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### Authors

O'Brien, Kevin J

Deng, Yanhua

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**The Reach of the State:  
Work Units, Family Ties and “Harmonious Demolition”**

Kevin J. O’Brien and Yanhua Deng

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*Abstract:* When faced with homeowners who refuse to accept appropriation of their property, local authorities often use family ties to extend the state's reach. To complete urban renewal, municipal demolition offices turn to resisters' relatives who work for government bureaus, state-owned factories, schools, and hospitals. Under pressure and the threat of sanctions, many work-unit members agree to cajole their family members into signing demolition agreements, often by tapping into “feelings of affection” and emotional blackmail. Beyond emptying a neighborhood, "harmonious demolition" has many consequences: it can turn relatives against each other, lead to divorce, and produce disillusionment and anger. Although "demolition by implicating family members" was banned in 2010, it continues. Using vertical ties to pressure unit members and horizontal ties to influence relatives does not herald a softer authoritarianism, but instead alienates homeowners and work-unit members alike.

China is not as densely packed with “work units” (*danwei* 单位) as it once was. Many employees of foreign enterprises, private companies, and corner shops live outside these institutions, and even those who still belong to a *danwei* are subject to fewer demands

and receive fewer benefits than they did in the past.<sup>1</sup> But work units are hardly gone or forgotten, and continue to influence life far beyond their borders. In particular, when opposition erupts against a local government's plans, the authorities often turn to work-unit members to assist in quashing resistance.

Work units have always had considerable sway over their members. What is less well known, however, is how local leaders today turn to kinship ties to extend the reach of the state to people who do not belong to a work unit. This approach to social control has become especially common when urban neighborhoods are being razed for new construction projects and opposition is intense. Rather than using force on “recalcitrant homeowners” (*dingzi hu* 钉子户), which the central government has been discouraging,<sup>2</sup> officials responsible for clearing them out frequently initiate “harmonious demolition” (*hexie chaiqian* 和谐拆迁), sometimes also called “demolition with affection” (*qingqing chaiqian* 亲情拆迁).<sup>3</sup> This is also more truthfully known as “demolition by implicating

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<sup>1</sup> Marc J. Blecher, “Hegemony and Workers’ Politics in China”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 170 (June 2002), p. 302; Ching Kwan Lee, “From Organized Dependence to Disorganized Despotism: Changing Labour Regimes in Chinese Factories”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 157 (March 1999), p. 46. At this point, only government bureaus, public institutions (such as hospitals and schools), and a relatively small number of state-owned and large, collective enterprises are full-fledged work units.

<sup>2</sup> Wu Yizhou, “Zhongguo tudi zhengshou xin tiaoli mingque jinzhi baoli chaiqian” (New Regulation on Land Requisition in China Forbids Violent Demolition), *Qingnian cankao* (Youth Information) (9 February 2010).

<sup>3</sup> See Liu Qiyin, “Yunnan jiaoshi bei tingke youshui jiashu chaiqian, wanbucheng buneng huixiao” (Seven School Teachers in Yunnan Suspended from Teaching and Sent Back Home to Lobby for Demolition and Not Allowed to Return to Schools if They Do Not Fulfill the Task), *Shenghuo xinbao* (Life News) (30 November 2007); Liu Zhiyi and Zang Jin, “Chai buliao fangzi chai ni jia: Changsha zhulian shi chaiqian gongcheng diaocha” (Destroying Your Family if Your House Can Not be Demolished: Investigating Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives in Changsha), *Nanfang zhoumo* (Southern Weekend) (1 November 2013); Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui” (Who is Implicated During Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’

relatives” (*zhulian chaiqian* 株连拆迁): that is, sending work unit members to apply pressure on their relatives to convince them to relocate.

Our article will include an analysis of why many relatives who are employed by work units give in to pressure and do the tasks they are assigned, along with a discussion of how some resist. Whether they cave in or hold out, virtually all feel victimized by the demands they face. The article concludes with an examination of what our findings say about work units and methods of control in today’s China.

## **The Cases**

This analysis draws on Chinese media reports of 35 cases of demolition that occurred from 2004-2013. Most of our cases are recent: 24 took place in 2010-13. All involve “demolition by implicating homeowners’ relatives”, and most contain detailed information on how local governments used work units and family ties to pressure people to vacate their homes. The cases span 16 provinces and the cities of Beijing and Tianjin. Hunan and Shandong each produced five episodes. The number, distribution and stepped up coverage of incidents suggests that “demolition by implicating relatives” appears not only in places controlled by domineering local leaders,<sup>4</sup> but also areas that are generally examples of good governance. In this sense, the practice is more institutional than personal: a product of high-powered incentives to complete urban renewal and lessen the violence needed to evict homeowners.

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Relatives), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (25 December 2013). Sometimes family members are formally transferred to the demolition office. Other times they are ordered to do this work while continuing their normal duties.

<sup>4</sup> We thank one of the journal’s anonymous referees for encouraging us to consider this possibility.

Most of the reports appeared in prominent, nationally-distributed newspapers, such as *China Youth Daily* (中国青年报), *The Beijing News* (新京报), *Southern Weekend* (南方周末), and *Southern Metropolitan Daily* (南方都市报). Six of the articles were published in *China Youth Daily* and four in *The Beijing News*, newspapers known for their investigative journalism. Most of the accounts were long, typically exceeding 2,000 characters, and almost all of them benefited from on-the-spot reporting while the incidents were underway. In total, over a hundred people, including county leaders, local cadres, factory managers, and homeowners and their relatives were interviewed in the course of preparing these reports. Some of the stories were praised on-line,<sup>5</sup> and *The Beijing News*' coverage of the 2004 "Jiahe Incident" ricocheted around the country for weeks.

Owing to the number of accounts and the authorities' consistent behavior in them, we are confident they reflect a technique of "social control" (*shehui kongzhi* 社会控制) that local authorities frequently use to induce people to vacate their homes. Heart-tugging stories about local abuses are of course common in Chinese newspapers, not least because they boost sales and generate clicks. Some of these reports are undoubtedly "worst case analyses" and cannot be taken as representative. Still, we believe that our source materials collectively point to a practice that is both common and pathological: common enough to draw attention from higher authorities and the media as case after

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<sup>5</sup> After reading a *China Youth Daily* story on demolition in Ninghe, Tianjin, one on-line commentator wrote: "I really admire the journalist who wrote this report. The skills to do in-depth interviews and obtain detailed evidence as well as his professional conscience should be a good example for all journalists". See Suo Yan, "Ninghe chaiqian zhi sanke pai'an jingqi" (Demolition in Ninghe Is Making People Strike the Table in Surprise) (4 May 2010), <http://boxun.com/news/gb/china/2010/05/201005042208.shtml>, accessed 15 March 2014.

case appears, and disturbingly systemic, as the newest examples serve as proof that some of the harshest practices have yet to curtailed.

