytical challenges inherent in state repression

studies are that they are typically built on short-term cases. The longitudinal research design permits me to track the processes of external intervention and state behavior change. More specifically, I use the incorporated comparison method that "analyzes a cumulative process through time- and space-differentiated instances of a historically singular process" (McMichael 1990, p. 392). Incorporated comparison views social changes as outcomes of historical processes unfolding across local, national, and global levels at the same time. This method aims not only to take into account the significance of world politics, discounted in many historical comparative studies, but also to overcome the "deterministic or reductionist tendencies" of globalization studies that concentrate on the top-down effects of transnational forces (Buttel 2000, p. 120).

Accordingly, I adopt a multisite research design attentive to both shifts over time and actors and processes connecting various political levels in order to identify historical sequencing and within-case changes (George and Bennett 2005; Mahoney 2007) of the dynamics between transnational AIDS institutions, the state, and grassroots advocacy groups between 1989 and 2013 (see the appendix, table A1, for a summary). I follow Thornton and Ocasio (1999) and Bartley (2007) in using a historical analysis to specify the evolution of transnational AIDS institutions. Participant observation was conducted at the Chinese Secretariat for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (hereafter, the Global Fund) in Beijing in 2009. The Global Fund is the most influential transnational AIDS institutional entity, providing 25% of all international funding for AIDS intervention. The ethnography provided a map for subsequent archival research between 2009 and 2013. I established a historical document data set including newspapers; United Nations resolutions, reports, and briefs; and Global Fund guidelines and implementations between 1981 and 2013, supplemented by the reports of major international foundations and human rights organizations.

My analysis of state repression combines three types of evidence: (1) interviews with government agents who were involved in responding to activist activities, (2) participant observations and interviews with Chinese AIDS activists, and (3) official documents and news reports, as well as secondary literature in Chinese related to regulating and policing AIDS activism. Interviews were conducted in 2009 and 2013 with 42 officials from 25 offices in departments including health, civil affairs, foreign affairs, police, and homeland security at the central and provincial government levels. Most interviews were unstructured and allowed the subjects to lead the conversations. Participant officials considered the interviews as opportunities to showcase their accomplishments and talk about the specific challenges their individual departments were facing in dealing with booming transnational activism. They were also interested in hearing what solutions scholars could

suggest. Interviews lasted between two and three hours; all but four were recorded and transcribed in Chinese. I took notes for the unrecorded interviews.

My gender and age affected the data collection. One senior Chinese male professor provided me with highly restricted access to Chinese government departments. He was present at 36 interviews. As he opened the conversation and asked questions in the first half hour, I was perceived as a young female assistant. When senior participants ignored me, junior ones actively volunteered information to answer my questions after the formal interviews were over. Meals and drinks were arranged for us to have informal conversations with participants after interviews.[5]

The reliability of my interview evidence with government agents is supported by the level of agreement vis-à-vis critical details in both ethnographic and interview evidence with 94 activists and their group members. In particular, I traced three kinds of AIDS grassroots groups: gay men in urban areas, female sex workers in urban areas, and rural peasants living with HIV/AIDS. Over the course of six years, I participated in AIDS activism and recorded the lived experience of AIDS activists, who were responding to subtle changes in state repression as they occurred—from initial optimism and cheeriness over the reduction in state violence, to a rise of distrust and conflict among activists, to eventual advocacy coalition dissolution. Following this process was especially important for understanding how covert and implicit repression wreaks damage comparable to violence but in a much less visible way. I was able to observe these events and their consequences long afterward.

Coping with various repressive practices was a regular part of my fieldwork. Advocates taught me how to cope with surveillance, prepare for break-ins, and restrict internal communication once I started working as a volunteer for grassroots groups. I observed and, to an extent, suffered alongside my subjects as distrust and conflict spread among grassroots groups.[6] With widespread chilling effects, especially after 2010, covert repression also impeded my data collection when activist groups constantly suspected that others, including researchers, were infiltrators. I was forced to alter my data collection plans multiple times and switch to a disposable phone and coded language to communicate with activists.

[5] The male colleague also helped to counter the verbal and physical sexual harassment that was rather commonly directed at me during these interactions.

[6] Local police interviewed some of my academic colleagues in Beijing regarding my political affiliations and funding sources, and I myself was monitored, stalked, and detained. Even though my connections with local elite academic institutions shielded me from further prosecution, I experienced intense anxiety, insomnia, fear, and paranoia for an extended time. These struggles led me to reflect on the violent detrimental effects that nonviolent repression has on activists.

THE CASE: AIDS ACTIVISM IN CHINA

China's AIDS activism mainly developed around two issues: homosexuality and blood contamination. Initial advocacy activities emerged in urban areas in the early 1990s, when homosexuality was listed as a form of sexual orientation disorder under the category of sexual perversion. Politically, since 1980, the CCP strengthened its policy of silence regarding homosexuality and imposed arbitrary administrative penalties for engaging in homosexual conduct. Gay activists thus chose to engage with public health issues in order to affirm the gay community and de-pathologize homosexuality.

In the early 2000s activists turned their attention to a scandal that had caused China's largest AIDS outbreak to develop in the mid-1990s among commercial plasma donors in rural areas in east-central provinces. At the time, the profitability of blood drew governments at various levels into the plasma industry. Through promoting an efficient but dangerous technique of collecting blood, plasma collection stations were opened in poor rural regions where peasants could be easily recruited as cheap raw material.[7] High-risk procedures, combined with recycled medical instruments, untrained staff, and no blood testing, contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The average increase in reported HIV infection was around 30% annually between 1995 and 2000 (Cui, Liau, and Wu 2009). The Ministry of Health admitted that blood contamination caused at least 300,000 cases of HIV infection. As government officials tried to cover up the scandal, no measures were taken to tackle the epidemic, which resulted in yet another epidemic among blood product users. Besides former plasma donors, hemophiliacs, women who had been infected during labor or family-planning surgeries and who then transmitted the virus to their partners and children, and people infected in surgeries after traffic-related and other accidents emerged as major movement participants.[8] Urging the government to acknowledge this incident, take political responsibility, and provide financial and medical compensation became another major focus of AIDS activism.

[7] This procedure of plasmapheresis collects plasma after a device called a centrifuge spins blood at high speed to fractionate the cells from the fluid. Because one person's donation of blood can yield a very limited amount of plasma, the whole blood of many donors must be pooled before it is run through the centrifuge. After plasma is removed, the remaining cells are then injected back into donors to enable them to donate again more quickly and decrease the chance of anemia. This technique makes possible the collection of large quantities of plasma in a short period of time, which was crucial for the fast expansion of the plasma industry.

[8] Family-planning-related surgeries refer to terminations of gestation and performance of ligation operations. Given the low government financial subsidies since the marketization of the public health system in the mid-1990s, hospitals depended heavily on fees for drugs and other services to cover costs in developing areas. This led hospitals to invest heavily in the blood industry, including collecting blood and encouraging patients to use more blood products regardless of their medical conditions.

FINDINGS

The Puzzle of State Repression Transformation

This section considers four alternative explanations for why state repression of AIDS activism in China changed over time (see table 1 for a summary):[9] the characteristics of the domestic AIDS epidemics and AIDS movement, China's political structure, and transnational pressures. Taken on their own, each of these explanations can account for specific episodes of repression transformation but not its overall trajectory.

The first factor to consider is AIDS epidemics. China's largest AIDS outbreaks occurred in the middle 1990s. After mortality peaked in the early 2000s, the epidemic has been stabilized since 2006. Political repression did not correlate with the development of the epidemic.

The second factor to consider is activism itself. Authorities are more likely to repress it when they believe they can win (White 1999). This view would predict that when AIDS activism was weak, it was more harshly repressed. The early configuration of repression measures is congruent with this prediction. The Chinese state showed little tolerance for AIDS activism in the 1990s, when it was only a loose collection of individual activists and events with "virtually no insurgent capacity" (Boudreau 2005, p. 34). Open and aggressive administrative sanctions were combined with the use of medium degree and direct violence. My interviewees recalled that the police constantly raided community meetings and harassed activists. The first discussion group on AIDS and gay sexuality, Men's World, lasted only six months. The restaurant where advocates gathered was shut down for investigation and the manager was fired. Even social gatherings of advocates would attract military police.

Yet when AIDS activism grew stronger and peasants were mobilized around the turn of this century, state violence escalated, contrary to predictions from a weakness perspective. As activists reported in interviews, stalking, harassment, battery, and detention became prevalent methods of stopping journalists, medical workers, and other urban activists from entering villages hard hit by AIDS. Infected peasants were stopped from seeking, receiving, or imparting information about local epidemics and contacting activists; they were denied treatment. Police departments acted in concert to trace and intercept urban volunteers who were simply delivering winter clothes for AIDS orphans. Conflict between the police and infected villagers escalated in 2003. In one of these incidents, Tong village, with fewer than 600 residents in Henan Province, found itself surrounded by 600 policemen and hired thugs at 2:00 a.m. They smashed the doors to villagers' houses, beat up

[9] Table 1 also presents typologies whose "cells represent different values on independent and dependent variables" (Mahoney 2004, p. 86).

TABLE 1
Evolution of Repression against Chinese AIDS Activism

	Before CCP's Participation in Transnational AIDS Institutions		After CCP's Participation in Transnational AIDS Institutions	
	1989–98	1999–2003	2004–7	2008–13
Transnational factor:				
External intervention strength	Weak	Weak→medium	Strong	Strong
Domestic factors:				
AIDS epidemic	Low→high	High	High→medium	Medium
Mobilization around AIDS	Sexual identity focused, low degree	Contaminated blood focused, medium degree	Multiple-issue focused, high degree	Multiple-issue focused, high →low degree
Domestic coercive capacity	Medium	Medium	Medium→high	High
Repression trajectories:				
Violent action	Medium	High	Low	Low
Nonviolent action	None	None	Unobservable and indirect action, medium→ high degree	Observable and (in)direct action, high degree

over 10 villagers, and detained 18 villagers suspected of assembling protests, according to e-mail exchanges between activists in July 2003.

