

# **How to Interpret the Survival of the Chinese Communist Party since 1989?**

## **A Literature Review by American and Chinese Scholars**

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**Abstract:** Since 1989, American and Chinese scholars have engaged in debates about the collapse of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and China. The fact that both China and the CCP continue to survive contradicts many American scholars' predictions that China or the CCP would collapse after 1989. This paper examines and reviews the literature contributed by American and Chinese scholars regarding the survival of the CCP in the past 30 years. It addresses five main issues related to the resilient Communist regime, the role of CCP's democratic centralism in its survival, the effective procedure of the CCP's political system, the checks and balances with the CCP's characteristics, and the feasible action plans of intra-party reform. The article also discusses the existing literature about the CCP's characteristics of the intraparty elections and the inherent checks and balances since 1989.

**Keywords:** Chinese Communist Party, intra-party elections, political reform, resilience

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### **1. Introduction**

Since 1989, when the Tiananmen Square Incident took place, American and Chinese scholars have engaged in debates about the survival of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The fact that both China and the CCP continue to survive or even thrive contradicts many American scholars' predictions that China would collapse after 1989.

This article will examine and review the literature contributed by American and Chinese scholars regarding the survival of the CCP in the past 30 years. It will address five main issues as follows. First, how has the Chinese Communist government become more resilient in the last thirty years, rather than experiencing its collapse? Second, how can the democratic centralism and the intraparty democracy contribute to the resilient Communist regime which learned various lessons from the collapse of the Soviet Union? Third, does reform of the CCP's political system require a top-level design or a bottom up procedure? Fourth, how can a mechanism of the checks and balances be established within the authoritarian CCP? Finally, what should be the effective action plans of intra-party reform? The article will also discuss the existing literature about the characteristics of the intraparty elections and the inherent checks and balances within the CCP since 1989, especially since the CCP's Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002.

### **2. The Resilience School**

Since 1989, some American scholars have encountered significant dilemmas and confusions in their interpretation of the Chinese Communist government. On the one hand, the Regime Theory has led them believe that an authoritarian system must be fragile due to its lack of legitimacy, excessive reliance on violence, extreme centralization of its decision-making process and its practice of overriding institutional rules with individual authority (Nathan, 2003:6). Therefore, after 1989, many China specialists predicted that China would join the third wave of the worldwide democratization (Waldron, 1998; Scalapino, 1998).

Roderick MacFarquhar, a prominent China specialist, forecasted in 1991 that it would only be a matter of time before China repeated the fate of the former Soviet Union and a number of Eastern European countries in seeing the dissolution of its existing government system (MacFarquhar, 1991:3). In 2006, he again restated that all the necessary ingredients for a massive collapse of the Chinese Communist government were present for its eventual collapse within a matter of a few years instead of a few decades (MacFarquhar, 2006). In 2007, Susan Shirk, another well-known China specialist, also believed that "China may be an emerging superpower, but it is a fragile one" because "Chinese leaders are haunted by fears that their days are numbered" (Shirk, 2007:7).

A number of other political scientists also joined this political fortune telling about the CCP's fate (Waldron, 1995; Waldron, 2000; Waldron, 2003; Wasserstrom, 2004A; Wasserstrom, 2004B; Gilley, 2005A; Gilley, 2005B). Especially notable is Gordon Chang who in 2001 gave a specific time frame for the collapse of China, that is, it would happen in 2011 (Chang, 2001). Bruce Gilley also believed that the year 2005 marked the

decline of the Chinese system (Gilley, 2004; Gilley, 2005B:32-35). Larry Diamond, renowned scholar on democratic transitions, remarked in 2006 that “China cannot remain a completely closed political monopoly and remain stable.” Therefore, he continued, “It may not be in ten years, but I am pretty confident it [China’s collapse] is going to be within 25, maybe 10-15 [years]” (Diamond, 2006:219). Arguably the failure of many experts on Soviet studies to predict the collapse of the former Soviet Union led to collective embarrassment in their scholarly community. To avoid the repetition of such awkwardness, some scholars have taken certain risks in forecasting the collapse of China even at the possible expense of their scholarly reputation. Such brave predications, if materialized, would yield tremendous scholarly dividends.

