------Based on The Case Study in China

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the political support structures for NGO under authoritarian regime by taking a Chinese environmental NGO as an example. Although the government has never given up efforts to corporate NGOs, a lot of cooperations in public affairs have largely changed the relationship between NGO and the government. NGOs not only can help government solve the problem, but also get the opportunity for their development. The fragmented authoritarian and systematic connections play an important role in NGO support stucture, which help NGOs improve their abilities to mobilize resources and influence the policy. Under certain conditions, NGOs can take advantage of these roles to achieve their goals. Further reasearch about the mechenism should be conducted.

Key words: Authoritarian Regime; Civil Society; State-NGO Relationship; Cooperation

1. Introduction:

The state-NGO relationship has been a heated discussion in academia since the theory of civil society proposed and many studies have shown that a mature and stable civil society is benefical to operation and consolidation of democracy (Przeworski, 1995; Diamond, 1999; Schmitter, 1996). As a main actor, NGO often play an important role in the development of civil society. Tocqueville did his famous research about American democracy in 19th century and concluded that association freedom was a key factor promoting participatory and democratic values of American people (Tocqueville, 1835). Putman further explored the opinion in his research on Italy (Putman, 1994). Democrazation in former socialist countries in last century also proved the importance of NGOs, which aroused highly attention from academia (Bermeo, 2003; Schmitter, 1997; Kubik, 2000; Ekiert & Kubik, 1999).

However, for these reasons, authoritarian rulers often regard NGOs as a potential threat and often take two different stategies to respond to the real or perceived threats of
NGOs: corporatism and exclusion (Heurlin, 2010). The main purpose of exclusion strategy is to limit the living space of NGOs by various means, including restricting registration, funds, and activities of NGOs. Comparing to exclusion strategy, corporatism strategy takes a different route by integrating NGOs into authoritarian regime. Under such condition, government will not blindly suppress NGO and in contrast, it will even encourage some NGOs to participate in some public affairs. However, the government will still keep highly control on NGOs from funds, personnel management and operation. While NGOs can obtain a certain level of development, it is difficult for them to get rid of the control to gain autonomy and independence. The failure of social movements in some authoritarian country also illustrates the effectiveness of these strategy (Gallagher, 2004; McCormick edt, 1992; Tony, 2000; Wakeman, 1993; Huang, 1991).

The restrictions on NGO by authoritarian rulers largely hindered the growth of civil society, but it does not mean civil society is impossible under these regimes. In fact, the state-NGO relationship under authoritarian regime is far more complex. The case of democratization in Taiwan and South Korea has largely illustrated that even authoritarian rulers took various measures to exclude and corporate NGO, the space for development of NGO and civil society still exits. In recent years with the emergence of a new trend, In China, for example, a growing number of NGOs begin to deeply engage in public service delivery as well as public policy advocacy. Unlike western democratic society, it is impossible for NGOs to fight against government directly, but more and more cases illustrate that the changes of state-NGO relationship has taken place to some extent, such as strategy government took, ranging from corporatism to cooperation, but also reflected in the relatively independent and equal status of NGOs during the process of collaboration (Zhang & Guo, 2012; Chen & Xu, 2011; Zhan & Tang, 2013). Although to what extent will this new trend promote the civil society and democratization in China is still unknow, there is no doubt that it will greatly influence the pattern of China’s governance in the future. So it is of great value to study this new trend of state-NGO relationship and rethink the possible effects on civil society under authoritarian regime.

This article focuses on the political support structure under authoritarian regime, which makes the cooperation between the government and advocacy NGO possible by taking a Chinese environmental NGO as an example. The paper will answer two questions: (1) what is the political support structure in authoritarian regime? (2) How these factors take effects, which makes the cooperation possible?