This development might be explained by a threat-based theory: the greater the threat to the regime posed by activism, the more likely activists are to be subjected to violent coercion (Davenport 1995). But as AIDS activism expanded rapidly after 2004, the level of coercion did not increase. AIDS activists were the first group to launch public campaigns in 2005 demanding freedom of association and institutional access to policy making at the national level. I found that the number of grassroots AIDS NGOs grew from 54 in 2004 to 413 in 2009. AIDS activism was one of a few movements mostly heavily involved in formally organizing cross-regional and cross-work-unit coalitions. It also received support from overseas. Yet the Chinese government did not react with direct action in public, even though such a response would not have been out of character: terror and violence remain the state's major weapons in repressing activism that "shows any linking of cross-class and cross-locality mobilization" (Lee and Zhang 2013, p. 1504).

The third important factor to consider is the overall political structure, as manifested in a polity's degree of democratization and its coercive capacity (della Porta and Reiter 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Alimi 2009; Johnston 2012). Studies note that the Chinese state apparatus became more

stable and increasingly repressive against dissidents overall after 1989, especially since 2004 (Cai 2008). This strengthened coercive apparatus (Wang and Minzner 2015) has been adopting increasingly harsh policies toward dissidents, especially after "stability maintenance" (*weiwen*) became a priority of the Xi administration (see fig. 2).

The fact that the government eventually succeeded in curbing the growth of AIDS NGOs and dismantling their coalitions fits the overall contours of the structural argument. But the way this process unfolded between 2004 and 2013 departs significantly from the existing account which would lead us to expect nothing but an increase in overt repressive practices, such as raids, arrests, and indictments.

The fourth approach, the punitive model, would ascribe the reduction in coercive violence against AIDS activism to the increase of external intervention. Table 2 sketches a time line of the growth of transnational AIDS institutions. My interviews with intergovernmental agencies show that in the early 1990s the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were concerned about China's AIDS issues. With the transnational regulatory infrastructure only at an embryonic stage, however, external interventions were simply too weak to warrant a strong response from the CCP.

Transnational AIDS institutions coalesced in the early 2000s, granting foreign authorities legitimacy to intervene in AIDS governance in other countries and demanding that civil society actors be included in policy making as equal partners to national governments. China and Russia attempted to block such initiatives, insisting that AIDS governance was the jurisdiction of national health ministries.

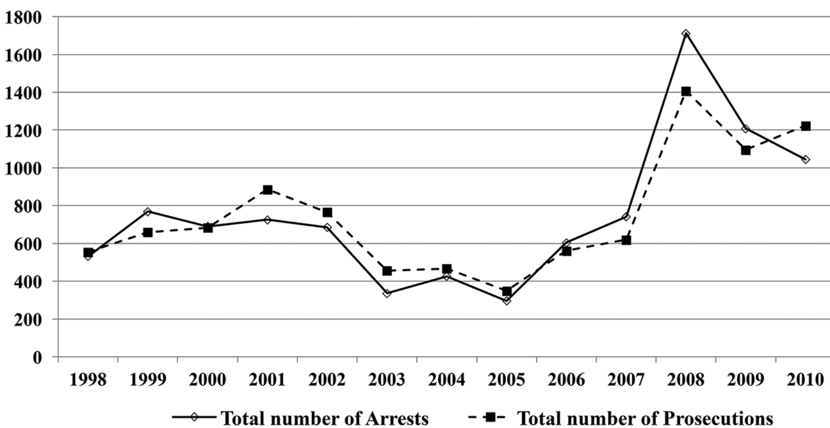

FIG. 2.—Number of political crime–related arrests (unit: individual) and prosecutions (unit: case), 1999–2010.

TABLE 2
TIME LINE OF SELECTED EVENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF TRANSNATIONAL AIDS INSTITUTIONS

Stage and Year	Events and Outcome
Embryo:	
1987	AIDS becomes the first disease discussed at the U.N. General Assembly. The WHO founds the Global Program on AIDS to help national governments to develop strategy for AIDS control.
1988	Health ministers meet and discuss AIDS for the first time, leading to the London Declaration on AIDS Prevention.
1991	International Council of AIDS Service Organizations is founded as a transnational network of NGOs.
1994	The principle of involving civil society and people living with HIV/AIDS in national responses to the epidemic is established in the Paris AIDS Declaration.
Formation:	
1996	As the first U.N. agency to include NGOs on its executive governing board, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is launched. Its creation marks the shift from a state-centric to a joint and cosponsored system.
1997	The Global Business Council on HIV/AIDS is founded.
2000	As the first disease discussed at the U.N. Security Council, AIDS becomes defined as a global political issue. AIDS is then included in the Millennium Development Goals. The World Bank also launches the Multi-country AIDS Program, the first large-scale transnational AIDS program.
Expansion:	
2001	The first U.N. General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS adopts the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, establishing the legitimacy of external interventions in AIDS epidemics in any country.
2002	The Global Fund becomes operational; it is now the largest multilateral initiative.
2003	The U.S.-funded President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is founded.
2006	The U.N. program Innovating for Global Health is founded as a transnational financing mechanism, mainly for low-income countries.
2007	The U.N.-funded Global Joint Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team consolidates its leadership in tackling AIDS.
2011	The Global Fund releases the Community Systems Strengthening Framework to reemphasize civil society participation as a strategic target area for interventions.

The newly established transnational AIDS institutions targeted human rights abuses in China. The U.S. embassy in Beijing started investigating the AIDS epidemic;[10] the *New York Times* followed with a series of interviews with Chinese AIDS activists.[11] Numerous reports were then pub-

[10] U.S. Embassy Beijing, "PRC Blood Donors and the Spread of Rural AIDS," March 2000; "PRC Henan Rural County: NO AIDS Here," April 2000.

[11] "Scientists Warn of Inaction as AIDS Spreads in China," *New York Times*, August 2, 2000; "In Rural China, a Steep Price of Poverty: Dying of AIDS," *New York Times*, Oc-

lished overseas. The United Nations, along with senior Western political leaders, publicly criticized China and called on it to loosen restrictions on grassroots AIDS-related organizing. Adding to political pressure, approximately U.S.$15 million was awarded to promote grassroots AIDS activism in China between 2004 and 2008 alone, making AIDS NGOs the largest recipients of overseas funding in China, far ahead of any other Chinese advocacy sector working on issues such as labor, gender, and environment.[12]

These interventions pushed the CCP to decrease violence against AIDS activists and facilitated the rapid development of domestic activism. From the late 2000s, however, it was apparent that the AIDS movement had reached its peak and was in decline. A large wave of collaborative action between AIDS activists, human rights lawyers, and legal assistants to file multiple lawsuits against local governments and/or their hospital systems in 2008 marked the crest of the movement's mobilization. Decline was slow and minimal at first, but by late 2009, the movement had entered on a period of fragmentation and waning mobilization. Movement participants were dwindling with the departure of individuals from grassroots NGOs, especially those founding and/or core members. The year 2010 delivered a heavy blow to the movement when two pioneering AIDS activists suddenly fled China. Take Chen Guobing, for instance. He was detained in 2002 as part of the early coercive measures to crack down on AIDS activism. In response, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), American State Department officials, and international AIDS and human rights activists at Human Rights Watch, Act-Up, and other organizations voiced strong concerns about Chen's detainment, prompting his release four weeks later. While physical violence did not stop Chen from continuing in AIDS advocacy, constant surveillance and planted rumors by the government eventually propelled him to leave the grassroots NGO he was leading at the time and move permanently to the United States.

The waning of commitment and enthusiasm became a major source of concern between 2010 and 2013 as many important activists disengaged from the AIDS movement in a variety of ways.[13] Some visibly retreated from grassroots NGOs and collective action, continuing the struggle on a personal rather than political level. Some withdrew wholly from the life of a

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tober 28, 2000; "Chinese Media Suddenly Focus on a Growing AIDS Problem," *New York Times*, December 17, 2000; "Silent Plague: A Special Report; Deadly Shadow Darkens Remote Chinese Village," *New York Times*, May 28, 2001.

[12] This estimate is based on information from International Cooperation Programs (China), the International Co-operation Programme Management Office of the National Center for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention (China), and Global Fund annual reports (2006–10).

[13] Davenport (2015) identifies it as lost commitment, a common component of demobilization.

challenger to recover economically, psychologically, and physically. Others shifted attention to other issues and movements such as education, disability rights, or environmentalism.

Replacing imprisonment with expulsion is only one of many emerging tactical innovations that enabled the Chinese authorities to transcend the constraints attached to traditional coercion and helped to send the AIDS movement into a downward spiral between 2008 and 2013. Movement activity significantly decreased when the movement was split up into fragments with contrasted outlooks on AIDS movement goals and strategies. Before 2009, seeking the inclusion of people affected by HIV/AIDS in policymaking processes had served as a central goal that generated solidarities across different constituencies of the movement and assured the continuity of mobilization. In decline, most grassroots NGOs lacked a unifying vision of what could be accomplished to further their cause. Moderate NGOs emphasized institutional participation and narrower goals while the more radical ones retreated from the legislature process and adopted even more radical rhetoric. Polarization led to the drop in concerted collective action in pursuit of visible events to reach the constituencies effectively.

During its decline phase, the AIDS movement suffered from a drastic erosion of external legitimacy. External legitimacy, erected in how social movement groups are perceived by their allies and supporters, is crucial for mobilization longevity (Walker and McCarthy 2010). The decrease in movement activity directed AIDS activism away from mass attention and reduced the audience for contentious claims around HIV/AIDS, which lowered the perceived need for and relevance of AIDS advocacy. For example, almost all the rural activists I interviewed in 2012 voiced their frustrations with a widespread belief that the Chinese government was taking care of the AIDS issue, and the gravity of infected peasants' daily struggles with high mortality, economic hardship, and political and social discrimination was thus diminished. Such "problem depletion" (Davenport 2015, p. 26) was compounded by conflict between grassroots AIDS NGOs that damaged the moral legitimacy of the whole movement. The earlier success of AIDS activism was obtained through a diverse set of ties in the domestic advocacy community and affiliations with transnational advocacy networks. Starting from 2010, however, AIDS activists found it increasingly difficult to convince potential members and sponsors that what grassroots AIDS NGOs were doing was valid. Heated clashes inside the AIDS advocacy community became well known, which raised questions about the morality of AIDS activism and further hindered recruitment, retention, and resource acquisition, all of which were necessary for movement survival. One foundation leader explained to me why they discontinued its AIDS program and shifted attention to agriculture: "Grassroots NGOs were turning on each other. We can no longer tell what is right or wrong. We had to walk away." As Gillham and Edwards

(2011) point out, moral ambiguity is often associated with the loss of legitimacy and the dissolution of social movements.

