

China's Policy Processes and the Advocacy Coalition Framework

Wei Li  and Christopher M. Weible 

This review of 81 applications of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) in China between 2006 and 2017 finds that the ACF's hypotheses about the existence and stability of competing advocacy coalitions in policy subsystems, the occurrence of change across its three-tiered belief system, and the credence of its four pathways to policy change, which have been developed and mostly tested in Western democratic contexts, can be confirmed in China's authoritarian political system and transitional context. This review also finds some unexpected results, which have implications for studying China's policy processes and for future applications of the ACF. Adopting common vocabulary and theoretical foci, ACF applications have captured some of the complexity and evolving features of policy processes in China. Applications of the ACF to China have also enriched the discussions about how authoritarian governments, through interacting with other policy actors, adapt to external changes in transitional context.

KEY WORDS: Advocacy Coalition Framework, China's policy processes, authoritarian regime

本文对2006年至2017年间中国81个倡议联盟框架（ACF）的适用情况应用进行研究，发现ACF的各项理论能在中国的威权政治体系和过渡背景下得以证实，这些理论包括：政策子系统项目竞争的倡议联盟的存在和稳定、倡议联盟三级信念体系中出现的变化、倡议联盟通往政策变化的四条路径的可信度（这些路径已在西方民主背景下发展并基本都经过检验）。本文还发现一些意料之外的结果，这些结果对研究中国政策进程过程和今后ACF的适用应用具有意义。通过采纳常见共同用语和理论焦点，ACF的适用应用已捕捉到中国政策进程过程的部分复杂性和不断发展的特征。将ACF应用于中国一事还增进了相关探讨，即威权政府如何通过与其他政策行为者相互影响，进而在过渡转型背景下适应外部变化。

关键词: 倡议联盟框架, 中国政策进程, 威权体制

Esta revisión de 81 aplicaciones del Marco de Coalición de Defensa (ACF) en China entre 2006 y 2017 encuentra que las hipótesis de la ACF sobre la existencia y estabilidad de coaliciones de defensa competitivas en subsistemas de políticas, la ocurrencia de cambios en su sistema de creencias de tres niveles, y La credibilidad de sus cuatro caminos hacia el cambio de políticas, que se han desarrollado y probado principalmente en contextos democráticos occidentales, se puede confirmar en el sistema político autoritario y el contexto de transición de China. Esta revisión también encuentra algunos resultados inesperados, que tienen implicaciones para estudiar los procesos de política de China y para futuras aplicaciones del ACF. Adoptando

vocabulario común y focos teóricos, las aplicaciones ACF han capturado algunas de las características complejas y evolutivas de los procesos de políticas en China. Las aplicaciones de ACF a China también han enriquecido las discusiones sobre cómo los gobiernos autoritarios, a través de la interacción con otros actores políticos, se adaptan a los cambios externos en el contexto de transición.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Marco de coalición de defensa, procesos de políticas de China, régimen autoritario

Introduction

The globalized study of public policy poses several challenges about the application of frameworks and theories within and across different countries. In particular, the contextual variation across countries (e.g., institutional, socio-cultural, economic, and biophysical) means that frameworks and theories created in one country may not apply to other countries and if they are applied they may lead to misinterpretations and false comparisons.

One of the most important cases for exploring the application of frameworks or theories outside of its original context can be found with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The ACF was developed by Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993), in the context of the U.S. democratic governing system marked by pluralistic struggles among interest groups and government entities to influence public policy. This backdrop offered a number of causal preconditions to support the ACF's theoretical foci on competing advocacy coalitions, policy-oriented learning, and policy change. Outside the United States, the ACF has been applied and found useful in other Western democratic systems, particularly Canada and many Western European countries (e.g., Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Pierce, Peterson, Jones, Garrard, & Vu, 2017). Outside of Western democratic systems, the ACF has been applied less frequently.¹