Several other factors speak to the reliability of the sources. First, the stories tally with several Chinese scholarly articles on the subject, newspaper editorials and commentaries that decry the practice, and numerous online posts by people who have experienced demolition.<sup>6</sup> Second, we have found a similar use of relatives when local authorities sought to end rural protests.<sup>7</sup> Finally, media coverage of the dark side of Chinese politics is usually more reliable than reports that extol the party-state, because

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<sup>6</sup> Cao Haiyun, “Guanxi xing qiangzhi dongyuan” (Coercive Mobilization with Social Ties), *Qingnian yanjiu* (Youth Studies), No. 5 (2011), pp. 75-82; Feng Yujun, “Quanli, quanli he liyi de boyi: woguo dangqian chengshi fangwu chaiqian wenti de falü yu jingji fenxi” (The Game among Power, Rights and Interests: A Legal and Economic Analysis of Urban Demolition in Contemporary China), *Zhongguo faxue* (China Legal Science), No. 4 (2007), pp. 39-59; Xu Mingxuan, “‘Zhulian shichaiqian’ weihe lüjin buzhi”? (Why “Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives” Persists after Repeated Prohibition?”), *Xinjing bao* (Beijing News) (28 October 2013); Xinhua blog, “Gedi lianfa “zhulian shi chaiqian” yin yulun qianglie fanxiang” (The Practice of “Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives” Occurs Frequently and Generates Great Resonance among the Public), <http://ximilu00.home.news.cn/blog/a/01010078BFF70CEE4A55BACE.html>, accessed 14 September 2014; BBS.ifeng, “Hebei sheng Xingtai shi shangyan bu chaiqian jiu tingzhi” (Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives in Xingtai city, Hebei) (20 January 2010), <http://bbs.ifeng.com/viewthread.php?tid=4232547>, accessed 15 March 2014; Xia Deyi, “Liu wen Huoshan xian” (Posing Six Questions to the Huoshan County Government), <http://bbs.local.163.com/bbs/localah/308630226.html>, accessed 14 September 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Yanhua Deng and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Relational Repression in China: Using Social Ties to Demobilize Protesters”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 215 (September 2013), pp. 533-52. On the use of relatives to put pressure on dissidents and activists who call for the disclosure of top leaders’ assets, see Didi Tang, “China Targets Family, Friends to Coerce Activists” (4 September 2014), <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/china-targets-family-friends-coerce-activists>, accessed 13 September 2013.

journalists can lose their jobs or even face prosecution if critical stories turn out to be inaccurate.<sup>8</sup>

### **Demolition Offices and Their Work**

To push demolition forward, local authorities usually establish special temporary organizations to deal with reluctant homeowners, often called “demolition offices” (*chaiqian ban* 拆迁办) or “demolition headquarters” (*chaiqian zhihuibu* 拆迁指挥部). In some places, they are given euphemistic titles, such as the Ziyang District Ancient City Protection and Construction Headquarters; in others, their names contain a touch of irony, such as the Longling Urban Construction Committee or the Qixian County Redevelopment and Management Headquarters. The short-lived nature of these organizations is evident in their staffing. Typically, they have no (or few) permanent personnel, and almost all their members are drawn from government bureaus and other work units. For example, in Zhangpu county, Fujian, the demolition office enlisted a cohort of over 300 recruits, followed by another of more than 200, mostly seconded from Party offices, government bureaus or schools.<sup>9</sup> Special efforts are made by demolition office personnel to locate staff whose relatives live in homes slated for removal. Other methods can be used to gain the compliance of homeowners who do not have relatives in

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<sup>8</sup> For more on one reporter who lost his job and was arrested for writing an exposé, see Xinhuanet, “Xin kuaibao jizhe Chen Yongzhou shexian sunhai shangye xinyu bei xingshi juliu” (Chen Yongzhou, *New Express* Reporter Suspected of Intentionally Defaming a Corporation’s Reputation under Criminal Detention) (26 October 2013), [http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2013-10/26/c\\_117879353.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2013-10/26/c_117879353.htm), accessed 7 April 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Wang Longxiang and Cai Jingjing, “Fujian jiaoshi yin fumu wei qian chaiqian xieyi bei ‘jiediao’ chaiqianban” (Schoolteachers “Transferred” to Demolition Office Because Their Parents Were Not Willing to Sign Demolition Agreements), *Haixia daobao* (Straits Tribune) (8 November 2013).

work units. Local authorities may “capitalize on vulnerabilities” (*zhua xiao bianzi* 抓小辫子), including long-ago violations of the family planning policy, unlawful business practices, mistakes made by a homeowner’s children, or a household’s reliance on the “minimum livelihood guarantee” (*dibao* 低保).

The paperwork behind an order to conduct “harmonious demolition” is often as rushed as was the formation of the demolition office. For example, in Huili county, Sichuan, the document describing how to facilitate removal and the sanctions for failure was issued by the Demolition and Relocation Leading Group, but the seal at the bottom of the “measure to investigate responsibilities” (*zeren zhuijiu banfa* 责任追究办法) was that of the county Bureau of Land and Resources. A bureau official acknowledged the discrepancy and explained that it arose because “the leading group’s seal had yet to be approved”. She assumed that “all the documents would be redone and reissued” once the new chop was ready.<sup>10</sup>

Although they are assembled quickly and usually disbanded once relocation is complete, demolition offices have considerable power. That power is used to coax work-unit employees to persuade relatives to accept the compensation offered. The heads of demolition offices, who may be county leaders themselves,<sup>11</sup> are often ready to dress down their staff members privately or publicly and to punish them economically. In

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<sup>10</sup> Wang Di and Tan Wei, “‘Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu’: Sichuan Huili xian zhengdi chiqian zhulian baiming gongzhi renyuan” (This Policy is Forcing Me to Abandon My Parents’: More than a Hundred Public Officials Implicated in Land Requisition and Demolition in Huili County, Sichuan), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (23 July 2010).

