The Contradictory Impact of Transnational AIDS Institutions on State Repression in China, 1989-2013*

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Abstract

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 innovation in the forms of repression. Based on a longitudinal study of repression against AIDS activism in China between 1989 and 2013, the author proposes that transnational institutions’ provision and reshaping of material resources and organizational rules can transform a domestic repressive apparatus in specific policy areas. The intervention of transnational AIDS institutions in China 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 new repertoires of strategies inside and outside China’s territory. Furthermore, diverse government organizations were far from passive targets in this process but used techniques of mimicry and editing to actively engage with and repurpose transnational practices for repressive ends.
INTRODUCTION

The presence of external intervention to change governmental behavior in other countries is a common phenomenon in world politics. However, efforts aimed at decreasing human rights abuses in specific policy areas are a recent development of emerging transnational institutions. This trend has been documented with large-scale quantitative data, but scholars have yet to fully explain how these efforts play out on the ground or what it means for 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 “transnational punitive model” to demonstrate how external interventions pressure recalcitrant governments to correct their behaviors and decrease the level of violent coercion through sanctions and/or naming and shaming (Hafner-Burton, 2013; Hathaway 2007; Hovi, Huseby, and Sprinz 2005; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Wong 2012). This approach suggests that a given transnational institution’s effects hinge on whether targeted governments either obey or reject external demands (Finnemore 1996; Goodman and Jinks 2013; Sikkink 2011). Scholars have identified domestic conditions—such as democracy level, economic development, or a country’s links to world society (Cole 2012; Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2007; Helfer and Voeten 2014; Kim and Trumbore 2010; Simmons 2009)—as key factors that shape compliance (or lack thereof), in addition to the strength of transnational institutions.
The transnational punitive model has underpinned many insightful analyses, yet the current research has been curiously one dimensional. In focusing on how a country’s aggregate level of repression changes in reaction to external interventions in abstraction, this literature has neglected the interactions between transnational institutions and domestic government organizations engaging in repressive acts and how such interactions affect transnational impact. As Hafner-Burton (2012) notes, the focus on macro-level structural factors has led to a near-absence of actors and agency in the extant literature. This oversight is costly when transnational studies in other areas have established that examining the outcome of transnational institutions requires attention to subnational actors and context-specific action (Liu 2006; Merry 2006; Yashar 2005). States rarely enact a single response to human rights pressure; rather, there is more often a multifaceted process involving various options and actions of government agencies. The punitive model is not attuned to how different bureaucrats interpret what transnational institutions demand and then decide how to respond to those demands.

These analytical problems are highlighted when we attempt to assess the impact of transnational AIDS institutions in China. In the early 2000s, China’s HIV/AIDS problems raised concern around the world, provoking extensive external interventions pushing the Chinese government to end its repression of AIDS 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, this pressure began to yield results as the central government opened up to external forces and drastically reduced its action to overtly repress 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—namely, a decrease in the use of violence and the innovation 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) has paired politically conservative moves with hardline crackdowns on dissent (Gallagher 2005; Zhao 2009). Like Russia, Iran, and Sudan, the Chinese regime’s political structure is not susceptible to external pressure, especially as its military and economic power grows (Drury and Li 2006; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Levitsky and Way 2005). The transnational 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 transnational punitive hypothesis would anticipate a purely quantitative decline of violence against China’s AIDS activism in response. Yet, in China, as in other contexts 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 (Cardenas 2007; Risse et al. 1999; Ron 1997).

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 the diverse institutional scholarship in studies of the state, repression, and transnational relations. This model focuses on the meso-level mechanisms that transmit transnational precepts to governmental 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 be constitutive of 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 innovate new repressive actors and methods. Instead of focusing only on how external interventions achieve intended corrective effects, the constitutive model reveals how transnational interactions can also be generative of 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.

Applying the constitutive model, I argue that transnational AIDS institutions not only affected the repression level against Chinese AIDS activism, but also had a constitutive, though varied, impact on the repressive practices of different state units—specifically, health, police, and security departments. To be sure, state violence and the threat of state violence decreased, but at the same time, new, nonviolent state practices emerged that reflected new 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 whom health departments received legitimacy and funds. Yet transnational expectations of civil society conflicted with the CCP’s priority of defending socialist sovereignty. The reconciliation of these two agendas required a shift in the state’s
overall objective from extinguishing all AIDS activism to facilitating and shaping AIDS activism in a particular direction.

Second, external interventions offered organizational forms, material resources, and framing language that government organizations drew on—through processes of 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 NGO model, government agents developed health social organizations (HSOs) as a new type of semi-government agent to operate alongside more traditional security and police agents at both 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, cooptation, 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.

Interactions between transnational institutions and state subunits in China have given rise to what I call “diplomatic repression”\(^1\)—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 performing state compliance with transnational rules. External interventions are not always a story of neatly divided antagonists, with foreign entities on one side and national governments on the other. Transnational institutions can motivate and fuel innovations in the repressive practices of certain state subunits. Thus, while external interventions aimed to change China’s authoritarian AIDS governance, they

\(^1\) Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this term.
mobilized health departments to learn and reformulate transnational rules and models to gain external endorsement while refortifying 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 (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007; Fariss 2014; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Franklin 2008; Kelley 2012; Elliot 2011). Scholars hold opposing views about whether external interventions are consequential in improving human rights practices (Hafner-Burton 2014; Krasner and Weinsterin 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 transnational punitive model in order to examine both intended and unintended transnational effects on political repression.

Transnational Punitive Model

The transnational 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 vs. constructivist.

The realist approach examines how external interventions can reduce repression through bilateral aid withdrawal (Ahmed 2012; Arnow, Carnegie, and Marinov 2012; Neumayer 2003), and multilateral and/or unilateral political and economic sanctions (Dursun 2012; Wood 2008). 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
The outcome is ascribed to the power and strength of external constraints compared to that of
targeted states (Nielsen 2013).

The constructivist approach concentrates on another form of punishment: transnational
advocacy campaigns publicizing rights violations (naming) in order to pressure governments to
change their behaviors as to improve their reputations (shaming) (Krain 2012; Zartner and
Ramos 2011). 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 2003).