Applying the ACF to China provides opportunities to understand the extent that its theories and hypotheses about coalitions, policy-oriented learning, and policy change developed in Western democratic contexts can be applied to an authoritarian political system. China's political system lacks voting rights, democratic elections, basic rights of assembly, and a free press—all of which serve as cornerstones of democratic states. China has also been governed by one political party for seven decades. However, the ACF has become more applicable to China after the country's four decades of transition from a planned economy to a market economy. To some extents and in some ways, policy processes in China have become more open and contentious, involving advocacy by NGOs, experts, journalists, and the general public (Mertha, 2009; Nathan, 2003; S. Wang, 2008). It is this combination of an authoritarian political system and the recent transitional environment that makes synthesizing and understanding the various applications of the ACF in China a valuable exercise.

We pose the following question: To what extent, if at all, do the theoretical logic and the hypotheses of the ACF developed and mostly tested in Western democratic contexts, apply to the Chinese context? Many aspects of this question have been

addressed by studies that applied the ACF to China (e.g., Han, Swedlow, & Unger, 2014; Wanxin Li, 2012; Stensdal, 2014; Wong, 2016). However, all of the English language studies concern environmental policy issues, which may limit our understanding of China's policy processes. Our meta-review of 81 studies that applied the ACF in China aims to identify generalizable patterns across both Chinese and English language studies of diverse policy areas and compares them with general findings of the ACF applications to Western democracies. We find that many of the theoretical logic and hypotheses from the ACF can help interpret China's policy process but not without some surprises and important differences and also limitations based on this sample of studies. This paper concludes in offering insights into the study of China's policy processes and suggestions for future research on the ACF.

An Overview of the ACF

The ACF helps guide researchers to explain policy change by focusing on the role of advocacy coalitions and policy-orientation learning. The ACF posits that policy processes are complex, with ongoing and multiple interactions involving actors from various institutions (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994). The framework helps identify the specific components of policy processes (e.g., policy advocacy) and untangle the multifaceted nature of the policy process.

The flow diagram in Figure 1 shows a typical ACF scenario; that is, two coalitions operating within a policy subsystem. Policy subsystems are subsets of political systems that consist of a policy topic, territorial scope, and governmental and nongovernmental actors (called "policy actors") who are directly or indirectly attempting to influence public policy. A subsystem is set within a broader political system featuring relatively stable parameters (those factors that structure a political system) and external events (those factors more prone to change in a political system). In the middle are long-term coalition opportunity structures that shape how policy decisions are made, and short-term constraints and resources, which refer to the ephemeral nature of political resources that can fluctuate in any political system.

The ACF was developed and tested in the United States, and was applied to Western democracies other than the United States (Pierce et al., 2017; Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009). In this paper, "Western democracies" mainly refers to democratic countries in Western Europe, and Anglo-American democratic countries in North America.² The governments in these political systems are formed through multi-party competition and popular elections, and there is a high degree of freedom of association and expression. These features are in sharp contrast to China's authoritarian political system (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017; Marshall & Cole, 2014). Although the openness and inclusiveness of policy processes vary in pluralist, corporatist, and Westminster-style democracies, the policy processes in Western democracies are expected to be more inclusive of opponents and more open to diverse actors' participation than those of authoritarian regimes (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). However, given the limited number of ACF applications to authoritarian regimes, these postulations have not yet been confirmed.