<sup>11</sup> For examples, see Liu Qiyin, “Yunnan jiaoshi bei tingke youshui jiashu chiqian, wanbucheng buneng huixiao”; Tu Chaohua, “Jiangxi Fengcheng chiqian zhulian diaocha” (Investigating Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives in Fengcheng, Jiangxi), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (10 January 2008).



Qixian county, Henan, for instance, the County Redevelopment and Management Headquarters instructed the Labor and Social Security Bureau and the Bureau of Finance to stop paying the salaries of eight workers across four departments, after their relatives refused to sign demolition agreements.<sup>12</sup> In Dinggang town, Jiangsu, when a teacher questioned the principal of her school about the authority of a demolition office to withhold her wages, the principal replied: “The demolition office indeed doesn’t have this right. But it could report your [poor] performance to the district leadership, which has the right to hold back your salary.”<sup>13</sup>

Demolition offices are often sprawling operations, with staff members drawn from a wide variety of work units. Kaifeng provides a sense of the scale of these offices. In 2008, there were 22 demolition projects underway. To implement a redevelopment plan that affected much of the city entailed recruiting staff from nearly every government department and many other work units.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, a large urban renewal program in Huili county, Sichuan, drew personnel from 40 government bureaus and public organizations into the office in charge of “demolition with affection”. An official in the Huili County Bureau of Land and Resources defended the scope of what became a

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<sup>12</sup> Zhao Sanjun, “Huzhu bu qian xieyi qinshu de xiagang, qixian chaiqian gao zhulian” (Homeowners’ Noncooperation in Demolition Leads Their Relatives to be Suspended), *Dahe wang* (Big River Network) (22 March 2012), <http://henan.qq.com/a/20120323/000432.htm>, accessed 10 March 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Gong Fei, “Zhenjiang jiaoshi chaiqian dongyuan buli bei tingke” (School Teachers in Zhenjiang Suspended from Teaching Because of Their Poor Performance in Advancing Demolition), *Dongfang zaobao* (Orient Daily) (25 January 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Jin Daming, “Kaifeng shangyan zhulian shi chaiqian, qinshu buchai jiu tingzhi” (Kaifeng Doing Demolition by Implicating Homeowners Relatives and People Being Suspended if Their Relatives Are Not Willing to Allow Their Homes to be Demolished), *Liaowang dongfang zhoukan* (Oriental Outlook) (8 July 2008).

county-wide mobilization of demolition facilitators: “Demolition is a major project promoted by the county government. A single department can’t complete the task.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Preventing and Handling Opposition to Demolition**

If government employees or members of other types of work units are themselves told to relocate, there are many ways for their superiors (or other parties) to pressure them to leave.<sup>16</sup> For homeowners who are not attached to work units, however, other methods are used to extend the reach of the state to people adjacent to units, if not directly under their control.

After a demolition office is set up, a “contract system” (*bao’an zhi* 包案制) is usually established to expedite evictions. Under this arrangement, government bureaus and work units themselves are answerable for employees’ relatives who refuse to vacate their homes. Responsibility goes right to the top. In Yangxin county, Hubei, the task of persuading family members was “directed by work unit leaders, staffed by ranking cadres, advanced by specialized teams, and supervised by different branches”.<sup>17</sup> In Fengcheng county, Jiangxi, contract terms required work unit leaders to “carry away” (*baozou* 抱走)

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<sup>15</sup> Wang Di and Tan Wei, “Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu”.

<sup>16</sup> Ding Xianming, “Jiucheng gaizao: shui shouyi? shui shoushang”? (Urban Redevelopment: Who Benefits? Who Gets Hurt?), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (18 September 2010); Du Taoxin and Li Yuanqiang, “Zhejiang Lanxi xian zhulian shi chaiqian” (Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives Appears in Lanxi, Zhejiang), *Minzhu yu fazhi shibao* (Democracy and Law Times) (9 December 2013); Tu Chaochao, “Jiangxi Fengcheng chaiqian zhulian diaocha”; BBS.ifeng, “Hebei sheng Xingtai shi shangyan bu chaiqian jiu tingzhi”.

<sup>17</sup> Xu Wenge, “Hubei gongwuyuan qianli fushen du baoting suoyan biqian” (Hubei Civil Servants Flying Thousands of Miles to Shenzhen and Trying to Facilitate Demolition by Blocking a News Kiosk), *Nanfang dushi bao* (Southern Metropolitan Daily) (13 March 2013).

their own “children” (*haizi* 孩子), meaning they were responsible for ensuring that relatives of unit members left their homes and accepted the compensation offered.<sup>18</sup>

Motivating work unit heads to exercise their power over relatives of resisters is extremely important. A Fengcheng county document stated: “The Number One leader’ (*yibashou* 一把手) of a work unit contracted with demolition shoulders the ultimate responsibility. The Number One leader should be paddled if he or she doesn’t work hard enough on ‘thought education’ or tries to avoid conflicts or shirk responsibilities”.<sup>19</sup> In Huili county, Sichuan, leaders of work units whose members slacked off in pressuring relatives were punished by having 50% of the leader’s subsidies or merit pay withheld.<sup>20</sup> Jiahe county, Hunan, treated failures with equal seriousness. Performance would be taken into account in a work unit’s annual evaluation; top leaders would be held responsible if those beneath them did not get relatives to vacate their homes.<sup>21</sup>

Collective punishment is also used. In Kaifeng city, hospitals that were unsuccessful in persuading staff members to return home and do thought work on relatives who ignored demolition orders were charged 5,000 yuan for each failure.<sup>22</sup> In Juancheng county, Shandong, primary and middle schools were fined 3,000 yuan per day if they did not convince their teachers to get family members to vacate homes scheduled to be torn

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<sup>18</sup> Tu Chaohua, “Jiangxi Fengcheng chaiqian zhulian diaocha”. These terms also applied to unit members who resisted eviction.

<sup>19</sup> Tu Chaohua, “Jiangxi Fengcheng chaiqian zhulian diaocha”.

