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The Corporatist System and Social Organizations in China

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ABSTRACT This article considers whether social organizations (SOs) in China have acquired more autonomy over time under the socialist market economy. To discern whether SOs are changing under the corporatist system, we use quantitative data analyses of a 2001 to 2004 survey of SOs in China. We find that the later the SOs were founded, the more autonomy they have and the more oriented they are to representing their constituents' interests. The data also verify that the later SOs were formed, the greater their desire for freedom from the party-state. Furthermore, SOs that are more autonomous tend to be more critical of the SO management system, but this holds only for SOs founded before 2000. After 2001, no correlation occurs between autonomy and the expressed desire for more freedom.

KEYWORDS autonomy, China, corporatism, social organizations

INTRODUCTION

In China, thirty years after reform and openness began and twenty years after the Cold War ended, the authoritarian system of one-party rule by the Chinese Communist Party continues. Compared with the Mao era, however, the 'socialist market economy' has diversified China's system of interest representation and reduced the party-state's role, a system that researchers have often described using the conceptual framework of corporatism. Nevertheless, researchers have different views about the change in the relationship between the party-state and social organizations (SOs) that have slowly acquired autonomy, as well as the changes autonomous SOs rendered to the corporatist system.

In this study, we seek to determine whether SOs are gaining autonomy in China's corporatist system. If they are, we ask whether this is accompanied by a desire for greater freedom from state management. We use data from a survey of China's SOs to elucidate the situation China's corporatist organizations face, to show how much autmonomy SOs have from the party-state, and to describe the present condition of China's corporatist system.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF CORPORATISM

In defining corporatism, Philippe C. Schmitter, the preeminent corporatism theorist, writes:

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports. (Schmitter, 1974: 93–94)

Furthermore, Schmitter (1974) divides corporatism into state corporatism (state-dependent and state-penetrated) and societal corporatism (autonomous and state-penetrating). He presents nine indices to distinguish state corporatism from societal corporatism: (1) *Limited number*, whether caused by deliberate government restriction or inter-associational arrangements; (2) *Singularization*, whether led by state-imposed eradication of multiple or parallel associations, spontaneous cooptation, or competitive elimination; (3) *Compulsory membership*, whether led by officially decreed, exclusively conceded authority, or social pressure; (4) *Noncompetitiveness*, whether caused by state mediation, arbitration and repression, internal oligarchic tendencies, or external voluntary agreements among associations; (5) *Hierarchical order*, whether caused by state-decreed centralization, administrative dependence, or intrinsic bureaucratic extension and/or consolidation; (6) *Functional differentiation*, whether led by state-established *enquadramento* (framing) of occupational-vocational categories, or voluntaristic agreements on respective 'turfs' and nonraiding provisions; (7) *State recognition*, whether from political necessity imposed from below or by the state as a condition for association formation and continuous operation; (8) *Representational monopoly*, whether dependently conceded or independently conquered; (9) *Controls on leadership selection and interest articulation*, whether asymmetric imposition by the 'organized monopolists of legitimate violence' or reciprocal consensus on procedure and/or goals produce leadership selection and interest articulation.

Although Schmitter (1974: 92) states that corporatism is 'a concrete, observable general system of interest representation which is "compatible" with several different regime-types', he excludes the Soviet Union's communist experience because it is a 'monist' model (single-party rule). Describing the Soviet system, he stresses how it differs from corporatism:

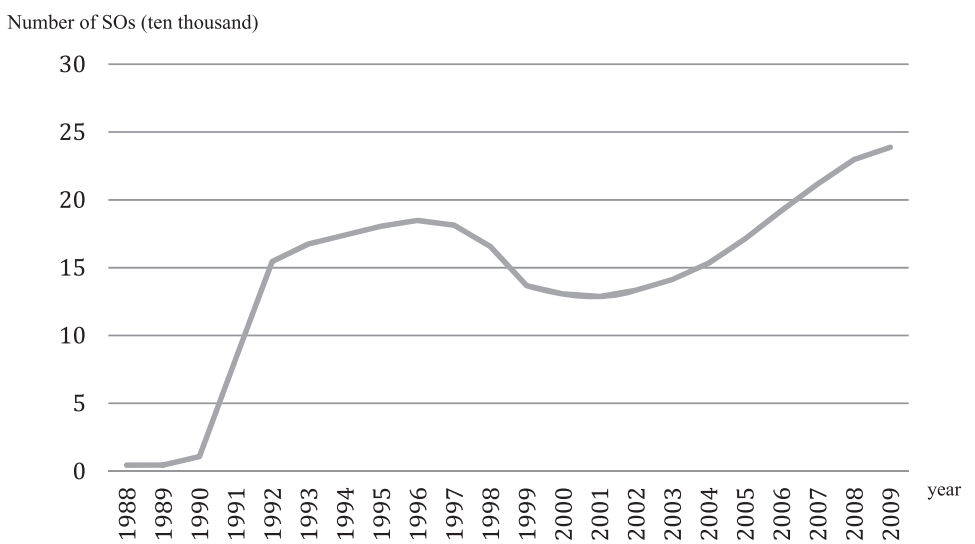
> [The Soviet system is] a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a fixed number of singular, ideologically selective,