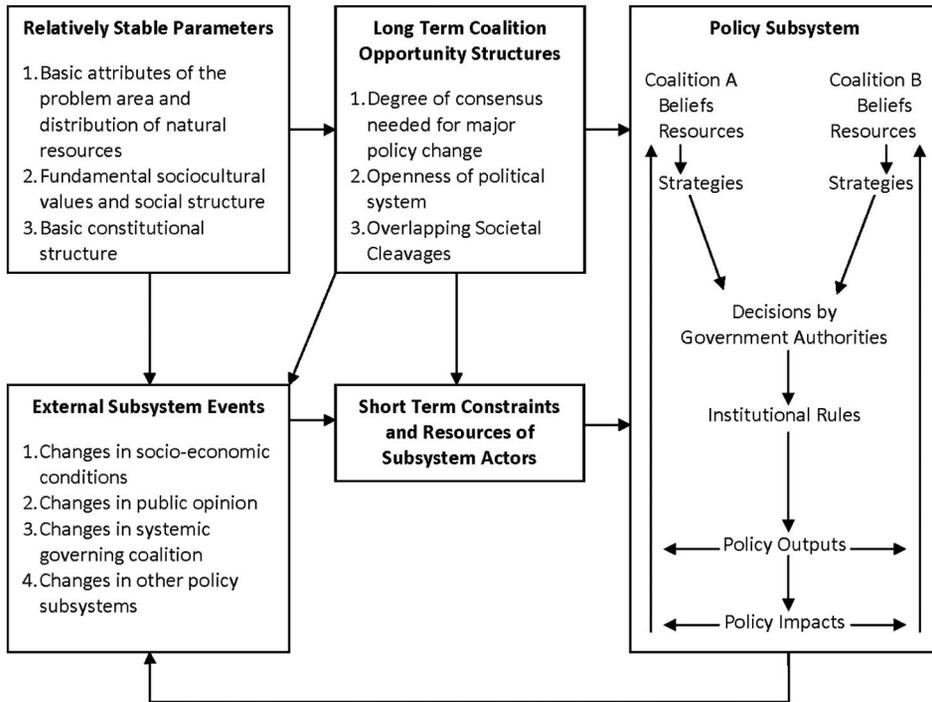


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of the Advocacy Coalition Framework.
Source: Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, and Ingold (2017).

Compared to other models that seek to explain China's policy changes by focusing on agenda setting (e.g., X. Zhu, 2008) or activities and ideas of specific policy actors (e.g., Mertha, 2009; Teets, 2018; X. Zhu, 2013), the ACF has the potential to provide original insights into the policy processes in China because it captures the ongoing interactions around policymaking, the political use of technical information, conflicting or coordinated beliefs, and strategies of actors inside and outside the government in response to environmental changes.

The ACF supports three theoretical emphases.³ The first involves advocacy coalitions, which consist of policy actors who share policy core beliefs and coordinate their behavior. The policy core beliefs around which policy actors coalesce are part of a three-tiered belief system. Policy core beliefs tend to be subsystem-wide in scope, fairly stable, and include policy-relevant priorities, perceptions of problems, and general policy solutions. More fundamental value orientations can be found in deep core beliefs that are very resistant to change and apply to more than one policy subsystem. Being more specific and narrow, secondary beliefs relate to the instruments for realizing policy core beliefs and are the least resistant to change. The ACF posits several hypotheses about coalitions. These hypotheses generally state that, when policy core beliefs are disputed, policy subsystems will develop two or more stable coalitions over time, that these coalitions will likely compromise on the secondary aspects (e.g., means) rather than the policy core aspects (e.g., goals) of public policies, and that government officials might show more moderate positions than their interest group allies.

The second theoretical emphasis relates to policy-oriented learning, that is, enduring alterations to belief systems and subsequent behavior. Policy-oriented learning is one of the intermediate steps that link external shocks to policy changes. Four sets of factors are expected to affect the occurrence of learning: level of conflict, institutional structures of the setting, source of the stimuli, and attributes of the policy actor. The ACF hypotheses generally state that within-coalition learning will more likely occur than cross-coalition learning, intermediate levels of conflict are conducive for learning, and brokers can facilitate learning between coalitions.

The third theoretical emphasis is policy change (or lack of policy change), which can be explained by advocacy coalitions' activities (e.g., negotiated agreements), policy-oriented learning, and exploitation of internal or external changes. Major policy changes are defined as changes in the core aspects of the policies underlying government programs (e.g., changes in major goals). Minor policy changes are changes in the secondary aspects of government programs (e.g., means of achieving goals). As policy core beliefs resist change, the ACF hypothesizes that a major policy change is less likely to occur when the advocacy coalition that instated the program remains in power.