2. Literature Review and Framework

(1) The Development of NGO under Authoritarian Regime

Many scholars carried out a lot of research on the development of NGOs under authoritarian regime and found that although in general, authoritarian rulers take a restrictive attitude towards NGOs, the space for development still exits. One important reason is that the government needs NGO. With the decentralization and globalization, it is
very difficult for government to achieve its goal by traditional means. Precisely, NGOs can provide a range of public services to solve the market and government failure (Weisbrod, 1975; Hansmann, 1980). While more and more authoritarian regimes opening up and transferring to the market economy, the resouces allocation system has changed from single to pluralism, which give NGOs opportunity and capability to moilize resources (Bratton, 1989). Some research on China, Vietnam and other socialist countries clearly demonstrates that with the transformation from planned economy to market economy, NGOs in these countries will have the opportunity to get more resource, which is necessary for their development (Chan, 2005; Martens, 2006; Ma, 2002; Foster, 2002).

In addition to government needs and the development of market economy, another reason beneficial to NGO is the degree of political elites cohesion. Some scholars find that comparing to personalist regime, single-party regime often expresses a more tolerant attitude towards NGO. Due to an intense power struggle within the regime of personal dictatorship, dictator will try all means to suppress NGOs to prevent enemies making use of them. The history of Indonesia and Philippines has fully demonstrated this point. In contrast, the political elites cohesion in single-party state is much stronger than that in personalist regime. Through a series of institution and norms, single-party state can easily intergrate political elites to control the scale and harm of party conflicts (Geddes, 1999; Waldner, 1999; Brownlee, 2007), so political elites tend to consider NGO from a perspective of long-term point of view, which regards NGOs not as a threat, but as a strength to stablize the regime (Herulin, 2010). This is also the reason why NGOs can be an important democratic transition power in a number of single-party states (Alagappa, 2004; Jones, 1998).

Although the market economy and single-party elites cohesion is beneficial to the development of NGO under authoritarian regime, it can’t explain why the cooperation between advocacy NGOs and government can happen. Unlike those enaged in public service delivery, some NGOs focus on public issues and influencing the public policy agenda as their mission. These NGOs can improve the government accountability and promote democratization by mobilizing citizen participation and spreading civic awareness (Anheier & Salamon, 2006). So they are more likely to be viewed as a threat to authoritarian rulers and encounter much less political opportunity compared in democracy countries. Many scholars find that the government will be more tolerant of those NGOs involved in public service delivery and will not hesitate to suppress advocacy NGOs if they go beyond the bottom line. Some scholars summarize this feather as the strategy of “classification control “, which means take different actions to different NGOs (Spires, 2011; Kang & Han, 2005). For these reason, many advocacy NGOs will choose depoliticization strategy to avoid touching sensitive topics to maximize living space (Tang & Ma, 2011). Some NGOs will even take some actions initiatively to meet the government’s goal, which can establish mutual trust relationship during the cooperation with government (Spires, 2011; Tang & Zhan, 2008).
There are several shortcomings on current research: Firstly, most research on advocacy NGOs show great interest in their role in social movements and democratization under authoritarian regime (Hemment, 2007; Mertha, 2009; Cellarius & Staddon, 2002; Alagappa, 2004), which mainly regard NGOs as an power against to the government, but they pay less attention on how these NGOs exist and cooperate with government in a poor condition. Because of the third wave and the development of global civil society, advocacy NGO has been regarded as an Astraea, who will protect the people suffering from those dictators. During the democratization of formal socialist countries, advocacy NGO can successfully organize different class of people by arousing their conscience and courage (Bermeo, 2003). For these reasons, scholars often put advocacy NGO in an opposite position to the authoritarian government and analyse them from the perspective of social movement theory and democratization theory. However, when the state is so powerful that NGO can hardly challenge the authority, it is wise for them to show an active and constructive attitude towards the government. Cooperating with the government is an optional choice for advocacy NGO to influence the government’s decision. However, the question why authoritarian rulers are willing to cooperate with advocacy NGO should be further discussed.