> noncompetitive, functionally differentiated and hierarchically ordered categories, created, subsidized and licensed by a single party and granted a representational role within that party and vis-à-vis the state in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders articulation of demands and mobilization of support. (Schmitter, 1974: 97)

From this perspective, the Mao era's party-state system, modelled on the Soviet Leninist system, also falls outside the corporatist framework.[1]

Under the banner of reform and openness, however, China moved from a command economy to a market economy in the 1980s, and began shifting from the party-state's direct control in economic and social areas to indirect guidance through surrogates. Under the slogan 'Small Government, Big Society', many economic and social responsibilities have passed to nongovernmental entities (NGOs), accompanied by large-scale government downsizing. Since the 1980s, various forms of NGOs have played an increasingly important role in education, economic development, disaster relief, and social welfare services (Ma, 2006: 49). Those with corporate status are legally classified as social organizations – *shehui tuanti* (社会团体) or *shetuan* (社团). As Figure 1 shows, their number has steadily increased since 1988. Nongovernmental, noncorporate entities (*minban feiqiye* 民办非企业) and foundations must also register with the government's Department of Civil Affairs at the corresponding administrative level. Furthermore, some NGOs are registered as profit-making enterprises. In addition to these officially registered

Figure 1. Number of social organizations



Source: Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC ed., 2010. China Civil Affairs' Statistical Yearbook, China Statistics Press, 121.

organizations, numerous other unregistered grassroots organizations or loosely organized groups are active.

In light of these changes, researchers have taken two approaches in describing the formal features of China's interest representation in politics: the civil society approach and the corporatism approach. The civil society approach attempts to detect the emergence of a civil society autonomous from the party-state, challenging state power, and, by extension, moving towards democratization as NGOs develop. In 1989, however, the Tiananmen incident showed that the communist regime had not yet relinquished its power, and this caused researchers to abandon the civil society approach. Instead, researchers have embraced the corporatism conceptual framework, which gives prominence to party-state control and the centralization of authority as an effective analytical framework that can better explain current trends. For example, Saich (1994: 262) cautions against using the term 'civil society' prematurely, and suggests that China's current system could be better called 'quasi-state corporatism'. In addition, Pearson (1994) calls China's corporatism 'socialist corporatism', considering its distinctive socialistic features. Unger and Chan (2008: 105) also use the state corporatism framework to analyze the system of interest representation, although they argue that China approached state corporatism 'not as a mechanism for yet further strengthening the state's grip over the economy and over society, but rather the reverse, a mechanism through which the state's grip could be loosened'. Many researchers adopt the analytical framework of corporatism, while being cognizant of the fact that China's corporatism has Chinese characteristics in its formation process and in its internal structure.

However, the state corporatism framework may also fail to satisfactorily explain the complexities of China's current situation. Saich (2000: 139) fears that if researchers attend too much to the top-down aspect of state-society relations by employing a static corporatism framework, they might oversimplify the fundamentally complex relations between the state and society. As a result, they might overlook what could be a momentum for change. The static systematic view of the corporatism framework and the dynamic trend towards the development of civil society under a market economy (e.g., gains in autonomy by NGOs and the fluidity in the relationship between the party-state and society) often emerge as two elements difficult to reconcile, and researchers attempt to find a balance between the two approaches.

Researchers focusing on NGOs' move towards autonomy and civil society development suggest that such movements are hastening China's evolution from state corporatism to societal corporatism. For example, Chan (1993: 59) warns that if China fails to form democratized state corporatism in ten years, social unrest might erupt. She also suggests that China may be moving towards socialist societal corporatism, which is different from capitalist societal corporatism. White, Howell, and Shang (1996) argue that by the mid-1990s, intensifying con-

flicts of interest and reduced financial support from government agencies to SOs prompted traditional corporatism, with its strong state element, to incrementally shift towards societal corporatism. Jia, Shen, and Hu (2004) use case studies in Guangdong, Shanghai, and Wenzhou (Zhejiang) to show that while bottom-up trade associations were developing under market economization, many government-organized NGOs were shedding their dependence on the government to overcome problems such as the aging of human resources, tight financial administration, and low recognition among their constituencies. They emphasize that the government should overhaul the system for regulating organizations to shift the current system towards societal corporatism. Unger and Chan clearly state:

> It is conceivable that a state-corporatist association in China could gradually come under the sway of its membership – could, in short, become societal corporatist in nature, and thereby part of civil society. One can envision a scenario similar to what was experienced in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, where democratization was accompanied by, and in some cases preceded by, major shifts in the direction of societal corporatism. It is entirely possible to conceive of this occurring even without democratization. (Unger & Chan, 2008: 67)

However, others are sceptical that China will move towards societal corporatism any time soon, because that shift cannot occur theoretically or in fact under the current authoritarian system of one-party rule. For example, Dickson (2001) argues that the transition from state corporatism to societal corporatism is possible only when the one-party system collapses and democratization is complete. In recent years, mainstream analyses show that Chinese state corporatism is changing but not disappearing. Kennedy (2008: 173) examines business associations' unsuccessful efforts to form price-setting cartels in the late 1990s and writes, 'no one label – civil society, corporatism, or any other – adequately reflects the nature of government–business relations in China'. Holbig (2006) suggests the concept of *fragmented corporatism* to describe how formally established structures of state corporatism gradually fragment but do not disintegrate as individual and collective actors are empowered to negotiate their interests within the corporatist system under party-state control.