A review of ACF applications in Western democracies found that most identified one or more advocacy coalitions (Pierce et al., 2017). However, few studies have discussed whether coalitions have stable membership (Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Pierce et al., 2017; Weible et al., 2009).⁴ Some of these studies have identified a number of conditions conducive to two or more coalitions in Western democracies that might not exist in nondemocratic systems. First, elected officials, societal groups, and competing political parties are often coalition members (Nohrstedt, 2011; Payan, Lewis, Cousineau, & Nichol, 2017), and might not exist or exist in lower numbers in nondemocratic systems. Second, democratic elections often lead to changes in the governing coalition, which affect both the likelihood and political resources of opposition members (Meijerink, 2005; Nohrstedt, 2011). Third, opposing coalitions with limited resources often mobilize public support (e.g., calling for a popular vote or to protest) to exert pressure on governments (Fischer, 2014; Weible, 2005), which is unlikely when political voices are repressed. Last, democratic political systems make it possible for minority coalitions to obtain governing power, acquire resources, contest the dominant coalition's beliefs, open up access venues, and participate in cross-coalition discussions (Albright, 2011; Winkel & Sotirov, 2011).

Previous reviews, primarily based on studies of Western democracies, have found that policy-oriented learning and external events have more often been identified as pathways to policy change than internal events and intercoalition negotiations (Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Pierce et al., 2017; Weible et al., 2009). Studies have also found that minority coalitions could hardly bring about policy change without exploiting external events (Meijerink, 2005; Nohrstedt & Weible, 2010). In some case, opposing coalitions can use veto powers to block policy changes (Ingold & Varone, 2011).

Considerations for Applying the ACF to China

When applying ACF's three theoretical emphases to countries that are not Western democracies, we need to consider the differences and changing natures of alternative political systems and the variation across policy subsystems within a political system (Henry, Ingold, Nohrstedt, & Weible, 2014; Scott, 2012). In particular, different political systems and policy subsystems require different degrees of consensus for policy change, and vary in the number of decision-making venues and their accessibility, and these factors affect the resources and strategies adopted by advocacy coalitions (Gupta, 2014; Ingold & Varone, 2011).

To apply the framework to China's authoritarian political system, several presumptive considerations emerge. One consideration involves the impact of rapid changes in China's country-wide characteristics (i.e., its relatively stable parameters) on stability of advocacy coalitions. Stability of advocacy coalition is important because it concerns how coalition membership, actors' beliefs, strategies, and subsystem resource distribution might change or remain unchanged over a long period of time in response to external and internal changes and what are the structural opportunities or constraints that will affect policy stability and change (Jenkins-Smith, 1991; Meijerink, 2005; Pierce, 2011). Due to rapid social and economic transition, some relatively stable parameters in the ACF, such as fundamental social cultural values (Wong, 2016) and basic constitutional and political structures (T. Huang, 2013), have not been stable in China over the last four decades. Political constraints for ENGOs have loosened (Li, Lo, & Tang, 2017; Zhan & Tang, 2013). Think tanks have mobilized private resources to influence public policies (Teets, 2018; X. Zhu, 2013). The commercialization of the news media and the increasing use of the Internet have provided opportunities for citizens to influence government agendas (Gang & Bandurski, 2011). Given these changes, we expect to find new policy beliefs emerging and new actors becoming involved in China's policy processes. In addition, changes in relatively stable parameters may also cause external changes that change coalition actors' policy beliefs (policy-oriented learning) and/or destabilize coalition membership (defection), resulting in policy change.

The first consideration of applying the ACF to China is expressed in the first expectation: Given China's rapid social and economic changes, actors and beliefs of advocacy coalitions within a subsystem tend to be unstable over periods of time.