Whether theorizing transnational impact in terms of power, money, or reputation, the
realist and constructivist approaches share one core research question: How and why 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. Another approach
focuses on the links between countries and transnational rules (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007;
Murdie and Davis 2012). The more expanded a government’s involvement is in transnational
institutions, the more likely it is to embrace transnational practice (Hafner-Burton 2009; Meyer
et al. 1997). When domestic factors are not favorable, scholars also consider how transnational
institutions may indirectly affect state repression by strengthening domestic mobilization (della
Porta and Reiter 2006; Starr, Fernandez, and School 2011) and/or changing the configuration of
national political structures (della Porta et al. 2006; Tarrow 2001, 2005).

Yet, for all this scholarship’s attention to how domestic conditions affect transnational
impact, focus on the structural aspects of political regimes far outweighs that on the domestic
institutional context. 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 how different Israel state agencies changed interrogation methods in order to continue torture but also maintain the appearance of compliance with transnational pressures. Ron’s study of different 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—namely, 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 that external interventions may shape repression. Empirical evidence indicates a diversity of governmental 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 torture with imprisonment and disappearance of subjects in order to avoid punishment (Conrad and DeMeritt 2014). Many single-party regimes respond to external pressures by increasing funding patronage that allows them to maintain repression
We thus 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 (Earl 2011; Oliver 2008; Shriver and Adams 2010). These studies examine the nonviolent, covert, indirect, and “softer” strategies of repression. For example, wiretaps and undercover informants can diminish trust and cause individuals to withdraw from activism (Marx 1979). In some extreme cases, U.K. and U.S. government agents and their informants built personal relations with targeted activists—including using sex—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; Soule and Earl 2005), there has also been a rise in tactical innovations of repression (de Lint and Hall 2009; Hibou 2011; King and Waddington 2006; O’Brien and Deng 2013; Rafail 2010) including the development of “a range of subtle but painful sanctions” (Slate and Fenner 2011: 22) that are 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 how repression is not a “homogenous block” (Shor 2008: 122) predetermined by a country’s overall political structure. Recent studies reveal that 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 FBI directed its motives and strategies of repressive operations (see also Downing 2004). Earl and Soule’s study (2006)
further demonstrates how local government agents act on behalf of their own 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 different domains and what substantial politics are at stake (Davenport and Sullivan 2014). For example, Gamson (1989) shows that the expansion of covert action in the U.S. is connected to the expansion of the national security bureaucracy. Meanwhile, in authoritarian contexts like China, government officials handle environmental activism differently compared to other activism given the different decision-making structure in environmental governance (Friedman 2009; Xie and 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 different issue domains in a given country.

The move towards disaggregating the monolithic repressive apparatus fits in with an institutionalist view of states as complex organizations with coercive power (Alford and Friedland 1985; Hooks 1990; Laumann and Knoke 1987; Lieberthal and Lampton 1992; Skocpol 1979; Weir and Skocpol 1985). According to this perspective, a state is composed of multiple heterogeneous policy domains that operate more or less autonomously with their own central issues, processes, government organizations, and other key stakeholders (Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005). This approach contrasts with the structural approach prevalent in the literature on non-western countries that views the state as a single unitary entity, within which the administrative characteristics of state agents are evenly distributed (Kohli 2004). The latter assumes the state responds to challenges in a coherent way based on macro-level political structural factors such as state strength and capacity (Fearon and Laitin 2003). In contrast, institutionalist analyses are attentive to within-state variations and 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 in choosing between and developing different types of repression. Second, shifts in their institutional environments may lead those organizations to change the forms of their repressive practice. However, repression studies and the institutionalist theory of state attend primarily to domestic context. A transnational constitutive model integrates such 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: 100, cited in Earl 2003: 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, this 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 term this the *mobilizing effect* of transnational constitutive impact. Second, transnational institutions supply material and network resources, and cultural rules and organizational models that government organizations may use to innovate repressive practices through mimicry/copying (imitation) and editing/reshaping.
(transposing and re-appropriating). I term these the *institutional effects* of transnational constitutive impact. Building on Earl (2004)’s analysis, I argue that the first mobilizing effect alters the particular ends to which repressive action is put (repressive motives), while the second institutional effect change the organizational models (repressive actors) and strategies (repertoire of strategies) available to government organizations (See Figure 1 for a summary).

[Figure 1 about here]

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: 21). They are new forms of regulation that are no longer confined to hierarchical state activities but characterized by the participation of nonstate actors, both for profit and nonprofit, in policymaking at multilateral levels in areas such as health, environment, labor, and trade (Bartley 2007, 2014; Chorev 2012a; Keohane 2002; Lim and Tsutsui 2012; Reinecke, Manning, and Hagen 2012). Transnational institutions are comprised of expectations that delimit “the range of legitimate or admissible behavior” (Rittberger 1993: 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: 72) that sustains regular interaction across national boundaries between state and nonstate organizations. External sources of funding accounted for almost half of all HIV-related spending in low- and middle-income
countries (Joint United States Programme on HIV/AIDS 2016), which heavily affects how individual health systems govern HIV/AIDS.

Repressive Motives. — Transnational institutions may affect government organizations’ repressive motives— their definition and perception of the threat posed by domestic social movements. Repressive motives cannot be derived only from the intrinsic attributes of activism itself since government organizations do not necessarily have pre-given adverse relations with social movements. Rather, examining the threat perception of activism bears on how a given government organization diagnoses the challenges, decides what interests to pursue or defend in repression, and how to succeed, which in turn guides 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).

All government agencies do not experience external interventions in the same way. As the transnational punitive model points out, transnational institutions can challenge a state’s authority. However, 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 averse to their political ideology because such practices serve their objective of staying in 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. In the case of China, transnational AIDS institutions did not have the leverage to push the Chinese state as a whole to
change. However, 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 pressures. Since transnational institutions prioritize civil society advocacy and the CCP fears public displays of societal discontent, how health departments responded to these seemingly incompatible demands changed the conflict object and thus their goals of repression.