On the other hand, some other scholars have begun to reflect on the fallacy of the China Collapse theory based on the renewed Chinese developments over the last two decades (Nathan, 2003:6). Leading this school of thought, Andrew Nathan created the resilience school, in which he argued that some classical Western theories on authoritarianism are not entirely applicable to China, whose developments have proven its system to be adaptable and resilient (Nathan, 2003:6).

Addressing the question as to whether an authoritarian system is capable of renewal and revitalization, Talcott Parsons once thought that a totalitarian regime could adapt and continue to exist, as long as it met the following four conditions: 1) giving up the utopian ideology and charismatic leaders; 2) placing a large number of technocrats in decision-making positions; 3) adopting a complex and professional bureaucracy; and 4) reducing the control of individual rhetoric and actions (Nathan, 2003:16). While Richard Lowenthal does not believe that these aforementioned character adaptabilities can change the essential characteristics of an authoritarian system (Nathan, 2003:16), Nathan is persuaded that the CCP has in fact completed those changes (Nathan, 2003:16).

In light of the CCP’s power transitions since its Sixteenth Party Congress in 2002, Nathan began to hold a positive view of their normalcy in that the qualities of individuals, rather than factional considerations, had played a more important role in the selection of leaders. Moreover, there had been an increase of diversity, function and professionalism with the governing apparatus. The establishment of channels of political participation and the civilian petition system had also strengthened the party’s legitimacy in the view of the public. These changes should enable the CCP to better survive and adapt (Nathan, 2003:6-7). Hence, by 2009, Nathan acknowledged that “twenty years after Tiananmen, the resilience of Chinese authoritarianism still surprises us” (Nathan, 2009:37). Further, he thought that the resilience, adaptability and restorative ability of the CCP’s authoritarian system would reinvigorate comparative studies of authoritarian systems (Nathan, 2009:38; Shambaugh, 2009).

More specifically, Nathan noted that the CCP’s resilience and adaptability had something to do with its internal balance of power. In the process of selecting the top leaders, the decrease of factional strife was conducive to the creation of an outstanding collective leadership, which in turn helped to balance the different factions. The absence of one or two top leaders who controlled everything was conducive to the emergence of an increasingly collective leadership (Nathan, 2003:11). Admittedly such development did not mean the disappearance of internal factional struggle; rather it was the outcome of establishing a self-balancing mechanism (Nathan, 2003:11). When being interviewed by Rong Jian in July 2012, Nathan stated that the resilience of authoritarian systems was not a prediction but rather an analysis, one that could be used to explain the fact that CCP did not collapse since 1989. He further elaborated that such an analysis did not mean that the Chinese Communist system would never fail (Rong, 2012:98).

Echoing Nathan’s reflections, Bruce Dickson also expressed in 2006 that “the CCP is not in imminent danger of collapse” because it has enhanced its governing capacity through the “strategy of survival without undertaking fundamental reforms of the political system” (Dickson, 2006:46). Similarly, David Shambaugh stated “the CCP is adapting fairly (but not entirely) effectively to meet many of these challenges” because it “has learned the negative lessons of other failed communist party-states” (Shambaugh, 2009:9), although he revised his scholarship significantly since 2015 when he predicted “the coming Chinese crackup” (Shambaugh, 2015).

