State Power and Chinese Authoritarian Resilience in the Reform Era: Coercion, Obstruction and Domination**

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Abstract

This article attempts to unravel the puzzle of Chinese authoritarian resilience. After the 'reform and opening up' policy had been implemented in the late 1970s, China started to enjoy decades of phenomenal economic growth and to produce an increasing amount of urban middle-class. In consequence, many observers expected to witness subsequent political liberalisation. However, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can still hold on to power until present. What makes the regime resilient? This work addresses the question through the power dimension, arguing that the CCP's longevity hinges upon its power dominance over potential threats. The Party's power can be seen to have three faces. The first face is coercion: The Party carries out decision-making on the issues over which there is an observable conflict among interests. The second face is obstruction: The Party takes control over the agenda of politics by keeping the potential issues out of the political decision-making process. The third face is domination: The Party's power exists when the Chinese people believe the values which oppress them and resign themselves to those values. Because China is becoming more powerful and influential in many ways, this work on Chinese politics is of both academic significance and policy relevance.

อำนาจรัฐและความเข้มแข็งของระบอบอำนาจนิยมจีนในยุคปฏิรูป: การปราบปราม การกีดขวาง และการครอบงำ**

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บทคัดย่อ

　　　　บทความนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่ออธิบายเรื่องความเข้มแข็งของระบอบอำนาจนิยมภายใต้การนำของพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์จีน ผ่านคำถามที่ว่าอะไรเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้ระบอบพรรค-รัฐ ดำรงอยู่ได้ในสังคมจีน โดยหลังจากการประกาศใช้นโยบายปฏิรูปและเปิดประเทศในช่วงปลายทศวรรษที่ 1970 ประเทศจีนได้เติบโตทางเศรษฐกิจอย่างก้าวกระโดด ทำให้เกิดชนชั้นกลางและผู้อาศัยในเขตเมืองจำนวนมาก ซึ่งเงื่อนไขทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมที่ว่านี้สอดคล้องกับแม่แบบการพัฒนาไปสู่สังคมประชาธิปไตย แต่ทว่าจวบจนถึงปัจจุบัน พรรคคอมมิวนิสต์จีนยังคงอยู่ในอำนาจอย่างมีเสถียรภาพ　บทความนี้เสนอข้อถกผ่านมิติของอำนาจ โดยเสนอว่าสาเหตุที่พรรคคอมมิวนิสต์จีนยังคงปกครองประเทศจีนอยู่ได้นั้น เพราะพรรคมีอำนาจเหนือภัยคุกคามที่อาจเกิดขึ้นและกระทบต่อพรรค โดยอำนาจของพรรคคอมมิวนิสต์จีนนั้นแบ่งออกเป็น 3 มิติ มิติแรกคืออำนาจในการบังคับ ปราบปราม ผ่านการใช้กองกำลังทางการทหารและตำรวจ อำนาจมิติที่สองคืออำนาจในการกีดกันประเด็นที่สุ่มเสี่ยง อันตรายต่อการรักษาสถานภาพเดิมไม่ให้เข้าสู่กระบวนการตัดสินใจ ผ่านการคัดสรรสมาชิกพรรค การปกปิดข้อมูล ข่าวสาร และการโฆษณาชวนเชื่อ และอำนาจมิติที่สามคืออำนาจในการครอบงำทางเลือกของประชาชน ให้หลีกเลี่ยงการกระทำที่ขัดแย้งกับผลประโยชน์ของพรรค

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Introduction

Tracing back to 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong secured victory over the Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (KMT) and founded of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the country was heavily shattered and fragile. With a series of violent conflicts that rampaged across its vast territory, most of the land was depleted, and people were impoverished. The primary mission of the new regime was to rebuild from scratch not only the state but also the nation. Now, seven decades of CCP rule have passed and China has undergone a myriad of changes only few people back then could have imagined.

