

Authoritarian Parochialism: Representation in Chinese Local Congresses

Abstract

How do Chinese township and county congresses represent their constituents when congress meetings are brief and infrequent and policymaking is dominated by the congress standing committee, higher levels of authority, and communist party committees? Based on scores of qualitative interviews and an original survey of 5,130 local congress delegates, Professor Melanie Manion shows that the amateur local congresses deliver representation in the form of targeted public goods to the geographic constituency. Moreover, congress delegates and ordinary Chinese share an understanding of this notion of representation. Unlike liberal democratic versions, however, this Chinese “pork barrel politics” mainly works extra-legislatively, through delegate advocacy to local government.