The decline of the AIDS movement raises questions about the completeness of the punitive model. Although some governmental behavior changed as it would predict, how and why new repressive practices emerged are still unanswered questions. One activist, echoed widely, commented on a whole range of new repressive measures: "They [foreign entities] were holding high hopes. Without really understanding the Chinese government, they came in very passionately and aggressively and had all kinds of good visions." Applying the transnational constitutive model, the next section analyzes the multiple unintended effects of transnational intervention.

Mobilizing Effect of Transnational Interventions on Repressive Motives

Regardless of any continuity, AIDS activism did not register as the same problem for Chinese government organizations before and after transnational institutions' intervention. Throughout the 1990s, AIDS activism was seen not as an independent political challenge, but as a form of immoral conduct. The Health Ministry defined AIDS as a Western disease with "homosexuality, drug addiction, and pre-marital sex as the root."[14] The CCP was not interested in AIDS issues; it claimed at the Paris AIDS Summit that AIDS would threaten only Western countries (Garrett 1994). When Chinese AIDS activists advocated nondiscriminatory policies, they were perceived as one of many local oppositions provoked by Westernization and market transformation that were crossing, blurring, and shifting socialist moral boundaries.

When Chen Bingzhong, one of the first Chinese AIDS activists, followed WHO recommendations to use the term "sex workers" instead of "prostitutes" in his article about AIDS education, the publishing journal was called back and destroyed by the Health Ministry and Chen was forced to retire. In explaining Chen's "mistake," a senior health official equated AIDS with "the problems of prostitution and homosexuality" and claimed that "we can lock them all up."[15] Another activist was fired and then denied the right to

[14] "Sino-American AIDS Symposium Opens in Beijing," *Xinhua News Agency*, November 8, 1990. Given its early history in the United States (Epstein 1996), the construction of HIV/AIDS as a lifestyle-related Western gay disease was prevalent. The first set of AIDS programs promoted by WHO were designed to contain the epidemic among articulate minorities of homosexuals and injecting drug users, thus contributing to the stigmatization of AIDS in the Global South. In the specific context of China, the first reported AIDS case was identified as a homosexual American resident who was traveling and then died in Beijing. This was the beginning of heightened attention to homosexuals and sexual transmission, even though most indigenous cases were infected via blood.

[15] "Fighting the Disease of Denial," *The Age*, March 16, 1993.

marry even five years later because his AIDS education activities "encouraged homosexuality and sympathized with prostitutes." The objective of the clampdown was to annihilate AIDS activism, delimit the anomaly, and justify the exclusion of unsuitable groups as moral pollution harmful to the socialist social order.

In the early 2000s an abrupt increase in external attention to HIV/AIDS came as a surprise to Chinese officials. Kay (2005) argues that transnational institutions can disrupt domestic institutions and create uncertainty for political organizations. Overwhelmingly, government participants identified external interventions as disruptive challenges. One security official exposed the state's inadequacy in handling AIDS activism, describing it as "a blank spot in our administration system." His statement implies that transnational institutions drastically improved the salience of AIDS activism and made government organizations reassess existing practices and devise new ones.

Contrary to the predictions of the punitive model, however, the disruptive impact of external interventions was not uniformly distributed across the Chinese state. Instead, there was an array of diverse effects among various substate units—in particular, the CCP, health departments, and police and security agencies. Socialist moralities were no longer what was at stake when those units became interested in pursuing different objectives through repression. This process thus transformed government organizations' perceptions of AIDS activism's (1) nature, (2) scale, and (3) amount of pressure exerted.

First, interventions from abroad had politicized the nature of Chinese AIDS activism. AIDS is not a political issue in China because of something inherent in the disease. Even though the largest HIV/AIDS outbreak occurred in 1994 and the virus had reached every Chinese province as early as 1997, archival data show that until 2003, the CCP was convinced that AIDS would not threaten China and no official policy was needed. With AIDS low on the political agenda, AIDS activism was far from the center of politics.

The nature of AIDS was transformed when external interventions made the CCP a target for public naming and shaming in the early 2000s. Newly founded transnational AIDS institutions used the blood scandal to frame China as a human rights violator. In response, the CCP conducted multiple public relations campaigns overseas, blaming the epidemic on poor peasants' individual behavior and denying the credibility of external investigations. The conflict between China and transnational AIDS institutions sharpened when UNAIDS issued a report publicly condemning the CCP.[16] UNAIDS's depiction of China's AIDS problem as a security and development threat

[16] United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in China, *HIV/AIDS: China's Titanic Peril* (UNAIDS, 2001).

to the world was adopted worldwide.[17] The European Union and American governments responded by placing AIDS in China on their foreign policy priority list.[18]

External interventions pushing the CCP to confront HIV/AIDS had the simultaneous effect of turning both the disease and AIDS activism into a threat to socialist sovereignty—at least in the eyes of the CCP. After years of objections, the CCP was forced to make an unusual concession in 2003 when the SARS crisis magnified China's health issues. Later that year, the WHO's request to visit villages affected by AIDS was approved. From the outside perspective, this marked a turning point: China seemingly began to engage with transnational AIDS institutions.

Official participants in my study, however, shared the domestic view that this shift reflected a failure to curb "the attempts of Western enemy forces to interfere in China's domestic affairs." They perceived this series of events as an attack on China's sovereignty. Three CCP officials claimed that Western forces were taking advantage of the CCP's lack of legitimacy during the succession of senior party leaders at the time.[19] In discussing the political nature of AIDS activism, officials from foreign affairs and security departments always made reference to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.[20] As one official at the CCP International Department put it, "It is a danger that domestic activists in cahoots with anti-China forces abroad would undermine our sovereignty."

Second, external intervention changed the perception of AIDS activism from a nuisance that could be handled at the local level to a threat with transnational implications. The idea that AIDS activism put sovereignty at risk propelled the CCP to reassess the phenomenon and appropriate responses to it. In their interviews with me, CCP officials categorized AIDS activism as a form of regime-threatening opposition, along with independent labor unionization, popular religion, and military veteran organizing. Interestingly, from the perspective of Chinese activists themselves, this construction of AIDS activism as transnational was detached from reality and even offensive. One rural activist related, "Officials care more about foreigners' involvement than what we actually do. One time I was looking for some

[17] Center for Strategic and International Studies, "The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India and China (a Conference Report of the CSIS Task Force on HIV/AIDS)," Central Intelligence Agency, October 1, 2002.

[18] "Statement for the Record, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," congressional testimony, February 5, 2002.

[19] After taking over the office of general secretary of the CCP in 2002, Hu Jintao assumed the presidency in 2003 and became the chairman of the Central Military Commission in 2004. In 2004 the fourth generation of political leaders came to power at the 16th People's Congress.

[20] Interviews show that this event left a deep impression on senior party leaders because of President Hu Jintao's visit to Eastern Europe in 2004.

AIDS medicine for my son in Hong Kong, and the police freaked out, assuming I must be plotting with somebody overseas."

The CCP's resistance to transnational institutions did not lead to unified noncompliance. Notably, security and police departments interpreted the transnational implications of AIDS activism very differently from health departments. The goal of security and police departments was to abolish transnational influences in China for two reasons. First, those departments defined their formal tasks as safeguarding the centralized authority of the CCP and upholding the principle of sovereignty. Security and police officials in my study felt undisguised hostility to transnational interactions. AIDS activism, as one security officer described it, was "a form of Western penetration and subversion activities against the socialist regime with health as a screen." His colleague later added, "We must be vigilant to hostile forces abroad at all times." AIDS NGOs were often referred to as *bai'shoutao* (white gloves), middlemen that conducted unlawful activities for their "foreign bosses" or *heishou* (black hands).

Second, officials blamed transnational advocacy for increasing the workload of their departments. Chinese security and police departments did not target all instances and forms of activism. Instead, they had a selective list of national contentious issues to which they assigned higher political value, designated personnel, and concentrated attention. AIDS activism would not have been put on that list without external interventions. One senior police official complained that his team was overworked: "Our job is to put out fire just like firefighters. Now there is too much fire." Not surprisingly, then, security and police officials stated that, for their organizations' sake, they would have preferred to follow the Russian model of cutting off all transnational connections. When I was detained in Henan, a security official scolded me as a researcher from the United States for picking the "wrong time" to visit because his unit was shorthanded in monitoring local AIDS activists' transnational interactions.[21]

In contrast, health departments were highly motivated to adopt transnational engagement in order to expand their organizations. After being politically marginalized since the 1980s, health departments at both central and provincial government levels had suffered from a lack of financial investment and administrative status in bureaucratic systems. For example, exactly two officers in the gonorrhea unit of the sexually transmitted disease office were responsible for handling all matters related to AIDS in the metro area of Beijing, which had a population of 13.8 million in 2000.

Health official participants agreed that external interventions had changed the peripheral position of health departments. Transnational AIDS institu-

[21] I was released and forced to leave the town after being taken from my hotel and interrogated for hours.

tions brought a cascade of AIDS programs that tied material and symbolic benefits to adopting transnational rules. Foreign donors doubled their contributions, accounting for 59.13% of the financial resources allocated to China's AIDS intervention (see Li et al. 2008). The Global Fund alone approved more than $800 million for anti-AIDS efforts in China between 2003 and 2012.[22] Meanwhile, external interventions propelled the CCP to invest in the bureaucratic infrastructure of AIDS governance. All the health officials I interviewed identified 2004 as the turning point of their career. As one officer put it, "One day you woke up, money was dropping from the sky. Projects related to AIDS started to spring up all over the place." Between 2003 and 2008, the national AIDS program budget accounted for almost half of all the funding for public health provided by the central government (Cheng 2008). Indeed, it was often wryly noted that health departments were *chi'-aizifan* (dining off AIDS). One health officer bluntly stated, "It hardly has anything to do with AIDS epidemics. We have many other important public health issues, but only AIDS is a political hot button."