Restoring the country in the aftermaths of the devastation of World War II and the Civil War, the Party has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in transforming China, which was caught in a vice at the time, into one of the world's leading nations in several domains, economy, politics, technology and innovation, to name but a few. However, China's path of development did not happen by chance. Many experiments were carried out to boost the country's wellbeing and to revitalise its prosperity. Due to the lack of resources, knowledge and support from outside, the early attempts such as the Great Leap Forward led to none but the tragedy (Vorasakdi Mahatdhanobol 2014, 106). Not until the regime opted to implement the 'reform and opening up' policy in the late 1970s did positive signs appear on China's economic scoresheet. From the 1980s to the 2010s, China enjoyed decades of phenomenal growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at an average of nearly 10% per annum, boasting its status to the world's second-largest economy in 2010 (Morrison 2019, 5-6). During the Reform Era, the Chinese economy became more open to private involvement, which produced a substantial urban middle-class, members of which grasped the sense of wealth. Considering the success of economic reform which rolled out as a principal axiom for the governance, China observers expected to witness consequential political reforms.

The first wave of debates among intellectuals consequently revolved around the prospects of China's political liberalisation. Leaning on the classical modernisation models of democratic transitions based on Western experiences, many scholars appraised that democracy would likely be realised in China; it was not a question of *if*, but *when*. Looking at the socio-economic conditions of China, Stanford University professor Henry S. Rowen asserted that China would democratise around the year 2015 (Rowen 1996). He later amended the prediction, by saying that in 2015 China would

adopt democracy only partially (Rowen 2007, 38); whereas full democratisation would occur in 2025 (Rowen 2011). His core ideas concerning China's democratic prospects were shared by other scholars such as Thomas Friedman (1998) and Liu and Dingding (2012, 41).

The flow of time, nevertheless, casts doubts to the optimism over China's liberalising potential (Chin 2018, 64). As the predicted time is approaching, the CCP not only manages to hold on to power but also manages it with astute manoeuvres. The phrase 'authoritarian resilience' became a heatedly discussed concept for sinologists (Liu and Dingding 2012, 41). The second wave of debate accordingly moved the key research question from *when* the regime will change to *why* the Party-state is still resilient to such a change (Tang 2018). Drawing on observations on authoritarian regimes, pundits tried to put forward several arguments to solve this contentious question from different angles such as 'institutionalisation of domestic politics' (Lieberthal 1992, 1-3; Nathan 2003, 6; Shambaugh 2008, 9), 'adaptability and pragmatism' (Lai 2016, 16; Mertha 2009, 996) and 'moral and economic performance legitimacy' (Zhao 2001, 440; Zhao 2009, 422), among others.

Acknowledging that the Chinese authoritarian resilience in the Reform era is complex and multifaceted, this article endeavours to shed light on a more subtle feature of the topic by providing a newly organised interpretation to China's authoritarian resilience through the 'three-dimensional view of power' (also known as 'three faces of power') theoretical framework developed by Steven Lukes. In his account, power can be exercised in three ways. The first way is through coercion; the second through obstruction; and the third through domination (Lukes 1974, 25). In responding to the aforementioned research question – *Why is the Party-state still resilient to the pressure for democratisation?* – this essay argues that the CCP's power is the most critical factor to its longevity. Notwithstanding its vulnerability to an economic slowdown, demise of communist ideology and public anger about social inequality and corrupt bureaucrats, the CCP is not yet prone to collapse. The Party will remain durable as long as it is capable of employing its power to suppress the threats, block the potential issues from entering the policy sphere and manipulate Chinese citizen's preferences. The only possible, albeit somewhat improbable, option for democratic transformation is for the party itself to launch the project.

This work on Chinese authoritarian resilience is of both academic significance and policy relevance. Firstly, because China is currently seen as a development model by many other countries,

an in-depth explanation on longevity in China's one-party governance could contribute to the existing literature in the field of China Studies and serve as a platform for further research on authoritarian resilience in other area studies. The works on the CCP's durability with a particular focus on the power dimension are still underexplored. Secondly, as China is becoming more powerful and influential in many ways, this more nuanced understanding of China's domestic politics – in particular the CCP – could equip policymakers and concerned authorities with necessary salient points in making strategic and policy decisions.

The organisation of this paper is as follows. The next section presents a brief review of the concept of authoritarian resilience in existing scholarship. The subsequent three parts provide analyses on the three-dimensional power theory and how the CCP uses each face of power. Regarding the first face of power – coercion – this paper explores the CCP's utilisation of coercive apparatus, e.g. the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police (PAP), to curb domestic threats such as protests and rebellion. With regard to the second face of power – obstruction – this paper examines the CCP's cadre appointment and propaganda. These cases exemplify the Party's control over the political agenda and ability to keep potential issues out of the policy process. Concerning the third face of power – domination – this paper incorporates into the analysis of Chinese state power the adaptive policy formation. In this aspect, Chinese people accept their roles in the existing order of things, either because they are more satisfied with the *status quo* rather than seeking changes or because they acknowledge that there is no alternative to it, and thus reduce their cognitive dissonance as a practical means of dealing with oppression. While the first two faces of power focus on the agent that uses power, the third face underlines those accepting the power. The paper ends with a conclusion of the findings, limitations and implications of the ongoing trends.