Secondly, although current research are concerned with the independence and autonomy of NGO under authoritarian regime, they focus mainly on the specific strategy instead of institutional factors (Bernhard, 2007). From their point of view, NGO are able to negotiate with the state under the visible control of government (Saich, 2000). For example, Tang (2011) use the “depoliticized autonomy” to summarize the strategy of grassroot NGO while they are dealing with the powerful government. Hsu (2010) argued that NGO could make alliance with state agencies to gain enough resources and legitimacy. These studies have showed that a successful NGO can overcome difficulties to achieve its goal by making full use of all available resources and taking appropriate strategies. However, these studies emphasize NGOs’ own initiative too much and don’t pay enough attention on the institutional factors behind these strategies. Only in certain institutional environment can NGO take a successful strategy and different political opportunity may bring different results (Tilly, 1978; Boudreau, 1996; Oberschall, 1989). Many scholars believe NGO can be successful in authoritarian regime due to some non-institutional factors such as personal network. However, in fact, political institutional factors play an important role in supporting the development of NGO. It will be very helpful to understand the mechanisms of cooperation between advocacy NGO and government.

This paper will try to fill this gap by exploring the political support structure for NGO under authoritarian regime. The next part I will draw on the political institutional characters of authoritarian regime and analyse how these factors work.

(2) Fragmented Authoritarian and Systematic Connections

Based on previous studies, this article will draw a picture of how advocacy NGO and government cooperate by using a framework of fragmented authoritarian and systematic
connections. Fragmented authoritarian is a typical characteristic of many authoritarian regime, many studies have found that even in single-party authoritarian regime, which have a higher elite cohesion, the bureaucracy system is not monolithic and the political authority is decentralized and fragmented (Lieberthal, 1988; Kahn, 1992; Heryanto edt, 2005; Wu, 2004). Lietherthal find that single-party system in China is not as solid as it seems to be. The energy and time of top authority is limited, so the bureaucracy almost controls the policy process including discussion and implementation. Because of the high professional level and the patron-client relationship with the higher authority, there is great discourse power for each department in their own field. Different government departments tend to hold different attitudes towards the same issue because department leaders may have different goals and they will seek to maximize their interests. Communist Party of China is not the single case and almost every single-party regime has this character. Wu (2004) finds the economy policy in Taiwan during 1960s-1970s was often contradictory because different sectors would introduce different policies due to their own interests- even the top leader could do nothing about it. In formal Soviet Union, fragmented power structure also exists. The factional conflicts among the party leaders had weaken the political cohesion to some extent (Lowenhardt, 1981). Ploss (2015) analysed the agriculture policy in Soviet Union from 1953-1963 and found that there are a lot of conflicts among different leaders as well as departments. As many scholars have pointed out: single-party regime has the highest political cohesion compared with other types of dictatorship. So we can infer that the power structure must be more fragmented in those countries like Syria, Iran, Russia and so on. This special power structure is very important for us to understand the mechanism of cooperation between NGO and government. Many studies have found the fragmented and decentralised power structure can give NGO opportunities to be involved in public affairs and even change the policy agenda (Zhan & Tang, 2013; Ang, 2014;Kelley, 1976).

However, fragmented authoritarian can’t fully explain why advocacy NGO can cooperate with government. Although fragmented authoritarian can provide NGOs opportunity, if NGO lack channels with government, they are more likely to act by themselves or even mobilize the public to express their views or fight against the government. Thus systemic connection is another condition for NGO to cooperate with government. It is often very difficult for NGOs to register under authoritarian regime because of dual-command system, which requires NGO to seek for a government department to be responsible for their actions. Authoritarian rulers believe this system is important and necessary for government to master their movements and ensure that they won’t be troublemakers. Although many scholars regard this system as a mean to control NGO (Lehmbruch and Schmitter, 1982; Foster, 2001; Ma, 2002), actually this is also an advantage can be used by NGOs. The management system provides NGO a link to government, through which NGO can acquire funds and political support. While the leader of government department is open-minded, advocacy NGOs can easily make full use of this natural connection to help them achieve their
goals. Unlike personalist social networks, this kind of systematic connection can organize the government and NGO together institutionally, which provide possibility for NGOs to cooperate with government. We should note that many NGOs have more than one department as their guidance department, which in fact improve their ability to gain resource and political support.

Fragmented authoritarian and systemic connection is two main factors, which support advocacy NGO under authoritarian regime. Especially for those NGOs that have two or more departments, they can get rid of the external control from a single organization and handle different kinds of public affairs easily. This article will take a Chinese local environmental NGO as an example to describe the how these two factors work in cooperation between NGO and government in environmental advocacy and supervision program.