Turning next to the institutional effects of transnational interventions, these highlight that government organizations do not passively comply with or object to external pressures; rather, they decide what meeting external demands requires and devise their responses accordingly. It is important to note that transnational institutions may foster the capacities of government organizations. One exceptional study by Dale and Samara (2008) finds that transnational legal systems were instrumental to the Bush administration in overcoming obstacles and running the Extraordinary Rendition Programme for torture. Indeed, relations, practices, and discourses embodied in transnational institutions may serve as 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 (Larson and Aminzade 2007; Campbell 2004; Dobbin; Shachar 2001; Simmons and Garrett 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, which provokes negotiation and conflict among domestic actors (Brysk 2013; Long 2001; Merry 2006). 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 governmental 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 are operative, especially at the transnational level in the 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 constrain current domestic actors, so too can domestic government organizations play transnational interests to their advantage (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). For example, government organizations 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 conducted repression against AIDS activism in cooperation with police and security departments. Now, health departments utilize material resources from overseas to imitate transnational organizational models and blend them with existing socialist organizational elements. Specifically, semi-governmental health social organizations (HSOs) were formed to cope with the transnational audience and repress AIDS activism.

Repertoires of Strategies. — Repressive actors select from a repertoire of possible 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, which shapes 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 (della Porta et al. 2006; Sikkink 2005; Tarrow 2001). Government organizations can draw on the same networks and spaces—such as various international conferences and forums (Smith et al. 2007)—to innovate and 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 but misdirects, discredits, neutralizes, or suppresses activism indirectly. It involves not only sanctions but also awards arising from transnational engagement.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA

This article answers the call for more empirical research on authoritarian countries as difficult cases where transnational influence cannot easily reach especially outside Latin America and East Europe (Hafner-Burton 2012). As one of the strongest authoritarian countries, China is a methodologically useful case that 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, constitutes 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 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, this article employs the incorporated comparison method that “analyzes a cumulative process through time- and space-differentiated instances of a historically singular process” (McMichael 1990: 392). Incorporated comparison views social change as outcomes of historical processes unfolding across local, national, and global levels at the same time. This method aims not only to address the significance of world politics discounted in many historical comparative studies, but also to overcome the “deterministic or reductionist tendencies” of many globalization studies concentrating on the top-down effects of transnational forces (Buttel 2000: 120).

Accordingly, I adopt a multi-sited 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 Appendix A for a summary). I follow Thornton and Ocasio (1999) and Bartley (2007) in using a historical analysis to specify the historical 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 twenty-five percent of all international funding for AIDS intervention in the world. A three-month ethnography there provided a map for subsequent archival research between 2009 to 2013. I established a historical document dataset including newspapers, UNAIDS/WHO 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. In-depth interviews were conducted in 2009 and 2013 with forty-two officials from twenty-five offices in departments including health, civil affairs, foreign affairs, police, and homeland security at the central government and province 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 challenge 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 one and two hours, and all but four interviews were recorded and transcribed in Chinese. Notes were taken for the unrecorded interviews.

My gender and age affected the data collection process. One senior Chinese male professor provided me with highly restricted access to Chinese government departments. He was present at thirty-six interviews where he opened up the conversation and asked questions in the first half hour as I was perceived as a young female assistant. When senior participants ignored me, junior ones actively volunteered information to address my questions after the formal interviews were over. Meals and drinks were arranged for us to have informal conversations with participants after interviews.²

² The male colleague also helped to counter the verbal and physical sexual harassment that was rather commonly directed at me during these interactions.
The reliability of my interview evidence with government agents is supported by the level of agreement vis-à-vis key details in both ethnographic and interview evidence with ninety-four activists and their group members. In particular, I traced three sectors 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 responding to subtle changes in state repression as they occurred—from the 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 comparable damage as violence but in a much less visible way. I was able to observe these events and their consequences long afterwards.

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 interviewees as distrust and conflict spread among grassroots groups. 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 extant connections with local elite academic institutions shielded me from further prosecution, I experienced intense anxiety, insomnia, fear, and paranoia for an extended period of time. These struggles led me to reflect on the violent detrimental effects that nonviolent repression has on activists. With widespread chilling effect especially after 2010, covert

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3 These interviewees were recruited through tracing the network of activist communities: 39 were in Henan, 37 in Beijing, 7 in Shanghai, 5 in Hebei, 4 in Tianjin, and 2 in the United States.
4 I was released and forced to leave the town after being taken from my hotel and interrogated for hours.
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 an disposable phone and coded language to communicate with activists.

THE CASE: AIDS ACTIVISM IN CHINA

China’s AIDS activism developed around two issues: homosexuality and blood contamination. Initial advocacy activities emerged in urban areas surrounding male homosexuality 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 had strengthened its policy of silence regarding homosexuality and imposing 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. Later, middle-class gay males with high levels of education would constitute a leading force in Chinese AIDS activism.

In the early 2000s activists turned their attention to a scandal that caused China’s largest AIDS outbreak to develop among commercial plasma donors in rural areas in east-central provinces in the mid-1990s. At the time the profitability of blood drew governments at various levels into the plasma industry. Through promoting an efficient but dangerous technique\(^5\) of collecting blood, plasma collection stations were opened in poor rural regions where peasants

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\(^5\)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.
could be easily recruited as cheap raw materials. 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). Blood contamination caused at least 300,000 cases of HIV infection (Ministry of Health 2010). 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 were infected during labor or family planning surgeries and who then transmitted the virus to their partners and children,\(^6\) and people infected in surgeries after traffic-related and other accidents\(^7\) emerged as major movement participants. Urging the government to acknowledge this incident, take political responsibility, and provide financial and medical compensation became another major focus of AIDS activism.

**FINDINGS**

**The Puzzle of State Repression Transformation**

This section considers four alternative explanations (See Table 1 for a summary\(^8\)) of why state repression of AIDS activism in China changed over time: the characteristics of the domestic AIDS epidemics and AIDS movement, China’s political structure, and transnational pressures.

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\(^6\)Family planning-related surgeries refer to terminations of gestation and performance of ligation operations.

\(^7\)Given 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.

\(^8\)This table also presents typologies whose “cells represent different values on independent and dependent variable” (Mahoney 2004: 86).
Taken on their own, each of these explanations can account for specific episodes but not the overall trajectory of repression transformation.