<sup>20</sup> Wang Di and Tan Wei, “Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu”; Wang Jianwei and Cao Chang, “Hunan Ziyang: jiucheng chaiqian shixing ‘zhulian zhengce’ yinfa zhengyi” (Controversy Triggered by “Implicating Policies” during the Old City Demolition in Ziyang, Hunan), *Zhongguo jingji zhoubao* (China Economic Weekly) (8 September 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Luo Changping, “Chaiqian yinfa jiemei tongri lihun” (Demolition Caused Two Sisters to Get Divorced on the Same Day), *Xinjing bao* (Beijing News) (9 November 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Jin Daming, “Kaifeng shangyan zhulian shi chaiqian, qinshu buchai jiu tingzhi”.

down.<sup>23</sup> Demolition offices and county leaders commonly use a mixture of praise and criticism to highlight units that are doing their work well and to spur laggards on.<sup>24</sup> The threat that all work unit members might lose their year-end bonuses can place enormous pressure on relatives of strong-minded homeowners. For example, two headmasters at a primary school told a teacher whose mother refused to hand over her house: “Don’t implicate so many people and make us all suffer with you. If you draw us all into this, we’ll give you a failing performance evaluation at the end of the year.”<sup>25</sup>

To curb shirking and to clarify who is responsible for what, local authorities often draw up documents that specify which work unit is accountable for which “nail house”.<sup>26</sup> In Hejian, Hebei, county authorities compiled a seven-page table laying out information on 231 homeowners and their family members. After matching names one-by-one, units were told to persuade the relatives of employees to leave.<sup>27</sup> In Lanxi county, Zhejiang, a

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<sup>23</sup> Zhang Jiye and Cui Rukun, “Juancheng chaiqian lianzuo: qinshu chaiqian bu jishi ganbu tingzhi” (Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives in Juancheng: Cadres Suspended Because Their Relatives Did Not Allow Their Homes to be Demolished in Time), *Qilu wanbao* (Qilu Evening News) (20 November 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Jin Daming, “Kaifeng shangyan zhulian shi chaiqian, qinshu buchai jiu tingzhi”.

<sup>25</sup> Wang Di and Tan Wei, “Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu”.

<sup>26</sup> Wang Junxiu, “Tianjin Ninghe: bu peihe chaiqian, jiaoshi bei qiangzhi tingke” (Teachers Suspended for Noncooperation with Demolition in Ninghe, Tianjin), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (20 February 2010); Wang Di and Tan Wei, “Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu”; Du Taixin and Li Yuanqiang, “Zhejiang Lanxi xian zhulian shi chaiqian”. On the term *dingzihu* more broadly, see Lianjiang Li and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Villagers and Popular Resistance in Contemporary China”, *Modern China*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (January 1996), pp. 28-61. With reference to demolition, see Steve Hess, “Nail-Houses, Land Rights, and Frames of Injustice on China’s Protest Landscape”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (September/October 2010), pp. 908-26; Matthew Erie, “Property Rights, Legal Consciousness, and New Media in China: The Hard Case of the ‘Toughest Nail-House in History’”, *China Information*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (March 2012), pp. 34-58.

<sup>27</sup> For the table, see, [http://tousu.hebnews.cn/2011-11/28/content\\_2404043.htm](http://tousu.hebnews.cn/2011-11/28/content_2404043.htm), accessed 25 April 2014.

woman's son-in-law was working at the taxation bureau, and the bureau was put in charge of facilitating demolition of her house.<sup>28</sup>

Local regulations are often used to stiffen the spines of work-unit heads and employees who hesitate to take part in “harmonious demolition”. In Qingshuihe county, Inner Mongolia, the county Discipline Inspection Committee and the Party's Organization Department issued a document that caused a stir and led some cadres to call its provisions “despotic” (*bawang tiaokuan* 霸王条款). Among other things, it said:

For relocatees who are immediate family members (parents, parents-in-law and children) of officials with titles of vice section chief or above, the officials must mobilize their relatives to sign an agreement with the demolition company within ten days. If family members fail to sign and vacate their homes, the Organization Department and the Department of Discipline and Supervision will admonish the officials and suspend them from their posts. After 15 days have passed, if the family members still refuse to sign a demolition agreement without legitimate cause or for reasons not permissible by law, regulation or policy, the officials are to be deprived of their leadership positions and transferred to other jobs. If they are Party members, they will also receive “organizational treatment” (*zuzhi chuli* 组织处理).<sup>29</sup>

County authorities in Nayong in Guizhou province, Taihu in Anhui province, and Ziyang in Hunan province circulated similar documents explaining how to deal with half-

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<sup>28</sup> Du Taoxin and Li Yuanqiang, “Zhejiang Lanxi xian zhulian shi chaiqian”.

<sup>29</sup> Tian Yongsheng, “Qingshuihe jiucheng gaizao: zhulian wenjian bi gongwuyuan ji jiashu chaiqian” (Urban Redevelopment in Qingshuihe: Regulations Implicating Public Officials and Making Them Force their Relatives to Accept Demolition Offers), *Beifang zhoumo bao* (Northern Weekly) (7 December 2011).

hearted demolition facilitators.<sup>30</sup> The most well-known example, however, was drawn up by the Jiahe, Hunan county government and Party committee. In 2004, all personnel affiliated with Party organizations, government bureaus, and other public institutions were required to provide “four guarantees” (*sibao* 四包): that relatives would 1) sign demolition agreements, vacate their homes, and surrender ownership certificates; 2) settle down elsewhere; 3) not “willfully make trouble” (*bu wuli qunao* 不无理取闹); and 4) not participate in collective petitions or lawsuits. Those who failed to deliver on these guarantees were subject to “two suspensions” (*liangting* 两停): suspension of salary and suspension from office.<sup>31</sup>

Work unit members who do not throw themselves into demolition work may find themselves marginalized. For example, after his daughter refused to leave her apartment and filed an administrative lawsuit, Chen Long, a vice director of the Bureau of City Management in Taihu county, Anhui, felt like a “surplus person” (*duoyude ren* 多余的人) at the office. His subordinates stopped reporting to him and no one notified him when meetings were scheduled. A vice director of the county Organization Bureau warned him that much more might follow:

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<sup>30</sup> Kong Pu, “Nayong: bu chaiqian tingxin tingzhi” (Noncooperation in Demolition Causing Salaries to be Withheld and Offices Suspended in Nayong), *Xinjing bao* (The Beijing News) (30 July 2009); Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui”. Wang Jianwei and Cao Chang, “Hunan Ziyang: jiucheng chaiqian shixing ‘zhulian zhengce’ yinfa zhengyi”.

<sup>31</sup> These are not hollow threats. In Jiahe, over 160 cadres experienced suspension from office and suspended salaries. Luo Changping, “Chaiqian yinfa jiemei tongri lihun”. In Huili county, Sichuan, over 100 grassroots cadres and other work unit members were suspended from their normal duties. Wang Di and Tan Wei, “Zhege zhengce biwo buren fumu”.