Authoritarian Resilience Revisited

The Chinese authoritarian resilience has been a centre of attention since the Tiananmen Incident in June 1989. In the wake of such nadir, many observers thought that the CCP's Party-state rule would come to an end. However, the regime swiftly put all menaces under control. It was capable of restricting inflation, resuming economic growth and restoring its international relations (Nathan

2003, 6). Currently, it is evident that the CCP is still alive and in firm control of the realm. Therefore, the crux of the matter is what China scholars worldwide are aiming to decipher. The early attempts to answer the questions pertain mainly to the functionality of the Party. Most of them emphasized the decentralisation of the supreme single command, which was an essence of the Maoist and Dengist eras, to allow collateral units to work independently under the Party's umbrella.

Kenneth Lieberthal coined the term 'fragmented authoritarianism' to illustrate the reformed political structure within the Party-state that helps the CCP to maintain its rule. He pointed out the division among various Party bureaucratic agencies in administrating public affairs. In formulating any policy, these agencies typically debate and bargain with each other over the final shape and how it will be implemented. Compromise or consensus was always required for adaptation of any policy and its practical implementation (Lieberthal 1992, 2).

Andrew Nathan and David Shambaugh similarly argued that the CCP is not static in adjusting its organisational structure in the face of democratisation tidal waves. Nathan postulated at least four institutional changes in China's domestic politics including the formalised norms in leadership succession, the increased emphasis on meritocracy in political promotion, the differentiation and specialisation of agencies within the regime and the establishment of channels for political participation and complaint (Nathan 2003, 6-7). Likewise, Shambaugh underlined the CCP's active learning from the former Soviet Union case, asserting that the CCP is active in revitalising the Party's ideology, alleviating leadership rifts, strengthening Party discipline and seriously dealing with corruption. Also, the regime reaches out to consult more with non-member specialists and introduces intra-party democracy (Shambaugh 2008, 9). Although this, to some extent, reflects political pluralisation of the policy process in China, the CCP still reserves the right to make the ultimate decision, vitally ensuring its autocratic rule.

In addition to the abovementioned works, some accounts took into consideration the importance of other domestic factors in China's policymaking process. They stressed that the CCP not only needs to minimise the intra-party cracks but also needs to answer to public appeals effectively. Andrew Mertha looked deeper into China's responsiveness to address the increasingly diverse societal demands. He suggested that rapid socio-economic change, aggressive lobbying by pressure groups and changing expectations of Chinese citizens towards the Party-states were

demonstrative of the Party's inability to cope with the issues (Mertha 2009, 996). As a result, the Party feels an impulse to integrate those previously excluded from the policymaking process such as the media, non-governmental organisations and individual activists, which opened up fertile spaces for policy changes. Zhao Dingxin posited that the CCP's economic performance, which raises people's quality of life, is the main – if not sole – criterion of its legitimacy. According to Zhao, China, as an authoritarian Party-state, is performance-oriented, and the CCP will face a severe crisis if its economy cools off (Zhao 2001, 430; 2009, 425).

The focus on economic calibre echoes again in Hongyi Lai's work. He coined a term 'pragmatic authoritarianism' to explain the CCP's longevity, categorising shreds of evidence into three components, namely economic governance, social governance and political governance. For Lai, economic governance, such as high GDP growth, people's higher living standards and poverty reduction, is the most substantial segment of Chinese authoritarian resilience (Lai 2016, 104). Relaxation of social regulations, being social governance, and improvement of intra-party stability management, being political governance, are combined ultimately to facilitate economic statecraft.

These previous publications are instrumental in helping the readers understand several aspects of Chinese authoritarian resilience. However, there is still an undersupply of writings with a focus on the power dimension. Although the previous studies can be used to explain the CCP's adaptation to survive in the changing environment, they did not investigate deeply into how the regime controls and contains its citizen discontent. Yuhua Wang argues that the strong state's coercive apparatus can explain the exceptional robustness of the CCP rule (Wang 2014, 14). However, as this article argues, coercion is only part of the CCP's comprehensive power.