Research Questions

Whether we use the labels 'civil society' or 'corporatism', we seek to answer two research questions in this exploratory study.

> *Research question 1: Are more recently founded NGOs/SOs more autonomous of the state than earlier founded NGOs/SOs?*

Research question 2: Are NGOs/SOs that are more autonomous of the state more likely to be dissatisfied with the current state corporatist system?

The first research question reflects the thinking of researchers who have observed a loosening of the ties between NGOs/SOs and the state. If the state is weakening its control over NGOs/SOs as economic reforms proceed, NGOs/SOs formed later in the reform era should be more autonomous of the state. The second research question asks whether autonomy from the state indicates NGO/SO dissatisfaction with the state. Not having state ties may cause NGOs/SOs to feel that they can express dissatisfaction. On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the state may lead NGOs/SOs to attenuate their state ties. The second research question enables us to see whether weaker ties signal a breakdown in state hegemony.

Our research on the autonomy of NGOs/SOs is informed by case studies that have been presented as representative of the whole picture. Case studies of specific NGOs/SOs focus on both model cases and industry organizations, and these provide the background for our research questions and exploratory analysis. However, considering China's size and diversity, it is difficult to comprehend the whole picture by analysing one or two specific cases. Another method – quantitative analysis – can give a better overview of trends. Nevertheless very few quantitative analyses have attempted to understand overall trends that target a sizable number of NGOs/SOs. Only the Ming Wang team survey (NGO Research Center, Tsinghua University) has been published, but they had only 104 valid cases and a 13.7 percent valid response rate (Wang, 2000). This study gathered data from 2,858 SOs to answer the two research questions.

METHOD

For this study, we targeted SOs registered at the government's Department of Civil Affairs at the corresponding administrative level in accordance with the Regulations for Registration and Management of Social Organizations (effective October 1998). As of the end of 2009, the total number of SOs reached 238,747 (Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2010). The regulations, in addition to setting stipulations pertaining to human resources and economic resources required for registration, specify strict management principles: (1) prior to registration, the administrative supervisory agency (*yewu zhuguan danwei* 业务主管单位) must inspect and ratify the SOs; (2) similar SOs may not coexist within one administrative district; and (3) regional or branch bodies are not permitted. These regulations indicate that China's SOs have been incorporated into the state corporatist system in an institutionally distinct manner inasmuch as they include several criteria that Schmitter stipulates as defining state corporatism: 'limited number, singular, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered, functionally differentiated, recognition by state, and representational monopoly'. In other words, our

target of analysing SOs trends allows us to identify changes that continue inside China's state corporatism.

Survey and Data

With the cooperation of a team at Peking University's Center for Civil Society Studies, we mailed a questionnaire to the leaders of the SOs registered at each administrative level in Beijing, Zhejiang, and Heilongjiang from 2001 to 2004 (see Map).[2] The government provided lists constituting our targeted population. We surveyed the SOs registered at each administrative level (municipality *shi* 市) and district (*qu* 区 county *xian* 县 levels) in Beijing, as well as at provincial (*sheng* 省) levels in Zhejiang and Heilongjiang. For SOs registered at prefectural (*di* 地) and county (*xian* 县) levels in Zhejiang and Heilongjiang, we surveyed half of the administrative regions, chosen by systematic sampling.[3] The final sample yielded 8,897 SOs, and 2,858 valid responses, for a response rate of 32.1 percent (see Table 1).

To describe the composition of valid responses, we can divide the samples into organizational types – academic, trade, professional, and federated – with the corresponding percentages of 31.4 percent ($n = 849$), 33.9 percent ($n = 918$), 20.2 percent ($n = 547$), and 14.5 percent ($n = 393$), respectively. Organizations in Beijing, Zhejiang, and Heilongjiang constituted 21.9 percent ($n = 627$), 62.4 percent ($n = 1{,}782$), and 15.7 percent ($n = 449$) of our sample, respectively. Organizations registered at the provincial, prefectural, and county constituted 29.8

Map: Beijing, Zhejiang, and Heilongjiang

Source: Created by authors.