[Table 1 about here]

The first factor to consider is AIDS epidemics. China’s largest AIDS outbreaks occurred in the middle 1990s. After the peak mortality in the early 2000s, the epidemic has been stabilized since 2006. Political repression did not correlate to the development of this epidemic. The second factor to consider is activism itself. Authorities are more likely to repress when they believe they can win (White 1999). This view would predict that when AIDS activism was weak, it received harsher repression. The early configuration of repression is congruent with this prediction. The Chinese state showed little tolerance in the 1990s towards AIDS activism when it was only a loose collection of individual activists and events with “virtually no insurgent capacity” (Boudreau 2005: 34). Open and aggressive administrative sanctions were combined with the use of middle-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, the escalation of state violence seemed contrary to what a weakness perspective would predict. 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 halted from seeking, receiving, or imparting information about local epidemics and contacting activists, in addition to being
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, Xiongqiao, a small village of less than six hundred residents in Henan province, found itself surrounded by six hundred policemen and hired thugs at 2 am. They smashed the doors to villagers’ houses, beat up over ten villagers, and detained thirteen villagers suspected of assembling protests.\(^9\)

This development might be explained by another theory: the greater the threat posed to the regime by activism, the more likely it is to be subjected to violent coercion (Davenport 1995). However, as AIDS activism expanded rapidly after 2004, the level of coercion did not increase as this threat-based explanation would predict. AIDS activists were the first group to launch public campaigns in 2005 demanding freedom of association and institutional access to policymaking at the national level. My research estimates that the number of grassroots AIDS NGOs grew from 54 in 2004 to 413 in 2009. AIDS activism was also one of a few movements mostly heavily involved in formally organizing cross-regional and cross-work-unit coalitions and 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: 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 (Alimi 2009; della Porta and Reiter 1998; Johnston 2012; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Studies note that the Chinese state apparatus has become more stable and increasingly repressive against dissidents overall after

\(^9\) Email exchanges between activists in July 2003.
1989, especially since 2004 (Cai 2008). Since the 2000s, this strengthened coercive apparatus (Wang and Minzner 2015) has been adopting increasingly harsh policies towards dissidents, especially after “stability maintenance” (weiwen) became a priority of the Xi administration (see Figure 2).

[Figure 2 about here]

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. However, the way this process unfolded between 2004 and 2013 departs significantly from the existing account that would lead us to expect nothing but an increase of overt repressive practices, such as raids, arrests, and indictments.

The fourth approach, the transnational punitive model, would ascribe the reduction in coercive violence against AIDS activism to the increase of external interventions. Table 2 provides a sketched timeline 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. However, with the transnational regulatory infrastructure only at an embryonic stage, external interventions were simply too weak.

Transnational AIDS institutions fully coalesced in the early 2000s, granting foreign authorities the legitimacy to intervene in AIDS governance in other countries and demanding that civil society actors be included in policymaking 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.

[Table 2 about here]
The newly established transnational AIDS institutions targeted human rights abuses in China. The United States’ embassy in Beijing started investigating the AIDS epidemic, followed by a series of interviews with Chinese AIDS activists conducted by the *New York Times*. A proliferation of reports were then published overseas. The United Nations, along with senior western political leaders, publicly criticized China and called on it to loosen restriction on grassroots AIDS-related organizing. Along with political pressure, approximately 15 million USD 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.

These interventions did force the CCP to agree to participate in transnational AIDS institutions and decrease violence against AIDS activism. But though some governmental behavior changed as the punitive model would predict, how and why new repressive practices emerged remains unanswered. One activist stated, echoed widely, “They [foreign entities] were holding high hopes. Without really understanding the Chinese government, they came in very passionate and aggressively and had all kinds of good visions.” Starting in 2010, the government compelled several important AIDS activists to leave China by using surveillance and planting rumors. Not only did this action garner little international attention, but in a 2010 report UNAIDS actually praised the Chinese government for “sharpening the focus on human rights in China.”

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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 (2006–2010).
the national response to AIDS."\textsuperscript{13} Replacing overt imprisonment with covert expulsion represents only one of an emerging repertoire of nonviolent repressive operations that combined what Earl (2003) terms channeling action with practices authorized by transnational AIDS institutions between 2008 and 2013. This shift led to the decline of the AIDS movement while ironically enabling the CCP to perform as a seemingly responsible status quo power before a global audience. 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 object for Chinese governmental organizations before and after transnational institutions’ intervention. Throughout the 1990s, AIDS activism was considered 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.”\textsuperscript{14} The CCP was not interested in AIDS issues as it claimed at the Paris AIDS Summit that AIDS would only threaten western countries (Garrett 1994). When Chinese AIDS activism advocated for nondiscriminatory policies, it was perceived as one of many local oppositions provoked by westernization and market transformation that were crossing, blurring, and shifting socialist moral boundaries.


\textsuperscript{14} “Sino-American AIDS Symposium Opens in Beijing,” Xinhua News Agency, November 8, 1990. Given its early history in the U.S. (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, which contributed 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.
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 while Chen was forced to retire. In explaining Chen’s “mistake,” a senior health official equated AIDS with “the problems of prostitution and homosexuality” and argued that “we can lock them all up.” Another gay activist was fired and then denied of the right to marry for 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 fortify 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, governmental participants identified external interventions as disruptive challenges that, as described by one security official, exposed the state’s inadequacy in handling AIDS activism as “a blank spot in our administration system.” This implies that transnational institutions drastically improved the salience of AIDS activism and made governmental 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 different 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) the amount of pressure it 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.\textsuperscript{16} UNAIDS’ depiction of China’s AIDS problem as a security and development threat to the world was adopted worldwide.\textsuperscript{17} The European Union and American governments responded by placing China on their foreign policy priority list.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18}“Statement for the Record, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” Congressional Testimony, February 5, 2002.
External interventions pushing the CCP to address 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 as China seemingly began to engage with transnational AIDS institutions. However, official participants in my study 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 brought up how western forces were taking advantage of the CCP’s lack of legitimacy during the succession of senior party leaders at the time.  

In discussing the political nature of AIDS activism, officials from foreign affairs and security departments always made reference to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. 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 something that could be handled at the local level to something 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

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19 After taking over the offices of General Secretary of the CCP in 2002, Hu Jintao assumed 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.
religion, and military veteran organizing. Interestingly, from the perspective of Chinese activists themselves, this construction of AIDS activism as transnational in nature was detached from reality and even offensive. One peasant activist related, “Officials care more about foreigners’ involvement than what we actually do. One time I was looking for some AIDS medicine for my son in Hong Kong, the police freaked out assuming I must be plotting with somebody overseas.”

