

## **1. Introduction**

This essay is to discuss the competing arguments about authoritarian resilience in China and to offer the author's own assessment as to China's authoritarian resilience. Scholars are divided as to China's authoritarian resilience. Authoritarian means that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ensures very high level of control over policymaking and their authority over Chinese political system. Resilience means strong and continuous. Therefore, authoritarian resilience means that CCP control in Chinese policies and authorities have been strong and continuous (Li, 2012).

Some believed that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) resisted or prevented democratic demand. They also believed that the authoritarian resilience was supported by four crucial institutional developments in China's political systems: (1) succession politics, (2) meritocracy, (3) specialization, and (4) more political participations (Li, 2012). However, Li (2012) believed that the rise of China's middle class and three trends: (1) weak leaders, strong factions, (2) weak government, strong interest groups, and (3) weak party, strong country may hinder the authoritarian resilience.

## **2. Competing Arguments of China's Authoritarian Resilience**

Some scholars supported that China still has authoritarian resilience in 2012. There are at least three arguments supporting it. First, CCP's one-party political system enables CCP to govern China more effectively. It also successfully resisted or prevented democratic demand in China (Li, 2012). Second, CCP had attempted to reform and rebuild itself institutionally after the 1989 Tiananmen incident. According

However, it may not work for the rising middle class since studies showed that Chinese middle class tends to be suspicious about the policy promises made by authorities and demanded better policy implementation, as well as combating corruption (Li, 2012).

Second, Li (2012) also argued that there had been three transformative trends in CCP ruling. The first one is weak leaders but strong factions. Li (2012) speculated that CCP was divided into two coalitions in 2011: Elitist Coalition (Jiang Zemin's Camp) and Populist Coalition (Hu Jintao's camp). Since they are high-ranking officials in 2011, for example, Xi Jinping, Wang Qishan, Li Keqiang, Wang Yang, the conflict of policy direction may hinder the governance efficiency in China.

The second one is weak government but strong interest groups. For example, the State Council has become less effective in controlling China's provinces, major cities, and even key state-owned enterprises. It reflects serious problems with the administrative capacity of the central government. Chinese interest groups are categorized into (1) corporate and industrial interest groups, (2) emerging middle class, and (3) workers groups. The first group was highly influential in policymaking and the second and third group have increasing political consciousness.

The third trend is a weak party and strong country. It can be seen by a large-scale outflow of capital in recent years (presumably by corrupted officials) and the widespread corruption in CCP.

### **3. View of the Authoritarian Resilience of CCP**

The arguments by Li (2012) are evidenced before the rule of Xi Jinping. Under the rule of Hu Jintao, CCP has a diminishing power in controlling Chinese

2017b). Such Central Leading Small Groups result in better coordination of tasks among different levels of officials, especially between those which have the same ranking (Heilmann, 2017). It leads to more effective policymaking and execution.

Therefore, after the succession of Xi Jinping as the general secretary of the party, the three transformative trends suggested by Li (2012) was greatly resolved: weak leaders, weak government, and weak party. It was replaced by strong policymaking and execution. From another angle, even though one disregards the contribution during the terms of Xi Jinping, the authoritarian resilience of CCP has been strong due to its sophisticated organization.

Heilmann et al. (2017) documented the sophisticated organization of the Chinese government. For example, the central government of PRC in 2015 constituted inner cabinet, outer cabinet, ministerial-level economic supervisory organ with special status, and ministerial-level research and advisory organs. The inner cabinet constitutes the premier, four vice-premiers, and five state councilors. The outer cabinet constitutes 25 ministerial-level bodies of the State Council. These 25 ministries have high level of specialization on affairs such as national development and reform, finance, central bank of PRC, commerce, industrial and information technology, land and resources, environmental protection, water resources, transport, agriculture, foreign affairs, housing and urban-rural development, healthcare, education, science and technology, etcetera. It already represents a higher level of professional and specialization in the government structure. It increases the Chinese government's control over different state affairs (Heilmann, 2017).

Apart from the central government, there are also sophisticated structure in the provincial government similar to the structure of the central government. Despite the