Transnational AIDS institutions thus created space for bureaucratic expansion. Simply implementing the Global Fund program forced the CCP to allow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop multiple new units and construct entirely new headquarters. Even in the resource-poor rural areas of central China, I observed new hospital buildings, cars, and equipment that surely would not have been possible without the Global Fund.

As health departments enjoyed increased legitimacy, technology, and resources originating abroad, the door was opened for transnational entities to enter China's domestic policy domain. Health officials testified to significant transnational impact on the organizational, programmatic, and especially managerial operation of health departments. Transnational AIDS institutions introduced a new way to govern AIDS through planning and budgeting, HIV/AIDS surveillance, primary prevention, testing and counseling, antiretroviral therapy treatment, case management, monitoring, and evaluation. The Global Fund, for example, has highly institutionalized programs with detailed procedures that micromanage specific activities, including how to make work plans. One health official noted that "the Global Fund had set up the standard of AIDS intervention [in China]" by implementing projects and providing training sessions. This comment was widely echoed among bureaucrats.

Meanwhile, different transnational players—from intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, and Western governments to Western foundations—made use of the intervention opportunity to get involved in

[22] Based on data from the Global Fund China Country Coordinating Mechanisms (http://www.chinaccm.org.cn; accessed August 2012).

China's AIDS governance. Before 2003 the Health Ministry enjoyed a monopoly over domestic disease control; foreign organizations were banned, except in Yunnan Province.[23] But by the time of my fieldwork, it was almost impossible to find an important AIDS project, meeting, or conference without foreigners prominently represented.

Although health departments benefited from external interventions, they also subjected themselves to a more complicated institutional environment. This presented a dilemma. When perpetrators do not want to comply with transnational rules, they tend to reject the validity of those rules and keep their actions hidden from scrutiny. Interviews show that health officials believed that there were dangerous political agendas behind outside interventions. But unlike security and police forces, health departments could not simply dismiss transnational rules and players, as these increasingly became part of their daily work routines. Health bureaucrats consequently had to find ways to conform to multiple and conflicting expectations, which changed their objective of repression.

Third, external interventions amplified the amount of pressure AIDS activists could exert after destabilizing the alignment between government organizations. Changing power dynamics between elites can improve the prosperity of social movements (McAdam 1996), and even without influence over China's political structure, transnational AIDS institutions shifted political opportunities favorably to AIDS activists by targeting health departments. In 2005 the Global Fund mandated the participation of grassroots NGOs in AIDS interventions by threatening to cut China's funding. When the Health Ministry tried to gloss over the issue, various organizations from UNAIDS and UNDP, the U.S. Embassy, and Chinese activists combined forces and pushed the ministry to acknowledge for the first time the legal standing of grassroots NGOs in 2007.[24]

Constrained by transnational engagement, health departments could no longer simply denounce grassroots AIDS NGOs, as the latter were now a legitimate player in AIDS governance by transnational definition. Meanwhile, lacking basic infrastructure or expertise, many local health departments had to rely on grassroots NGOs to implement AIDS intervention in order to meet performance objectives.[25] Usually external interventions take place in domestic areas where states have already established administrative and political control (Krasner and Weinstein 2014). But there was no institutionalized AIDS control in the early 2000s. The Ford Foundation and Clinton Foundation were the first to collect baseline epidemiological data in

[23] For more details on the particularity of this province, see Hyde (2007).

[24] Under domestic regulations, grassroots NGOs would usually be considered illegal, as they were not qualified to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

[25] Spires (2011) demonstrates that certain Chinese grassroots NGOs could enjoy better chances of survival by contributing to the performance goals of government agencies.

China's rural areas hard hit by AIDS. As one peasant activist commented, "health officials knew nothing, not even how to instruct patients to take medicine." Grassroots NGOs indeed had much more experience and better access to subpopulations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In 2007, one NGO with which I was volunteering distributed more condoms in Beijing alone than the Health Ministry had distributed nationwide. All the health official participants acknowledged the instrumental importance of "some" grassroots NGOs. When asked about their collaborations with AIDS activists, officials emphasized that AIDS interventions had *texin* (special nature). One health official felt compelled to assure me, "Nobody in the health bureau is gay." To meet the requirement of foreign experts to involve gay men in program design, his team had to work with grassroots gay groups.[26] In short, simply eradicating grassroots activities was not optimal.

This change restricted the choices of security and police departments. One security official complained, "Of course, somehow stern measures should be taken but we would be under fire if we just ban NGOs. NGOs in the AIDS area are mostly receiving help from abroad. They are used as an anchor point for overseas forces. As dangerous as they are, the old system did not apply any more. Those NGOs would not be simply shut down." Another police officer stated that AIDS activism thus had the potential to "do the greatest damage to social stability and shake our socialist regime to its foundation." Finding themselves at odds with health departments, police and security departments criticized health agents for prioritizing "department interest bias" over national security. Such friction also intensified the perceived risk of allowing further transnational encroachment into China's domestic affairs. Not only were Chinese activists invited to a number of high-level conferences and meetings, such as U.S. congressional committee hearings, E.U. roundtables, and multiple Global Fund board meetings, but they were also selected to represent the Global South countries to serve for transnational entities such as the Global Fund Council Developing Countries NGO Delegation. Though disgruntled at activists' presence overseas, health officials could not oppose or disallow it directly. At one meeting at the Global Fund headquarters in Geneva, health officials angrily confronted a Chinese activist for bringing up an internal dispute, saying, "You are a traitor. . . . How can you make the state lose face?" Nonetheless, no action was taken against the activist. Another foreign affairs official commented that conflicts like this revealed that "the Western countries prevail over the East and socialism is currently at a low ebb across the world."

To summarize, external interventions transformed the perceived nature, scale, and pressure of AIDS activism. As transnational AIDS institutions

[26] Given widespread homophobia in government organizations, coming out is hardly an option for officials.

emphasized and empowered grassroots community participation, they also politicized AIDS and AIDS governance, moving AIDS activism ever more squarely into the regime's view as a danger that needed to be controlled. At the same time, when interventions provided organizational benefits to certain domestic elites, they created incentives for those substate units to adopt transnational practices and support AIDS governance reform. Therefore, instead of disregarding external demands, the Chinese state had to balance a desire to defend its own sovereignty with transnational expectations to promote civil society. Accordingly, repressive goals shifted from simply eradicating AIDS activism to shaping it in a way that would (1) bolster the appearance of civil society and visibly demonstrate China's effort to fashion a form of AIDS governance in line with transnational AIDS institutions, (2) assist health departments in performing intervention tasks, and (3) counteract the influences of transnational human rights and democracy rules. One health official boasted, "I can tell as early as 2003 that fighting AIDS was not their [Global Fund] real purpose. . . . They [transnational entities] just wanted civil society and democracy. But our government is smart." The next two sections describe the "smart" changes made to repressive actors and strategies.

Institutional Effects of Transnational Interventions on Repressive Actors

External challenges have shaped the transformation of repressive agents by provoking the reform of old agents and fueling new ones. While transmitting new rules and "appropriate governmental behaviors" in public health to China, transnational AIDS institutions also establish the new parameters within which government organizations can act. Instead of rejecting these organizational models and resources from abroad, government organizations incorporated them into existing socialist ones in order to reconstruct repressive agents through mimicry and editing. These two processes enabled government organizations to develop new units that decrease their risk from transnational mobilizations.

Throughout the 1990s the task of eliminating AIDS activism was left to local police and security departments. Their work was assisted by the Health Ministry, which used administrative sanctions and disciplinary measures under the auspices of the CCP Disciplinary Rules. As the punitive model would predict, transnational interventions put traditional repressive agents in the spotlight. Local police agents initially ignored mounting outside criticism, only to stimulate more pressure. Between 2002 and 2004, about 50 activists and infected peasants were imprisoned. All were released within a few months of their arrests, thanks to transnational campaigns on their behalf. As one of the freed activists said, "Our government got a lesson

about health and AIDS issues. They learned that the outside world considers AIDS important."

The punitive model would not predict what happened next. Responding to external intervention, the CCP moved to unify its own leadership and interdepartmental coordination. In 2004, it created a joint committee headed by members of the CCP International Department and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Civil Affairs, State Security, and Public Security. The joint committee met with the Health Ministry to discuss tactics for handling AIDS activism. Decisions made at these meetings were then delivered to local coordinating units set up at the provincial and city levels. Between 2005 and 2006 the old repressive agents, especially security departments, were assigned to study transnational activism as a "prerequisite for most other activities" (Marx 1974, p. 208). Rather than relying on local officials, the CCP dispatched special working teams to assess the overall landscape of transnational grassroots activities. Officials in foreign affairs referred to such operations as a special *gongbing* (secret engineering force) and said that it had accumulated a list of targets to monitor, comprising those most prominently interacting with advocacy networks abroad.

It was not until the CCP mapped out a long-term plan that the reconstruction of local repressive agents was launched in 2007. This created a brief interlude of little to no overt coercion between 2004 and early 2006. According to the June 2005 minutes of an NGO meeting, AIDS activists believed that they were "on good terms with the state." By early 2007, however, I observed that activists had begun debating whether the comparatively relaxed environment was an illusion. It eventually became clear in 2008 that what had seemed like a state retreat was only a pause to consolidate the repressive political apparatus. At the local level, existing repressive agents were developing closer working relationships not only with one another but also with departments not previously involved in policing grassroots activism. As one CCP official put it, "The *yinbi zhanxian* [covert front] of police and security departments goes in tandem with other departments whose operations are overt and public." The work of the police and security departments moved behind the scenes, and departments such as civil affairs, commerce and industry, tax, publishing, and even fire bureaus increased their interaction with AIDS activists. They could catch grassroots organizations' managerial mistakes and prosecute them without provoking political controversies.