Nathan’s revised view on the resilience school is quite representative, as it reflects the general changes in the view of the Chinese political system among American scholars (Feng, 2008; Zheng, 2003; Tsang, 2009; Heberer & Schubert, 2006). Previously pessimistic opinions about the CCP and its political reform have been revised significantly (Nathan, 2009:36). These scholars once believed that a restorative and adaptive political system must possess checks and balances, while the China’s centralized system, devoid of such a mechanism, would not be sustainable. Faced with the fact that, over the past thirty years, the Chinese Communist power has not only survived but also demonstrated resilience and adaptability, these scholars have not changed their fundamental beliefs and value judgements; however, they have come up with a new scholarly hypothesis; that is, the CCP has perhaps an inherent self-restricting and self-balancing mechanism that is uniquely Chinese, just as its intra-party election system is unique to the CCP itself. In particular, Nathan believes that the resilience of the

Chinese Communist authority owes itself to the successful administrative skills and professional management” (Rong, 2012:98, 103). In his more recent writing, Nathan further points out that a key causes of CCP’s resilience is the adaptable decision making system for the socioeconomic transition so that the government has the capability to identify priorities and make its sophisticated decisions (Nathan, 2013A:178; Li, 2013B:22-23).

### **3. The Democratic Centralism School**

This new resilience school has encouraged scholars to explore the historical process and technical improvement of the CCP’s checks-and-balances system and election format. However, American scholars have yet to provide any in-depth or comprehensive analysis of questions such as: What are the checks-and-balances functions that are characteristic to the CCP’s internal election system? How are these functions similar to or different from the typical Western type of political checks and balances? How does one explain the functions of these Chinese types of checks and balances and their future prospects?

The democratic centralism school contributed by Chinese scholars may address the above-mentioned questions through their comparative studies of the CCP and its counterpart in the former Soviet Union. Huang Donghong believes that, as early as the first Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1905, Lenin introduced the concept of “democratic centralism.” He argues that Bolsheviks had to emphasize the centralization and unity of their party while fully allowing for intraparty democracy; they both abided by the iron party discipline and allow for different factions within the party. At the Ninth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, a Central Supervising Commission was established in order to exercise effective supervision of the top party leaders. In reality, however, democracy was only in name while centralization was the essence. By the time that Stalin was in power, the Soviet Communist Party became highly authoritarian with a heavy emphasis on centralization and absolute obedience. Stalin’s personal dictatorship and personal cult reached their zenith, much to the detriment of the principle of democratic centralism. Later, Khrushchev attempted to implement some kind of political reform, but the despotic nature of the Soviet system remained (Huang, 2002:37). According to Xing Guangcheng, by the Gorbachev era, ideas of social diversity and toleration of plural opinions and interests began to supersede the so-called democratic centralism which shaped and reshaped the CCP. However, Gorbachev himself did not advocate political plurality or a multi-party system; instead, he stressed the utility of a democratic system in “fostering and guiding various interests” (Gorbachev, 1987:337) with an ultimate goal of practicing an open, democratically inclined and humane socialism (Xing, 2011).

To address the process of gradual democratization within the Soviet Communist Party, one has to take a close look at the reasons for the collapse of the former Soviet Union. According to Yang Huang, one main reason was the fact that the intense degree of centralization, practiced over a prolonged historical period, had gravely weakened the intraparty democracy because it “made it very difficult for the majority of party members and the masses to assert their normal democratic rights contained in the party’s constitution,” thus giving rise to a one-person leadership on which the entire party’s fortune relied (Yang, 2000:11). Zhu Xiufang also points out that “in the Soviet Union there was no differentiation between the party and the state; in fact, the party has replaced the government and the heavy concentration of power had turned the party into an actual government apparatus,” thus making it difficult for the party to sustain its legitimacy in a country like this or to achieve political democratization or pluralization (Zhu, 2009:135).

