

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Chapter 2:

Provinces: Paradoxical politics, problematic partners¹

John A. Donaldson

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

*"China is a country of provinces, and governing China is essentially governing China's provinces."*²

The province has formed a fundamental part of China's governance system for more than seven centuries. Evolving as an integral unit of governance during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), these country-sized entities remain important channels of administration that are often large enough to deal with serious territorial problems. Given China's large territory, mammoth and diverse population and often rugged terrain, China's rulers – emperors and invaders, Nationalists and Communists – have relied on provincial governments to project central power from capital to locality. Simultaneously however, provinces have served as bases of power in their own right, becoming during some periods a threat to central authority. This paradox – provinces as both indispensable and threatening to central rulers – has persisted across five different regimes.

¹ Thanks is due to Zhou Chuanyi, Guo Xin, Zhong Ke, Jennifer Milewski, Yingxian Chan, Wilson Loke and Helena Gao for assistance with research, editing and translation, as well as to ANSLoC members and affiliates, particularly Chung Jae Ho and Lai Hongyi. The author also appreciates financial support from the Office of Research, Singapore Management University.

² Zhiyue Bo, "Governing China in the Early 21st Century: Provincial Perspective," *Political Science and China in Transition* (Beijing: Renmin University, 2002), p. 165.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Provinces are massive political entities. Whether measured based on population, GDP per capita or area, most provinces are comparable to some of the world's largest countries (see Table 2.1). Nine currently contain more than 50 million people and 19 contain more than 30 million. Most are larger in size than many European or Latin American countries. Even the most sparsely populated non-metropolitan provincial-level government, Tibet, is home to more people than Jamaica or Mongolia, and the smallest in area, Hainan, is larger than Belgium. The economies of provinces also run the gamut between wealth and deprivation. The richest (Hong Kong and Macau) have a GDP per capita greater than Switzerland – Macau's is just shy of the United States. Among the provinces (as opposed to other types of provincial-level governments), the GDP per capita of the wealthiest (Zhejiang) compares favorably to Poland, while that of the least wealthy (Guizhou) can be compared to Nicaragua. The provinces' size underscores their importance and adds complexity to their relationships with the center.

This paper focuses on the political paradox represented by the province starting with the role and functions of the province as they changed over time. Then, it will examine provinces' power and authority after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The third section explores the impact of reform, and the fundamental changes sparked as reformers relied on provincial leaders to implement structural changes in China's economic system. Finally, the paper concludes by asking whether continuity or change is more likely in the role of the province in China's administration. This chapter discusses provinces as a general type, and leaves the analysis of the unique features of other types of provincial-level governments, centrally administered municipalities, autonomous regions, and Special Administrative Regions, to the following three chapters.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

Provinces in History

The province as a government institution first emerged in China during the Yuan dynasty, which was established by Mongol invaders from the north. This innovation was a consequence of wartime: the exigencies of the conflict compelled the Mongols to establish whatever forms of government they needed to maintain military control.³ This aspect of Yuan rule had been, in turn, adopted from their predecessors, the Jin (1115-1234), founded by the Jurchens after they expelled the Song Dynasty from Northern China. At first the Jin administered Han-dominated areas indirectly through a puppet regime, but as some areas became more restive, the Jin central government dispatched officials to deal with local crises as representatives of the center. Over time, those officials began to be more fixed to the regions themselves. In conquering northern China, the Yuan adopted this aspect of the Jin system to administer recently conquered areas, and newly-formed layers of government gradually became permanent. Consequently, whereas previous dynasties had fairly regular levels of government, the number of levels the Yuan established varied greatly, based on military need. Typically, the Mongols established three or four levels in any given place, but in some places they formed as few as two or as many as five levels, and the relationships between these levels varied. Gradually, through this process of adding new levels of government and officials to staff them, the province emerged and became a

³ John Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," in John Fitzgerald (ed.), *Rethinking China's Provinces* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 11-40; Zhenhe Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi (The History of China's Local Administration System)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2005).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

fixed part of Chinese administration. Since then, the province as a form of local government has maintained a consistency second only to the county.⁴

What made provinces distinct from previous top levels of government seen as early as the Qin dynasty (221-207 BC)? Although earlier forms of intermediate government, like their later Yuan counterparts, bridged the central and county levels of government, they were much smaller in area and oversaw as little as a tenth the population of the provinces. Moreover, these intermediate levels of governance were often not formal levels of governance, in that early dynastic rulers established local organizations that lacked permanent territories and unitary administrative offices. For instance, the *lu* of the Song dynasty (960–1279 AD) oversaw overlapping areas of territories that had been assigned to officials from different functional boards. Since the authority of the *lu* was divided among central officials, this arrangement centralized power and provided little discretion for local leaders.⁵

The earliest forms of the province likewise were arrangements in which representatives of various central departments were dispatched to help administer an area. Under the Mongols, these ad hoc arrangements were referred to as *Xing Zhongshu Sheng* or “traveling central letter departments” – the contemporary Chinese term for province, “*sheng*,” meant “departments” at that time. These represented three central organizations, the *menxiasheng* (Chancellery),

⁴ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 74-79. The pattern of temporarily establishing levels of governance that gradually become permanent is a general phenomenon seen through much of China's history. Joseph B. R. Whitney, "China: Area, Administration, and Nation Building," (Chicago: Chicago University Press, Department of Geography, 1970), p. 80-81; Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 12.

⁵ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*; Fitzgerald, "The Province in History."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

zhongshusheng (Secretariat) and *shangshusheng* (Department of State Affairs). In fact, the term “provincial capital” or “*shenghui*” (“*hui*” meaning “meeting”) originates from the periodic meetings between officials from these departments. Gradually, the term *sheng* evolved to mean province. In order to establish firm control over the relatively small intermediate governments that continued to be staffed primarily by native Han, the conquering Mongols established at first 6, then 10, of these *Xing Zhongshu Sheng* units, which were abbreviated as *Xingsheng*. An eleventh *sheng* (not a “*xingsheng*” since it was fixed) administered the area around the Yuan capital (Table 2.2 lists provincial-level governments from the Yuan dynasty to the PRC).⁶

The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) ended the Mongol’s reign in China, restoring Han rule. Not having to contend with being a conquering military power over a subjugated people, Ming leaders reformed and simplified the Yuan’s confusing confluence of levels, improving administrative efficiency. Generally, compared to the Yuan, the Ming also had fewer types of local governments, which also controlled much smaller areas. While the Ming cancelled several forms of local government that had been in previous dynasties (such as the *lu*), they maintained the province, and raised it to become an integral part of the dynasty’s system of local government.⁷ Provinces in this dynasty contained three large organizations with specific duties:

⁶ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 74-79, 122; Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 16.

Personal communication, Zhou Zhenhe, March 8, 2008. The translations of the terms are from Michael T. Dalby, "Court Politics in Late T'ang Times," in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 561-681.

⁷ Ping Zhou, *Dangdai Zhongguo Difang Zhengfu (Modern Chinese Local Government)* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2007), p. 29; Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 78-79; Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. p. 17.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

the *Buzheng Shisi* (Financial commission), responsible for civil administration and finance; the *Ancha Shisi* (Judicial commission), responsible for law and monitoring functions; and the *Du Zhijun Shisi* (Department of the provincial commander), responsible for military affairs.

Dividing the province into these departments strengthened the center, but it reduced the Ming's ability to flexibly administer local areas. Hoping to moderate this, the Ming formally instituted a higher position, that of governor-general to lead and coordinate these three departments.