Table 1. Questionnaire response

	Administrative level	*Target sample**	*Actual sample**	*Valid response*	*Valid response rate*
Beijing	Municipality	1,251	916	348	38.0%
	District/county	937	891	279	31.3%
Zhejiang	Province	789	768	289	37.6%
	Prefecture	1,879	1,763	585	33.2%
	County	2,602	2,562	908	35.4%
Heilongjiang	Province	640	611	207	33.9%
	Prefecture	868	823	157	19.1%
	County	570	563	85	15.1%
Totals		9,536	8,897	2,858	32.1%

Note:
* Actual sample = target sample-returned questionnaires due to wrong address.

percent ($n = 838$), 36.4 percent ($n = 1,023$), and 33.8 percent ($n = 950$), respectively. Lastly, organizations founded before 1980, 1981 to 1990, 1991 to 2000, and after 2001 constituted 5.1 percent ($n = 132$), 30.0 percent ($n = 776$), 56.4 percent ($n = 1,459$), and 8.5 percent ($n = 221$), respectively. We then created four nominal variables describing SO type, region of registration, administrative level of registration, and year established using these categories.

Our aim in analysing by year of founding is to see whether ties between SOs and the state have weakened over time. We must proceed this way because we have no panel data to address our research questions directly. In China's history of reforms and openness, the 1980s were a time of preparing for a market economy. During the 1990s, the socialist market economy was the default line and marketization was moving forward. After WTO membership in 2001, market economization and entry into the global economy advanced even further. Looking at the tendencies and characteristics of SOs established in each period might suggest market economization effects on SO operations, although we must be careful not to overinterpret our results.

Measures

To answer the research questions, we used the following indices to measure SOs' autonomy. First, we considered the events leading to their establishment. In converting from a command economy to a market economy and in efforts to reform government bodies and reduce government functions, the government established many of China's SOs. The circumstances leading to establishment likely affected autonomy, so the survey asked: Was the organization established in a top-down fashion by decision of the organization or was it established in a bottom-up manner based on the initiative of the organization's members? We coded SOs either as a *bottom-up establishment* variable (coded 1) or a *top-down establishment* (coded 0).

Second, we considered governmental influence on SO personnel matters. Recall that Schmitter cites controls on leadership selection as the last of his nine indices distinguishing between state and societal corporatism. Thus, the degree of government intervention in SO personnel matters affects autonomy. Many Chinese SOs, in spite of being social organizations, were established to absorb excess public workers, employ high-ranking retired officials and their children, avoid modifying the organizational composition of the government sector, and skilfully evade reforms applied to government institutions.

Responding to this practice, the Chinese government heralded the separation of government and society (*zheng-she fenkai* 政社分开) and adopted various policies to sever close relationships between administrative supervisory agencies and SOs in personnel matters. In June 1991, the government prohibited the allocation of the government *bianzhi* (编制) (the Chinese version of *nomenklatura*, or the public office framework managed and funded by the party-state) by announcing provisional regulations by the organization department of the CCP, and the ministries of civil affairs, personnel affairs, finance, and labour regarding *bianzhi* and SOs nationwide. Throughout the 1990s, they banned cadres from holding positions in party or government institutions while concurrently serving in SO leadership positions. In April 1994, the state council office announced that department leader comrades and leaders of the state council or its subordinate agencies were no longer able to hold concurrent posts with leadership responsibilities at SOs. In July 1998, the state council office and the Communist Party Politburo banned leaders of party and government institutions from holding concurrent important positions in SOs, thus prohibiting them from holding SO leadership posts and leadership posts at agencies concerned with the party, government, People's Congress, People's Political Consultative Conference, judicial affairs, and prosecutorial agencies at or above the county level.

In the wake of these events, how autonomous is the SO's personnel from the party-state? To probe the degree of personnel autonomy, the survey asked: Is the SO vested with government-based *bianzhi* (编制)? Are organizational leadership decisions or recommendations received from the administrative supervisory agency? Does the SO provide secure jobs for retiring high-ranking officials? From responses to these questions, we created three binary variables: *absence of bianzhii, absence of leader recommendations and decisions*, and *nonprovision of posts for high-ranking officials*, and coded each variable '1' if respondents answered *no* and '0' if they answered *yes* to the three questions above.

Third, what is the SO's degree of financial dependence on the government? The state corporatist system and its variant, the socialist-state corporatist system, demand party-state loyalty, so financial dependence on the government could greatly impede autonomy, although it would not interfere under pluralistic or societal corporatist systems. To probe the degree of autonomy in financial affairs, the survey asked: Are financial contributions received from the administrative

supervisory agency? We created a binary variable, *absence of financial contributions*, coded '1' if respondents answered *no* and '0' if they answered *yes*.