3. Method

This article explores the question of how advocacy NGO cooperates with the government under authoritarian regime, which belongs to causal mechanism research. This article will take an environmental NGO as an example to answer how fragmented authoritarian and systemic connection work during the cooperation between advocacy NGO and government.

China is a typical authoritarian regime. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has ruled China since 1949 and even in the late-1980s, while many formal socialist country joined wave of democracy, CCP can still hold the power strongly. As the ruling party, CCP insists Marxism as the guiding ideology and rejects western political system. On one hand, to prevent people organized, CCP takes various means to limit and corporer NGO. On the other hand, by arousing people’s nationalist emotion, CCP can mobilize the public to achieve its goal. Although after 1992 with the popularity of the Internet and the development of market economy, CCP made some reforms on political democratization and decentralization, CCP’s leading position remains no doubt being challenged. The government will not hesitate to suppress the sensitive information on the Internet, which may be a threat and challenge to the political order (MacKinnon, 2011; Gallagher, 2004). In recent years, CCP begin to take a more and more tolerant attitude toward NGO. The state has imposed a lot of laws to standardize different kinds of NGO. Also, large amounts of money have been invested to improve the quality and quantity of NGO by central and local government every year. Meanwhile, Chinese government is still alert to NGO, especially those who have a close connection with fundings from international. Government also often monitors some NGOs who may give government trouble. Generally speaking, Chinese NGOs still don’t have a equal statue when dealing with the government. The state-NGO relation presents a “strong state, weak society” status on the whole, which is a typical characteristic of authoritarian regime.

The NGO named “GZ” we selected is an environmental NGO located in Hangzhou city, Zhejiang province. GZ was established in 2000 and at first it is a volunteer organization under
Communist Youth League of Zhejiang Province. In 2010, it registered as an environmental NGO under Department of Civil Affairs in Hangzhou city. We select GZ as the case mainly for following aspects: Firstly, there is a general representation for GZ as a formal registered grassroot NGO. GZ is neither a NGO without registration, nor a GONGO controlled by government. One one hand, GZ is constrained by rules and laws. On the other hand, GZ can operate independently to some extend, so exploring the mechanism of cooperation between this type of NGO and the government is very valuable and necessary. Secondly, different from the NGO who provide public service, GZ is an environmental NGO involved deeply in political advocacy and this type of NGO is meaningful to civic participation as well as the development of civil society, which is more sensitive to authoritarian ruler. So it is very helpful for us to understand the political support structure by studying the cooperation between GZ and the government. Thirdly, as an environmental NGO, GZ has a frequently interaction with government and therefore is much valuable for research.

We collect data mainly from participatory observation and in-depth interviews. We do our first survey in October 2015 and then conduct a fieldwork from March 2016 to April 2016. During the fieldwork, we worked in GZ as a trainee for more than two months and participated in several activities. We also interviewed many people including chairman, vice chairman and other employees and gained a lot of first-hand research data.

4. How Advocacy NGO Cooperates with Government: Taking Waterkeeper of Qiantang River as An Example

(1) The Cooperation Between GZ and Government

Waterkeeper of Qiantang River (WQR) is established in 2010 by GZ, which aimed at supervising environmental problems to improve the quality of Qiantang River. Also in 2010, GZ was founded and the guidance department of GZ is Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Hangzhou City. At that time, the environmental pollution has been a serious problem. Although the center government mass media has paid more and more attention to this problem, in reality, the environmental pollution is still rampant. For example, there are many factories pouring wastewater into Qiantang River, which made it heavily polluted. The related departments including Qiantang River Administration (QRA), Water Conservancy Bureau (WCB) and EPA were very worried about the poor condition of Qiantang River. However, there were so many factories along the river that limited human resource and finance can hardly deal with this problem. In order to deter the relevant factories, QRA sometimes had to take a spot check and selective law enforcement strategy to punish relevant factories. However, the effect is very limited because illegal costs are far less than earnings and many factories will continue choosing to pour wastewater into the river. Since Qiantang River is the mother river of Hangzhou City, which is the main source of the drinking water for the public. The water quality of Qiantang River actually affect the citizens’s health and safety. So the relevant government departments have to face a lot of pressure, not only from the bureaucracy itself, but also from social public. Generally speaking, it is very
emergen for QRA, WCB and EPA to break the dilemma and make the regulatory system more efficiency.