Governor-generals were responsible for leading two or more provinces, and reported directly to the Emperor. Ming leaders divided the Yuan's provinces to form fifteen provincial-units, including two *Jing* (cities) and thirteen *Buzheng Shisi*.⁸

The Qing Dynasty (1614-1912) simplified the Ming's levels of local governance even further. For instance, whereas during the Ming the number of levels of governance ranged from three to four, during the Emperor Yongzheng (1722-1735), the Qing established a system with, strictly, three levels, with provinces leading *fu* (prefectures), which led *xian* (counties).⁹ The government of the Qing was highly centralized. Within a province, each level of government was under a superior, and each level was under the overall supervision and control of the highest provincial authorities. Most provinces were led by a governor (three provinces were instead led concurrently by a governor-general). The governor, the highest civil authority within an individual province, was in turn subordinate to a governor-general who typically supervised civil and military authorities within one to three provinces.

⁸ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 78-79, 127-134; Ping Zhou, *Dangdai Zhongguo Difang Zhengfu (Modern Chinese Local Government)* (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2007), p. 31-32.

⁹ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 79.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

The Qing maintained control over these top local officials through a number of institutions. First, the highest provincial officials – the governor-general and governor as well as the magistrates beneath them – were appointed by the central Board of Civil Office. Second, although provincial leaders could recommend the hiring, termination, promotion and demotion of officials beneath them, they were required to do so in accordance with the rules and procedures that the board established. Since the board then deliberated and made final decisions, the ultimate decisions remained within the central government. Third, imperial commissioners closely monitored provincial officials, who sent periodic reports to the relevant central boards. Fourth, the provincial treasurer and tax collecting officials were considered agents of the central government. Likewise, the budget and expenditures of the provincial government were closely regulated by the central Board of Revenue. Finally, while local officials at each level enjoyed judicial powers, decisions were reviewed and approved by officials who were one level higher.¹⁰ Thus, despite the importance of the province as a mechanism of local governance, during much of the Qing, the provinces stayed under the firm grasp of the central authorities.

By dividing three Ming provinces into two provinces each, the Qing increased the number of provinces from 15 to 18, where it remained from 1667 to 1882 – a remarkable two centuries of stability. Starting in the late 19th century, the Qing added to these five provinces – Xinjiang in 1883, followed by Taiwan in 1885 and three northeastern provinces of Fengtian (now Liaoning), Jilin and Heilongjiang in 1907. In that the Qing was forced to cede Taiwan to

¹⁰ Tung-Tsu Ch'u, *Local Government in China under the Qing* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988), p. 4-7.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

Japan in 1895, the Republic of China (ROC) in 1911 inherited from the Qing dynasty 22 provinces in all.¹¹

Attempting to unify a country fragmented in the wake of the collapse of the Qing, Republican governments were challenged and often overwhelmed by the growing power of provincial and local governments. The response by central authorities of the time, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, was to try to reduce the strength of provincial governments or eliminate them entirely as a level of government. This was more an attempt to check the considerable power of entrenched military leaders than it was to rationalize government administration. For instance, President Yuan Shikai (1912-1916), attempting to weaken the provinces, sought to eliminate the intermediate governments between the province and county, and to channel central authority through the provinces to the counties below. By 1914, however, powerful provincial leaders compelled Yuan to relent and reintroduce circuits (*dao*) between the province and county.¹²

While regional warlords represented a powerful centrifugal force, the move towards empowering provinces was also backed by intellectuals. Emerging at the turn of the century, these scholars advocated various forms of federalism as a modernizing ideology and a way of resisting imperialism. The Republican government largely resisted this. Whereas Sun Yat-sen had rhetorically supported federalism, and had even in 1920 returned to power in Guangdong on the back of provincialism, in actual fact he envisioned a centralized nation-state for China. In 1922, Sun countered a plan for a federal constitution by proposing his own plan for a federalism

¹¹ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*, p. 79, 134-139.

¹² Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 19-25; Whitney, "China," p. 84-85.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

based not on the province but the county, with weak provinces and a powerful center. Hardly federalist in spirit, this plan would have strengthened the central government if it had been adopted. In practice, Sun's election as president of the Republic in May 1921 was based on the 1912 constitution. Even so, Sun's authority was not recognized beyond Guangdong province. By 1922, due to its strong backing by regional leaders, attempts to identify federalism as a modernizing force failed. Instead, federalism was closely linked with militarism and division, and lost favor among progressives of many ideological stripes.¹³

When the *Kuomintang* assumed control over the Republic in 1927, the Nationalist government eliminated the circuit that President Yuan had instituted and attempted to implement Sun's vision of subjugating the province by reducing it to a committee system. In addition, central leaders required that provincial government organs report not to the provincial government but to central ministers, and limited the power of the provincial governments themselves to merely implementing the decisions and laws of the central government. This system, like most aspects of Republican rule, proved effective only in the provinces surrounding Nanjing, the national capital. In more distant provinces, the Republican government held little sway. By 1936, military needs stemming from their fight against Communist guerilla forces compelled the Republic to partially restore formal provincial authority. However, the outbreak of war with Japan prevented the full implementation of this system throughout the country. After the war, a centralized system was embodied, in a modified form, in the Constitution of 1946; however, due to the Communist revolution, this held little consequence. Overall, the ROC, overwhelmed by numerous problems both internal and external to China, never had sufficient

¹³ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

capacity to check the power of regional warlords. This legacy was in many ways a continuation of the dilemmas faced by rulers of previous periods – balancing the need to keep the county unified under central authority against the pragmatic imperative to decentralize power to create a reasonably efficient and effective government over a vast and diverse country.¹⁴

The Republican period saw a marked increase in the number of provinces. In 1928, the Republicans added to the Qing's 22 provinces by promoting four provincial-level Special Administrative Regions located in northeastern China and other minority regions (Jehol/Rehe, Suiyuan, Chahar and Chuanbian/Sikang) to full-fledged provinces, and carving Ningxia and Qinghai out of other provinces. Thus when the war with Japan began in 1936, the Republic contained 28 provincial-level units. After Japan's surrender, the short-lived ROC's administration over China recovered Taiwan and split three Manchurian provinces into nine. Including the Tibetan region and 12 centrally administered cities, by 1949, the PRC inherited 48 provincial-level units.¹⁵

Provinces in Mao's China – Conduits, Bases and Illusionary Decentralization

The instability of the Republican period cautioned their Communist successors about the potential for provincial and local elites to exploit central weakness. Moreover, the leaders of the Communist rural insurgency realized early on that their goal of a social and political revolution rested on their ability to reach the grassroots. This, in turn, depended on their projecting power through local governments, especially given the size and diversity of China. Thus, institutionalizing and controlling provincial governments within a unified political system

¹⁴ Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 19-25.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

became central goals for their twin opposition to imperialism and warlordism. This had not always been the case. Despite their later commitment to unified government, ideological radicals had been allied with federalists during much of the early post-imperialist period. Indeed, a young Mao Zedong even strongly advocated self-determination for Hunan, his home province, as a way of resisting foreign imperialism. Years later however, Communist thinkers, such as Chen Duxiu, while committed to the concept of provincial power in theory, argued that a federal system would only be co-opted by cynical regional warlords. For these reasons, progressive thinkers split with federalists in favor of working with others calling for a unified nation.¹⁶

During the first few years of the PRC, the number of provinces spiked sharply to 52 before returning, by the middle of the 1950s, to the numbers and boundaries that were roughly equivalent to those of the late imperial period. This reflected the Communists' strategy, developed in revolutionary areas, of increasing the number of levels of governance and the number of units in order to increase flexibility in management and administration. Doing so facilitated the achievement of military, political and economic goals despite the diverse conditions that the Red Army encountered. This approach harkens back to the Yuan dynasty's proliferation of levels and numbers of units in response to military and other pressing needs. However, the Communist government managed to stabilize the county in a relatively short few years. As they did, unlike the Mongols, PRC's central government reduced the numbers of provinces, sacrificing flexibility for more central control.¹⁷ As a result, after this period of great fluctuation in the levels of units of government, the number of provincial units subsequently

¹⁶ Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.

¹⁷ Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 19; Whitney, "China," p. 126-127.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

remained constant for the two decades between 1967 and 1987 at 30, including Taiwan, which the PRC regards as a renegade province.