The fourth set of measures addresses relationships with the Communist Party. Recall that Pearson suggested the concept of socialist corporatism to describe China, because China still maintains a system of socialist one-party rule. Even with the beginning of reforms and openness, we must still consider the influence of the party organization. Since the late 1990s, the Chinese government has actively advocated for the construction of party organizations at SOs by issuing a series of notices: the Notice Concerning the Strengthening of Management Operations at Social Organizations as well as Non-Governmental and Non-Commercial Enterprises (1996), the Notice of the Organization Department of CCP and Ministry of Civil Affairs Concerning the Construction of Party Organizations at Social Organizations (February 1998), and the Opinion of the Organization Department of CCP Concerning the Strengthening of Party Construction Operations at Social Organizations (July 2000). At the 16th Communist Party Congress (November 2002), the necessity of a party presence in SOs and social intermediate organizations was added in Article 29 of the party constitution. To measure the SO's autonomy from the party, the survey asked: Is a party organization set up at the SO? We configured a binary variable, *no party organization*, coded '1' if respondents answered *no*, and '0' if they answered *yes*.

The fifth indicator is the amount of government involvement in SO activities and the importance of members' interests. Autonomy regarding SO behaviour and orientation may be positioned along a continuum from complete party/government integration to complete dedication to members' interests. To measure this, the survey gathered perceptions about the SO's most important purposes and roles. Respondents could give multiple responses to four statements related to their most important purposes: (1) the SO assists the related activities of the administrative supervisory agency; (2) the SO protects the legal rights and interests of the members; (3) the SO secures preferential governmental treatment for its members; (4) the SO pursues economic interests of its members. The first item indicates party-state integration, while the second through fourth indicate an orientation towards members' interests. We created binary variables reflecting positive and negative responses to these factors: *not an administrative agency assistant*, coded '1' if purpose (1) was not chosen, and '0' otherwise. *Protecting constituent members' rights and interests*, *securing preferential treatment for members*, and *pursuing economic interests of constituent members*, were coded '1' for purposes (2), (3), and (4) if the respondents answered *yes*, and '0' if they answered *no*.

Regarding an SO's most important role, we analysed responses to two statements: (1) the SO cooperates with government policymaking such as by taking on government functions and supports the government well; and (2) the SO protects and represents the rights and interests of members. The former statement indicates party-state integration; the latter indicates orientation towards members' interests.

We created a binary variable for *avoid assisting the government*, coded '1' if the statement was not chosen, and '0' otherwise. We also created a second variable, *protecting and representing rights and interests of constituent members*, coded '1' if the proposition was chosen, and '0' if it was not.

Indices Measuring Dissatisfaction with the Existing State Corporatism

Next, we used two indices to explore the second research question: Is the degree of autonomy within SOs correlated with dissatisfaction with the current administration of the state corporatist system?

First, we considered whether the SO agrees that it should *guakao* (挂靠) to the administrative supervisory agency. To explain the concept of *guakao*, consider that the Regulations for Registration and Management of Social Organizations and various rules require SOs to undergo annual inspections by the administrative supervisory agency and registration control agency regarding compliance with laws and policies, the status of its rule observance, personnel and institutional changes, and financial affairs management. The administrative supervisory agency must examine and ratify the SO each time it holds a symposium, sponsors an exhibition, or conducts other such activities. *Guakao* refers to how well the SO receives various official and unofficial guidance in lieu of having the administrative supervisory agency license its activities. The system precisely guarantees the party-state's control within the scope of current state corporatism. Attitudes towards the *guakao* system are thought to reflect the approval or disapproval of the status quo of state corporatism. We used a negative response towards the *guakao* system to create the binary variable, *object to guakao system*, coded '1' if the respondent did not agree that it should *guakao* to the administrative supervising agency, and '0' if they did.

The second indicator is whether the SO agrees that 'the greatest factors preventing SOs development are strict management structure and excessive regulations'. Respondents chose from factors such as SOs' uncertain legal status, uncertain functions, governmental disregard, an immature society without an associational culture, lack of funding, and human resources shortfalls. We focused on responses to 'strict management structure and excessive regulations' because they are likely to reflect approval or disapproval of state corporatism. We coded the binary variable, *object to the management system*, '1' if respondents chose this option and '0' if they did not.

RESULTS

We first examined the association between each organizational nominal variable (among SO type, region of registration, administrative level of registration, and year established) and an aggregate measure of the SOs' autonomy. We created a

Table 2. Measure of association between the characteristics of social organization and autonomy variables (Pearson chi-square statistics)

Variables	*Type*	*Region*	*Administrative level*	*Founding year*
Autonomy	236.38**	33.82	16.03	67.68**
Autonomy Recoded	180.23**	8.01	2.90	36.84**

Notes:
Total autonomy statistics: mean 5.45, standard deviation 1.849. Total autonomy (recoded) statistics: mean 2.30, standard deviation 1.040.
p-value: ** < 0.01.

new variable called *total autonomy* by adding the number of positive responses to the 12 variables; values ranged from 0 to 12. We then divided *total autonomy* into quartiles, and created a nominal scale variable that was categorized into four groups: (1) lower quartile (0–4); (2) middle lower quartile (5); (3) middle upper quartile (6–7); and (4) highest quartile (8–12). The associations between total autonomy and total autonomy recoded and each SO organizational variable were tested using Pearson's chi-square statistic (PCSS). Although PCSS is not a good measure of the degree of association between variables, it is commonly used in tests of independence of variables when the data distribution is nonparametric.