Furthermore, Cao Siyuan is convinced that the real reason for the collapse of the former Soviet Union was its deviation from the four major principles underscoring the nature of worldwide constitutional systems--the separation of the three branches of the government, multi-party competition, universal suffrage and freedom of the press (Cao, 2013:120). On the Phoenix TV program, Gao Fang also stated that one of the main reasons for the end of the Soviet system was its “constitutional party,” a variant of constitutional monarchy, a system that institutes personal dictatorship, life tenure of leadership positions and succession by political appointee. He further pointed out that Lenin was in fact opposed to the concentration of party, state and military power in one leader. When Lenin was the party leader, Trotsky was the Chairman of the military commission and Kalinin was a leader of the state. Only during the age of Stalin did the convergence of the three powers took place, thus establishing the historical and institutional cause for the eventual collapse of the former Soviet Union (Gao, 2013).

It is worth noting that, despite the aforementioned opinions, most mainland Chinese scholars blamed on Gorbachev who had brought forth the collapse of the former Soviet Union because of his abandonment of democratic centralism and the party’s leadership, along with the loss of public trust in the party (Wu & Qin, 2009:176-79). Other factors cited include serious internal strife caused by intraparty democracy (Li, 2007:36-39), failure to maintain the progressiveness of the Soviet Communists (Zhu & Zhu, 2007:3-6), and the excessive and malevolent development of internal party supervision (Pan, 2003:42-45).

In the face of the debate over why the Soviet Communists collapsed, the core is how to properly use the issue of intra-party democracy. Excessive autocracy will lead to institutional collapse, and excessive democracy

may also lead to internal disintegration. Therefore, it is necessary for scholars to explore the possible ways for the CCP to implement both internal peaceful reforms and avoid external violent revolutions through learning the process of evolution from the Soviet Communist Party. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Communists alerted the CCP timely and forced the CCP to conduct many preventable policies effectively.

#### **4. The Top-down vs. the Bottom-up Reform**

With respect to the intra-party reform which made the CCP resilient, the procedure of the top-down and the bottom-up contributed to the CCP's survival. In view of the overall trend of the CCP's party reform, it can be roughly divided into three major viewpoints. First, democratic elections and political reforms should be top-down, insisting on "top-level design" as the first priority. The term "top design" first appeared in the mid-1980s, because at that time, most of people recognized that reforms with the principle of "touching the stones while crossing the river" are not acceptable. Therefore, the proposed reform requires a target model and a top-level design (Wu, 2012).

In this regard, Wang Changjiang clearly supports the top-level design because due to the lack of top-level design, the excessive departmental power has gradually formed vested self-interest groups in opposition to national interests (Wang, 2012). According to Wang Lixin, "Historical experience shows that in the countries and organizations where power is concentrated, peaceful reforms are generally top-down, and violent revolution is generally bottom-up" (Wang, 2007:30). Hu Wei also believes that political system reform cannot take a trial-and-error because "some mistakes can't stand the test, and in particular, political mistakes can't stand the test. At the same time, political system reform is usually an irreversible process" (Xia, 2013).

The issue regarding the order of from the topbottom or from the bottom up also involves the relationship between internal and external party democracy. Yu Keping advocates that the reforming procedure should start within the party before expanding it to the whole county because "the Chinese Communist Party is the only ruling party in China who is the center of political power in contemporary China." Moreover, "without democracy within the party, China's democracy is an empty talk. Expanding the internal party democracy prior to promoting democracy in the whole society are the realistic road towards China's democracy" (Chen, 2009). Xiao Gongqin also endorses the idea of using party democracy to promote people's democracy because "a reasonable reform path must be top-down. Grassroots democracy is difficult to implement without upper-level democratic procedure" (Xiao, 2005).