By 1954, the People's Republic created a constitution that established provincial-level People's Congresses and organized within these provinces various administrative organs. What then were the powers of these provinces? While some scholars argue that Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong during certain periods emphasized regional autonomy and decentralization, for most if not all of this pre-reform period (1949-1976), the provinces' primary function was to serve as a conduit for central decrees. In the years after the founding of the PRC, the Chinese adopted a form of the centrally planned economy based on a Soviet model, featuring a centrally managed economy based on planned provision of inputs, output quotas, set prices and controlled labor. Personnel at the provincial level were selected centrally; during this period (as now) provincial leaders served at the pleasure of the central government. While provincial officials often strove to promote their careers by nurturing local ties, far more important was their ability to form linkages with powerful patrons in the center. Thus, provincial officials' dependence on the center and their willingness to implement faithfully the requirements of the central party and government was nearly total. As numerous purges made starkly clear, central leaders expected their provincial counterparts to fulfill the dictates of the central government, both in letter and spirit. Indeed, many provincial leaders did just that and more, as they competed with each other to appear more loyal to the center. The dogmatic implementation of central dictates frequently wrecked havoc. In addition to implementation, the provincial governments were also tasked with passing central decisions down to lower levels of government and ensuring that these governments also implemented them faithfully. In this way, central leaders expected

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

provincial governments to serve as a mechanism of political control, allowing them to extend the reach of the party and state to lower levels of government and society.¹⁸

This was the basic system under Soviet-style planning. However, Chinese adherence to the Soviet model of central planning ceased in the mid-1950s, just a few years after it was adopted. During subsequent periods, scholars argue, there were numerous occasions when Mao sought to decentralize power to provincial and local authorities. But was Mao's commitment to decentralization real or rhetorical? Some scholars present evidence that suggests that devolution of power was real. For instance, even during this initial period of Soviet-style planning, especially from the early 1950s, compared to the highly centralized system of planning that persisted for decades in the Soviet Union, Chinese central planners established a system of regional industrialization. Under this system, whereas larger and more vital enterprises were established under the center, a large number of smaller and less crucial enterprises were established at the provincial level and below. As Shirk argues, central planners could not dream of planning the inputs and outputs of so many small manufacturing firms, and had to rely on the skills of the leadership at the provincial and lower level to manage these firms.¹⁹ Moreover, Mao

¹⁸ Qingkui Xie, *Zhongguo Zhengfu Tizhi Fenxi (Analysis of China's Government System)* (Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 2002); Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 24-25; Jae Ho Chung, "Appendix: Study of Provincial Politics and Development in the Post-Mao Reform Era: Issues, Approaches, and Sources," in Peter T. Y. Cheung, Jae Ho Chung and Zhimin Lin (eds.), *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China: Leadership, Politics, and Implementation* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

¹⁹ Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 29, 159.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

concluded that the planning system of the PRC, while more decentralized than the Soviet system, was too centralized to provide for effective incentives, and argued that decentralization would help make the people more enthusiastic and proactive.²⁰ During these campaigns, Mao harkened back to the “Yan’an tradition” of “implementing according to local conditions” (*yindi zhiyi*).

In this spirit, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), during which central authorities devolved greater fiscal and administrative power to the provinces, in part by mobilizing the support of provincial leaders. Further evidence of provincial discretion can be found in the variety of responses of provincial governments to the initiatives of the Great Leap.²¹ In the recovery after the Great Leap Forward and the mass famine that it caused, Liu Shaoqi and other key central leaders attempted to recentralize power. Their plans were never fully realized, however, as the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) usurped party institutions and central authority. In launching the Cultural Revolution, Mao appealed to provincial leaders to overcome central resistance to his radical ideas. With crucial leaders, including Liu Shaoqi, Peng Zhen and Deng Xiaoping, building up a base of support within the Central Committee and elsewhere in the center, provincial party leaders served as the vanguard of Mao’s movement.²² Since the degree of

²⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²¹ Jonathan Unger, "The Struggle to Dictate China's Administration: Branches vs. Areas vs. Reform," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 18 (1987), pp. 15-45; Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

²² Unger, "The Struggle to Dictate China's Administration."; Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*, p. 160; M. Sargent, "The Cultural Revolution in the Provinces," (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1971), p. 1-4.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

implementation of the Cultural Revolution, like the Great Leap before it, varied by province, perhaps moves toward decentralization were more than rhetorical.

Despite this evidence, it appears that decentralization during these periods was more illusory than real. If anything, when the provinces took initiatives it was either in support of a group of central leaders, or it was to outdo others in implementing ideas and plans emanating from the center, often at the cost of local interests. With the exception of the brief period of 1955-7, when the provinces were encouraged to exercise their own judgment in setting provincial policy, few examples of conflict with the center emerged. The fiscal experiment implemented during the Great Leap Forward, for one, was quickly scrapped, with little effect on expanding the range of local discretion. Swift local implementation of communalization, industrialization and the fanciful and disastrous agriculture techniques advocated at the time violated the interests of most provinces and underscored the extent of central power. What of the Cultural Revolution? One of the main phenomena regarding decentralization was that central leaders – specifically Mao himself and members of the Gang of Four – used provinces as bases for support. While provincial leaders seemed to be working independent of the center, their expressions of support and implementation of various models of revolution were signs of appealing to the central actors rather than indicating local autonomy. Variations in the approaches adopted by the provincial leaders of Guizhou and Sichuan between 1957-8 did not indicate substantial political autonomy, as their actions were effectively constrained by party leaders. In response, most provincial leaders abandoned the principles of *yindi zhiyi*, and, guided by the imperatives dictated by strong, if less institutionalized, ideological control, adopted

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

central dictates. Thus, it appears that despite the strongly worded expressions of support for local autonomy, Mao feared true local discretion.²³

In addition to their complex relationships with the center, provinces during Mao's era had to deal with prefectures, the next level down. From a legal perspective, prefectures have simply been organizations to which provinces can dispatch officials, and not a formal level of government, although in fact many prefectures have taken on roles, powers and responsibilities of their own.²⁴ Under the vertical-branch structure of command, prefectures in most years during this period had to follow provincial orders, helping the province enforce compliance with government statutes.²⁵ For an analysis of the changing role and functions of prefecture governments, see Chapter 6.

In addition to these levels of governance, for a five-year period, an additional layer of government, the six supra-provincial regions known as the Great Administrative Regions (1949-1954), were established as a layer between the provinces and the central government. Instituted at a time when China was chaotic and divided, the government of the nascent People's Republic hoped these regions would help unify the nation. While one might expect that these powerful governments would weaken the center, instead they allowed the central government additional

²³ Jae Ho Chung, *Central Control and Local Discretion in China: Leadership and Implementation during Post-Mao Decollectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); David S. G. Goodman, *Centre and Province in the People's Republic of China: Sichuan and Guizhou, 1955-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²⁴ Zhou, *Dangdai Zhongguo Difang Zhengfu*, p. 45.