Table 2 shows that the two autonomy measures were correlated with SO type and the year of establishment; that is, the null hypothesis of independence was rejected with a significance level of 0.001 in all four analyses. In contrast, no statistically significant association occurred between the two autonomy measures and region or administrative level. In a multivariate analysis of variance that included all four SO profile variables as independent variables in a model with *total autonomy* as the dependent variable (now treated as an internal level variable), we found that founding year was independently and significantly related to the autonomy measure.

These preliminary data analyses provide evidence that the founding year is an important factor explaining SOs autonomy in China. We next examine more closely the relationships between founding year and the different measures of autonomy and the relationship between autonomy and dissatisfaction with the current state corporatist system.

Autonomy of China's Social Organizations

Table 3 shows the results for the individual indices of autonomy and the year the SO was established.[4] We computed PCSSs, cross-tabulating each dichotomous autonomy score with founding year. The PCCSs are presented in the fifth column of Table 3. The first column is the percentage of responding SOs that were coded

Table 3. Percent and number of respondents describing the autonomy of their social organizations by year of establishment

Variable	*All years combined*	*Year of establishment*			χ^2
		1981–1990	*1991–2000*	*2001–*	
	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	
Course of events leading to establishment					
Bottom-up establishment	39.6 (2,027)	35.5 (626)	40.5 (1,216)	47.6 (185)	9.767**
Social organization personnel affairs					
Absence of 'bianzhii'	81.4 (2,272)	77.9 (715)	82.8 (1,357)	84.5 (200)	8.888*
Absence of leader recommendations and decisions	49.2 (2,277)	49.5 (736)	49.1 (1,351)	48.9 (190)	0.033
Nonprovision of posts for high-ranking officials	83.0 (2,244)	82.5 (716)	83.2 (1,330)	83.3 (198)	0.145
Social organization financial affairs					
Absence of financial contributions	68.1 (2,277)	62.2 (736)	70.3 (1,351)	74.7 (190)	18.584**
Relationship with communist party					
No party organization	82.2 (2,295)	82.1 (736)	81.1 (1,357)	90.1 (202)	9.816**
Interest orientation seen in purpose					
Purpose: not an administrative agency assistant	47.3 (2,444)	49.6 (774)	46.8 (1,450)	42.7 (220)	3.634
Purpose: protecting constituent members' rights and interests	53.2 (2,444)	49.1 (774)	53.2 (1,450)	67.3 (220)	22.737**
Purpose: securing preferential treatment for members	27.4 (2,444)	22.5 (774)	28.6 (1,450)	36.4 (220)	19.399**
Purpose: pursuing economic interests of constituent members	12.1 (2,444)	6.3 (774)	13.9 (1,450)	20.5 (220)	43.195**
Interest orientation seen in most important role					
Most important role: avoid assisting the government	75.6 (1,965)	74.2 (621)	76.0 (1,176)	78.0 (168)	1.254
Most important role: protecting and representing rights and interests of constituent members	15.0 (1,965)	10.1 (621)	17.0 (1,176)	18.5 (168)	16.799**

Note:
p-value: * < 0.05; ** < 0.01.

'1' (or *yes*) for the measure of autonomy. Columns 2 through 4 present percentages for the SOs founded in different periods.

First, regarding the events leading to the SO's establishment, less than 40 percent responded that the SO was established based on the voluntary request of the constituent members, which indicates that many were established top-down by the government. However, the percentage of SOs established voluntarily showed a

significant upward trend the later they were established: from 35.5 percent for SOs established from 1981 to 1990, to 40.5 percent for SOs established from 1991 to 2000, to 47.6 percent for SOs established since 2001.

Second, regarding personnel matters, 81.4 percent had no government *bianzhi*, and 83.0 percent provided no positions for high-ranking retired government officials. Schmitter (1974) predicted that pseudo organizations under a monist system tend to be government-integrated in personnel matters, but that is not the case here. About 80 percent of SOs are not state corporatist; they have avoided government unification on personnel matters. Although most have avoided monism, about half receive direct and/or indirect intervention from the government on personnel matters: 49.2 percent responded that the administrative supervisory agency did not give recommendations or make decisions concerning organization leaders. In addition, considering only the variables indicating autonomy in personnel matters, those reporting no *bianzhi* showed a significant upward trend (i.e., SOs founded later were less likely to have *bianzhi*), but no significant trends appeared for the other two variables. In other words, twenty years after reform and openness, newer organizations are not more autonomous than older SOs with respect to autonomy from the government in personnel matters.

Third, regarding SO financial affairs, 68.1 percent reported receiving no government financial contributions. In addition, 62.2 percent of those were established from 1981 to 1990, 70.3 percent from 1991 to 2000, and 74.7 percent since 2001. Thus large-scale government institution reforms implemented since 1998 resulted in newer organizations being more autonomous than older SOs in financial affairs.