In addition, some scholars argue that the CCP's democratic reform must be initiated from bottom-up or "crossing the river by feeling the stones." Fang Ning believes that most of the successful political reforms have no theoretical guidance, and there is no top-level design, but rather gradually exploring from bottom up without any plans, and ultimately succeed. On the contrary, many failed reforms seem to be well prepared and carefully designed by the top level in advance, but in practice, they end in failure. "Their results hurtled the people, the country, and themselves. They have been left as embarrassment in the memory of history" (Fang, 2012). In this regard, Deng Yuwen also has a similar point of view. "Instead of forcing the implementation of the so-called 'top design' without the basic consensus and sufficient driving forces, it is better to initiate an open debate encouraging the public to address current issues, objections, and tasks of the reform." For instance, utilizing the internet would promote public participation in public affairs and social life, thereby, according to Deng, creating a "great constraint on interest groups" (Deng, 2011).

Furthermore, some scholars argue that the CCP political reform should be interactive between the top and bottom. Ren Jiantao believes that the current intra-party democratic reform is clearly in a state of disorder between the top-level design, the middle-level system and the local level reform." Therefore, it is necessary to improve interactions and collaborations between the central government and local government in an effort to promote the reform orderly and gradually (Ren, 2012). Hu Wei also believes that intra-party democracy should adopt top-down, combine with the bottom-up, interact up and down (Hu, 1999), and stress that "intra-party democracy is like a locomotive, running with people's will" (Xia, 2013). Wang Guixiu stresses that democracy should start from the top of the party, while constantly promoting grassroots democracy, grasping the middle of the two heads, and combining top-down and bottom-up" (Wang, 2000).

In fact, designing and promoting political reform from the top down is a false proposition because the CCP has never proposed a timetable, a road map and specific targets for its political reform at the top level. The promotion of political reform from the bottom up has been proved by the direct election of village committee for more than 30 years, which has demonstrated that it is difficult to succeed because the democratic initiatives, such as direct elections of village committees which still remain at the village level, are difficult to be pushed from bottom up. Therefore, scholars' study may only base on China's past practice because as for whether the future plan of the top-level design can be accepted by the ruling party, it is totally beyond scholars' control.

### **5. The Triple Powers with the CCP Characteristics**

In effort to address the additional driving force to sustain CCP's dynamics, scholars have more discussions focused on specific reform mechanisms and procedures. The first view is that a mechanism for the separation of triple powers should be established within the CCP. Lin Shangli proposes that "the power within the party should be divided into decision-making power, executive power and supervision power," and the system and operational mechanism of "restricting power by power" should be established" (Lin, 2002:62-63).

According to Cao Siyuan, the serious problem of the CCP is that the decision-making power and supervision power are highly concentrated in the hands of the executives. He proposes a plan for balancing the powers within the party, aiming to upgrade the current decision-making power from virtual to real and transform the supervisory power from dependence to independence. Following the principle of checks and balances, the most abused executives would be and should be strongly constrained (Cao, 2012).

The second view is to establish a one-party with pluralistic democracy. Zheng Yongnian believes that if the West uses external pluralism, such as the multi-party system, China should develop its "internal pluralism, that is, emphasizes the distribution of internal interests." He emphasizes that the functions of internal pluralism include four tasks: one is to promote the open system; the second is to create a political "competing" system, that is, "through the internal distribution of interests, to prevent the development of external forces and external pluralism;" the third is to promote the mobility between social classes; the fourth is to maintain historical tradition of "rebellion" in which the people's rebellion should have legitimacy when the ruler is unpopular (Zheng, 2012). Hu Wei also believes that China can approach the combination of one-party system and one-party pluralism; therefore, the development of inner-party democracy may become an alternative version of China's multi-party system. As a result, the development of inner-party democracy can ultimately maintain the ruling status of the Communist Party on the one hand and satisfy the objective needs of diversified social interests on the other hand (Hu, 1999).