²⁵ Fitzgerald, "The Province in History."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

flexibility to deal with China's geographical and cultural diversity. These regions also permitted China's leader to centralize over a two-step process – bringing diverse provinces into the regions, and then unifying the six regions. Regarding their relationship with provinces, these regional governments helped provinces cope with problems that were unique to the region, those that might be too difficult or large in scale for a provincial government to manage on its own, but too distant for a still nascent central government to help handle. Within a few years, the central government judged that these regions had served their purpose, and that regional leaders had become too powerful. Accordingly, these regions were eliminated then in June of 1954, and the central government resumed direct administration of the provinces.²⁶

Post-Mao Reform: Provinces as key component to change

Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and the subsequent reforms of 1978 brought important changes to the role of provinces. To help facilitate these reforms, the central government gradually added slightly to the number of provinces. As noted earlier, the number of provincial units had remained at 30 for the twenty years between 1967 and 1987. In 1988, central authorities split a large island off from Guangdong province, establishing the entire newly-formed Hainan Province as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), endowing it with special

²⁶ Qingkui Xie (ed.), *Dangdai Zhongguo Zhengfu (Modern Chinese Government)* (Shenyang: Liaoning Renmin Chubanshe, 1991); Dorothy J. Solinger, *Regional Government and Political Administration in Southwest China, 1949-1954: A Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). See also David S.G. Goodman's review of Solinger's book in the *China Quarterly*. Personal communication with Pu Xingzhu, March 8, 2008.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

privileges.²⁷ Nearly a decade later, in March 1997, a large provincial-level municipality, Chongqing, was established by splitting a large area, including the city and a number of surrounding rural counties, off from Sichuan, then China's most populous province, to serve as a growth pole for the rest of southwest China and to manage the massive Three Gorges Area.²⁸ In July 1997, Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty and became a Special Administrative Region (SAR). Subsequently, Macau joined Hong Kong as China's second SAR in December 1999. Including Taiwan, China has 34 provincial-level governments, including 23 provinces, five autonomous regions consisting of large numbers of ethnic minorities, four provincial-level municipalities and two SARs.

Decentralization and the substantial (though limited) empowerment of provinces were among the primary features of reform and was regarded as both a mechanism of reform itself and a way to solicit support from provincial leaders. The marked differences between the Chinese and Soviet systems, including China's relatively weak system of central planning, its large number of firms under the purview of local governments, and local governments' control over

²⁷ Around this same time, the central government proposed combining Chongqing, eastern Sichuan and western Hubei to form a new province, Sanxia Province. This province was intended to oversee the construction of the Three Gorges Dam and handle issues related to it. The plan never reached fruition, and was reportedly shelved in light of resistance from both domestic and international groups. In any case, part of this responsibility was taken up by the subsequently established provincial-level Chongqing Municipality. See for instance Hong Lijian, "Chongqing: Opportunities and Risks," *The China Quarterly*, No. 178, (2004), pp. 448-466.

²⁸ Peter T. Y. Cheung, Jae Ho Chung and Zhimin Lin (eds.), *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China: Leadership, Politics, and Implementation* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 7.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

population movements and labor allocation, facilitated the decentralization of specific functions to provincial governments.²⁹

Nevertheless, decentralization, though significant, has not undermined the fundamental relationship between provinces and the center as much as it has increased its complexity. The center expects provinces to act autonomously in many areas, but to do so within the framework of central directives. Similarly, provinces in China are burdened by two sometimes conflicting constitutional responsibilities. As an element within a unitary state, provincial governments are directly under the leadership of the central government, and are part of the system of representation under the National People's Congress. China's State Council routinely issues directives for provincial governments to implement, and to transmit to lower level governments when appropriate. Simultaneously however, provinces are formally controlled by and responsible for executing the decisions of the provincial-level People's Congresses. Thus, the province is divided between a responsibility for representing local interests, and implementing central directives that sometimes clash with those interests.³⁰ As China decentralizes, this contradiction, which has persisted in some form for centuries, becomes increasingly acute. Moreover, in cases where the central leadership has perceived that power has devolved too much – as evidenced by an inability to compel the provinces to accede to central wishes or by inflation sparked by the provinces' excessive spending and investment – it has attempted to recentralize power. However,

²⁹ Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*.

³⁰ Zhou, *Dangdai Zhongguo Difang Zhengfu*, p. 67; Cheung, Chung and Lin (eds.), *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China*, p. 7-11.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

while power between center and province has waxed and waned, the overall trend has been in the direction of decentralization.

Decentralization devolved a wide range of new functions – economic, political, social and cultural – that provinces were entitled, and expected, to perform.³¹ As a part of this, in 1979, China's central government granted for the first time legislative powers to the People's Congresses of each province, a right that was enshrined in the country's constitution when it was revised in 1982. Since that time, provincial Congresses passed numerous local laws, with some 2,483 provincial laws passed between 1979 and 1991 alone. Many of these laws, half of which pertained to local economic issues, helped to deepen economic reform.³² Some core functions of provincial governments are similar to that of other local governments, including maintaining social and political stability, reining in localities and controlling population growth. Beyond these, provincial governments are responsible for a range of activities, including nearly every government function, save for military affairs and setting foreign policy.³³

³¹ For a discussion of the functions performed by provinces during this period, see Zhou, *Dangdai Zhongguo Difang Zhengfu*; Jae Ho Chung, "Chapter 2: Reappraising Central-local Relations in Deng's China: Decentralization, Dilemmas of Control, and Diluted Effects of Reform," in Chien-min Chao and Bruce J. Dickson (eds.), *Remaking the Chinese State: Strategies, Society, and Security* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 46-75.

³² Chung, "Reappraising Central-local Relations in Deng's China."; Young Nam Cho, "The Political of Lawmaking in Chinese Local People's Congresses," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 187 (2006), pp. 592-609.

³³ Although foreign policy is determined centrally, provinces directly relate with foreign countries and actors. See Peter T. Y. Cheung and James T.H. Tang, "Chapter 4: The External Relations of China's

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

Perhaps most crucially, within the broad outline of national economic policy, provinces establish and implement strategies for economic and social development. In this way, provincial leaders have had a profound impact on politics, influencing (paraphrasing Harold Lasswell) who gets what, when and how. Provincial development strategies varied considerably. For instance, governments of coastal provinces have successfully sparked economic development in a number of booming local economies, including the Pearl River Delta (Guangdong), the Yangtze River Delta (Shanghai) and, to a lesser extent, the Bohai Rim (Tianjin and beyond). Interestingly, growth in these areas was achieved through strikingly different strategies. Provincial economic strategy was not confined to coastal provinces as inland provinces, despite unequal central policies, also adopted a wide variety of approaches to develop their economies. For instance, Yunnan promoted a number of sectors, including tobacco, tourism and regional trade, and Shanxi implemented a comprehensive "overtaking strategy." While these provinces successfully implemented a coherent economic growth plan, others, such Sichuan and Hubei, have been less successful. By contrast, some provincial governments have downplayed to an extent rapid economic growth, despite the central government's prioritizing it (before the Hu Jintao era at least), and instead implemented strategies with somewhat different goals. For instance, Shaanxi leaders adopted a strategy promoting the development of less-developed regions while

Provinces," in David M. Lampton (ed.), *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 91-120.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

Guizhou's strategy emphasized rural poverty reduction, with both approaches coming at the expense of economic growth.³⁴

In addition to implementing policies of their own initiatives, some inland provincial governments have taken advantage of opportunities that central government programs have presented. For instance, since the establishment of the 1999 policy to open western China, the provincial-level municipality of Chongqing has taken initiatives not only to develop the economy within its own territory but also that of the southwest and the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. China's northeastern provinces, by contrast, have been more conservative regarding the adoption of economic growth strategies, a trend that probably continues despite central attempts to support

³⁴ Hans J. Hendrischke, "Provinces in Competition: Region, Identity and Cultural Construction," in Hans Hendrischke and Chongyi Feng (eds.), *The Political Economy of China's Provinces: Comparative and Competitive Advantage* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 7; Andrew Watson, Xueyi Yang and Xingguo Jiao, "Shaanxi: The Search for Comparative Advantage," in Hans J. Hendrischke and Chongyi Feng (eds.), *The Political Economy of China's Provinces: Comparative and Competitive Advantage* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 73-154; David S. G. Goodman, "King Coal and Secretary Hu: Shanxi's Third Modernization," in Hans J. Hendrischke and Chongyi Feng (eds.), *The Political Economy of China's Provinces: Comparative and Competitive Advantage* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 211-244; Lijian Hong, "New Chongqing: Opportunities and Challenges," in John Fitzgerald (ed.), *Rethinking China's Provinces* (New York: Routledge, 2002); John A. Donaldson, "Why do Similar Areas Adopt Different Developmental Strategies? A Study of Two Puzzling Chinese Provinces," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 18, No. 59 (2009).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

the revitalization of this 'rust-belt' region.³⁵ While other levels of government, including counties, cities and even townships, have implemented their own growth strategies, it has often been provincial governments that have had the power, resources and capabilities to be the drivers of innovative development policies.

