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Abstract

Having been a stable authoritarian regime for more than seven decades, China is an excellent example of how authoritarian regimes can resist pressure from a rapidly transforming society. Its capacity to adapt to social change and maintain a strong hold on power has been observed by students of Chinese politics in the nature of its institutions. These include fragmented governments, decentralization, flexible governance, adaptive capacity, consultative functions, bargained mechanisms, and responsiveness. Xi Jinping's rise to power and the introduction of information and communications technology (ICT) in recent years have brought about the evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's methods for governing society. Changes in its governing strategy have merited a review of our understanding of the Chinese regime and inspired an investigation into how social stability is maintained in China. In this paper, we review previous descriptions of China's authoritarianism and observe the policies the Xi regime has adopted to strengthen state power. We propose that for the purposes of social control, the Xi administration has been building a hierarchical state machine and expanding this machine to the digital sector of society, a campaign which we call "institutional autocratization." These efforts to establish a hyper-stability structure with new technologies may indeed have strengthened Xi's rule.

Keywords: Social stability maintenance ✉ state-society relations ✉ the Xi regime ✉ institutional autocratization

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