It used to be hard to demote cadres like you so long as you didn't make mistakes. But now it's easy to do so through organizational treatment. What's organizational treatment? It's different from "disciplinary sanctions" (*jilü chufen* 纪律处分) and has various forms. It includes criticism, warnings, suspension, transfer, deprivation of job title, and removal from office. In short, there's a series of measures. The county Organization Department or Personnel Bureau can choose how to deal with you depending on the situation.<sup>32</sup>

Moral appeals may also be layered on top of financial penalties and career consequences. The vice secretary of the Discipline Inspection Committee in Nayong county, Guizhou, said that cadres must set an example and "take the lead [in promoting demolition], since the masses are watching".<sup>33</sup> When Chen Long refused to pressure his daughter to accept eviction on the terms offered, one of his former superiors, who by this time worked elsewhere, was sent back to conduct thought work on him. Chen's "old leader" (*lao lingdao* 老领导) told him: "You and your wife are civil servants, and in particular work in law enforcement. We therefore have greater expectations for you than we have for ordinary people. You should have higher consciousness and be of higher quality, and do as you're told".<sup>34</sup> The Party secretary of the Political Legal Committee in Jiahe county went so far as to say: "We're all Party cadres and [can be called upon to]

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<sup>32</sup> Lin Yan and Chen Mo, "Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui".

<sup>33</sup> Kong Pu, "Nayong: bu chaiqian tingxin tingzhi".

<sup>34</sup> Lin Yan and Chen Mo, "Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui".

shed our blood and lose our lives. Small issues like promoting demolition really pale in comparison to those sacrifices.”<sup>35</sup>

Most likely because their day-to-day responsibilities do not involve administrative enforcement, and because they are expected to be exemplars and “engineers of people’s souls” (*linghun gongchengshi* 灵魂工程师), moral appeals are especially common when encouraging teachers to participate. In Changsha, a teacher was informed that because she had a high level of education she should help the government complete redevelopment and publicize its advantages.<sup>36</sup> The vice director of the Longling, Yunnan, Committee for Urban Construction argued that teachers should be reminded of their position and told to act in line with the public interest instead of being selfish.<sup>37</sup> A primary school teacher in Dinggang town, Jiangsu, was said to have low consciousness and to “lack the ethics of a teacher” (*meiyou shide* 没有师德) when she failed to persuade her parents to sign a demolition agreement. An official at the Bureau of Social Development instructed her to learn from the “moral excellence” (*gaoshang pinde* 高尚品德) of colleagues who worked tirelessly on family members and even subsidized their move when the compensation offered was too low.<sup>38</sup>

Some types of work unit employees are harder to persuade or coerce. For example, the managers and workers of state-owned business enterprises (SOEs) are typically

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<sup>35</sup> Luo Changping, “Chaiqian yinfa jiemei tongri lihun”.

<sup>36</sup> Liu Zhiyi and Zang Jin, “Chai buliao fangzi chai ni jia”. Teachers are often expected to be thankful for the education they received, to be “reasonable”, and to support the government.

<sup>37</sup> Liu Qiyin, “Yunnan jiaoshi bei tingke youshui jiashu chaiqian, wanbucheng buneng huixiao”.

<sup>38</sup> Wang Jianwei, “Chaiqian gao zhulian, shui zhi guo” (Whose Fault? Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives), *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) (27 January 2011).



mentioned alongside government personnel and teachers as potential thought workers, but seldom figure prominently in the examples that follow. This could be because, unlike employees of government offices and schools, they are better able to deflect demands to participate in pressuring relatives. SOE workers are sought out by demolition offices, but may be able to slip out of their grasp because most SOEs have become more autonomous in the reform era. Government workers and teachers remain far more dependent on the state for their salaries, benefits and promotions and have fewer resources with which to resist calls to apply pressure on their relatives. SOEs that are performing poorly may also have less say over their workers while managers with high salaries and with options to move out of the state sector may be able to brush off demands to participate. In short, all work unit members are not the same, and the hold that the state has over different parts of the public sector varies.

### **To Submit or Resist**

In the face of unremitting pressure and likely sanctions, many of the work unit employees profiled in the 35 cases gave in, with only a few standing up and fighting back, or finding other ways to avoid complying.

The threat of reprisals normally works. According to Wang Cailiang, a lawyer who focuses on land and demolition disputes, work unit members are simply “not in a position to resist” (*meiyou tiaojian dikang* 没有条件抵抗)<sup>39</sup> because local authorities have power over them and can punish them. A teacher in Chaling county, Hunan, explained: “The only thing we can do is wait. Teachers count as ‘government employees’ (*gongwu*

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<sup>39</sup> Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui”.

*renyuan* 公务人员). We dare not cause a big row out of fears of retaliation”.<sup>40</sup> Or, as a cadre from Hanshan county, Anhui, lamented: “You can’t guess what organizational measures they’ll use, and you never have a say in the process. Since you can’t predict the future, the only thing you can do is: Obey! Obey!”<sup>41</sup>

Being poorly positioned to resist, work unit members generally feel little choice but to cajole their relatives into signing a demolition agreement. To do so, they often resort to emotional blackmail and tap into “feelings of affection”. For example, a police officer in Ziyang, Henan, was assigned to persuade his older sister to give up her store and its desirable location. His superiors leaned on him so hard that he could not bear it any longer. He pleaded desperately with his sister, ultimately writing her a text message that said: “family affection is more important than money”. She broke down and agreed to accept the resettlement offer.<sup>42</sup> In Gongyi county, Henan, a woman was sent to conduct thought work on her grandmother. Overcome with worries that she would lose her job at a carpet factory, the woman knelt down and begged: “Grandma, please sign the document. Otherwise they won’t let me go back to work. You know how hard it is to find a job these

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<sup>40</sup> Ding Wenjie and Zhou Mian, “Hunan Chaling xian chaiqian ‘zhulian’ shijian diaocha” (Investigation of “Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives” in Chaling, Hunan), *Jingji cankao bao* (Economic Information Daily) (21 August 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Zhang Fei, “Chaiqianhu kusu beipo qianzi, Hanshan xian xiangguan bumen que cheng qinqing chaiqian” (Relocates in Hanshan County Complain Tearfully of Forced Demolitions, But Relevant Departments Insist on Demolition with Affection), *Anhui guangbo wang* (Anhui Radio Network) (10 November 2010), <http://www.ahradio.com.cn/fm1055/system/2010/11/10/001053143.shtml>, accessed 10 March 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Wang Jianwei and Cao Chang, “Hunan Ziyang: jiucheng chaiqian shixing ‘zhulian zhengce’ yinfa zhengyi”.