However, the CCP’s resistance to transnational institutions did not lead to unified noncompliance. Notably the transnational implications of AIDS activism rather had opposite indications to security and police departments as opposed to 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 had undisguised hostility to transnational interactions. AIDS activism, as one security officer described, 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 time.” AIDS NGOs were thus often referred to as “white gloves” (bai’shoutao), middlemen that conducted unlawful activities for their “foreign bosses” or “black hands” (hei’shou).

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, a security official scolded me as a researcher from the U.S. for picking the “wrong time” to visit because his unit was short-handed at monitoring local AIDS activists’ transnational interactions.

In contrast, health departments’ viewed transnational intervention quite differently; indeed, they 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 under the sexually transmitted disease office were responsible for handling all matters related to AIDS in the metro area of Beijing with a population of 14 million people in 2000.

Health official participants agreed that it was external interventions that changed the peripheral position of health departments. Transnational AIDS institutions brought a drastic influx of AIDS programs that tied material and symbolic benefits to adopting transnational rules. Foreign donors doubled their contributions, accounting for 59.13% of financial resources allocated to China’s AIDS intervention.21 The Global Fund alone approved over 800 million USD 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,

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“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 “dining off AIDS” (chi’aiizifan). 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 Center for Disease Control and Prevention to develop multiple new units and construct entirely new headquarters. Even in the resource-poor rural areas of the 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 from abroad, the door was opened for transnational entities to enter China’s domestic policy domain. This was evinced through health officials’ testimonials to the 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, western governments, to western foundations—made use of the intervention opportunity to get involved in China’s AIDS governance. Before 2003 the Health Ministry enjoyed a monopoly over domestic disease control; foreign organizations were banned, except the Yunnan province. But by the time of my fieldwork, it was almost impossible to find an important AIDS project, meeting, or conference without foreigners presents playing major roles.

While health departments benefited from external interventions, therefore, 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 shared the view 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 officials thus had to find ways to conform to multiple and conflicting expectations, which changed their objective of repression.

Thirdly, external interventions amplified the amount of pressure AIDS activism could exert after destabilizing the alignment between government organizations. Scholars highlight that changing power dynamics between elites can improve the prosperity of social movements (McAdam 1996). 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

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23 For more details on the particularity of this province, see Hyde (2007).
activists combined forces and pushed the Ministry to acknowledge for the first time the legal standing of grassroots NGOs in 2007.\textsuperscript{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. Usually external interventions take place in domestic areas where states have already established administrative and political control (Krasner and Weinstein 2014). However, there was no institutionalized AIDS control in the early 2000s, which made the Ford Foundation and Clinton Foundation the first to collect baseline epidemiological data in 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 “special nature” (text in). But as one health official still felt compelled to assure me, “Nobody in the health bureau is a gay.” To meet the requirement of foreign experts to involve gay men in program design, his team

\textsuperscript{24}Based on domestic regulations, grassroots NGOs would usually be considered as illegal since they were not qualified to register with the Ministry of Civil Affairs.
had to work with grassroots gay groups. 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 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 frictions also intensified the perceived risk of allowing further transnational encroachment into China’s domestic affairs.

Chinese activists were not only invited to a number of high-level conferences and meetings such as U.S. Congress House Hearings, EU roundtables, and multiple Global Fund board meetings, they were also selected 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 conflicts like this revealed that “the western countries prevail over the East and socialism is currently at a low ebb across the world.”

25 Given widespread homophobia in government organizations, coming out is hardly an option for officials.
To summarize, external interventions transformed the perceived nature, scale and pressure of AIDS activism. As transnational AIDS institutions 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 something 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 practice and support AIDS governance reform. Therefore, instead of disregarding external demands, the Chinese state’s repression of AIDS activism 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 the constitution of 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 with existing socialist ones in order to reconstruct repressive agents through the processes of mimicry and editing. These two processes enabled government organizations to develop new units that mitigate the challenge of transnational mobilizations.

Throughout the 1990s the task of eliminating AIDS activism was left to police and security departments at the local level. Their work was assisted by the Health Ministry that used administrative sanctions and disciplinary measures under the auspices of the CCP Disciplinary Rules. As the punitive model would predict, transnational interventions placed traditional repressive agents in the spotlight. Local police agents initially ignored mounting outside criticism, which only incurred more pressure. Between 2002 and 2004, about fifty 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 gay activists said, “Our government got a lesson about health and AIDS issues. They learned that the outside world consider AIDS as important.” However, 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, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Civil Affairs, State Security, and Public Security. The joint committee met with the Health Ministry to discuss tactics in 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 the task of studying transnational activism as a “prerequisite for most other activities” (Marx 1979: 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 secret engineering force (gongbing) and said that it had accumulated a list of targets to monitor, comprised of 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, which led AIDS activists to believe that they were “on a good term with the state.”26 By early 2007, however, I observed that activists began 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 covert front (yinbi zhanxian) 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, while departments such as civil affairs, commerce and industry, tax, publishing, and even fire bureaus increased their interaction with AIDS activists. Those actors could catch grassroots organizations’ managerial mistakes and prosecute them without provoking political controversies.

However, this reform had limited success. With deepening transnational engagement in AIDS governance, governmental organizations now thought of themselves as acting publicly rather than privately, and within the transnational arena rather than domestically. As officers

26 NGO Meeting Minutes, June 2005.
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 they could not approach staff members of foreign organizations without warrants 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: 353). China’s experiment led health social organizations (HSOs) to take the center stage. HSOs are professional associations created by the Health Ministry to engage in social welfare service related to AIDS control. They are not government organs by legal definition, but registered as nongovernmental professional organizations as extensions of the government into society that facilitate the propagation of official policies to the relevant groups. Their leading officers are from within Health Ministry departments, but also from other departments such as the police. However, HSOs operate only partially on a government-financing basis from the Health Ministry and most of their employees are not governmental 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 “one organization, two faces” (yitao renma, liangtao paizi). 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 twenty-five 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, constituting nationwide federations with charter members at the provincial and local levels.

External interventions activated the process of reconstituting 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.”