Before registered as an environmental NGO, GZ was a volunteer team under the control of Volunteer Department of Communist Youth League, which was engaged in environmental protection. Xin Hao, the founder of GZ insisted that GZ should regisited as a NGO. After 10 years’ effort, Xin Hao eventually found the leader of EPA of Hangzhou City through personel network and persuaded him to be the guidance department. In January 2010, GZ sucessfully changed to be an environmental NGO registered under Department of Civil Affairs in Hangzhou city. From the beginning, GZ faced two emergency issues: survive and enhance its visibility. At that time, there was no concept of government purchasing service, nor the funds from the government to support NGO as well. Meanwhile, private donations in China were very limited. Although GZ had a close connection with Communist Youth League before, it is very difficult for GZ to get money directly from CYL. The question of how to survive had become a serious issue for GZ under such circumstance.

In addition to the question of how to survive, GZ also need to consider how to enhance its visility. At the beginning, GZ regarded itself as a water protection NGO and held several activities about how to protect Qiantang River, but most of these activities were disposable and had little effects on improving the quality of Qiantang River. For these reasons, Xin Hao had thought a lot about how to improve the existing project to make GZ play a more substantial role in protecting Qiantang River. Finally he decided to start from environmental supervision, not only because did it can solve the pollution problem of Qiantang River, but also it can respond to the public attention and enhance its visibility. In order to increase the possibility of success of the project, Xin Hao told EPA and WCB about his ideas, hoping to gain fund support from them

Surprisingly, WCB and EPA showed two different attitudes towards his proposal. WCB is responsible for the river management in Hangzhou City and need to help to protect Qiantang River, but they were not interested in the proposal. Instead, they thought it would make the public skepticism about the capacity of the government if NGO participated in water protection, which may give the public a bad image of WCB. So they totally hold a negative attitude towards the proposal. In contrast, the leader of EPA showed great interest in the proposal and they regarded GZ as a kind of resource, which can be used beyond the government. As a NGO supervised by EPA, GZ was considered to be able to mobilize the pubic. So EPA believed that with the help of GZ, the problem of limited human resource on environmetal protecting could be solved to some extent. For this reason, EPA suggested GZ to cooperate with QRA to protect Qiantang River. Xin Hao followed the suggestions because he thought GZ would not only gain some fund support, but also enhance its visility if they cooperate with QRA. Then GZ started to contact with QRA immediately.

With the help of EPA, GZ and QRA decided to cooperate to conduct an environmental supervision project about Qiantang River. Although there was no concept of government
purchasing service at that time, QRA still signed a contract with GZ, which set the rights and obligations clearly to both sides. According to the contract, QRA provide a sum of money to support GZ to conduct the environmental supervision project and other activities about environmental advocacy. At the beginning, the cooperation didn’t go on smoothly, GZ often fought against the factory at the front line, which easily led to the conflicts between GZ and factory. Due to this reason, the head of GZ had been hit for several times. After that, GZ decided to change its strategy, which avoids direct confrontation with the factory and establish the public cooperation interactive supervision mode. Public volunteers organized by GZ can report the polluters to QRA if they found them pouring the waste into the river and then QRA would responsible for publishing the relevant factory according to the report. The public cooperation interactive supervision mode played an important role in improving the quality of Qiantang River and helped GZ build a trust relationship with QRA during the cooperation. Based on the successful experience, GZ held a series of activities in form of songs, paintings and so on to enhance the awareness of importance of protecting the Qiantang River, which enhance the visibility among the public. Due to the good performance of GZ, the QRA decided to build a long-term cooperation with GZ and provide a government purchasing service to GZ. In the following years, QRA and GZ form a very good relationship during the cooperation and sometimes the staffs of QRA are even willing to wear volunteer clothes to participate in the activities held by GZ.