days”. The old lady, crying, signed the agreement.<sup>43</sup> Invoking career consequences is a common tactic used to soften up older, “uncooperative” family members. In Beihai city, Guangxi, for instance, a schoolteacher implored her mother to give in, saying: “Mom, I won’t blame you if you don’t agree to sign, but our house will be torn down anyway. How terrible it would be if we lost our home and I also ended up jobless.”<sup>44</sup>

Some demolition facilitators even demean themselves or employ deception to complete their assignment. A middle school teacher in Hanshan county, Anhui, who had always been a model of success in his family, used every method he could think of to get his sister to cave in, finally resorting to rolling on the floor, kicking and screaming. His sister and brother-in-law ultimately accepted the demolition agreement.<sup>45</sup> In Lixian county, Hebei, a government worker could not withstand the pressure when her parents refused to give up their land. She signed the requisition document on her father’s behalf and before her parents knew they had “agreed” to it, their peach trees had been chopped down.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Qiu Yanbo, “Henan gongyi wei gaizao Du Fu guli qiangzhi cunmin banqian” (Gongyi County, Henan Forcing Villagers to Move to Restore Du Fu’s Hometown), *Dongfang jinbao* (Orient Today) (3 January 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Xie Yang, “Beihai Yintan: tudi chaiqian zhong de minyi boyi” (Beihai Yintan: Public Opinion and Game-playing Amid Demolition), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (18 October 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Zhang Fei, “Chaiqianhu kusu beipo qianzi, Hanshan xian xiangguan bumen que cheng qinqing chaiqian”.

<sup>46</sup> Liu Gang, “Hebei Lixian zaocheng shexian weipi xianjian, zhengdi zhulian gongzhi renyuan” (Lixian, Hebei Creates a New City without Approval, and it Advances Land Acquisition by Implicating Public Officials), *Zhongguo xinwen wang* (China News) (23 June 2011), <http://www.nd.chinanews.com/News/xwdc/20110623/46164.html>, accessed 10 March 2014.

To save a relative's home, employees required to participate in demolition work may quit their job, as a vice section chief did in Taihu county, Anhui.<sup>47</sup> They may also “sever relations” (*duanjue guanxi* 断绝关系) with a family member. A case in point was an official in the Kaifeng Bureau of Culture who was unwilling to urge his father to accept a low compensation offer. So he announced that he had cut all ties with his father.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes the initiative goes the other way, with a homeowner taking the lead to protect a relative. In an effort to shield her son, who was the discipline inspection chief of the municipal management bureau, a woman on the relocation list in Suining, Hunan, claimed she had severed all ties with him.<sup>49</sup>

But this seldom works, because simply announcing the end of a relationship is often seen as a ruse, and the authorities may refuse to acknowledge it. Divorce is a stronger statement because it comes with a certificate issued by the local government. A divorce may be real but fake (i.e., real officially but fake emotionally).<sup>50</sup> It may also be temporary and reversed shortly after demolition is completed or averted.<sup>51</sup> Among the 35 cases, 10

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<sup>47</sup> Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui”.

<sup>48</sup> Jin Daming, “Kaifeng shangyan zhulian shi chaiqian, qinshu buchai jiu tingzhi”.

<sup>49</sup> Jiang Kaisong, “Zailun Suining xian zhengfu zhulian chaiqian: quanda haishi fada” (Another Discussion of Demolition by Implicating Homeowners Relatives Initiated by Suining County Government: Can Power Trump Law?), *Hongwang baixing husheng* (Red Net Voice of the People) (13 November 2013), <http://people.rednet.cn/PeopleShow.asp?ID=1780414>, accessed 4 May 2014.

<sup>50</sup> When asked whether her divorce was fake or not, Lin Xin in Minhou county, Fujian said: “We were forced to divorce. Is there another way out? We have to appear to be breaking up in public. In front of our child, we must look like a normal family”. See Liu Yiding, “Fujian jiaoshi fufu bei choudiao quan fumu chaiqian, lihun bao zhangfu gongzuo” (A Married Pair of Teachers in Fujian Transferred to Persuade Their Parents to Accept Demolition Terms, Then Divorce to Save Husband's Job), *Xinjing bao* (The Beijing News) (29 December 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Sometimes, however, the process can lead to arguments and recriminations, sour relations and even end a relationship. See, for example, Liu Li, “Henan Puyang: jiaren ju chaiqian, guanyuan ke mianzhi, duodui fuqi beipo lihun” (Officials Facing Suspension

witnessed couples divorcing or beginning proceedings to elude demolition work. In Jiahe, Hunan, to save their spouses' jobs, at least five couples split up. This tactic briefly became so popular that it was said the county Bureau of Civil Affairs refused to accept new divorce filings, and a 50-year-old official had to go to another city to divorce his wife and distance himself from his brother-in-law, who was refusing to cooperate with a demolition order.<sup>52</sup>

Media exposure can also be helpful. After a female employee was transferred to a demolition office to facilitate the removal of her mother-in-law's home, she posted her transfer notice on Weibo and asked: "What should I do"? Her query drew the attention of *Southern Weekend* (one of China's most influential newspapers) and put the local authorities in a difficult spot.<sup>53</sup> Even though her blog was deleted within 24 hours, distressed public employees in the same situation responded. A discipline inspection chief in the Suining City Management Bureau had similarly been transferred to a demolition office in order to persuade his mother and uncle to turn over a home they had inherited from his grandfather. He heard about the *Southern Weekend* report and posted an essay online, to which the county government replied, claiming that his transfer to the demolition headquarters was a routine personnel move. He immediately wrote another post making his name and phone number public. A flurry of media reports followed, and

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for Their Families' Noncooperation in Demolition and Many Couples Are Forced to Divorce in Puyang, Henan), *Zhongguo guangbo wang* (Chinese Radio Network) (28 November 2013), [http://china.cnr.cn/yaowen/201311/t20131128\\_514256217.shtml](http://china.cnr.cn/yaowen/201311/t20131128_514256217.shtml), accessed 20 March 2014.

<sup>52</sup> Luo Changping, "Chaiqian yinfa jiemei tongri lihun". Even divorce does not always provide a reliable way out. In some cases, the authorities fail to recognize that divorce means that ties have been broken and continue to apply pressure on a unit member. See Liu Li, "Henan Puyang: jiaren ju chaiqian, guanyuan ke mianzhi, duodui fuqi beipo lihun".