As a hybrid organization, HSOs are a manifestation of a new approach—what official participants called “fighting NGOs with NGOs” (yimin zhimin). Through this strategy, state-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

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27“An Internal Speech by the Head of the Standing Committee of Communist Party of Beijing” (Internal document), March 6, 2009.
purely as ceremonial window dressing (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005). But in the case of Chinese HSOs, tremendous efforts was put into actually transforming and aligning 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 form—failed. In response to external interventions, the Ministry first tried to use mass organizations28 to represent a non-existing civil society in AIDS governance in order to freeze out grassroots groups, disclaim community advocacy activities, and buffer the government from external critique. This effort was unsuccessful. Contrary 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 upon the opportunity to expand as organizations.

The second phase of NGOization involved government organizations’ learning of transnational organizational models. When HSOs were activated, they did not have an adequate

28It included the All-China Women’s Federation, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the Communist Youth League, and the China Red Cross.
understanding of 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 a NGO workshop hosted by the Global Fund in 2005, “The
organizer was talking about stuff like forming community organizations. But everybody but me
was an official in the audience!” Between 2006 and 2011, I observed significant improvement in
HSOs’ knowledge and skills as they became increasingly recognizable as AIDS NGOs that
conformed with 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 overseas 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 the idea of global
civil society as a western conspiracy, they nonetheless emphasized that China should play the
game and utilize 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
copied. Precisely because they believed 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) “being present” (*you yin*) as to participate in transnational activities; (2) “being articulate” (*you sheng*) in presenting the CCP’s perspectives; (3) “being appealing” (*you hu*) in advancing the CCP’s interest; (4) “being persuasive” (*you ying*) in advocating for support; (5) “being active” (*you wei*) in developing connections with transnational NGOs networks; and (6) “being important” (*you wei*)—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 getting 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 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 4000 grants to China for a total value of 6.7 billion dollars. About 10% of this money went to HIV/AIDS intervention. By 2009 CASAPC and CAPM had received 20 million USD from the American foundations, placing them both among the top ten Chinese recipients of grants from U.S. sources. In 2012 almost 80% of health social organizations’ funding came from transnational entities, a large portion of which

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29 Foundation Directory Online Professional Database, Foundation Center.
was meant to promote civil society development in China. For example, the Global Fund approved a 14,395,715 USD 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.\(^{30}\) The irony emerges, however, when we recognize that HSOs actually constitute 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 against AIDS activism entailed direct violence combined with overt legal and administrative forms of sanctions in order to terminate AIDS-related activism and scare off potential supporters. The terror of police interventions such as apprehension, raids, searches, and interrogation pervaded activist communities throughout the 1990s. Some AIDS educational hotlines utilized pagers rather than telephone landlines at fixed locations so volunteers could reply to calls without attracting police attention. State tactics of administrative discipline ranged from public warnings, demerit recordings, wage deductions, on-duty observation, demotion, transfer, suspension, expulsion from the CCP, or some combination of the above.\(^{31}\)

Taking place at the domestic level when activists took action, such 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 social arenas such as marriage and parenthood, schooling,

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\(^{31}\)As the CCP dominated the (re)distribution of life chances, such measures were extremely effective forms of punishment.
healthcare service, and employment opportunities. Repressive actors could thus draw on the socialist repertoire that denies people’s bottom-up advocacy and organizing to act directly at will.

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 repertories 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 took the proactive approach of entering 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 key part of AIDS governance. The new repertoire aimed to redirect and repurpose the transnational resources meant to develop AIDS NGOs, and infiltrate the vertical linkages 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, while at the same helping the Health Ministry to perpetuate 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 constituted 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 policymaking, and coordinate activities (Juris 2008). However, 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 from dismissing the legitimacy of NGO participation and blocking activists from attending world conferences to sending out NGO delegations of its own along with the government delegations. Government-organized NGO delegations were usually coordinated by the so-called China NGO Network for International Exchange (CNIE), which is actually a bureau of the CCP International Department. HSOs played leading roles in such delegations. Exploiting the openness of transnational space, the Chinese government was thus able to introduce HSOs as new repressive actors.

HSOs’ activities at world conferences was a performative process based on mimicry and editing. The mimetic process occurred when HSOs 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 governments.” Uncertain about the situation, officials had to learn how to act based on their first-hand observations overseas. One security official described,

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 NGO’s voices in the past. Now the international society can hear what we [the government] get to say. Of course we have problems. But we have also conducted a lot of work. So we cannot just let NGOs talk about us. We should speak up by 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 performing their commitment to an NGO identity. HSOs submitted proposals to give presentations, applied for conference travel grants, participated in panels and group discussions with foreign NGOs, and conducted fundraising events targeted at conference participants. They even took part in protests and demonstrations staged by local and international activists.

Mimicry was combined with the editing process. Organizational models and practices are constituted of normative and operational elements (Power 1997). The normative elements define the prescriptive codes behind the concrete tasks specified by operational elements. While HSOs copied the operational activities of the AIDS NGO model, they transposed its normative goals with a counter model of nonpolitical and cooperative AIDS NGOs that would serve the government. This counter model was bolstered with intensive campaigns at various world conferences. One example was the World AIDS Conference in Austria in 2010, where ten Chinese activists staged a protest and held a banner demanding that the government pay more attention to 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’ visiting AIDS patients and professionally prepared videos and pamphlets praising the government’s leadership. In addition to the conference section hosted by the China State Council, HSOs organized a Chinese NGO satellite section with 200 participants to showcase the contributions of HSOs in providing services to AIDS patients under the Health Ministry’s
leadership. Chinese activists, for their part, shared with me their frustration with this juxtaposition of what HSOs called a “harmonious” top-down model within transnational space with 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 characterized it as “the government’s tactical success overseas.” Contrary 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. (2008)’s 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 by using not just punishments but also rewards to generate divisions among activists. First, HSOs strove to implement and diffuse the harmonious model among grassroots groups. 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 “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 utilized along with other NGO management materials in various workshops and training sections for grassroots organizations.

Chinese activists were quick to recognize how 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.” While 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 grassroots 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 anti-government and/or anti-China imperialist lackeys. For example, I observed one fall-out between two NGOs in 2007 that was fueled by government planted rumors; the misunderstanding was clarified in 2011, but the relationship was already damaged beyond repair.
HSOs also utilized 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), leading Chinese AIDS NGOs to focus on 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 like 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 UN 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 into the report.