(2) The Mechanism of Cooperation under Fragmented Authoritarian and Systemic Connection

The case above illustrates the detail of cooperation between GZ and QRA. We can find that the need for both sides is a prerequisite for cooperation. There is limited human resources and money for QRA to finish their mission, but they have a great responsibility. The dilemma made QRA think about how to mobilize the public to participate in supervising the environment. GZ also need cooperate at the beginning period due to a shortage of money and visibility. However, although both sides hoped to cooperate with others, because of information asymmetry, they can hardly know each other’s needs just like buyers and sellers in market, which made cooperation difficult. Although GZ had a project about protecting Qiantang River based on its prior experience, the fragmented management system of Qiantang River and closed bureaucracy system made it hard for GZ to contact with QRA.

Under such condition, the systemic connection can play an important role because of dual-recommend system. When NGO register, it means NGO has found a government department responsible for its behavior, which can be a natural link for NGO to connect with government. Although academics and public often criticize this management system, because it makes registering NGO became very difficult. There is no doubt that such management system provides NGO a formal, stable and legal channel to government. The channel can become an important way for NGO to gain resources and political support.
under certain condition. During the cooperation with QRA, EPA of Hangzhou City played an important role as GZ’s “mother”. EPA not only agreed with the idea proposed by GZ, but also introduced GZ to QRA, who were in need of help. There are three reasons for EPA to do so, first and the most important is the low political risk. Although it is a little sensitive for NGO to participate environmental supervision, there is no political problem unless NGO fight against government directly. Instead, there may be a bright spot, if the government can guide the public to achieve its own goals. The second reason is that EPA is the guidance department of GZ, so EPA is more concerned about the development of GZ. At time time, GZ just established and was in urgent need of money as well as project support. EPA itself is not very convenient to provide money to GZ because EPA is GZ’s “mother” and therefore introducing GZ to QRA can become a good choice. The last reason is the responsibility of EPA. EPA is not directly responsible for environmental protection of Qiantang River, but it is EPA’s duty to reduce pollution. Meanwhile, the public also easily attributes the problem to EPA for some reasons, so they want GZ help them relieve social pressure, just as Xin Hao said:

“EPA is our guidance department, it is very common for us to seek them for help when we face problems ….. As we were familiar with each other, the leader of EPA was willing to help us when they know the dilemma we faced ….. To tell the truth, before the project started, we really didn’t know who we can turn to for help. We intended to get the support from EPA, but the leader of EPA said that QRA was more suitable for us ….. After we contacted with QRA with the help of EPA, we signed a contract, according to which QRA would pay us a sum of money to buy our service (From Xin Hao, 11.10.2015).”

From Xin Hao’s perspective of view, dual-management system is negative for NGO to register, but it is useful for NGO to have a guidance department. In one hand, guidance department can supervise the behavior of NGO to prevent NGO do something “politically incorrect”. In the other hand, the guidance department can become the object for NGO to turn to for help. Although it may not be successful every time, they still show a great attitude to support their “children” in general. The dual-management actually ties NGO and government together, which provides political legitimacy and resource for NGO.

“We should be good at using the special relationship with the guidance department as a NGO. If possible, we should talk with leaders of relevant departments frequently and report the statues of NGO even we don’t have problems. If we insist doing so, it is very easy for us to get familiar with and they will provide the opportunity and resource to you in the following days. If NGO don’t pay attention to communicate with guidance departments, they won’t know your problems and of course can’t help you, so it is important for NGO to take the initiative to seek opportunities.” (From Xin Hao, 11.10.2015).”

In fact, this kind of systemic connection not only exists in government, but also widely in other aspects including party, mass organizations and so on. Each channel can become an
important source for NGO to gain resource and political support. These organizations are independent and maintain a close contact at the same time, which constitute a complex and diverse network. GZ took the advantage of such systemic connection during their development in the following step: They not only set up party branches, but also made full coverage of Trade Union, CYL and Women’s Federation. When GZ started to expand to the provincial NGO, they found Science and Technology Association of Zhejiang Province (STA) to be their guidance department, which greatly expanded the channel to gain political support and resource.