This reform had limited success. With deepening transnational engagement in AIDS governance, government organizations now thought of themselves as acting publicly rather than privately and within the transnational arena rather than domestically. As officers from security departments and foreign affairs complained, health departments no longer wanted to get involved in direct action against NGOs, especially in Beijing, where the offices

of most transnational AIDS institutions were concentrated. Security officers complained that they could not approach staff members of foreign organizations without formal documents as they used to. An awareness that an external audience was watching was widespread among official participants. "Our regulations cannot go back to the 1990s unless we cut ourselves off from the outside world," one security officer emphasized.

Forming new repressive actors became crucial for controlling AIDS activism in the presence of transnational AIDS institutions. Institutional scholars point out that external challenges are capable of "ending what has become locked in by institutional inertia" and "forcing the initiation of unorthodox experiments" (Hoffman 1999, p. 353). China's experiment led health social organizations (HSOs) to take center stage. HSOs are professional associations created by the Health Ministry to provide social welfare services related to AIDS control. They are not government organs by legal definition. Registered as nonprofit professional associations, they are extensions of the government into society that facilitate the propagation of official policies to the relevant groups. Their leading officers come mostly from Health Ministry departments, but also from other departments such as the police. HSOs are only partially government financed by the Health Ministry, and most of their employees are not government officials.

In fact, HSOs do not carry any formal administrative rank or possess official power. It is this very ambiguity surrounding HSOs that has allowed them to put on different faces for different audiences in different contexts. All the official participants agreed that HSOs are *yitao renma, liangtao paizi* (one organization, two faces). One security official noted that, unlike formal governmental entities, "It is much easier for social organizations to interact with grassroots and international groups and know what they are doing." Currently, there are 25 major HSOs involved in AIDS programs. The Chinese Association of Preventive Medicine (CAPM) and the Chinese Association of STD/AIDS Prevention and Control (CASAPC) are the two largest. They are nationwide federations with charter members at the provincial and local levels.

External interventions activated the transformation of HSOs into new repressive actors. A handful of HSOs had been created in the early 1990s to transfer some government functions when the CCP did not want to invest in AIDS control. Other than holding occasional small-scale events, HSOs existed solely in name for a decade. In 2004, however, a series of reforms were initiated to make HSOs "the leader of domestic NGOs" and "an important force in nongovernmental diplomacy" able to "get a footing in international society."[27]

[27] "An Internal Speech by the Head of the Standing Committee of Communist Party of Beijing" (internal document), March 6, 2009.

As hybrid organizations, HSOs are a manifestation of a new approach—what official participants called *yimin zhimin* (fighting NGOs with NGOs). Through this strategy, government-sponsored NGOs are developed and used to control AIDS activism at both domestic and supranational levels. The approach modifies the traditionally Leninist model of control that seeks to influence key groups by binding them into mass organizations that become dependent on patronage. In addition to drawing on the existing domestic repertoire of repressive strategies, health departments, along with the security, police, and CCP international departments, studied and adopted transnational models and resources in order to "NGOize" HSOs.

"NGOization" refers to the series of internal reforms through which HSOs imitate certain components of Western NGO templates while also integrating them with existing organizational structures and practices. Scholars have noted that some governments adopt transnational models purely as ceremonial window dressing (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005). But in the case of Chinese HSOs, tremendous effort was put into actually transforming the organizations to meet transnational expectations regarding formally stated goals, operational procedure, and regular activities for a true NGO. Unlike most government-sponsored social organizations, HSOs complied with transnational standards by setting up boards of directors (or steering committees/advisory groups), designing NGO constitutions, and organizing plenary member meetings. Officials specifically chose organizational elements that were externally legitimated. When I asked one CCP official why a particular HSO had the word "alliance" in its name, he explained, "We chose it to meet the international fashion trend. It is a popular term."

The NGOization process had three aspects. First, it did not arise automatically, but was driven by the interplay between Chinese health departments and transnational AIDS institutions. HSO NGOization did not occur until the Health Ministry's first attempt at decoupling—using the language of NGOs to repackage existing socialist organizational forms—failed. In response to external interventions, the ministry first tried to use mass organizations to represent a nonexisting civil society in AIDS governance in order to freeze out grassroots groups, disclaim community advocacy activities, and buffer the government from external criticism.[28] This effort was unsuccessful. Compared to mass organizations, with their rigid structure and fixed positions, HSOs had much more autonomy and flexibility, which made internal reform much easier. The leaders of HSOs were also much more motivated to adapt to transnational rules in order to seize the opportunity to expand.

[28] These organizations included the All-China Women's Federation, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the Communist Youth League, and the China Red Cross.

The second phase of NGOization involved government organizations learning about transnational organizational models. When HSOs were activated, they did not fully understand external expectations at first; it was only through actually engaging in transnational health programs that they learned how to mimic an NGO. One peasant activist recalled his first time attending an NGO workshop hosted by the Global Fund in 2005: "The organizer was talking about stuff like forming community organizations. But everybody in the audience but me was an official!" Between 2006 and 2011, I observed significant improvement in HSOs' knowledge and skills as they became increasingly recognizable as AIDS NGOs that conformed to transnational structures and norms. Official respondents identified important learning opportunities, such as workshops, information exchange, study tours, and transnational conferences. Some U.S.-based NGOs, such as Family Health International, were invited to provide detailed managerial guidance during the reform. Almost all the officials described looking explicitly to NGO practices in other countries, especially the United States. Two security officials highlighted their own background of European education in helping them to understand how NGOs operate. When demonstrating the "theoretical significance" of learning, one official showed me an internal document with the signature of the attorney general of Beijing in 2009, titled "China Must Study International NGOs." The document introduced the concept of global civil society and identified the development of nonstate actors as one of the major challenges and opportunities facing China. Though all the officials I interviewed condemned as a Western conspiracy the idea of global civil society, they nonetheless emphasized that China should play the game and use nonstate actors to realize its interests at the transnational level.

For HSOs, to learn is not simply to copy, but also to actively reformulate what they have copied. Precisely because they believed that Western governments used the promotion of civil society as a façade, official participants repeatedly argued that transnational NGOs could and should be repurposed for the CCP's ends. Officials outlined a six-step process to me—moving from mimicry to editing—which would eventually establish HSOs as important "nonstate" players in transnational AIDS institutions. Those steps are (1) *you yin* (being present) and participating in transnational activities; (2) *you sheng* (being articulate) in presenting the CCP's perspectives; (3) *you hu* (being appealing) in advancing the CCP's interests; (4) *you ying* (being persuasive) in advocating for support; (5) *you wéi* (being active) in developing connections with transnational NGO networks; and (6) *you wèi* (being important)—becoming core members of global civil society. One CCP official provided a comprehensive explanation:

> (1) and (2) are the first step. We are not familiar with how transnational NGOs act, so we need to attend various world conferences to understand who they are,

> what they think, and what they do so we can learn accordingly. (3) and (4) focus on how to channel foreigners' attention. We shall interact with transnational advocacy networks but not get in any direct conflict with them. When they criticize us, our own social organizations need to be there to publicize our perspectives so the foreign audience can be exposed to different views and make those [enemy] NGOs' words suspicious. The next level is (5) and (6). We need to have our social organizations established in major transnational NGO networks so we can always fight back when the [Chinese] state is under attack.

The third aspect of the NGOization process is linked to funding. The building, training, and expansion of HSOs had relied primarily, and ironically, on material resources from abroad since 2005. Looking at money from U.S. foundations alone, China has become a favored destination for funding in recent years. Among 195 countries, China ranked third in the number of grants received. In total, American grant makers have made almost 4,000 grants to China for a total value of $6.7 billion. About 10% of this money went to HIV/AIDS intervention.[29] By 2009 CASAPC and CAPM had received $20 million from American foundations, placing them both among the top 10 Chinese recipients of grants from U.S. sources. In 2012 almost 80% of HSOs' funding came from transnational entities. A large portion was meant to promote civil society development in China. For example, the Global Fund approved a $14,395,715 program titled Mobilizing Civil Society to Scale Up HIV/AIDS Control Efforts in China, more than half of which was funneled to HSOs in the name of supporting civil society and community activism (Li et al. 2010). The irony emerges, however, when we recognize that HSOs are actually a new set of repressive actors at the service of the authoritarian state.

Institutional Effects of Transnational Interventions on Repressive Strategies

Before 2004, traditional repression of AIDS activism entailed direct violence combined with overt legal and administrative sanctions. The goals were to both terminate AIDS-related activism and scare off potential supporters. Fear of police interventions such as apprehension, raids, searches, and interrogation pervaded activist communities throughout the 1990s. Some AIDS educational hotlines used pagers rather than telephone landlines at fixed locations so volunteers could reply to calls without attracting police attention. State tactics of administrative discipline included public warnings, demerit recordings, wage deductions, on-duty observation, demotion, transfer, suspension, expulsion from the CCP, or some combination of the above.[30]

[29] Foundation Directory Online Professional Database, Foundation Center. https://fdo.foundationcenter.org.

[30] As the CCP dominated the (re)distribution of life chances, such measures were extremely effective forms of punishment.

Those tactics targeting individual activists aligned with the existing domestic governance of AIDS itself at the time, which ascribed the disease to individual faulty behaviors. AIDS policies focused on excluding HIV/AIDS patients from marriage and parenthood, schooling, health care services, and employment opportunities. Repressive actors could thus draw on the socialist repertoire that denies people's bottom-up advocacy and organizing.

External interventions did not just curb the operation of overt coercive punishments by undermining their organizational efficacy and legitimacy; they also mobilized government organizations to develop new repertoires of strategies. When the repressive goals changed from simply eradicating AIDS issues and communities affected by HIV/AIDS to governing them, indirect and covert nonviolent strategies became more useful in limiting, preempting, or demobilizing challenges. Repressive actors entered the same transnational institutional spaces as those increasingly occupied by Chinese activists. Noting the inadequacy of their domestic repertoire, Chinese officials turned to transnational AIDS institutions for resources, networks, and models of action to build diplomatic repressive strategies.