Thirdly, 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 especially funding trustee service. This “divide and conquer” strategy—recognized and referred to as such by activists—can be seen when we compare the development trajectories of two grassroots NGOs32 funded in 2005. 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

32 Their names were altered for confidentiality.
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 right but because of the state’s mercy.” Very soon the HSO began to support the other grassroots NGO 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 NGO 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 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 leaders (laoda), 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 idea, 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, which 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 males 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 United Nations 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 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 males not to use the restroom in the government building because the men 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 activist told me in pains that many gay groups had lost their identities.

As grassroots groups were divided into different camps, internal conflict deepened among activists and displaced the focus of AIDS activism. For example, several victims of contaminated blood who were near death in Henan launched a campaign begging for emergency medical assistance from the local government in 2012. The campaign was only able to mobilize small-scale protests of local peasant NGOs; most other NGOs remained silent, watching as six patients passed away. One peasant activist said, “If it happened five years ago, we would march down the street together. But now everybody is on [their] 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 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.” The 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 should not be surprising to any scholar of human rights. But what happened is ill-captured by simply calling it “noncompliance.” I have stressed the interactive process between transnational entities and government organizations, and 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 in this section 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) and/or methods (e.g., content, format, occurrence, scale) of repression in a certain policy domain. Transnational impact transmitted through these two paths along these three axes are independent but not isolated, 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 non-exhaustive and preliminary imagining of directions for future research, some possible combinations as a starting point to consider various modes of constitutive impact.

[Table 3 about here]

Three of the combinations represent variations of diplomatic repression that appropriate transnational democratic templates in the form of material resources, organizational networks, and/or cultural scripts. The Chinese case I have discussed here represents Combination 1, wherein covert nonviolent activities were conducted by both state agents and HSOs as hybrid entities at both transnational and domestic levels, before and after the occurrence of advocacy mobilization. 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, wherein 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, wherein governments used foreign aid disbursement to sponsor either private militias or hybrid semiofficial forces that openly used violence against political challengers (Roessler 2005). Importantly, diplomatic repression is not confined to non-democratic contexts. The United States Extraordinary Rendition Programme 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 only had
mobilizing effects. For example, Israeli authorities were pushed to invest domestic resources in reforming the repression system (Ron 1997). This mode is prevalent in 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 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. Aside from authoritarian governments, democratic entities including many European countries are also learning new ways from the European Union to police protests (Tarrow and della Porta 2011).

Under what conditions do transnational constitutive effects lead to diplomatic repression? While this question is beyond the scope of this article, 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 improvements on violations. Indeed, as I have argued, external interventions in China served to 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

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33 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this information.
outside forces to attack China’s sovereignty. Similar situations occurred in Indonesia (Tsing 2005), Russia (Beznosova 2013), Cuba and Israel (Cardenas 2007).

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—while HIV/AIDS was put on the agenda of the UN 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.

However, thirdly, 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 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 engagements. 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 key 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 had closer connections with departments in the post-independent Ukraine that were newly installed in the state (Checkel 2001).

CONCLUSION

This article proposes that beyond influencing the quantitative level of domestic repression, transnational institutions may be constitutive of a state’s domestic repressive apparatus by provoking and fueling changes in institutional arrangements and organizational models that fashion the motives, actors, and methods for authoritarian repression. The CCP was unwilling to withdraw from repression when external interventions turned AIDS activism into a far greater threat to socialist sovereignty. But dependent on external resources and legitimacy, health departments wanted to avoid violating transnational rules by building legitimate AIDS governance—and, by transnational definition, this had to involve civil society participation. In their efforts 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 linkages.

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 semi-democratic 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 goals of reducing repression, the results show that transnational AIDS institutions did have a remarkable impact in China insofar as they transformed repressive practices by altering repressive objectives and the practices considered appropriate to pursue those objectives related to public health. By taking the constitution of repression seriously, future research on international relations and human rights could develop richer empirical accounts of transnational effects that would otherwise be bracketed.

Beyond Chinese AIDS activism, the constitutive model contributes to contentious politics theory in two ways. First, it speaks to the call to balance the social movement literature’s overemphasis on direct and overt coercion (Boykoff 2006; Cunningham 2009; Earl 2011), especially in authoritarian contexts. Traditionally, emphasis has been placed on direct and public uses of violent force, largely based on state repressive capacities. A new stream of research challenges this hypothesis that authoritarian states derive repressive power from structural
conditions (Blaydes 2011; Dimitrov 2013; Lee and Zhang 2013; Lorentzen 2013; Mann 2008; Nathan 2003). This article expands the spectrum of repressive operations to include not only punishments but also awards, inducements, and attractions (Hibou 2011; O’Brien and Deng 2013). In addition, the constitutive model reveals that external interventions can have divergent, even conflicting, effects. For example, transnational AIDS institutions benefited urban gay groups while marginalizing advocates for rural peasants in China. This finding further bolsters the argument that authoritarian regimes’ resilience and stability lies not in their capacity to coerce, but in their dynamic means to repress with specific goals and limits (Policzer 2009; Slate 2010).

Second, the constitutive model identifies transnational institutions as a source of transformation and, more importantly, innovation in repression. This finding troubles the normative premise of a wide variety of transnational institutions that aim at promoting human rights (Krasner & Weinstein 2014). Much of the literature has focused on whether and to what extent transnational institutions may deter governments from existing repressive practices. In contrast, the constitutive model suggests that external interventions may actually, if inadvertently, provide material and cultural resources for generating new repressive actors and means. Social movement scholars have recently emphasized diffusion in driving repression development in both authoritarian and democratic countries (Tarrow and della Porta 2011). The constitutive effects model reveals additional mobilizing and institutional mechanisms and encourages further exploration of how transnational conflicts actually shape human rights abuses.