Complementing this, provinces gained new budgetary powers, including the ability to raise their own funds and establish their own budgets, subject to central approval. Provinces also became responsible not only for most investment, but also paying wages and providing social services such as education and health. Because China lacks a formal, regularized system for allocating expenditure responsibilities among sub-national governments, each province determines its own way of dividing budget responsibilities between itself and its sub-provincial governments, and sets broad outlines for the budgets of counties. For instance, the proportion of the responsibility borne by the provincial governments of Gansu and Hunan for a number of categories of expenditures varies greatly (see Table 2.3). Moreover, the distribution of resources within a province often contains marked disparities. For instance, in Gansu province in 1995, the per capita revenues among prefecture-level units varied, from a high of RMB 35 to a low of RMB 6.6. These disparities were even greater on the county level. While the discretion of

³⁵ Hongyi Harry Lai, "China's Western Development Program: Its Rationale, Implementation and Prospects," *Modern China*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2002), pp. 432-466; David S. G. Goodman, "The Campaign to 'Open Up the West': National, Provincial-level and Local Perspectives," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 178 (2004), pp. 317-334; Jae Ho Chung, Hongyi H. Lai and Jang-Hwan Joo, "Assessing the 'Revive the Northeast' (*zhenxing dongbei*) Program: Origins, Policies and Implementation," *Asian Network for the Study of Local China* (Singapore: 2007), pp. 1-30.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

provincial leaders to allocate revenues within the province has increased policy flexibility, it has also contributed to greater inequality.³⁶

In addition, since the mid-1980s, the central government allowed provincial governments to commit to large-scale investment projects without obtaining central approval. These included foreign invested projects involving up to US\$30 million, a figure that was subsequently increased to US\$100 million. Foreign investment has combined with extra-budgetary funds and bank loans to expand the potential sources of investment capital available to provincial governments to such an extent that by 1997, only 2.8 percent of investment capital was sourced from the state budget. By 2001, the State Council removed many remaining barriers to provincial discretion over investment, including investment in agriculture, and most other sectors, save a short list of restricted sectors such as nuclear energy, transportation infrastructure and the automobile industry.³⁷

On the other hand, provincial governments' new right to direct investment, while sparking rapid economic development, also created at least two major problems. First, new budgetary responsibilities compelled provincial leaders to industrialize too quickly in order to raise revenues and promote economic growth. These powerful incentives spurred investment in

³⁶ Albert Park, Scott Rozelle, Christine P.W. Wong and Changqing Ren, "Distributional Consequences of Fiscal Reform on China's Poor Areas," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 147 (1996), pp. 1001-1032; Christine P.W. Wong, "China: National Development and Sub-National Finance: A Review of Provincial Expenditures," (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).

³⁷ Chung, "Reappraising Central-local Relations in Deng's China."; Jae Ho Chung, "Beyond Decentralization: Central-Local Relations in China during the Reform Era," *ANSLoC* (Korea: 2005).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

projects that maximized short-term returns, but were not necessarily efficient. Reduplication of industries also became rife throughout the country. As provincial governments invested more funds into productive factors, local economies began to overheat, sparking rounds of rapid inflation throughout China. This ready source of often poorly monitored largess also proved tempting, and official corruption deepened. Second, as they promoted sometimes uncompetitive local industries, provincial officials moved to protect these infant businesses from outside competition by excluding competing products from other provinces, hoarding raw materials over which they had control and erecting bureaucratic barriers over regional trade. These barriers to trade also took a toll on economic efficiency and created a national problem that was difficult for the center to counter. Thus, while these changes helped promote reform and growth, they also triggered new problems.³⁸ Further, the central government, by 1984, decentralized personnel appointments, shifting to making appointments from two to just one level down. Thus, while provincial leaders still serve at the pleasure of the central leadership, two-thirds of the appointments that the central leadership had previously made were now made by provincial committees, sharply enhancing the ability for provincial leaders to select their own subordinates.³⁹

³⁸ Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*; Pak K. Lee, "Local Economic Protectionism in China's Economic Reform," *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (1998), pp. 281-303. For a differing interpretation, see Andrew H. Wedeman, *From Mao to Market: Rent Seeking, Local Protectionism, and Marketization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁹ John Burns, "Strengthening Central Party Control of Leadership Selection: The 1990 Nomenklatura," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 138 (1994), pp. 458-491; Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*, p. 179.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Thus, with reform, the role of provincial governments has grown more complex, and their functions have proliferated rapidly. These changes have increased the range of discretion for provincial leaders in a number of policy areas. In taking policy initiatives, provinces adopt a variety of roles, from pioneer to bandwagoner to resister, and sometimes act well beyond the boundaries set by the center.⁴⁰ This phenomenon has led scholars to explain why provinces implement such a variety of policies, only some of which comply with central.⁴¹

First, in trying to achieve some of the economic benefits of decentralization while maintaining a measure of control, the center can mandate or encourage local experimentation, as well as impose centrally-mandated constraints.⁴² One comparative study revealed that Guangdong and Shanghai implemented reform and development policies under widely different

⁴⁰ Chung, *Central Control and Local Discretion in China*.

⁴¹ For a summary of this literature, see Donaldson, "Why do Similar Areas Adopt Different Development Strategies?"

⁴² See for example Linda Chelan Li, *Centre and Provinces: China 1978-1993: Power as Non-Zero-Sum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Dorothy J. Solinger, "Despite Decentralization: Disadvantages, Dependence and Ongoing Central Power in the Inland: the Case of Wuhan," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 145 (1996), pp. 1-34; Susan Shirk, "The Chinese Political System and the Political Strategy of Economic Reform," in David M. Lampton and Kenneth Lieberthal (eds.), *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision Making in Post-Mao China* University of California Press, 1992); Kai-Yuen Tsui and Youqiang Wang, "Between Separate Stoves and a Single Menu: Fiscal Decentralization in China," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 177 (2004), pp. 71-90. These two categories (experiment and constraint), while identifiably distinct in the literature, are related and can overlap.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

constraints, which affected their choice of investment policies.⁴³ Lieberthal and Oksenberg argue the extent to which Beijing tries to influence provincial policy depends on, *inter alia*, the economic role of the particular province in the overall Chinese economy, its role in national security, and its ability to earn foreign exchange.⁴⁴ Second, characteristics related to the provinces themselves – such as initial conditions, cultures and histories – help explain these variations. For example, some provinces start with some industries or sectors that are relatively advanced, or are burdened with, say, a large number of inefficient state-owned industries. Variation in initial conditions such as GDP, industrial structure, poverty rates and natural resource endowments and similar factors can also influence provincial strategy, as can provinces' differing cultures and histories. Certain minority groups may have beliefs or values that can affect factors that are central to economic changes, such as the tendency to migrate. In addition, previous policy decisions constrain or facilitate subsequent decisions by making certain choices more or less costly.⁴⁵ Third, the personal attributes of provincial leaders can be crucial to understanding policy adoption and implementation. Factors such as career prospects, origin,

⁴³ Linda Chelan Li, "Provincial Discretion and National Power: Investment Policy in Guangdong and Shanghai, 1978-1993," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 152 (1997), pp. 778-804.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁴⁵ Hongyi Lai, *Reform and the Non-State Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Goodman, *Centre and Province in the People's Republic of China*.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

clientelistic relationships, and individual characteristics of individual leaders, scholars suggest, contribute to explaining provincial deviation from central policy.⁴⁶