The construction of diplomatic repression against AIDS activism centered on "manufacturing a civil society" by seizing on precisely the practices meant to make NGOs a vital part of AIDS governance. The new repertoire aimed to redirect and repurpose the transnational resources meant to develop AIDS NGOs. An important goal was to infiltrate the vertical links between transnational AIDS institutions and Chinese grassroots organizations and the horizontal ties between grassroots organizations themselves. This repertoire indirectly affected activists' perception of political opportunities and decreased advocacy participation, at the same time helping the Health Ministry to claim the existence of "civil society" to gain external legitimacy and resources.

Diplomatic repression was effected at both transnational and domestic levels. According to transnational social movement studies, world conferences were an important "transnational social space." Chinese activists had been attending such conferences and meetings since the late 1990s to present their agendas and perspectives, increase media coverage, and engage with organizations and networks overseas. Scholars have argued that such events provide an open space for civil society actors to exchange ideas and information, share resources, develop horizontal relationships, participate in policy making, and coordinate activities (Juris 2008).

My data suggest that governments are not passive targets within transnational space. Beginning with the 15th World AIDS Conference in 2004, the Chinese Health Ministry changed its strategy. Instead of dismissing the legitimacy of NGO participation and blocking activists from attending world conferences, it sent NGO delegations of its own along with the government delegations. Government-organized NGO delegations were usually coordi-

nated by the so-called China NGO Network for International Exchange, which is actually a bureau of the CCP International Department. HSOs played leading roles in such delegations to exploit the openness of transnational space.

HSOs' activities at world conferences were based on mimicry and editing. They imitated organizations that were perceived as influential in the transnational space. When asked about HSOs' presence at world conferences, one health official told me, "Foreigners like to believe NGOs. For some reasons NGOs' words seem to carry more weight than [those of] governments." Uncertain how to act, officials had to learn from firsthand observation overseas. One security official said, "We participated in events like NGO parades at many international conferences. We would carry different banners according to the overall diplomacy policy of the state. There were only NGOs' voices in the past. Now the international society can hear what we [the government] have to say. Of course we have problems. But we have also done a lot of work. So we cannot just let NGOs talk about us. We should speak up ourselves." This statement highlights how officials endeavored to disrupt grassroots activists' activities. Instead of attacking NGOs, HSOs chose to present themselves as advocates for transnational AIDS institutions by copying fashionable practices and publicly displaying their commitment to an NGO identity. For example, HSOs submitted proposals to give presentations, applied for conference travel grants, participated in panels and group discussions with foreign NGOs, and conducted fund-raising events targeted at conference participants. Some officials, in their capacity as NGO delegates, took part in protests and demonstrations staged by local and international activists.

Mimicry was combined with editing. Organizational models and practices are made up of normative and operational elements (Power 1997). The normative elements define the prescriptive codes behind the concrete tasks specified by operational elements. HSOs copied the operational activities of the AIDS NGO model, but they transposed its normative goals with a countermodel of nonpolitical and cooperative AIDS NGOs that would serve the government. This countermodel was promoted with intensive campaigns at various world conferences. One example is the World AIDS Conference in Austria in 2010, where 10 Chinese activists staged a protest and held a banner demanding that the government carry out its promise to people living with HIV/AIDS. At the same conference, HSOs arranged a booth representing the Joint Action of NGOs in China in the NGO exhibition hall. The booth displayed large posters of top party leaders shaking hands with AIDS patients. Professionally prepared videos and pamphlets praised the government's leadership. Delicate handicraft items made by HIV/AIDS carriers showcased Chinese patients' energetic spirit and positive outlook. In addition to the conference section hosted by the China State Council, HSOs or-

ganized a Chinese NGO satellite section with 200 participants to highlight the contributions of HSOs in providing services to AIDS patients under the Health Ministry's leadership. China's now first lady, Peng Liyuan, delivered an emotionally charged speech; she was even moved to tears in a segment when she described the years of hardship in regions hard hit by HIV/AIDS before the government began to solicit the support of NGOs.

Chinese activists shared with me their frustration at this juxtaposition of what HSOs called a "harmonious" top-down model within transnational space and the more contentious bottom-up model of organizing. With far fewer resources and less capacity, grassroots groups could not compete with HSOs in front of a foreign audience, particularly when so many of the grassroots actors were peasants living with HIV/AIDS who could not even speak English. Many advocates concluded that the CCP was simply too pervasive. The competition with HSOs itself had distracted activists and obscured conflicts. One peasant activist called it "the government's tactical success overseas." In contrast to activists' enthusiasm in 2007 when I started my fieldwork, skepticism about transnational engagement began to spread in 2009 and was fully entrenched within the activist community by 2011. Consistent with Starr et al.'s (2008) analysis of covert repression, Chinese activists' perception of the openness of political opportunities had drastically decreased.

At the domestic level, the new repertoire of diplomatic repression sought to replace the more contentious grassroots advocacy model with the "harmonious" NGO model. It used not just punishments but also rewards to generate divisions among activists. First, HSOs strove to set the harmonious model as a new standard defining viable and "successful" grassroots group. Between 2003 and 2007, transnational entities were effective in diffusing the grassroots advocacy model in China through training and AIDS project development. In response, HSOs edited manuals of project operation, monitoring, and evaluation in an attempt to establish their own authority in this area. They released "Guidelines for NGO Action in Fighting AIDS," stating that "NGOs are not anti-governments, so NGOs should abide by rules of domestic laws and government disciplines and collaborate with local governments." These guidelines were published in journals targeting people living with HIV/AIDS and used along with other NGO management materials in various workshops and training sections for grassroots organizations.

Chinese activists were quick to recognize that this strategy contaminated the values and norms attached to terms such as NGOs and civil society, yet they also felt constrained by it. As one peasant activist said in anger, "Those kinds of NGO activities are top-down handouts of charity. The purpose is to ask you to cherish gratitude for the state. The key is not what patients get, but the way we get it. Top-down or bottom-up." Whereas he wanted to abandon the use of the term NGO to distance his group from HSOs, many

of his group members wanted to maintain the name for transnational legitimacy. HSOs thus effectively blocked transnational discursive resources by seizing on and reappropriating the very meaning of NGOs to represent the exact opposite of communities, empowerment, and independence after 2009.

The second means by which HSOs sought to implement a harmonious NGO model was to interrupt the interactions between domestic activists and transnational entities by contesting the existing leadership of AIDS activism. Similar to its counterparts overseas (McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow 2005), China's AIDS movement did not automatically attract transnational support. Rather, leading advocacy NGOs in Beijing served as mediating brokers and incubators who connected domestic networks with transnational material and ideational resources. Direct attacks against those leaders took place frequently during my fieldwork. False stories were circulated, constantly accusing those leaders of mismanaging their programs, embezzling project funding, and serving as antigovernment or anti-China imperialist lackeys. For example, I observed one falling-out between two NGOs in 2007 that was fueled by government-planted rumors; the misunderstanding was finally clarified in 2011, but the relationship was already damaged beyond repair.

HSOs also took indirect approaches to replace leading NGOs. As noted, NGO networks and coalitions had become prevalent worldwide by the late 1990s (della Porta and Tarrow 2005). Chinese AIDS activists were thus heavily invested in coalition-building and network-based forms of practice, including developing horizontal ties among grassroots groups, free and open circulation of information, and consensus-based decision making. In response, HSOs founded the Chinese NGO Alliance to Combat STD/AIDS in 2007. The alliance's stated mission was to "provide information and technical support for grassroots groups, increase their organizational capacity, and mobilize grassroots groups in supporting the government in AIDS intervention." In order to establish themselves as leaders in this realm, HSOs produced several reports on community participation in AIDS intervention and delivered them to transnational entities such as the World Bank and Global Fund. They also took over writing the Participation and Support of Civil Society Organizations and Community-Based Groups session for the U.N. General Assembly Special Sessions on HIV/AIDS Country Progress Report. HSOs hosted many meetings with grassroots NGOs in order to collect information, though notably none of the activists' critiques made it into the report.

Third, the harmonious model was used to fragment movement identity and disrupt coalitions between local communities. With large amounts of transnational funding, HSOs tried to tempt many grassroots groups to adopt the harmonious NGO model by offering technical assistance, organizational training, and funds for trustee service. This "divide and conquer"

strategy—recognized and referred to as such by activists—can be seen when we compare the development of two grassroots NGOs funded in 2005.[31] The Orchid Group works for peasants infected via contaminated blood. In 2008 a regional HSO reached out to this group and offered medical resources. One year later Orchid Group ended the working relationship. Its leader told me, "They [HSOs] want you to remember that everything comes from the state. You get all the money and medicine not because you deserve it or you have rights but because of the state's mercy." Very soon the HSO began to support the other grassroots group in the same county by providing them office space and equipment such as a TV and computers. Orchid Group began having trouble recruiting new members; it also lost to the other group in applying for Global Fund grants.

The Red Group illustrates an opposite case. When I first visited it in 2007, it was a small gay male group with three volunteers working from the founder's tiny apartment. When I visited it again in 2012, Red Group occupied a whole building with six offices and a small lab to collect blood samples for the local health bureaus. Hanging on the wall were certificates and photos of its members taken with leaders of various foreign health organizations. Red Group was now what AIDS activists called a "star NGO": as one peasant activist explained, organizations that "got more funding, more projects, more trips to attend foreign conferences, more opportunities to talk to foreigners and Western foundations." He explained, "Back then we thought of HSOs as friends. Now looking back, what officials were doing was selecting a few gay NGOs and making them the star. . . . Those stars wanted to be the *laoda* [leaders], which came into conflict with those established ones. . . . The minute those star NGOs realized that they were just some puppets and started to have their own ideas, officials just dumped them and moved on to the next. Then there came another round of conflicts." Star NGOs not only helped to promote the harmonious NGO model but also frequently attacked other advocacy-oriented NGOs by accusing them of being too radical or unprofessional. The accusations fueled ongoing conflict within the activist community.