Fourth, regarding Communist Party relationships, 82.0 percent of SOs reported no party organization. That proportion was about the same for SOs established between 1981 and 1990 (82.1 percent) and those established between 1991 and 2000 (81.1 percent). However, it increased to 90.1 percent for those established since 2001. Thus the policy of promoting party construction since the late 1990s has been uneven. The overall relationship between SOs and the Communist Party was more diluted in organizations founded after market reforms. This may indicate that Pearson's (1994) socialist corporatism, characterized by Party control, is transforming into a state corporatist system.

Fifth, we examined the degree of integration of activities with the government and strength of orientation towards rights and interests of constituent members. The results for *purpose: not an administrative agency assistant* show that a little less than half of the SOs surveyed took that position, meaning that just a little over half saw their purpose as assisting in the related activities of the administrative supervisory agency. The results for *most important role: avoid assisting the government* indicates that roughly 25 percent thought that the most important role was functional unification with the government. That is, the vast majority perceived that their role was not to cooperate with government policymaking, such as taking on government functions.

Thus, while over half the SOs saw themselves as assisting in the related activities of the administrative supervisory agency, about three-quarters did not see their role or mission as implementing government policies. Founding year had little effect on either variable, so the results are constant across age groups.

The data for *purpose: protecting constituent members' rights and interests* show that a little over half, 53.2 percent, agreed with that statement, which indicates that SOs are slightly more oriented towards representing interests than not. For *most important role: protecting and representing rights and interests of constituent members*, only 15.0 percent see their most important role as protecting members' rights and interests. However, the more recent the establishment, the higher the commitment to members' representation. For SOs established from 1981 to 1990, 1991 to 2000, and since 2001, *purpose: protecting constituent members' rights and interests* increased from 49.1 percent to 53.2 percent to 67.3 percent, respectively. *Purpose: securing preferential treatment for constituent members* increased from 22.5 percent to 28.6 percent to 36.4 percent, respectively. *Purpose: pursuing economic interests of constituent members* increased from 6.3 percent to 13.9 percent to 20.5 percent, respectively. *Most important role: protecting and representing rights and interests of constituent members* increased from 10.1 percent to 17.0 percent to 18.5 percent, respectively. Generally speaking, SOs are oriented towards cooperating with the government, but newer organizations tend to be more oriented towards representing member interests than older SOs.

Clearly, China's newer SOs maintain somewhat cooperative relationships with the government with respect to personnel activities but are more autonomous with respect to the way they were established, their financial affairs, and their relationship with the Communist Party. Newer SOs also seem more oriented to interest representation.

Dissatisfaction with China's Existing State Corporatism

Table 4 provides results on the second research question regarding dissatisfaction with the corporatist system. First, only 25.3 percent negatively view the current

Table 4. Dissatisfaction with current social organization management system

Variable	*sum*	*Year of establishment*			χ^2
		1981–1990	*1991–2000*	*2001–*	
Objection to *guakao* system	25.3% (2,021)	21.8 (664)	26.3 (1,186)	31.6 (171)	8.419*
Objection to the management system	20.1% (1,950)	17.2 (622)	20.9 (1,162)	25.3 (166)	6.524*

Note:
p-value: * < 0.05.

Table 5. Variables having a significant correlation with 'Objection to *guakao* system' (Spearman's rank order correlation, r)

Year of establishment					
1981–1990		*1991–2000*		*2001–*	
Variable:	*Spearman correlation:*	*Variable:*	*Spearman correlation:*	*Variable:*	*Spearman correlation:*
Purpose: pursuing economic interests of constituent members	0.133*	Absence of financial contributions	0.157*	No variables have a significant correlation	
Absence of financial contributions	0.127*	Purpose: pursuing economic interests of constituent members	0.109*		
Purpose: securing preferential treatment for members	0.115*				

Note:
* $p < 0.05$ for the Spearmanrank order correlation.

guakao system for social organization management; only 20.1 percent see the current strict management system as hindering SO development. The data, however, indicate a significant upward trend for more recently established SOs. More than 30 percent of those recently founded viewed the *guakao* system negatively, and more than one-quarter regarded strict management and excessive regulations as the greatest impediments to SO development, showing that the desire for more autonomy is growing under the current corporatism. However, few expressed dissatisfaction with the current system.

Finally, we consider which variables, besides founding year, are correlated with dissatisfaction with the current SO management system. Because the data are a nominal scale measurement, a correlation analysis using a simple linear structure model is unsuitable. Therefore, the Pearson χ^2 value was calculated for objection to the *guakao* variable and each of the 12 variables measuring different aspects of autonomy. Variables significantly correlated with *object to guakao* at the 0.05 level were identified for each time period of SO establishment. Table 5 ranks the variables extracted according to strength, significance, and direction of the nonparametric Spearman's rank correlation *r* with objection to *guakao* variable.