One important finding of my analysis is that increased transnational engagement with democratic practices may actually lead to the development of new forms of repression and the
strengthening of authoritarian rules. This analysis complicates not only the celebratory paradigm in social movements regarding transnational impact on local activism, but also the prevalent argument that connections to transnational institutions help to democratize authoritarian regimes (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005; Levitsky and Way 2010;). Recently, scholars have highlighted an important question: Why do some authoritarian regimes collapse while 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 resolve conflict in various domains (Dimitrov et al. 2013; Lee and Zhang 2013; Stockmann and Gallagher 2011). Such arguments, however, tend to consider those states in relative isolation. 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 in order 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). My finding that Western governmental and nongovernmental organizations provoked, informed, and indeed funded the Chinese state’s development of HSOs confirms Dale (2011)’s discussion of the “supportive” roles played by democratic organizations in facilitating authoritarian power. The constitutive model pushes this line of research further by showing how the interventions of democratic entities might, ironically, contribute to the sustainability of authoritarian practices.

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 conflicts 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, 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 are 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 East Europe (Biesma et al. 2009; Kapilashrami and McPake 2012) while the democratization programs of western countries have produced great instability and even war in various contexts (Mansfield & Snyder 2005; Snyder 2000). Similar unintended consequences are resulted from transnational environment, labor, and trade institutions (Barley 2011; Libecap 2014; Oh 2015). Prior analyses have focused primarily on explaining target countries’ willingness and capacity to comply with external expectations. While 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.
Even though preliminary, the constitutive model suggests a restatement of external interventions: Rather than asking about the macro-level determinants of (non)compliance, we should examine the meso-level, two-way processes through which external precepts are transmitted to, and taken up by, different government organizations. This approach suggests downshifting 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 into a domestic policy domain and prescribe, proscribe, or authorize government behavior; and (2) how government organizations experience external interventions, and how they construct a repertoire of responses.

On the one hand, scholars could transcend the dichotomy between external interveners and domestic organizations by focusing on their interactions at the trans-local level. External interventions are not top-down forces but interactions that bring together various material and cultural resources as raw materials that may constrain and enable organizational behavior depending on their different connections with transnational entities. Analyzing these interactions is a complicated task, 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 frictions or gaps among subunits inside the state. The finding suggests that the expansion of transnational institutions might lead to increasing conflict rather than isomorphism at the domestic level (Bromley and Powell 2012).

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, highly contingent upon their existing internal organizational structure, and the (often inconsistent) relations between other subunits. Another question concerns government organizations’ experience of complexity in policy domains characterized by 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 emerging to tackle global questions of public health, agriculture, environment, law, and finance among others. The traditional distinction between democratic and authoritarian contexts has becoming increasingly ambiguous and permeable, allowing government organizations to respond in creative ways. To this end, it proves illuminating to examine authoritarian and democratic practices in relational terms rather than premising the research with 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 (Chorev, 2012b; Noy, 2015; Seckinelgin 2007; Watkins, Swidler and Hannan 2012). My research shows how, in the context of globalization, health—traditionally perceived as “low politics”—became a key 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 certain domestic actors, goals, and strategies.
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FIGURE 1
THE CONSTITUTIVE IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ON REPRESSIVE PRACTICE
FIGURE 2
NUMBER OF POLITICAL CRIME-RELATED ARRESTS (UNIT: INDIVIDUAL) AND PROSECUTIONS (UNIT: CASE), 1999-2010
## TABLE 1
**EVOLUTION OF REPRESSION AGAINST CHINESE AIDS ACTIVISM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transnational Factor</th>
<th>Before CCP's participation in transnational AIDS institutions</th>
<th>After CCP's participation in transnational AIDS institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transnational Factor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External intervention strength</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak→Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic Factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS epidemic</td>
<td>Low→High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization around AIDS</td>
<td>Sexual-identity-focused, low degree</td>
<td>Contaminated-blood-focused, medium degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic coercive capacity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repression Trajectories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent action</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonviolent action</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Events and Outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embryo</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>AIDS becomes the first disease discussed at the United Nations General Assembly. The WHO founds the Global Program on AIDS to help national governments to develop strategy for AIDS control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Health Ministers meet and discuss AIDS for the first time, which leads to the London Declaration on AIDS Prevention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>International Council of AIDS Service Organizations founded as a transnational network of nongovernmental organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>As the first UN 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 co-sponsored system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>As the first disease discussed at the UN 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The first UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS adopts the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, establishing the legitimacy of external interventions in AIDS epidemics of any country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Global Fund becomes operational; this is now the largest multilateral initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The U.S.-funded President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>The UN program Innovating for Global Health is founded as a transnational financing mechanism mainly for low-income countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>The UN-funded Global Joint Problem-Solving and Implementation Support Team consolidates its leadership in tackling AIDS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Global Fund releases the Community Systems Strengthening Framework to re-emphasize civil society participation as a strategic target area for interventions.
### TABLE 3
POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL CONSTITUTIVE EFFECTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>Repressive Motive</th>
<th>Repressive Actors</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Nonviolent</td>
<td>Covert</td>
<td>Before/After</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>China, Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Nonviolent</td>
<td>Covert</td>
<td>Before/After</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Nonstate</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Kenya, Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>State/Nonstate</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Covert</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Covert</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Nonviolent</td>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>After</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Y=transnational effects have changed repressive motives; N=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=transnational intervention occurs prior to mobilization; After=transnational intervention occurs post-mobilization.
### Appendix A Multi-Level/Sited Data Collection Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor Cluster</th>
<th>Analytical Focus</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transnational AIDS Institutions</strong></td>
<td>The structures, norms, and intervention programs of transnational institutions</td>
<td>Archival research</td>
<td>Ann Arbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Operation at the international and national level</td>
<td>Archival research, Participant observation, In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Ann Arbor, Beijing, Shanghai, Henan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese State</strong></td>
<td>Domestic HIV/AIDS governance institutions</td>
<td>Archival research, In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Central state: Beijing, Local state: Four provinces[^34]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grassroots Advocacy Groups</strong></td>
<td>Historical evolution of AIDS activism</td>
<td>Archival research, In-depth interviews, Participant observation</td>
<td>Beijing, Shanghai, Henan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots networks working on blood issues</td>
<td>Participant observation, In-depth interviews</td>
<td>China (Beijing, Henan, Hebei, Tianjin, Shanghai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots networks working with gay males</td>
<td>Participant observation, In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Chicago, Ann Arbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grassroots networks working with female sex workers</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[^34]: These four provinces were chosen because they enjoy high status among all the local states. As my research subjects requested, no specific information is released here to protect their identity information.