Given the research gap, this work employs the three-dimensional power approach in the analysis of the Party-state to exemplify its resilience. The following section will explain the theoretical framework of this study.

Three Dimensions of Power

The concept of power is at the heart of politics, whether it is at a local, national or international level. It occupies the crucial position amongst human interactions and relations with one another. Within the academic field of political science, power analysis serves as a fundamental platform for

understanding conflict and cooperation (Parsons 1963, 232). Despite its long history originated from the seminal works of political philosophers in the classical era like Plato and Aristotle or Machiavelli and Hobbes to the more contemporary such as Max Weber, the systematic study on power had recently emerged in the mid-20th Century when a series of political scientists started to pay closer attention to it. The concept of power then began to be studied in a more scientific manner, turning intuition into hypothetical statements that could be testified and applied in concrete research situations. In this essay, the 'three-dimensional power' theory developed by Steven Lukes will be used. The following three sub-sections will go through each dimension of power.

One-Dimensional View of Power

Robert A. Dahl first proposed the idea of power as follows: '*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* do something that *B* would not otherwise do' (Dahl 1957, 202-203). A little later in the same article, he defined this operational definition slightly differently by looking no longer at *A*'s capacity but at *A*'s 'successful attempt' to get another actor to do something he would not otherwise do (Dahl 1957, 204). Simply put, his idea claimed that power is used by means of decision making, meaning that the powerful actor could *intentionally* make someone do something without the consent of the latter. His understanding subsequently became understood as the one-dimensional view of power.

Two-Dimensional View of Power

Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz criticised the incompleteness of the first school of thought and built up a new theory called 'Two Faces of Power' (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 948). They asserted that if power can be exerted through decision-making from actor *A* over actor *B,* it can also be expressed by nondecision-making. The second layer of power starts with the mobilisation of bias. The bias selectively benefits certain groups over others. The dominant groups in society will obstruct the issues which challenge or fail to concur with the values and beliefs that embody the bias. When the bias effectively prevents certain problems from developing into fully-fledged issues, a nondecision-making situation emerges (Bachrach and Baratz 1963, 641). The focal point is on how power influences the conditions for decision-making, rather than how power works in the actual process of decision-making. In terms of public policymaking that affects all actors, the second dimension of power is apparent when actor *A* successfully build up social, political and institutional

practices that uphold their privileges in public consideration of any agenda, most of which are comparatively innocuous to them. By considering only those supportive of *A* to participate in decision-making, *A*'s power is to prevent rivals from entering the discussion table (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, 7).

According to Bachrach and Baratz, the methods used to augment and carry on the bias vary. That is to say, they can be anything from brute force and threats used to organise some issues out of the policy process; the co-optation of the opposition; the use of norms, values or prerequisites to disqualify some issues; to the establishment of new procedural rules to prevent challenges to the existing bias (Bachrach and Baratz 1970, 44).

Three-Dimensional View of Power

Going beyond the first two streams, Steven Lukes argued that both concepts are restricted to explaining scenarios where conflicts of interest are overt (Lukes 1974, 39). He introduced another facet of power, one that is hidden from view and which could not be proven empirically. It lies in actor *A*'s ability to shape the preferences, cognitions and perceptions of others in accordance with his through norms construction and cultural reverberation. As long as actor *A*'s policy preferences and those of other actors are made identical, conflicts between two parties are significantly minimalised.

Lukes indicated that the three forms of power are neither contradictory to one another, nor is a single tool exclusively used at any one time. All dimensions of power can be and often are used simultaneously; nonetheless, the third dimension of power works most effectively. He asked:

[I]s it not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial? (Lukes 1974, 24)

The above citation closely resembles the concept of 'adaptive policy formation' which refers to the situation where individuals reconcile themselves to difficult circumstances. In embracing an existing order of things, people know its consequences and thus reduce their cognitive dissonance as a practical means of coping with oppression. For Lukes, the third dimension of power occurs not only where there is domination, but where the dominated acquiesce in their domination. James Scott

divided such acquiescence into two versions: thick and thin (Scott 1990, 72). In the thick sense, people actively believe in the values that explain and justify their oppression. In the thin sense, people are merely resigned to them. While Scott endorsed the thin view, Lukes argued that both co-occur.