Finally, provincial discretion also depends on the issue in question. While provincial leaders often have great latitude regarding local economic issues, they are more constrained regarding some non-economic issues. As seen in issues on which the center places a high priority (e.g., China's family planning policy), that are both extremely acute and require central coordination (e.g., the fight against communicable diseases such as SARS), or are perceived as threatening to political stability (e.g., the repression of the *Falungong* movement), the center is often able to assert its priorities. Generally, the more policies are encompassing in scope (as opposed to selectively targeted), are not allocative, and do not involve radical changes, the more the center can constrain local discretion.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Examples include Cheung, Chung and Lin (eds.), *Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China*; Zhiyue Bo, *Chinese Provincial Leaders: Economic Performance and Political Mobility Since 1949* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); Alan P.L. Liu, "Beijing and the Provinces: Different Constructions of National Development," *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 8 (1996), pp. 28-53; Pierre Landry, "Controlling Decentralization: The Party and Local Elites in Post-Mao Jiangsu," *Political Science* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000); Yasheng Huang, *Inflation and Investment Controls in China: The Political Economy of Central-Local Relations during the Reform Era* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Eun Kyong Choi, "Building the Tax State in China: Implementation of the 1994 Tax Reform," (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2006); Elizabeth J. Remick, *Building Local States: China during the Republican and post-Mao Eras* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁴⁷ Jae Ho Chung, "Appendix: Study of Provincial Politics and Development in the Post-Mao Reform Era: Issues, Approaches, and Sources," in Peter T. Y. Cheung, Jae Ho Chung and Zhimin Lin (eds.),

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Despite being less dominant over the provinces than they were under Mao, central leaders retain nevertheless important instruments of control. These include the institution of nomenklatura, an improving ability to monitor and evaluate provincial activities, and some unique policy tools, such as the ability to grant preferential policies.⁴⁸ Central officials are predominantly represented in the Politburo, while provincial representation as full membership of Central Committee has consistently declined since 1978.⁴⁹ Moreover, the center can constrain provincial behavior through a variety of procedural and organizational means that give the center advantages during negotiations, such as restricting investments by changing regulations on bank disbursements.⁵⁰ Further, the center's bias towards coastal provinces, before the subsequent implementation of policies intended to spark development in western and northeastern China also underscores central power. Under its "three economic belts" policy, China's central government has kept western provinces weak in order to ensure access to the resources of this

Provincial Strategies of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China: Leadership, Politics, and Implementation (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998).

⁴⁸ Chung, *Central Control and Local Discretion in China*.

⁴⁹ Yumin Sheng, "Central-Provincial Relations at the CCP Central Committees: Institutions, Measurement and Empirical Trends, 1978-2002," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 182 (2005).

⁵⁰ Dali Yang, "Reform and the Restructuring of Central-Local Relations," in David S. G. Goodman and Adam Segal (eds.), *China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade and Regionalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 59-98.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

well-endowed area for coastal provinces, exacerbating the disparity between these areas.⁵¹ This serves to emphasize that, while many powers are devolved to the provinces, actual decentralization has been uneven; for many provinces, the center remains dominant even in the economic realm.

More importantly, while recognizing that the center retains authority in some issue areas, we should also avoid concluding that the relationship between center and province (or between any two levels of government in China) is zero-sum. After all, decentralization was partially a strategy for deepening support for reform, a major priority of the center. Moreover, decentralization can strengthen the state's overall capacity not only by helping reforms reach the grassroots, but also by presenting a safety valve for regionalist pressures. Finally, part of the challenge reformers faced was the need to rapidly institutionalize after the anti-bureaucratic reaction of the Cultural Revolution and the chaos that entailed. Allowing provincial governments a role in this effort not only does not inherently weaken the center, it also actually has helped build the overall state.⁵²

In addition to their relationship with the center, provincial leaders have had to negotiate relations with lower levels of government. Not the least of these includes the increasingly

⁵¹ C. Cindy Fan, "Uneven Development and Beyond: Regional Development Theory in Post-Mao China," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1997), pp. 620-639; Dali Yang, *Beyond Beijing: Liberalism and the Regions in China* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁵² Linda Chelan Li, *Centre and Provinces: China 1978-1993: Power as Non-Zero-Sum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Chung, "Study of Provincial Politics and Development in the Post-Mao Reform Era."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

powerful city, which now appears in numerous forms. While many of these types of cities existed before the reform era, their role in the nation and their capacity for independent action at that time was relatively trivial. Few doubt the importance of China's increasingly powerful cities, yet scholars debate the extent of their role. Some argue that the rising power of cities has historical significance. As one historian argued, "Relatively speaking, the province has surrendered authority to the subordinate echelon of the city within a rapidly intensifying state... The emergence of the city as a standard unit of territorial administration foreshadows one of the most significant reorganizations of China's territorial administration since Yuan times." This historian even wondered whether the province has a continuing role to play in state building.⁵³ By contrast, another scholar argues more soberly that, despite the rise of cities, "provinces are still undoubtedly the most important sub-national level of administration."⁵⁴

While cities have in some ways helped provinces, by promoting economic growth for instance, prefecture-level cities have rivaled to some extent the power of provinces, at least over portions of the provinces' territories. How have various types of relationships between province and city affected the city's potential for development? There are a number of cases where the province played an important role, for good or ill, in the development of prefecture-level cities. For instance, Hubei province was a factor in Wuhan's failure to keep up with the development of other major Chinese cities; aggressive provincial interference partially explains why Wuhan had

⁵³ Fitzgerald, "The Province in History," p. 25.

⁵⁴ Jae Ho Chung (ed.), *Cities in China: Recipes for Economic Development in the Reform Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

such trouble implementing its development plans.⁵⁵ Jiangsu province's support of the development of the port in Zhangjiagang city made no small difference in that city's development relative to Nantong. In Zhejiang province, provincial-level policies were influential in helping Hangzhou develop vibrant town-and-village enterprises and state-owned enterprises, while, ironically, it was Zhejiang's nearly total neglect that prodded Wenzhou residents to rely on their entrepreneurial traditions to develop remarkably successful private, often household-based, industries. Sichuan province's preferential treatment of Chengdu, to the detriment of Chongqing, contributed to the central decision to make Chongqing into China's fourth centrally administered city. While there are certainly cases where the province has not played as prominent a role, it appears that provinces are often powerful enough to make a difference, despite the strength of cities.⁵⁶

We can also ask a related question: What effect has the rise of China's cities had on provinces' relationships with other levels of government? One relationship that has been fundamentally altered is the province's relationship with prefecture-level districts. As cities with formal governance structures emerge through reclassifying what had been categorized as prefecture-level districts into prefecture-level cities, the number of prefecture districts has declined, even disappearing entirely from four provinces as early as 1991. Because the prefecture had previously been primarily a regional arm of provincial power, these newly-established,

⁵⁵ Dorothy J. Solinger, "Despite Decentralization: Disadvantages, Dependence and Ongoing Central Power in the Inland: the Case of Wuhan," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 145 (1996), pp. 1-34.

⁵⁶ Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, "China's "City System" in Flux: Explaining Post-Mao Administrative Changes," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 180 (2004), pp. 945-964.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

powerful prefecture-level cities alter the ability of provinces to project power. The rise of cities has also affected the relationship between provinces and counties. Previously, county governments would turn to provincial governments to help them escape from the grip of prefectural cities. However, with the reform-era institution of "cities-leading-counties," leaders of prefecture-level cities have in many cases obtained more direct and formal control over nearby counties, to the detriment of both county and province. Thus, the development of cities also alters provinces' relationships with units lower on the administrative hierarchy.⁵⁷

IV. Prospects for the future

The increasing importance of provinces has, directly or indirectly, affected most political, economic and social aspects of life in China. From the lofty centers of power to the humble, distant village, few have been left untouched by Deng's decision to decentralize power, now thirty years past. The legacy of this era is mixed. Decentralization of power has spurred unprecedented economic growth and unlocked the economic potential of many a locality. It has lent an institutional base to more voices, joining a larger, though limited, polity that – though far short of pluralism – helps prevent the reemergence of a single individual with despotic power. At the same time, the empowerment of provinces exacerbated problems, such as inflation, inequality, overinvestment, corruption and rising regionalism. Provincial leaders' discretion can block, at least somewhat, central solutions to pressing national problems. The rise of strong provincial leaders has been hailed by some, reviled by others. To many in the grassroots, the suggestion that provincial leaders serve to check central power can sound bitterly ironic, as

⁵⁷ Ibid; Fitzgerald, "The Province in History."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

decentralization has, in many ways, shifted predatory behavior from a higher level to one a bit closer to home.