The third suggestion is that the CCP should allow the existence of different party factions and strengthen the checks and balances within the party. Shi Xiaohu believes that "a political party that recognizes and encourages the existence of different political factions within the party is democratic and modernized; on the contrary, all who suppress the political factions within the party are authoritarian." It can be seen that the existence and diversification of political factions within the party is actually the foundation of inner-party democracy. He stresses that "the development of inner-party democracy can only be based on the legalization and openness of political factions within the party" (Shi, 2010). Hu Jiwei also believes that while Mao Zedong recognized the two political directions and two headquarters within the CCP during the Cultural Revolution, Mao actually admitted that there were two factions within the party. Therefore, he believes that "allowing factional activities will not separate the party, but will improve and strengthen the party's leadership to the correct direction" (Yao, 2010). Hu Ping also believes that it is a universal phenomenon to have factions and factions within the party, but the key is "whether the factional struggle within the party is to be open and legalized, and whether the factions are willing to accept the rules and procedures for peaceful competition" (Hu, 2012).

However, another group of scholars opposes the legalization of party factions. Li Guowei believes that it is necessary to "ban party factional organizations" because the factional activities are "organized separatist activities carried out by a very small number of people in the party against the party's mission and principles." He quotes Karl Marx's idea that "all sects are essentially reactionary" (Li, 2007:39). At the same time, Lenin also pointed out that "any factional activity is harmful and cannot be tolerated." Therefore, Li Guowei believes that "the faction organizations and factional activities in any form within the party will erode the role of the party in the mind, disintegrate the party in politics, and separate the party in the organization" (Marx & Engels, 1995). Some scholars suggest that the party can conduct elections, giving party members more democratic rights, but must not allow or even encourage the public appearance of factions. In this regard, Wang Changjiang argues that it is necessary to "draw out the boundaries between campaign activities and factional activities" (Wang, 2011). Chen Hongtai also stresses that while implementing the "institutionalization of different opinions within the party," it is necessary to "distinguish the party's group opinion from the sects" (Chen, 2011).

In 2004, Xiao Gongqin also believed that the implementation of the multi-party system within the party "has considerable risks because it will affect the internal imbalance of the homogeneous group" (Xiao, 2004). Xiao also summed up the five reasons why he had to criticize some scholars' view points on this issue. First, the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party model is not suitable for China; second, if the factions of different interests within the party would be legalized, the result would increase internal party conflicts. Third, if different groups within the party were allowed to organize their own factions and compete each other within the party, it would inevitably lead to external social conflicts. Fourth, some scholars believe that intra-party democracy cannot be accepted by the CCP because for a long time, the power within the party has been highly monopolized. The CCP's governance would involve in serious crises if the more democratic reforms would be introduced. Finally,

the idea about party democracy has strong elitism which ignores the strong demand of mass democracy (Xiao, 2004).

In fact, whether the CCP should allow different opinion groups and different interest groups within the CCP is out of party's control. In fact, multi-interest and multiple opinions are closely related to the development of pluralistic social economy. In the face of the already formed strong and solid vested interest groups within the party, the cost and risk of attempting to break and destroy it is much higher than the implementation of competitive democratic elections within the party. Obviously, democratic elections may lead to the "bleaching" of evil forces and it can also regulate the evil forces, forcing them to be locked into the "cage" of the democratic system, abandoning evil and rectifying evils, such as some Taiwan's legislators who used to be mafia leaders and the American founding fathers who were slave owners. The universal approach of a democratic society to vested interests is through democratic elections, the election of spokespersons who reflect and represent the different interest groups, fair competition under a common game rule, and the gradual promotion of justice with votes despite the time-consuming and costly process.