Analysis of the Chinese Communist Party's Use of Power

The 'reform and opening-up' policy implemented at the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 looms large in the prosperity China is enjoying nowadays. Under the 'One Focus, Two Basic Points' axiom, the then-paramount leader of China, Deng Xiaoping, attempted to implement reforms in agricultural and industrial sectors, while allowing the country to interact more freely with the outside world to obtain knowledge and skills to support such reforms. Nevertheless, the opening up had both pros and cons.

On the one hand, the Chinese government witnessed a remarkable increase in its economic scores, and its citizens began to catch a glimpse of fortune. The country experienced a five-times increase in its GDP within a single decade, starting from 367 billion Renminbi when the economic reform was introduced in 1978 to 1.7 trillion Renminbi at the end of 1989 (The National Bureau of Statistics of China 2020a). On the other hand, the opened doors allowed the infiltration of western values such as democracy, freedom and privacy into Chinese society. These and the people's growing wealth and ambitions to be represented in politics led to calls for democratisation and greater popular participation. The larger the attendant demonstration was, the more severe the threat it posed to the central government. In consequences, the government used force to quell the gatherings. Despite its short timespan, the world most clearly witnessed the first face of CCP power.

The CCP's first face of power: Coercion

According to the first definition of power, the most important source of the CCP's coercive power lies in its security apparatus, namely the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA)

In contrast to most states where the army belongs to the bureaucracy with the head of state/government being an *ex officio* commander-in-chief, the Chinese Constitution maintains that the army is ultimately commanded by the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), a

subsidiary of the CCP. Under the principle of civilian control over the military, the PLA is legally and practically under the absolute directive of the Party. Rifts between the Chinese leadership and the military occurred in few instances. For example, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake brought global attention to the civil-military relations by showing the PLA General's dissatisfaction over Premier Wen Jiabao's command (Li 2010, 28). A similar scenario can be seen in the 'disconnect' between President Hu Jintao and military leaders over China's trial of an experimental J-20 fighter during the US Secretary of States Robert Gates' visit in 2011 (Page and Barnes 2011). However, these situations were rare. On the whole, the PLA is loyal to the Party leadership.

The CCP's decision to use its military arm to suppress student protestors at Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989 is the most apparent case showing coercive decision-making. After several weeks of protests by more than one million students and workers who occupied Tiananmen Square in Beijing, martial law was declared on 20 May 1989. Later, troops paraded towards the capital city, but were ordered by the central government not to fire on civilians. Only after the Party's elders approved the decision to use force on 2nd June did the army begin to open fire. Starting from that night to 4th June, the PLA forcefully dispersed the unarmed civilians. The incident took only a few days before the crowds fled the Square; nonetheless, global society had already witnessed the Party-state's unreserved use of force to end the conflict that harms its interest.

The People's Armed Police (PAP)

Although the deployment of military force to cope with domestic security had become scarce after that, the Party is not hesitant to control any rebellious activities by a relevant, yet slightly softer, mechanism such as the Chinese People's Armed Police.

The PAP was established in 1982 to serve as the paramilitary wing of the CCP, with primary responsibility for maintaining domestic stability and a secondary role in providing rear-guard support for the PLA during wartime. The unit, which is composed of up to a million personnel, is also assigned to serve a variety of other roles and missions such as responding to natural disasters, guarding government compounds and participating in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation (UNPKO). The PAP had been under the dual leadership of the CMC and the State Council before being placed under the sole authority of the CMC after Xi Jinping became the CCP's general secretary and the CMC's Chairman. Because the PAP can now be deployed only by the CMC, it has

recently become known as 'China's other army' (Wuthnow 2019, 11). The Police Force can harass, detain and arrest individuals deemed as threats to the CCP's rule.

In recent years, the PAP has played an active role in controlling large-scale social upheavals and restoring social stability. In March 2008, the Tibetan uprisings were sparked off by a small group of Tibetan monks who gathered in Lhasa to commemorate the anniversary of the failed 1959 uprising against the CCP in Tibet that ended with the Dalai Lama's flight into exile. Those monks aimed to protest against religious controls, including patriotic education campaigns and forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama. When the local police attempted to disperse the crowds by force, the lay Tibetan people joined the monks, spreading the protest from Lhasa to Tibetan areas in other provinces, with approximately 30,000 Tibetans joining (Barnett 2009, 13). The Party postulated that the Tibetan protesters were supported by the 'separatist' and the anti-China forces, it sent the PAP to suppress the demonstrators. In order to 'maintain stability' and prevent subsequent upheavals, the CCP ordered the armed police to stay permanently.