<sup>53</sup> Liu Zhiyi and Zang Jin, "Chai buliao fangzi chai ni jia".

within two weeks he was given his post back and released from further demolition work. Though a victory of sorts, his mother and uncle did not fare as well: his grandfather's land and residence were requisitioned according to "legal procedures."<sup>54</sup>

Finally, the willingness of a work unit to assist an employee may influence the outcome. For instance, a work unit may facilitate demolition but help improve the terms and make it more palatable to its employee's relative.<sup>55</sup> In Pengshan county, Sichuan, the Bureau of Education paid a 20,000 yuan subsidy to convince a bureau member's relative to sign a demolition agreement.<sup>56</sup> A unit may also stand with one of its members and try to deter a demolition order from being carried out. In Changsha, because staff from the demolition office visited a teacher's school so frequently, the principal and her colleagues came to recognize their faces, and they sent text messages warning her to leave when people from the demolition office arrived.<sup>57</sup>

## Feeling Victimized

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<sup>54</sup> Lei Hongtai, "Huanyuan Suining zhulian chaiqian shijian" (Getting to the Heart of the Incident of Demolition by Implicating Homeowners' Relatives in Suining), *Fazhi zhoubao* (Legal System Weekly) (25 November 2013); Yu Zhiming, "Hunan Suining 'zhulian chaiqian' chengguan ganbu yi hui fu yuanzhi" (Official in the City Management Bureau in Suining, Hunan Reinstated after Suspension Arising from "Demolition by Implicating Homeowners' Relatives"), *Beijing qingnian bao* (Beijing Youth Daily) (1 December 2013).

<sup>55</sup> High-ranking demolition facilitators can be well-positioned to help relatives obtain more compensation. Still, "demolition by implicating relatives" is one of comparatively few situations in China where being related to an official or other public sector employee creates problems rather than opportunities.

<sup>56</sup> Mala.cn, "Pengshan xian de chaiqian lianzuo fa" (Demolition by Implicating Homeowners' Relatives in Pengshan County) (14 January 2008), <http://www.mala.cn/forum.php?mod=viewthread&action=printable&tid=790283>, accessed 5 March 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Liu Zhiyi and Zang Jin, "Chai buliao fangzi chai ni jia".

“Demolition by implicating relatives” leaves many work unit members, leaders and employees alike, in a state of helplessness. They say they feel powerless to resist and see “no way out”. Although “harmonious demolition” extends the reach of the state in the short run, over the long term it threatens to alienate people who have benefited from party rule and were well-disposed toward the regime.<sup>58</sup>

“Demolition with affection” can turn relatives against each other and cause a family to unravel. As an official in Jiahe, Hunan, put it: “The practice of implicating relatives has made Jiahe a terrible place: relations between fathers and sons are strained, couples have broken up, and siblings have become enemies”.<sup>59</sup> When a cadre in the County Planning Commission was let go because his sister would not cooperate with demolition, the man told his sister that she should consider him dead. In Suining, Hunan, the wife of a discipline inspection chief, wrote in her divorce petition:

The plaintiff and the defendant have been married for more than 20 years. They have loved each other and have maintained very good conjugal affection. . . . Demolition by implicating homeowners’ relatives has, however, devastated the plaintiff. She’s afraid she might be implicated again and has experienced great pain in filing to divorce a husband she loves dearly.<sup>60</sup>

The court rejected the case, because it had never seen a justification like this.

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<sup>58</sup> In an article decrying “harmonious demolition”, one commentator concluded: “there are no lucky ones under absolute power”. See Tong Dahuan. “Zhulian shi chaiqian: juehui quanli xia meiyou xingyunzhe” (Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives: No Lucky Ones under Absolute Power), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (China Youth Daily) (12 January 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Luo Changping, “Chaiqian yinfa jiemei tongri lihun”.

<sup>60</sup> Lei Hongtai, “Huanyuan Suining zhulian chaiqian shijian”.

Disillusionment and rage are common among work unit members. After she received a notice transferring her to a demolition headquarters, the Changsha schoolteacher mentioned above wrote on Weibo: “Here and now, I hate demolition. It isn’t what it’s advertised to be: a process that will give people a better life, happiness, and an environmentally-conscious society. It’s destroying my happiness. It’s deceptive. It’s my nightmare”.<sup>61</sup> A vice director of the City Management Bureau in Taihu, Anhui, told a reporter that one of his friends, who was a vice section chief in another bureau, was hurt so deeply by being forced into demolition work that he gave up his position and “broke with the system” (*yu tizhi jue lie* 与体制决裂).<sup>62</sup>

“Demolition by implicating relatives” not only affects those drawn into it. Other unit members, watching it unfold around them, know that they could easily be next. An official in the County Government Office in Qingshui, Gansu, explained: “It’s understandable that demolition has caused problems among family members. . . . But the widespread panic among government employees caused by this wave of demolition can’t be eased in the short term. Other officials worry that one day they could be implicated themselves.”<sup>63</sup>

Effects can also linger. A school teacher in Zhenjiang city, Jiangsu, did not feel better after the district government ordered that she be paid two months’ back salary and that her principal and a township leader call on her to apologize for what she had gone

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<sup>61</sup> Liu Zhiyi and Zang Jin, “Chai buliao fangzi chai ni jia”.

<sup>62</sup> Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui”.

<sup>63</sup> Sun Ke, “Gansu Qingshui zhulian chaiqian shijian diaocha” (Investigation of Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives in Qingshui, Gansu), *Xin xibu* (New West), No. 7 (2004), pp. 8-11. Chen Long, in Anhui, also pointed out: “I wasn’t the first and I won’t be the last”. See Lin Yan and Chen Mo, “Zhulian chaiqian zhulian le shui”.



through during a contentious eviction. The teacher remained concerned that she had offended so many people that she would be treated poorly in the future.<sup>64</sup>

### **Some Implications**

“Demolition by implicating relatives” frequently works. Homeowners are persuaded to leave and houses are torn down. The pressures placed on public sector employees (through work units) and on homeowners (through family ties) are often potent enough to induce people to vacate their homes on the terms offered.