This divide-and-conquer strategy could also be seen in the government's contrasting approaches to urban gay men and peasants infected via blood. Almost all the star NGOs were gay male organizations in urban areas. In 2012, China's prime minister met with several gay male NGO leaders chosen by HSOs in Beijing and praised their organizational models in front of U.N. representatives. At the same time, the Health Ministry ignored infected peasants who were protesting in the same city and sent them back home. Urban gay male groups were favored in part because transnational

[31] Their names have been altered for confidentiality.

entities were interested in the issue of homosexuality in China and had drastically increased their investment in promoting the participation of gay men in AIDS intervention since 2008.

Meanwhile, health departments believed that gay men's groups could contribute to AIDS programs without creating a political threat. One police official put it succinctly: "Homosexuals are not dangerous. As long as the homosexuality is seen as deviation by the society, this group would not become a political threat to the state." None of this conflicted with the state's ongoing homophobia. In 2012, when I was observing how a gay group helped a health department to conduct voluntary testing, officials asked gay men not to use the restroom in the government building because they were not "clean." As gay groups began increasingly to work closely with health departments, they became gradually distanced from communities affected by AIDS. Two gay activists told me in pain that many gay groups had lost their identities.

As grassroots groups were divided into camps, internal conflict deepened among activists and displaced the focus of AIDS activism. For example, in 2012 several victims of contaminated blood who were near death in Henan launched a campaign begging for emergency medical assistance from the local government. The campaign was able to mobilize only small-scale protests of local peasant NGOs; most other NGOs remained silent, watching as six patients died. One peasant activist said, "If it happened five years ago, we would march down the street together. But now everybody is on [his] own." As the whole activist community became fragmented, many groups of infected peasants withdrew from transnational engagement, turned to radicalization, and became further isolated. One rural activist angrily declared, "The government is deceptive. Foreigners turned out to be fickle. We peasants can only count on ourselves." Enraged at the way that transnational programs were being used to divide grassroots groups, some activists organized a campaign with a banner that read Fuck Off, Global Fund. This increasing fragmentation of the AIDS activist community was a manifestation of the whole movement's decline (Sawyers and Meyer 1999).

DISCUSSION: REPRESSION INNOVATIONS AND UNINTENDED TRANSNATIONAL EFFECTS

To be sure, the fact that the Chinese state did not comply with transnational AIDS institutions' prescriptions should not be surprising to any scholar of human rights. But what happened is poorly captured by simply calling it "noncompliance." I have stressed the interactive process between transnational entities and government organizations, and I have examined the (re)constitution of repressive practices as the outcome of this process. Even though external efforts did not achieve their goal, transnational institutions

did indeed influence the behavior of the Chinese government—just not in the ways intended. The Chinese case is not necessarily generalizable to all other contexts, but I suggest that focusing on transnational constitutive effects provides a framework for hypothesis generating and future case comparison.

The constitutive model highlights the constitutive effects—both mobilizing and institutional—of transnational interventions that may shape the motives (threat perception), actors (state agents, nonstate agents, or hybrid), or methods (content, format, occurrence, scale) of repression in a policy domain. Transnational impacts transmitted through these two paths along these three axes are independent but not isolated from each other as different combinations can lead to different configurations of repressive practices. Diplomatic repression is but one possible outcome. Based on secondary literature, table 3 gives a nonexhaustive and preliminary imagining of directions for future research. Some possible combinations are a starting point to consider various modes of constitutive impact.

Five of the combinations represent variations of diplomatic repression that appropriate transnational democratic templates in the form of material resources, organizational networks, or cultural scripts. The Chinese case I have discussed here represents combination 1: covert nonviolent activities were conducted by both state agents and HSOs as hybrid entities at both transnational and domestic levels, before and after the mobilization of advocacy. Jordan is another example in which hybrid organizations—in this case, the General Union of Voluntary Societies—used aid from foreign government agencies such as the United States to monitor and control NGOs (Wiktorowicz 2000). Russia illustrates combination 2: police forces worked with international NGOs to learn about human rights in order to conduct nonviolent and covert repression (Taylor 2011). Several East African countries in the 1990s represent combinations 3 and 4: governments used foreign aid to sponsor either private militias or hybrid semiofficial forces that openly used violence against political challengers (Roessler 2005). Diplomatic repression is not confined to nondemocratic contexts. The United States Extraordinary Rendition Program engaged with a transnational network of state and private agents to conduct covert but violent torture overseas (Dale and Samara 2008).

Beyond diplomatic repression, there are other modes of transnational constitutive effect. Combination 6 is a common mode wherein the pressure of transnational institutions had only mobilizing effects. For example, Israeli authorities were pushed to invest domestic resources in reforming the repression system (Ron 1997). This mode is prevalent in the Middle East and Latin America, where external interventions have mobilized government officials to invent (un)observable covert repression. In contrast, transnational institutions had only institutional effects in combinations 7 and 8, wherein

TABLE 3

POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL CONSTITUTIVE EFFECTS

Combination	Example	Repressive Motive Altered	Repressive Actors	Content	Format	Occurrence	Scale
1.	China, Jordan	Yes	State/hybrid	Nonviolent	Covert	Before/after	Transnational
2.	Russia	Yes	State	Nonviolent	Covert	Before/after	Domestic
3.	Malawi	Yes	Hybrid	Violent	Overt	Before	Domestic
4.	Kenya, Rwanda	Yes	Nonstate	Violent	Overt	Before	Domestic
5.	United States	Yes	State/nonstate	Violent	Covert	After	Transnational
6.	Israel	Yes	State	Violent	Covert	After	Domestic
7.	Burma	No	State	Violent	Overt	After	Transnational
8.	Europe	No	State	Nonviolent	Overt	After	Domestic

NOTE.—Yes = transnational effects have changed repressive motives; no = transnational effects have not changed repressive motives. Hybrid = hybrid repressive agents; state = governmental/public repressive agents; nonstate = nonstate/private repressive agents. Violent = violence involved; nonviolent = no violence involved. Covert = covert repressive operation; overt = open repressive operation. Before = repression occurs before mobilization; after = repression occurs after mobilization.

transnational resources helped to open up new areas of operation and upgrade repressive techniques. For example, the Burmese authorities not only used the opportunity of transnational conferences to arrest activists in 2009, but also helped the Chinese security department to capture Chinese activists in 2015.[32] Aside from authoritarian governments, democratic entities including many European countries are also learning from the European Union new ways to police protests (della Porta and Tarrow 2012).

Under what conditions do transnational constitutive effects lead to diplomatic repression? This question is beyond the scope of this article, but the Chinese case suggests that diplomatic repression may be conditional on (1) a state committed to transnational engagement but not willing to withdraw from repression; (2) transnational institutions providing a partially integrated set of organizational and discursive structures, resources, and practices around the specific policy issue; and (3) at least some domestic institutional actors in the issue area whose interests align with those of transnational institutions.

First, participation in transnational institutions is often not followed by fewer violations. Indeed, as I have argued, external interventions in China put the issue of AIDS squarely on the political agenda of the CCP, but not necessarily in a good way. The disease went from being simply ignored to increasingly understood as a dangerous threat to national security—not so much the disease itself, but the opening it was seen as providing for outside forces to attack China's sovereignty. Similar situations occurred in Indonesia, Russia, Cuba, and Israel (Cardenas 2007; Tsing 2011; Beznosova 2013).

Second, given the lack of genuine commitment, to the extent that transnational institutions have strong leverage and influence to incentivize government actors in the target policy domain, external interventions are conducive to changes in the constitution of repressive forms. Transnational AIDS institutions did not have adequate strength to target China until the 2000s, when a supranational disease regulatory system had gained the widespread endorsement of what Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) call "a critical mass" of countries—especially strong Western ones—and HIV/AIDS was put on the agenda of the U.N. Security Council. Compared to 1996, transnational material resources had increased by 16 times in 2003 and 52 times in 2009, making AIDS a more resource-rich policy domain than, for example, the environment, labor, or gender.

Third, even if transnational institutions are strong, they may not have constitutive effects unless some domestic actors in the target state can benefit from engaging with transnational institutions. The surge in resources and legitimacy from overseas had limited influence over the Chinese state as a whole, but it did compel the Health Ministry to embrace transnational

[32] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this information.

AIDS institutions and subject health departments to transnational constraint. My findings suggest that interactions between transnational institutions and substate units are conditional on the latter's position within the state and institutional maturity. Chinese health departments—located at the "periphery" of the state bureaucracy—were motivated to signal a commitment to transnational AIDS institutions in order to receive legitimacy and material resources. Substate units disadvantaged by existing institutional arrangements are more likely to be open to transnational engagement. The European Court of Justice has similarly been found to have more influence when marginalized subnational courts need additional transnational resources to pursue their bureaucratic agendas (Alter 2009).

A pivotal factor here is institutional maturity. In contrast to well-established policy domains, emerging ones are more likely to allow transnational entities to enter and influence the domestic arena. AIDS governance in China did not have a stable institutional infrastructure; this provided greater scope for discretion and flexibility in responding to external interventions. In a similar way, the European Convention on Human Rights was able to develop close connections with newly founded government agencies in postindependent Ukraine and convince those agencies to facilitate human rights reform (Checkel 2001).

CONCLUSION

Beyond influencing the quantitative level of domestic repression, transnational institutions may reinforce a state's domestic repressive apparatus by provoking changes in institutional arrangements and organizational models that fashion the motives, actors, and methods for authoritarian repression. The CCP was unwilling to stop repression when external interventions turned AIDS activism into a far greater threat to socialist sovereignty. But because they depended on external resources and legitimacy, health departments wanted to avoid violating transnational rules. They needed to build legitimate AIDS governance and, by transnational definition, they had to allow civil society participation.

In trying to promote AIDS governance in China, however, transnational AIDS institutions introduced new organizational forms and material resources that inadvertently enabled government organizations to develop HSOs as new repressive actors. Transnational institutions also provided new framing language and opened up a space for government organizations to shift their emphasis to nonviolent means of diplomatic repression and to suppress challengers even beyond China's jurisdictional territory by interrupting transnational and domestic links.