CCP's second face of power: Obstruction

According to the second definition of power, the most crucial source of the CCP's prohibitive power lies in its ability to mobilise bias through selected representation and propaganda.

The Party's Membership

One nature of the second dimension of power is the blockade of entry into politics. Because all the state apparati are in the Party's hands, public policies are formulated and implemented by the CCP authorities. Unlike democracies where representatives are elected on a free-and-fair basis, the CCP membership system is enforced to exclusively select only handful, trustworthy candidates to serve the Party, and to a broader extent, the entire nation. Among the total population of over 1.4 billion in 2019, only slightly over 90 million – approximately 6 per cent – are now securing their membership (The National Bureau of Statistics of China 2020b; China Daily Information Co. 2019a). Furthermore, to become a member of the Party, one needs to undergo a multitude of screening, training and evaluation (McMorrow 2015). Above all, he or she must be able to tolerate difficulties, to vow her or his loyalty to the Party and to strictly observe the Party's orthodoxies (Vorasakdi Mahatdhanobol 2011, 83).

Propaganda

The principal function of propaganda is to determine what is 'fit to know' and what is not. The guiding role of the Central Propaganda Department of the CCP (CCPPD) spans the whole Chinese society in the current era (Brady 2006, 58). Its extensive scope of sight ranges from media outlets to educational institutions and other cultural facilities. Moreover, the propaganda cadres and offices are installed in all mass organisations, e.g. trade unions, and all levels of the state bureaucracy as well as Chinese and foreign-run private companies located in China (Brady 2006, 58). The main targets of the CCPPD are twofold. Firstly, it has the capacity to control the flow of information into and throughout China. It actively censors and cracks down the media when and where it sees fit. Secondly, it can proactively engage in writing and disseminating such information that it believes should be transmitted to society (Shambaugh 2007, 28-29).

Concerning the censorship strategy, the Party is robust in ramping up the intensity of media control. It never permits any cardinal concept of freedom, such as media freedom or freedom of expression. Despite the factual nature of reporting, critical journalists are under the watchful eye of the CCPPD and often punished for failure to comply with the Party's line on the sensitive issues. A veteran journalist Wang Qinglei was fired from his position after saying in social media that he was tired of the 'stifling environment' for China's journalism (Denyer 2014). The viral footage of TV reporter Liang Xiangyi giving dramatic side-eye and eye-rolling at a fellow journalist after the latter reportedly overly praised the Chinese government was banned from the media (Ma 2018). Besides, the notorious 'Great Firewall of China' was invented by the government to filter keywords in Chinese search engines and block access to sensitive websites (Zhao 2016, 1182).

Concerning the proactive propaganda, the regime could get its citizens to follow its line subconsciously by using ideological indoctrination. Generally, it aims to restore the faith of Chinese people, either by love or fear, in the CCP legitimate leadership. In the reform era, China has undergone tremendous political and economic changes and witnessed the collapse of the communist ideology. To fill up the ideology vacuum, the Party opted for nationalism. Manipulation of national pride is, to a substantial extent, an essential part of CCP's propaganda machine. Zhao Suisheng demonstrated that nationalism has provided 'the most reliable claim on the Chinese people's loyalty and the values shared by both the regime and critics.' By linking the party-state with

the Chinese nation, the CCP positions itself as a defender of China's national interests, pride and territorial integrity, thereby making criticisms of the Party an unpatriotic act (Zhao 2016, 1169). The recent cases of propaganda can be seen in Mainland China's media framing of Hong Kong Protests and the correction of Higher Education in China.