### **6. The Multi-Candidate Election School**

As another reason for the CCP's survival, some scholars argue that the feasible action plans and visionary directions matter. To prioritize the option of the CCP's internal reform, some scholars have created the multi-candidate election school. This school is seeking a breakthrough in CCP's political reform with low cost, low risk and quick effect. One view is to reform voting system, which should be a competitive election with a multi-candidate election. Hu Wei believes that the key indication of intra-party democracy must be the implementation of competitive elections. It is vital to gradually promote the competitive elections for the CCP's Central Committee elections, in Hu's view, and increase the proportion of multiple candidates in each election by 5% to 10% or with the success rate of 90-95%. When conditions are ready, it is necessary to consider extending the competitive election to the CCP's Politburo and its Standing Committee before gradually expanding it to the levels of provinces, cities and counties (Hu, 1999). Chen Hongtai also believes that the road to reform within the party is "the competitive election in the party, combining both appointments and elections" (Chen, 2011). Wang Lixin argues that the breakthrough of the political reform must be the intro-party elections because "the election system can select relatively good politicians and administration who are capable of effectively supervising the governance process." Moreover, "the election system can fully reflect the public opinion and give the elected persons full legitimacy." In addition, "the election system is able to enhance the public's awareness of belonging, participation, solidarity, and promoting political socialization" (Wang, 2001:103-104).

To promote this multi-candidate election school, Yu Keping emphasizes that "the democratic election can address the issue about power creation while the democratic decision-making can deal with the issue about the power implementation" (Qian, 2012). Wang Changjiang also believes that the first priority of the top level design of the political reform is "intra-party democracy. This is especially reflected in the implementation of empowering people's democracy." The critical reasons for the failure of CCP's political reforms, according to Wang, "are that the rights and responsibilities of authorizing democracy have not been clarified." It seems to Wang that "if direct elections can move up to the county level, at least the status of CCP as a ruling party can be guaranteed for 10 to 20 years" (Wang, 2012).

There is also a view that it is imperative to set a timetable for the political reform. Mu Ran believes that the political system urgently needs a timetable for reform, because the Internet is forcing the political system reform to speed up in order to deal with critical political issues quickly and effectively. He envisions that as the first step China in the first decade should be transformed from the autocracy to the political tutelage following Sun Yat-sen's ideal; the second step of the second decade, from the constitution to constitutional democracy; and the third step of the third decade should be from the constitutional democracy to democracy (Mu, 2011). Some scholars also emphasize that the party representative system should be reformed first, including the permanent representatives, the annual representative meeting, and the party congress system.

### **7. Conclusion**

The literature review of the above five major issues has addressed the key reasons for the survival of the CCP since 1989. First, CCP's resilience may relate to its internal check-and-balance function within the party. Second, the collapse of the Soviet Union helped the CCP learn the valuable lessons to improve its democratic centralism. Third, both bottom up and top down reform procedures have enhanced the CCP's dynamics. Fourth, CCP's internal factions have maintained its checks and balance with the Chinese characteristics. Finally, the feasible action plans for CCP's political reform may provide some realistic directions for its future development.

Needless to say, the collapse of the “China’s collapse theory” predicted by many American scholars has prompted people to think about whether there is a mechanism of power restriction and balance with the CCP’s characteristics without multi-party system. It may inspire scholars to consider a possibility of imposing effective checks and balances and keeping power in the cage of the legal system without changing the one-party system. It also helps scholars reinterpret that the key reasons for the collapse of the former Soviet Communist Party may be caused by Gorbachev’s excessive democracy, excessive political reform, and excessive checks and balances. In particular, the collapse of the Soviet Union has encouraged the CCP to design and implement a reform plan that should promote intra-party democracy, strengthen checks and balances, and avoid the crisis of governance and the disintegration of political parties. With respect to the top-down strategy of the CCP reform, many Communist leaders have realized that it is not a format or procedure of reform only. Instead, it is a critical factor which may affect the success or failure of the CCP’s regime. While China’s economic reforms were able to follow the procedure of bottom up, its political reform can’t take the same directions which may lead to the sudden death of the CCP. Meanwhile, Chinese scholars’ research may deliver a surprised message that the CCP’s version of checks and balances may represent the separation of the three powers within the party, the pluralism of one party, and the one-party with multi-factions. Obviously, all scholars studying the politics of the CCP can neither avoid nor ignore the aforementioned issues. It is essential to make in-depth discussions through empirical studies and rigorous methods.

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