Although the Spearman's rank correlation *r* is statistically significant and positive at the 0.05 level, the values are less than 0.20 and very few variables are associated with negative attitudes towards the *guakao* system. Nevertheless, Table 5 shows that, generally, for SOs established in the 1980s, SOs that pursued the economic interests of their constituent members, secured preferential treatment for constitu-

ent members, or had no financial contributions were more likely to express dissatisfaction with the *guakao* system. Again, SOs founded in the 1990s, pursuing economic interests of constituent members and financially independent of the government, were more dissatisfied with *guakao*. Specifically, more autonomous SOs tended to demand a freer rein, but only in a few instances. For SOs established after 2001, no significant correlations appeared between the measures of autonomy and dissatisfaction with *guakao*. However, it is important to remember that, in general, SOs established after 2001 expressed more dissatisfaction with this practice.

DISCUSSION

For this study, we examine two research questions using data from a survey of SOs operating under China's corporatist system. We compare SOs established from 1981 to 1990, 1991 to 2000, and after 2001, on 12 variables. These include events leading to the SO's establishment, government involvement in personnel and financial affairs, relationship with the Communist Party, and orientation towards members' rights and interests. The analyses reveal that SOs founded later (2001 or later) tend to be more autonomous from party and state and more oriented towards representing members' interests. Also, we find greater dissatisfaction with the existing SO management system among newer organizations. For SOs established after 2001, more than 25 percent were dissatisfied with the current strict management and more than 30 percent have requested that the *guakao* system be abolished. However, the overwhelming majority are still uncritical of the current system. Of course, our data do not include SOs that closed before the survey was conducted, so our conclusions about changes over time are limited. Thus we can make only limited inferences about trends in Chinese social organizations.

Our analyses fail to sufficiently clarify, for example, why newer SOs, which tend to be more autonomous, fail to increase their autonomy in personnel matters. Moreover, it is difficult to interpret the results showing that government interference in personnel affairs is not inconsistent with an orientation towards interest representation. We presume that this pattern may be unique to China's political culture. Perhaps SOs that are more oriented towards representing members' interests see close personnel connections with the government as advantageous for realizing profits and members, but our analyses cannot substantiate that. Even if we assume this to be true, we still lack theoretical understanding of how a situation in which both personnel connections to government and representation of autonomous interests emerge as a variant of corporatism. Finally, the common view is that autonomy in financial affairs might cause dissatisfaction with the current SO management system since SOs lost resources. We find some evidence of this in SOs founded prior to 2001, but we also find that it has almost no explanatory power for

SOs established since 2001. Thus future research should address what forces are ushering in the potential for change.

CONCLUSION

Our survey data show that SOs established later in the process of market reforms are more independent of the party-state in financial affairs, party construction, and orientation towards constituents' interests. In addition, some weak evidence shows that the corporatist system is fostering dissatisfaction with the strict SO management system. Although the Chinese corporatist system preserves the custom of patronage-driven behaviour based on personnel connections, only about a quarter of the newer SOs are asking the party-state to loosen its grip.[5] The findings have profound implications for understanding the Chinese corporatist system and state–society relations.

NOTES

[1] Whether the party–state system of the Mao era should fall outside the corporatism concept is debatable. Identifying the system during the time of the former Soviet Union and the days of Mao Zedong as a 'monist' or corporatist model may depend on assessing how extensively the industrial unions and peasant associations served as 'transmission belts' connecting the party and the populace autonomously from the party-state, and whether they wanted to or could represent the rights and interests of farmers and workers.

[2] We conducted the current survey in connection with the Comparative Empirical Research of Interest Groups and Civil Organizations Focusing Mainly on Modern China (Lead Researcher: Yutaka Tsujinaka), a grant-in-aid project of the Japanese government's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research. Our schedule was as follows: 21 December 2001: surveys mailed to SOs in Beijing (municipal level) and Zhejiang (except for Wuyi and Ninghai counties); 22 March 2002: surveys mailed to SOs in Beijing at the district/county level; 10 June 2002: surveys mailed to SOs in Wuyi County in Zhejiang; 10 November 2003: surveys mailed to SOs in Heilongjian (except for six counties); 2004: surveys mailed to SOs in six counties. In all cases, we sent reminder letters twice.

[3] In systematically sampling half of the administrative regions at the prefectural (*di* 地) level in Zhejiang and Heilongjiang, we extracted every other region from the government-provided Comprehensive Development Index Ranking List. For county (*xian* 县) level in the two provinces, we classified regions as county (*xian* 县), county-level city (*xianji shi* 县级市), and jurisdiction within prefectural-level city. We then drew random samples from the lists for each group.

[4] We excluded SOs established prior to 1981 from the analysis because the sample size is small and the years of establishment are scattered over a long time period from the 1950s to the 1970s.

[5] At the end of 2011, some regions such as Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Guangdong launched a new direction for registration and management of SOs. Under the new policies, SOs are not obliged to obtain registration approval from the administrative supervisory agency. The media see this change as a sign of structural modification of the *guakao* system.

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