In response to the 2014 Occupy Central Protests in Hong Kong, the Chinese official news agency published an article accusing a few Western media of having a biased view towards the movement and naming the US government for being the 'Western force' that support public chaos (Global Communications Association, Inc. 2014). The cases of 'colour revolutions' in Egypt, Thailand, Libya and Ukraine were also drawn to manifest the US-inflamed social turmoil. Similarly, Zhou Nan, an ex-*Xinhua* head and former minister of foreign affairs, expressed his opinion that the 'anti-China forces' inside and outside Hong Kong was using the students' civil disobedience to seize power from China (Lam 2014). When protests occurred again in Hong Kong in 2019 over the extradition bill, Chinese official sources immediately discredited the uprising, stating that:

"[S]ome Hong Kong residents [protesters] have been hoodwinked by the opposition [pro-democracy] camp and their foreign allies into supporting the anti-extradition campaign...to reap political gains by damaging the SAR government's creditability and reputation, or that some foreign forces are seizing the opportunity to advance their own strategy to hurt China by trying to create havoc in Hong Kong" (China Daily Information Co. 2019b, emphasis parentheses added).

It can be seen from the quotation that the Chinese state media tried to divert audience attention from the facts. Instead of reporting the protesters' discontent with the new law, the outlet portrayed the local protesters as being influenced by foreign forces and that they aimed to damage the country. Frequently, the Chinese government blames external parties for the problems happening in Hong Kong. However, some analysts asserted that with reference to this the CCP 'foreign interference' charge is partly similar to what had been done when Hong Kong was under British rule (Loh and Hao 2019, 1-2).

Similarly, academic freedom in China also receives a question mark. The CCPPD officials have thoroughly scrutinised curricula, discussions and scholarly publications. Qiang Zha

illustrates that the Chinese government considers intellectuals as being directly responsible for demaging the state and thus promulgates several policies to restrict campus academic freedom. The Party-state seeks in university professors a unity of knowledge and action in support of the state. Therefore, the main principles of teaching in universities, especially in the fields of philosophy and social sciences, need to be in line with CCP's values in lieu of 'Western' academic freedom that possibly taints its credibility (Zha 2010, 17).

In 2019, the Central Government approved alterations to Fudan University's charter. Fudan University, which is one of China's most prestigious universities well-known for its free space in humanities and liberal studies. Previously it upheld a firm stance on academic independence and freedom of thought. However, tighter affiliation to the Party is added to the charter. It now states: "The university adheres to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and will fully implement the party's educational policy" (Fifield 2019). The change indicates that the University can enjoy its academic freedom only in so far as it is in line with the Party's direction.

CCP's third face of power: Domination

Unlike the previous two faces of power which focus on the CCP as a power-using agent, the Party's third face of power explains Chinese citizens' acquiescence to the CCP's rule. According to the third dimension of power, the CCP's power also lies whenever the people accept their roles in the Party-dominated system, either because they can see no alternative or perceive the status quo as impossible to change. As a result, they alter their attitude to console themselves in ongoing circumstances. People know the consequences of attempts rebellious of the regime and thus reduce their cognitive dissonance as a functional means to respond to the oppression.

In this aspect, it can be postulated that the third dimension of the CCP's power is not formulated by the Party but stems from its primary and secondary sources of power. That is to say, the Party's coercive and obstructive powers not only perform their roles in terminating the threats and keeping potential issues out of the policy sphere but also create insidious impacts on Chinese society as a whole.

The use of security apparati, e.g. the PLA and the PAP, to coerce the demonstrators into submission could help the Party overcome particular conflicts over interests. Meanwhile, the legacy of the use of force in previous incidents, along with the stationing of forces in certain areas, can

together signal the CCP's willingness to opt for coercive means again in cases of the unrest. The forceful dispersal of the protesters at Tiananmen Square, in Tibet or Xinjiang then has imprinted into the mind of the public the picture of the determined security forces. Consequently, the options for dissatisfied individuals to express their frustrations were limited.

On the other hand, the concerted crackdowns on the media and the concomitant strengthening of the propaganda machine played a critical role in creating self-restraint among the public. As David Shambaugh has observed, the CCPPD has a passive control capability in bringing about self-censorship (Shambaugh 2007, 29). Several studies showed that, due to the strict control of the media and the active role of the propaganda cadres, the intellectuals, journalists and media frequently avoided expressing politically sensitive ideas in public as they recognise the risks in doing so (Link 2002; Tong 2009, 593). Jingrong Tong demonstrated that the practice of self-censorship helped the Chinese media outlets avoid political 'minefields' and concurrently increased the possibility of the publication of reports on highly sensitive issues (Tong 2009, 594). Similarly, academics and professors need to be careful in choosing teaching materials, especially 'foreign original textbooks' that would be screened by the local propaganda department before being used in class, and be vigilant about on what can be spoken in class and what cannot (Zhao 2016, 1185-1186).