Many have suggested changes, including a proposal from a prominent historian to enhance administrative effectiveness by reducing the size of provinces and increasing their number to fifty.⁵⁸ More important for this discussion however is not what changes should happen but what is likely to occur in the provinces. Some see the empowerment of provinces as the basis of a nascent federalist system that allows China to reap comparative regional advantages. Others fear that the rise of provincial governments provide too much of a foundation for independent power and that powerful provinces can sew the seeds for the emasculation or even the disintegration of the Chinese state itself. This, after all, had happened during the Republic era and a number of other catastrophic points in China's long history. Advocates of either view can find justification for their optimism or pessimism regarding the future of China's provinces. While this debate will not be decided here, some conclusions can be drawn based on the extant evidence.

For nearly as long as China has been in existence, pundits have considered the likelihood of China's disintegration.⁵⁹ Among the major scenarios that would lead to any type of collapse of

⁵⁸ Zhou, *Zhongguo Difang Xingzheng Zhidushi*.

⁵⁹ Some of the most extreme accounts include W.J.F. Jenner, *The Tyranny of History: The Roots of China's Crisis* (London: Allen Lane, 1992); Jack Goldstone, "The Coming Chinese Collapse," *Foreign Policy*, Vol. 99 (1995), pp. 35-52. For a historical perspective on this idea, see John Fitzgerald, "'Reports of My Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated': The History of the Death of China," in David S. G. Goodman and Gerald Segal (eds.), *China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade, and Regionalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 21-58.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

China, the rise of provincial power is among the most prominent.⁶⁰ As one prominent scholar noted more than a decade ago, "Amid all the fashionable talk (and lingering disbelief) about the rise of China, however, the question persists about the center's ability to hold China together... Those who raise this question point to the growing economic resources going to the provinces and the power vacuum Deng's departure might leave behind."⁶¹ However as we have observed, during the reform era at least, even at the highest point of provincial power and central weakness, the center has proven far from impotent. Even at the low ebb of central fiscal arrangements, the extractive ability of China's central government stood at the approximate midpoint between developing and developed economies. Numerous instruments remain in central hands to check provincial power. While any of a number of shocks can occur to throw calculations off balance, it is unlikely that provincial power at least by itself, will be the catalyst of any event cataclysmic enough to threaten China's integrity. As another scholar rightly concludes, "As a matter of fact, China has quite successfully dispelled the ungrounded concern that it might disintegrate politically and even territorially."⁶²

What of another scenario, one in which provincial power increases sufficiently as to morph China into a federalist system wherein the central and provincial states formally share

⁶⁰ David S. G. Goodman, "The Politics of Regionalism: Economic Development, Conflict and Negotiation," in David S. G. Goodman and Gerald Segal (eds.), *China Deconstructs: Politics, Trade, and Regionalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Steven L. Solnick, "The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neoinstitutional Perspective," *World Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1996), pp. 209-238.

⁶¹ Yang, "Reform and the Restructuring of Central-Local Relations," p. 59.

⁶² Chung, "Reappraising Central-local Relations in Deng's China," p. 46.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

power? In fact, some scholars argue that China has already adopted a *de facto* federalist system.⁶³ However, if federalism means anything, it must include specific arrangements, ideally protected by the constitution, for delineating and demarcating specific powers between center and periphery. However, China lacks these institutions. For the foreseeable future as well, it is unlikely that a unified party would be willing to give up a unitary state and cede sufficient power to make such arrangements possible.⁶⁴ Just as Sun Yat-sen saw the dangers of federalism in such a state as China, so today there is little evidence that such a system is desired, or viable.

Throughout much of Chinese history, the decentralizing dilemma has created a complex dance between center and local. Many leaders of China, from the Mongol leaders of the Yuan dynasty to Deng Xiaoping, understood that they needed the support of well-institutionalized, effective intermediate-level governments in order to rule effectively and efficiently – in order to project power to the lowest levels. At the same time, this decentralizing trend threatens to rend power from central hands. As provincial leaders become more powerful, central leaders feel threatened by a loss of control, and are tempted to respond by recentralizing. As one scholar put this dilemma, “few decision-making centers allow power to be retained at the center; this power, however, is likely to be illusory since the center soon becomes bogged down with the great volume of decision-making and communication demanded of it. Many decision-making centers,

⁶³ Yingyi Qian, Gabriella Montinola and Barry Weingast, "Federalism, Chinese Style: The Political Basis for Economic Success in China," *World Politics*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (1995), pp. 50-81; Yingyi Qian and Barry Weingast, "China's Transitions to Markets: Market-Preserving Federalism, Chinese Style," *Journal of Policy Reform*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1996), pp. 149-185.

⁶⁴ Chung, "Beyond Decentralization."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

on the other hand, ease the burden on the center and allow it, in theory at least, to deal with important policy matters only. The likely outcome of this arrangement, however, is that regional centers are liable to usurp the powers and prerogatives of the center."⁶⁵

Thus, the problems that China's central leaders face regarding their sometimes paradoxical relationships with provinces is not new. China's leaders have relied on local officials to support and implement key elements of much-needed reform. With the rise of provincial power, the ability of central leaders to ensure that their policies are followed has been called into question with increasing frequency. As the delicate balance between central and provincial relations has become less tenable, there have been incremental moves to recentralize power. Most recently, there has been substantial evidence of a shift in that direction, as seen in changes in central industrial policy and the attempt to improve monitoring of land usage and to check local land grabs, and efforts to rein in corruption.⁶⁶

In short, for the past few decades, power, though trending toward the provinces, has nevertheless oscillated back and forth between center and province, as it has during many periods of history.⁶⁷ Power is often not zero-sum; sharing power has helped China to institutionalize and stabilize to a degree that must have felt like a dream in the wake of the nightmarish chaos of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, despite some hand wringing, central leaders have shown themselves to be tolerant of a degree of local assertiveness – although this

⁶⁵ Whitney, "China," p. 166.

⁶⁶ Barry Naughton, "Strengthening the Center, and Premier Wen Jiabao," *China Leadership Monitor*, Vol. 21 (2007).

⁶⁷ Chung, "Reappraising Central-local Relations in Deng's China."

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

patience has its limits.⁶⁸ While not long ago, China's leaders witnessed the horrors that emerged when this balance became dangerously unstable, there are few substantial signs that this is happening today. The dance between center and province continues.

⁶⁸ Chung, *Central Control and Local Discretion in China*.