But the consequences of this approach to social control go beyond emptying out a neighborhood and allowing urban renewal to occur. For one, “harmonious demolition” draws work units into bullying and intimidation in an era when they do not dominate the landscape like they once did. Through high-powered incentives and hierarchical commands, work units continue to operate directly on the people in them, and even unit leaders are subject to the orders from above and find limited room to ignore demands if higher-ups insist. And this web of control extends beyond work units to individuals adjacent to them. With more Chinese living outside the confines of bureaucratic control, work units are expected to reach out and browbeat people not connected to them. This also occurred during the Maoist period, but is resorted to more often today when fewer and fewer urbanites remain in full-fledged units. The powers of the work unit system are evolving in tandem with market reforms and the spatial reorganization of Chinese cities.<sup>65</sup> Relying on vertical ties to control and coerce unit members, and horizontal ties to

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<sup>64</sup> Wang Jianwei, “Chaiqian gao zhulian, shui zhi guo”.

<sup>65</sup> On work units in the Maoist era and the early reform years, see Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley:

influence those “one degree of separation” away, work units remain a multi-pronged tool to penetrate society.

“Harmonious demolition” also tells us much about “soft repression”<sup>66</sup> at a time when the national government has sought to reduce the use of violence against protesters. In the same manner that paying off the disgruntled has become a common way to end contention,<sup>67</sup> and bargaining with homeowners in government offices can thwart popular action before it begins,<sup>68</sup> “harmonious demolition” is used to address both isolated and community-wide opposition and to head off “mass incidents” (*quntixing shijian* 群体性事件) without resorting to harsher forms of repression that could easily backfire.<sup>69</sup> After a decade of unremitting attention to “stability maintenance” (*weiwen* 维稳), the local state

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University of California Press, 1986); Xiaobo Lü and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Danwei: The Changing Chinese Workplace in Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997). On the reorganization of “spatial reality” and urban society more recently, see Luigi Tomba, *The Government Next Door: Neighborhood Politics in Urban China* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>66</sup> On this concept, see Myra Marx Ferree, “Soft Repression: Ridicule, Stigma, and Silencing in Gender-Based Movements”, *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Vol. 25 (2004), pp. 85-101; Jennifer Earl, “Repression and the Social Control of Protest”, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 2006), pp. 129-43; Lasse Lindekilde, “Soft Repression and Mobilization: The Case of Transnational Activism of Danish Muslims during the Cartoons Controversy”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (August 2010), pp. 451-69.

<sup>67</sup> Yang Su and Xin He, “Street as Courtroom: State Accommodation of Labor Protest in South China”, *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2010), pp. 157-84; Tian Xianhong, *Zhili jiceng zhongguo: Qiaozhen xinfang boyi de xushi (1995-2009)* (Governing Grassroots China: Discussing the Petitioning Game in Qiao Township (1995-2009)) (Beijing: Sheke wenxian chubanshe, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Ching Kwan Lee and Yonghong Zhang, “The Power of Instability: Unraveling the Microfoundations of Bargained Authoritarianism in China”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 118, No. 6 (May 2013), pp. 1476-1508; Julia Chuang, “China’s Rural Land Politics: Bureaucratic Absorption and the Muting of Rightful Resistance”, *The China Quarterly*, No. 219 (September 2014), pp. 649-69.

<sup>69</sup> Kevin J. O’Brien and Yanhua Deng, “Repression Backfires: Tactical Radicalization and Protest Spectacle in Rural China”, *Journal of Contemporary China*, No. 93 (May 2015), forthcoming.

has developed a varied arsenal of weapons to cope with discontent. Though there are dangers of exaggerating the authorities' effectiveness in pre-empting, policing and stopping protest, local responses to resistance range from instant concessions to immediate suppression, and much in between.<sup>70</sup>

That “demolition by implicating relatives” falls on the soft side of the repression ledger and avoids the use of physical force does not imply a less heavy-handed authoritarianism. In fact, the use of semi-masked, indirect techniques of domination reminiscent of “guilt by association” (*lianzuo* 连坐) in imperial China could point in the opposite direction, as control becomes more intrusive and harder to escape, much as it was during the Maoist era, when work unit controls were supplemented by ideological campaigns and other forms of political pressure. For all the benefits and inducements doled out to win cooperation from social groups crucial to development, threats and sanctions (for work unit members) and emotional blackmail (for their unfortunate relatives) are elements of the control regime that are deployed when money fails to placate the dissatisfied and violence seems inadvisable. China's authoritarianism can, at times, be as smothering as it was in the past.

But perhaps the situation is not quite so dire. It is true that “harmonious demolition” can be a horrible experience for work unit members and homeowners, and alienating millions of relocatees and many mid-level cadres does not seem like an astute way to maintain legitimacy and popular support. In particular, it seems unwise to abuse key beneficiaries of Party rule and to make powerful heads of government bureaus, schools,

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<sup>70</sup> The effectiveness of these techniques varies, and many, like *zhulian chiqian*, remind us of tensions in central-local relations and problems that arise when local authorities respond to central incentives in unexpected ways.

and hospitals feel like victims of unjust authority and “soft violence” (*ruan baoli* 软暴力).<sup>71</sup> But we are not the only ones who have recognized this. Why are cases of “demolition by implicating homeowners’ relatives” discussed in detail in China’s state-run media? And why are these accounts uniformly critical? In May 2010, the State Council issued an urgent circular banning “demolition by implicating homeowners’ relatives”.<sup>72</sup> Although the practice continues (nearly half of our cases occurred after 2010), officials in the upper reaches of government realize that controlling work-unit members through harsh sanctions and pressuring them to lean on their relatives to achieve state ends is not a formula for long-term success, and instead is a sign of overreach, desperation and incentives gone amok.

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<sup>71</sup> Chen Yao, “‘Zhulian shi chiqian’ shi weifa de ruan baoli” (Facilitating ‘Demolition by Implicating Homeowners’ Relatives’ is Illegal Soft Violence), *Renmin ribao* (People’s Daily) (1 February 2011).

<sup>72</sup> State Council General Office, “Guanyu jin yibu yange zhengdi chiqian guanli gongzuo qieshi wei hu qunzhong hefa quanyi de jinji tongzhi” (Urgent Notice on Strictly Managing Requisition and Demolition to Protect the Masses’ Legal Rights and Interests), <http://www.zgzyff.com/article/show.asp?id=7922>, accessed 26 May 2014. That local authorities often ignore the ban, suggests that they may value economic growth and opportunities for kickbacks over social stability, or that they view maintaining order in terms of halting today’s resistance by homeowners rather than preventing work-unit members from becoming disillusioned with the regime.