Conclusion

The central theme running through this entire essay is the power of the Chinese Communist Party. In order to answer *why the Party-state is still resilient to the pressure for democratisation despite the economic and social conditions being ripe for such change*, the 'three dimensions of power' theory developed by Steven Lukes is employed to systematically analyse the CCP's power in its many facts. This essay argues that the CCP's power is the most critical factor to its longevity. Notwithstanding its vulnerability to an economic slowdown, demise of communist ideology and public anger about social inequality and corrupt bureaucrats, the CCP is not yet prone to collapse. The Party will remain durable as long as it is capable of employing its power to suppress the threats, block the potential issues from entering the policy sphere and manipulate Chinese citizens' preferences.

Based on Lukes' account, the Party's power can be divided into three faces. The first face is coercion: The Party carries out decision-making on the issues over which there is an observable conflict over interests. The second face is obstruction: The Party takes control over the agenda of politics by keeping potential issues out of the policy process. The third face is domination: The Party's power exists when the Chinese people believe the values which oppress them and resign themselves to those values. While the first two faces of power focus on the agent that uses power, the third face underlines those accepting the power.

Regarding the first face of power – coercion – this paper explores the CCP's utilisation of coercive apparati, e.g. the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police (PAP), to curb domestic threats such as protests and rebellions. With regard to the second face of power – obstruction – this paper examines the CCP's cadre appointment and propaganda. These cases exemplify the Party's control over the political agenda and ability to keep potential issues out of the policy process. Concerning the third face of power – domination – this paper incorporates into the analysis of Chinese state power the adaptive policy formation. In this aspect, Chinese people accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they know they are more satisfied with the *status quo* rather than seeking changes or because they acknowledge that there is no alternative to it, and thus reduce their cognitive dissonance as a functional means responding to oppression.

It is also worth noting that three forms of power are neither contradictory to one another, nor is a single tool used at any one time. All dimensions of power can be, and often are, used simultaneously. In the foreseeable future, we could still see the Party-state use the first two faces of state power to guard itself from any vital threats, while the third face of power would be present when the public know the consequences of misbehaviour and thus change their behaviour to avoid the sanctions. The coercive measures would be used mainly to suppress anti-CCP movements, especially from the far-flung autonomous areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang, where the minorities' discontent towards the Central Government are noticeable. Likewise, chaos in Hong Kong due to its citizens' growing fear of China's political encroachment and their non-peaceful responses such as violent protests could also be a strong rationale for the PLA to step in. Nonetheless, the most certain circumstance to witness the full-scale use of the CCP's coercive power is in dealing with the Taiwan question. Its armed forces can be used either to pre-emptively respond to Taiwan's attempt to pursue

independence or proactively strive to annex Taiwan in case the prospect for the latter to reunify with the mainland deteriorates.

Furthermore, it is none but impossible to see the Party lower its guard in propaganda tasks. The Party-state has been persistent in controlling the influx of imported information via its notorious 'Great Firewall' and the information circulated within the society by screening and blocking, especially if they are considered sensitive to the government's legitimacy. Instead, with the more advanced knowledge in technology, the government would step up the ongoing mechanisms and simultaneously proceed to yearn for new and more effective options. In the same manner, it is unlikely that the standards for membership appointment would be lowered. Despite the recent wider doors for the non-proletarian, such as successful capitalists, to enter the Party, it is widely seen as the CCP's bids for overtaking and tightening its control over profitable enterprises. The continuous use of the first and the second faces of power by the CCP would also deter the public from taking rebellious actions or causing threats to the regime. Instead, the dissatisfied masses would reconcile themselves to the CCP-dominated system.

Since all three kinds of state power are centralised within the Chinese Communist Party and are unlikely to change in the near future, the only possible, albeit somewhat improbable, option for democratic transformation to be installed must be initiated by the Party itself, neither 'bottom-up' nor from outside forces. Notwithstanding its vulnerability to an economic slowdown, demise of communism ideology and public anger about social inequality and corrupt bureaucrats, the CCP will still be able to hold on to power. This study of Chinese authoritarian resilience yields not only the empirical analysis specific to the case of the Chinese Communist Party, but it can also serve as a platform for further study on other authoritarian regimes worldwide.

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