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Country/Province	Area (km ²)
Libya	1,759,540
Tibet	1,660,000
Iran	1,648,195
Xinjiang	1,228,400
South Africa	1,221,037
Liaoning	1,183,000
Chile	756,102
Qinghai	721,000
France	551,500
Spain	505,992
Sichuan	485,000
Heilongjiang	460,000
Gansu	454,000
Paraguay	406,752
Yunnan	394,100
Japan	377,873
Germany	357,022
United Kingdom	242,900
Guangxi	236,700
Hunan	211,800
Shaanxi	205,800
Kyrgyzstan	199,951
Senegal	196,722
Hebei	187,700
Jiangxi	187,400
Hubei	185,900
Cambodia	181,035
Guangdong	177,900
Uruguay	176,215
Guizhou	176,100
Henan	167,000
Jiangsu	166,900
Tunisia	163,610
Shanxi	156,800
Shandong	156,700

Country/Province	Population
Mexico	106,535,000
Henan	93,920,000
Shandong	93,090,000
Guangdong	93,040,000
Philippines	88,574,614
Germany	82,210,000
Sichuan	81,690,000
Ethiopia	77,127,000
Jiangsu	75,500,000
Egypt	75,498,000
Hebei	68,980,000
France	64,473,140
Hunan	63,420,000
Thailand	63,038,247
Anhui	61,100,000
United Kingdom	60,587,300
Italy	59,448,163
Hubei	56,930,000
Zhejiang	49,800,000
South Korea	48,224,000
Guangxi	47,190,000
Spain	45,200,737
Yunnan	44,830,000
Colombia	44,090,118
Jiangxi	43,390,000
Liaoning	42,710,000
Argentina	41,000,000
Heilongjiang	38,230,000
Poland	38,115,967
Guizhou	37,570,000
Kenya	37,538,000
Shaanxi	37,350,000
Fujian	35,580,000
Algeria	33,858,000
Shanxi	33,750,000

Country/Province	GDP/Capita (US\$/PPP)
Singapore	44,707
United States	43,968
Macau	43,949
Hong Kong	39,062
Switzerland	37,195
Shanghai	27,672
New Zealand	25,515
Beijing	24,205
Israel	24,095
South Korea	22,988
Tianjin	19,743
Estonia	18,973
Zhejiang	15,288
Poland	14,836
Jiangsu	13,820
Guangdong	13,589
Russia	13,116
Shandong	11,412
Venezuela	11,060
Liaoning	10,450
Romania	10,432
Fujian	10,298
Bulgaria	10,274
Inner Mongolia	9,618
Costa Rica	9,564
Hebei	8,135
Belize	7,836
Heilongjiang	7,768
Thailand	7,599
Jilin	7,540
Xinjiang	7,194
Ecuador	7,145
Shanxi	6,774
Henan	6,385
Colombia	6,378

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Nepal	147,181	Canada	33,260,800	Hubei	6,377
Jilin	145,900	Chongqing	28,080,000	Algeria	6,347
Bangladesh	143,998	Venezuela	27,861,351	Hainan	6,069
Anhui	139,400	Malaysia	27,452,091	Chongqing	5,975
Greece	131,957	Jilin	27,230,000	Albania	5,887
Fujian	121,400	Gansu	26,060,000	Dominican Rep	5,865
Nicaragua	120,340	Saudi Arabia	24,735,000	Shaanxi	5,822
Iceland	103,000	Inner Mongolia	23,970,000	El Salvador	5,766
Inner Mongolia	102,600	Ghana	23,478,000	Hunan	5,732
Zhejiang	101,800	Xinjiang	20,500,000	Ningxia	5,682
South Korea	99,538	Syria	19,929,000	Qinghai	5,641
Austria	83,858	Shanghai	18,150,000	Tonga	5,400
Chongqing	82,300	Angola	17,024,000	Jiangxi	5,179
Czech Republic	78,866	Beijing	15,810,000	Guatemala	5,175
Ningxia	66,000	Kazakhstan	15,422,000	Sichuan	5,058
Sri Lanka	65,610	Greece	11,147,000	Maldives	5,013
Hainan	33,920	Tianjin	10,750,000	Tibet	5,003
Belgium	30,528	Hainan	8,360,000	Egypt	4,953
Beijing	16,808	Austria	8,334,325	Guangxi	4,938
Tianjin	11,920	El Salvador	6,857,000	Armenia	4,878
Jamaica	10,991	Hong Kong	6,857,000	Anhui	4,823
Shanghai	6,340	Ningxia	6,040,000	Namibia	4,818
Brunei	5,765	Jordan	5,924,000	Angola	4,434
Luxembourg	2,586	Denmark	5,482,266	Yunnan	4,302
Hong Kong	1,092	Qinghai	5,480,000	Syria	4,225
Singapore	699	Finland	5,309,257	Gansu	4,200
Marshall Islands	181	Tibet	2,810,000	Philippines	3,153
Macau	27	Mongolia	2,629,000	Mongolia	2,887
		Macau	477,534	Guizhou	2,776
		Luxembourg	476,200	India	2,469
				Burundi	333

Table 2.1: Comparative Statistics between Chinese Provinces and Foreign Countries

Sources: State Statistical Bureau (Chinese data from 1996); CIA World Factbook.

The data presented for Chinese provinces (and in Table 2.2) are for 2006. Data of countries are as close to that year as possible. The information on GDP is adjusted for purchasing power parity. This table updates Greer, Charles, "Province, Nation, and the Chinese Mega-State," in Hsieh, C. M. Lu (eds.), *Changing China: A Geographical Appraisal* (Boulder: Westview, 2004).

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Yuan	Ming	Qing	Republic of China*	People's Republic of China
Zhongshu	Jingshi	Zhili	Zhili	Anhui
Lingbei	Nanjing	Jiangsu	Jiangsu	Beijing
Liaoyang	Shandong	Anhui	Anhui	Fujian
Henan Jiangbei	Shanxi	Shanxi	Shanxi	Gansu
Shaanxi	Henan	Shandong	Shandong	Guangdong
Sichuan	Shaanxi	Henan	Henan	Guangxi
Gansu	Sichuan	Shaanxi	Shaanxi	Guizhou
Yunnan	Jiangxi	Gansu	Gansu	Hebei
Jiangzhe	Huguang	Zhejiang	Zhejiang	Heilongjiang
Jiangxi	Zhejiang	Jiangxi	Jiangxi	Henan
Huguang	Fujian	Hubei	Hubei	Hubei
	Guangdong	Hunan	Hunan	Hunan
	Guangxi	Sichuan	Sichuan	Inner Mongolia
	Yunnan	Fujian	Fujian	Jiangsu
	Guizhou	Guangdong	Guangdong	Jiangxi
		Guangxi	Guangxi	Jilin
		Yunnan	Yunnan	Liaoning
		Guizhou	Guizhou	Ningxia
		Xinjiang (1884)	Xinjiang	Qinghai
		Taiwan**	Liaoning	Shaanxi
		Fengtian (1907)	Heilongjiang	Shandong
		Heilongjiang (1907)	Jilin	Shanghai
		Jilin (1907)	Xikang (1928)	Shanxi
			Qinghai (1928)	Sichuan
			Ningxia (1928)	Taiwan**
			Suiyuan (1928)	Tianjin
			Rehe (1928)	Tibet
			Chahaer (1928)	Xinjiang
				Yunnan
				Zhejiang
				Chongqing (1997)
				Hainan (1988)
				Macau (1999)
				Hong Kong (1997)

* For a brief period after World War II, the ROC had twenty additional provinces.

** Taiwan, split from Fujian 1885; lost to Japan 1895, recovered in 1945, and by 1949, site of ROC's capital, is currently seen by the PRC as a renegade province of China.

Sources: Zhou Zhenhe; Zhou Ping

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14-38. London: Routledge.

Table 2.2: List of provinces/provincial-level governments (Yuan to present)

Do not cite. For the final version, see:

Donaldson, John A. 2009. "Provinces: Paradoxical Politics, Problematic Partners." In *China's Local Administration: Traditions and Changes in the Sub-National Hierarchy*, edited by Jae Ho Chung and Tao-Chiu Lam, 14–38. London: Routledge.

Expenditure Category	Provincial government share of local expenditures	
	Gansu (percent)	Hunan (percent)
Capital Construction	48.4	89.0
Agriculture	24.8	67.0
Education	19.0	14.8
Health Care	16.7	15.4
Assistance to Underdeveloped Areas	44.7	7.6

Table 2.3: Provincial government share of local expenditures.

Source: Adapted from Table 3.4, Wong, Christine P.W., "China: National Development and Sub-National Finance: A Review of Provincial Expenditures," (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002).