If systemic connections provide channels for NGO to cooperate with government, the fragmented authoritarian give NGO the opportunity to take action. Many public affairs in China usually involve several government departments and they often lack a unified order. In order to max their own interests, each department will make full use of its authority to achieve their goals, so it is very common for them to have different or even opposite attitudes toward the same thing. In absence of a unified command superior, different departments have different attitudes and they can’t disturb each other, which provide space for NGO to take actions. Just like Xin Hao said:

“Many people like to ask us ‘whether the government will support you’, I think this question is too simple. As we all know, China is not a country rule of law, sometimes rule of man play an important role. Different people in the same department and different departments often show different attitudes toward the same matter. We can’t generally say that whether the government support us or not. In some cases, this department may opposite you, but other departments may support you, which may be an advantage we can make full use of.”

In the case of protecting Qiantang River, there are at least three departments involved in the daily management: EPA, WCB and QRA. All three departments are more or less responsible for environmental protection of Qiantang River. However, the main responsibility of WCB is water dredging and management, not improving the quality of river. In addition, WCB is responsible for the management of river in the whole city, not just Qiantang River. The more important is that WCB face a much less pressure from the public compared to other two departments, because the public can hardly link water protection and WCB together in their opinion. EPA is not directly responsible for the protection of Qiantang River, but the quality of Qiantang River is also related to environmental protection and EPA also face much more pressure from the public, so they are easily blamed for the pollution by the public. QRA face a much more poor condition compared with EPA and WCB. On one hand, unlike EPA and WCB, QRA is a specific government department dealing with Qiantang River. On the other hand, QRA face the same pressure from public just like EPA.

Three different departments face totally different pressure (Figure 1).

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Figure 1: Different Kinds of Pressure to Different Departments

Because three departments face different pressure, they have different attitudes towards the ideas proposed by GZ. Among the three departments, WCB face much less pressure from either bureau or public than the other two, so they have no urgent needs to improve quality of Qiantang River. If they deal with the public affairs with the help of NGO, it is easy to leave an image of lacking capacity for the public. It is evitable for WCB to hold a negative attitude towards the recommendation. For EPA and QRA, both of them faced lots of pressure from the public, so they all had sufficient motivation to solve the problem of water pollution. However, EPA didn’t enforce the law directly, so the need for cooperation is not as urgent as QRA. This is why when EPA introduced GZ to QRA, they could reach the agreement without any hesitation.

In this case, the decentralized management system of Qiantang River is a sign of fragmented authoritarian, because three departments are more or less responsible for water protection. However, the distribution of fragmented authoritarian is not uniformity. QRA had the most responsibility for water protection while WCB had the least. Without the unified command from higher authority, it is impossible for three close bureaucracy sector to cooperate, which gave GZ the opportunities to take action. Although there is not enough incentive for WCB to respond to the proposal, EPA and QRA had shown great interest in GZ. Even if GZ can’t get support from WCB, it can still achieve its goals with the help of fragmented authoritarian.

5. Conclusion

This article illustrated the mechanism and routine of the cooperation between NGO and government by analyzing the case of Qiantang River protection. Although authoritarian regimes often take a hostile attitude towards advocacy NGO, fragmented authoritarian and systemic connection provide NGO opportunities and possibilities to cooperate with government. In the absence of unified superiors, there usually exits conflicts among different government departments. Under such condition, NGO have the opportunities to seek for allies to gain support by making full use of systemic connection, which expand the space to gain political support and resource. It is important for NGO to take a correct strategy to achieve their goals and further development.

Further research need to be done to explore different effects of fragmented authoritarian and systemic connection under different conditions. This kind of mechanism also exits in democracy country, for example, the system of separation of powers has formed a decentralized political system in US (Baumgartner & Jones, 2014). There actually exit close linkes to government for NGO from the federal to the state (Skocpol, 1995), which
seems like the political system in authoritarian. However the two are totally different because of opposite political basis. It will be very important to clarify this issue to understand the strategy NGO takes under authoritarian regime.

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