The transnational constitutive model speaks to the puzzle of how transnational institutions affect authoritarian repression. Many scholars have

concluded that human rights mandates are ineffective in decreasing levels of abuse in authoritarian countries and thus that transnational institutions fail to matter in those countries. For this reason, as Hafner-Burton (2012) points out, studies of transnational impact now disproportionately focus on democratic or semidemocratic countries where repression is less severe and institutionalized. The constitutive model helps to bring authoritarian repression back into the core theoretical debates by shifting the analytical focus from repression's quantitative levels to its qualitative forms, and from intended to unintended transnational effects. Although one could view external interventions as having failed to achieve their stated goal of reducing repression, the results show that transnational AIDS institutions did have a remarkable impact in China. They transformed repressive practices by altering their objectives and the practices considered appropriate to pursue the objectives related to public health. By taking the forms of repression seriously, future research on international relations and human rights could develop richer empirical accounts of transnational effects that would otherwise be overlooked.

Beyond Chinese AIDS activism, the constitutive model contributes to contentious politics theory in three ways. First, it balances the social movement literature's overemphasis on direct and overt coercion (Boykoff 2006; Cunningham 2009; Earl 2011), especially in authoritarian contexts. Traditionally, direct and public use of violent force has been emphasized. A new stream of research challenges the hypothesis that authoritarian states derive repressive power from structural conditions (Nathan 2003; Mann 2008; Blaydes 2011; Dimitrov 2013; Lee and Zhang 2013; Lorentzen 2013). Future studies could benefit from expanding the spectrum of repressive operations to include not only punishments but also awards, inducements, and attractions (Hibou 2011; O'Brien and Deng 2013).

My study also reveals that external interventions can have divergent, even conflicting, effects. For example, transnational AIDS institutions benefited urban gay groups but marginalized advocates for rural peasants in China. This finding further bolsters the argument that social control lies not in authorities' ability to coerce, but in their dynamic means to repress with specific goals and limits (Policzer 2009; Slater 2010).

Second, the constitutive model identifies transnational institutions as a source of transformation and, more important, innovation in repression. This finding upsets the normative premise of a wide variety of transnational institutions that aim at promoting human rights (Krasner and Weinstein 2014). Much of the literature has focused on whether and to what extent transnational institutions may deter governments from using existing repressive practices. In contrast, the constitutive model suggests that external interventions may actually, if inadvertently, generate new repressive actors and means. Social movement scholars have recently emphasized diffusion

in driving repression development in both authoritarian and democratic countries (della Porta and Tarrow 2012). The constitutive effects model reveals additional mobilizing and institutional mechanisms and encourages further exploration of how transnational conflicts actually shape human rights abuses.

Third, the concept of diplomatic repression indicates the need to examine political repression not as an independent phenomenon in its own right, but as just one component (albeit a central one) of the dynamics between transnational institutions and nation-states. Existing theories are rooted in the context of domestic institutions through which states have already established administrative and political control. Yet the AIDS intervention area, which emerged relatively recently, driven by the institutionalization of transnational governance, was marked by intense conflict over the very nature of institutional arrangements. The function of political repression is no longer simply for the state to maintain order but to establish its infrastructural power in new policy domains driven by transnational forces.

In addition to contentious politics, my findings inform an important debate as to why some authoritarian regimes collapse when others survive and resist external and internal democratizing forces. Many studies point to cases in which authoritarian states have developed more complicated organizational tools to undermine challenges and dissolve conflict in various domains (Stockmann and Gallagher 2011; Dimitrov 2013; Lee and Zhang 2013). Cooptation, buyouts, and other bargaining techniques are used in China, Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, and many Middle Eastern and North African countries to contain, sculpt, and manage contention by absorbing dissent into authoritarian institutions so as to mute the aggrieved. These practices not only have longer-term effects on political opportunity and subsequent mobilization but also reconfigure the state's modes of wielding power and fostering legitimacy. Authoritarian regimes do not endure simply because of their coercive capacity, but thanks to their ability to change the rules of the game. The existing literature, however, tends to consider authoritarian states in relative isolation.

By contrast, I argue that the resilience of authoritarian states cannot be understood independently of globalization. Empirical studies show how authoritarian governments in Europe (Levitsky and Way 2006), the Middle East (Büchs 2009), Africa, and Asia (Levitsky and Way 2010) actively engage with transnational frameworks to gain access to foreign aid and external legitimacy and shield themselves from pressure for further substantial policy change (Bates 2001; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010). The constitutive model pushes this line of research further by showing that increased transnational engagement with democratic practices may actually contribute to the sustainability of authoritarian rules. This analysis challenges the prevalent argument that connections to transnational institutions help to democ-

ratize authoritarian regimes (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Levitsky and Way 2010).

To be more specific, my finding that Western governmental and nongovernmental organizations provoked, informed, and indeed funded the Chinese state's development of HSOs confirms Dale's (2011) discussion of the "supportive" roles played by democratic organizations in increasing authoritarian power. Scholars have long recognized that many civic organizations are created and/or organized by the government to advance authoritarian state interests (Cavatorta and Durac 2010; Yerkes 2012). These organizations' interactions with transnational advocacy networks are worthy of special attention since they play an important—and previously unexamined—part in influencing world political order. My analysis of NGOization proposes a first step in the effort to better understand the concrete processes through which transnational forces revive and enhance those socialist forms of organizations.

Beyond authoritarian states, the constitutive model also contributes to broader discussions in international relations, international law, and transnational sociology. Future work will profit from continuing to examine complementarity rather than rivalry between transnational entities and domestic institutions in target states. Even though the former is aimed at correcting/improving the practices and behaviors of the latter in specific areas, the constitutive model emphasizes that outcomes apart from those intended ones are of prime importance for understanding the actual influences of transnational interventions.

Unintended transnational effects are far from uncommon. For example, transnational health institutions have often undermined community engagement in Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Biesma et al. 2009; Kapilashrami and McPake 2012), and the democratization programs of Western countries have produced great instability and even war in various contexts (Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Similar unintended consequences have resulted from transnational environment, labor, and trade institutions (Bartley 2011; Libecap 2014; Oh 2015). Prior analyses have focused primarily on explaining target countries' willingness and ability to comply with external expectations. Although often necessary, such a restrictive focus can blind analysts to the multiple and often contradictory aspects of transnational impact elided by a country's compliance or disobedience in the aggregate.

The constitutive model suggests a restatement of external interventions: Rather than asking about the macrolevel determinants of (non)compliance, we should examine the mesolevel, two-way processes through which external precepts are transmitted to, and adopted by, government organizations. We might profitably downshift the study of transnational effects from abstract structural dynamics to the ongoing and incomplete political and cultural interactive processes between subunits of transnational and domestic

organizations in particular places and at particular times. Greater attention should be paid to two lines of research: (1) how transnational organizations enter a domestic policy domain and prescribe, proscribe, or authorize government behavior and (2) how government organizations experience external interventions, and how they respond to them.

On the one hand, scholars could transcend the dichotomy between external interveners and domestic organizations by focusing on their interactions at the translocal level. External interventions are not top-down forces, but interactions that bring together various resources as raw materials that may constrain and enable organizational behavior, depending on their differing connections with transnational entities. Analyzing these interactions is complicated, but tracking the long trajectories of interventions is a good starting point. By upholding the call for more research on what happens at the base of transnational politics (Tarrow 2005), this research shows that external interventions might increase friction or gaps among subunits inside the state. The expansion of transnational institutions thus might lead to increasing conflict rather than isomorphism at the domestic level.

On the other hand, highlighting government organizations' responses to external demands opens up a field of related questions. One question concerns how the interests and power differentials of government organizations shape their perception of transnational pressure. My analysis reinforces the growing consensus that the state is not a coherent and unitary actor with fixed interests, and its response to external pressure hinges on more than just the power behind that pressure (Weber, Rao, and Thomas 2009). Rather, state subunits' reactions are varied, contingent on their existing internal organizational structure and their (often inconsistent) relations between other subunits.

Another question concerns government organizations' experience of complexity in policy domains with contradictory institutional expectations. Chinese health organizations operated in a transnational scenario in which multiple democratic and authoritarian rules about governing AIDS coexisted and competed. This kind of complex scenario is increasingly widespread, as transnational institutions are now tackling global questions of public health, agriculture, environment, law, and finance. The traditional distinction between democratic and authoritarian contexts has become increasingly ambiguous and permeable, allowing government organizations to respond in creative ways. To this end, it is illuminating to examine authoritarian and democratic practices in relational terms rather than premising the research on an overdrawn categorical difference between political structures.

Despite its significant impact, transnational health governance is not an area typically studied by sociologists, with a few exceptions (Seckinelgin 2007; Chorev 2012*b*; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannan 2012; Noy 2015). My research shows how, in the context of globalization, health—traditionally

perceived as "low politics"—became a critical site through which a strong authoritarian political regime was both challenged and reinforced. More sociological analyses are needed to understand how transnational structures and processes channel or facilitate the formation of domestic actors, goals, and strategies.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1
Multilevel/Sited Data Collection Summary

Actor Cluster	Analytical Focus	Method	Location[a]
Transnational AIDS institutions	The structures, norms, and intervention programs of transnational institutions	Archival research	Ann Arbor
	Operation at the international and national level	Archival research Participant observation In-depth interviews	Ann Arbor, Beijing, Shanghai, Henan
Chinese state	Domestic HIV/AIDS governance institutions	Archival research In-depth interviews	Central state: Beijing Local state: four provinces
Grassroots advocacy groups	Historical evolution of AIDS activism	Archival research In-depth interviews Participant observation	Beijing, Shanghai, Henan
	Grassroots networks working on blood issues	Participant observation In-depth interviews	China (five provinces), Chicago, Ann Arbor
	Grassroots networks working with gay males	Participant observation In-depth interviews	China (five provinces), Chicago, Ann Arbor
	Grassroots networks working with female sex workers	In-depth interviews	China (two provinces)

[a] As my research subjects requested, no specific information is released here to protect their identity information.

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