Another consideration is the channeling and dampening of political conflicts. In the typical ACF scenario, policy actors would feel threats from opponents and mobilize into coalitions that remain stable over extended periods of time. In China, policy conflicts and competing coalitions within and outside the fragmented bureaucratic system exist (Mertha, 2009). However, such conflicts are often resolved by higher level officials' endorsement of one coalition over another (Hammond, 2013; Han et al., 2014). Open conflicts, especially popular and disruptive resistance against state policies, are often repressed by the government (Cai, 2008; Li, Liu, & O'Brien, 2012). The central government recently strengthened the regulatory and institutional framework for censoring online space (Creemers, 2017). The formation and maintenance

of advocacy coalitions led by non-state actors are often hampered by government control of citizen participation in politics (He, 2011; Heberer, 2009; Wei Li, 2012).

The second consideration of applying the ACF to China is expressed in the second expectation: In China's centralized political setting, there will be limited or no competition between advocacy coalitions, and there will be weak or no opposition to the dominant coalitions backed by powerful governmental actors.

The Chinese authoritarian political system might also inhibit public discourse, analytical debates, and the open exchange of information and argumentation. Coupled with government control over decision-making venues and subsystem resources (Zhan & Tang, 2013), Chinese policy subsystems would likely place limits on the diversity of policy ideas (C. Li, 2017, pp. 233–238). Subsystem actors may also refrain from challenging the deep core and policy core beliefs that are translated into policies and programs by the centralized state. One possible impact of authoritarianism on policy subsystems in China compared to more open political systems would be the stifling of policy-oriented learning, which would limit its role in policy change. The higher level Party leaders have often found it hard to obtain credible information about societal problems from lower level governments (Y. Huang, 2002), and hence have tended to overlook policy problems for extended periods (Chan & Zhao, 2016). Although public analytical debates and policy-oriented learning may be constrained, experts have evaluated and analyzed the ideas and policies in the Chinese political system (C. Li, 2017; X. Zhu, 2013). Thus, there might be a good amount of learning within the "black box" of decision making among China's elite experts (Li & Wong, 2019; S. Wang, 2011).

The third consideration of applying the ACF to China is expressed in the third expectation: When Chinese government inhibit public analytical debates, policy-oriented learning would be stifled, and there will be more within-coalition learning than learning between competing coalitions (if any).

If learning in China mostly entails within-coalition learning, then we would expect minor changes in the instruments for achieving policy core goals. Indeed, there is strong evidence that China's one-party state has been constantly innovating its policy instruments (Heilmann, 2011; Zhu & Zhao, 2018). The fourth expectation of applying the ACF to China is the following: Given more within-coalition learning than intercoalition learning in China, there will be more frequent minor policy changes than major policy changes.

Similarly, building off of the second and third expectation above, we would then expect the following fifth expectation: Given limited intercoalition competition, weak or no opposing coalition, more within-coalition learning in China, policy-oriented learning, external events and internal events (or their combination) will be more frequent pathways to policy change than negotiated agreement.

Apart from theoretical considerations, there are methodological challenges to overcome in applying the ACF to China. Similar to previous reviews, we shall investigate whether researchers develop common methods of data collection and analyses which are necessary to test hypotheses and make comparison with cases from other governing systems.

Data and Methods

We followed the PRISMA approach to conduct this review. The approach provides a 27-item checklist to document the review methods. The checklist enhances the transparency, accuracy, and completeness of systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Liberati et al., 2009). The PRISMA approach has guided review studies in public administration (Bouwman & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2016; Moyson, Raaphorst, Groeneveld, & Van de Walle, 2017; Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015; de Vries, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2016).

Using a coding framework drawn from previous reviews, this study analyzed ACF applications in China and indirectly compared them to studies that applied the ACF to other governing systems.

The coded categories included the following:

- Basic article information, such as title, full citation, year, and journal of publications;
- Policy subsystem topical scope and geographical scope;
- Whether the studies identify relatively stable parameters;
- Theoretical foci of coalition, learning, policy change, or other, whether the studies use theories other than the ACF, and what these other theories were;
- Methods of data collection, such as questionnaires (target population, sample size, and response rate), interviews (number), content analysis (time span, source), observation, focus group, documents, etc.;
- Whether the studies tested hypotheses and what the tested hypotheses were;
- Whether the coalitions were identified (the number and names of identified coalitions), and three tiers of coalition beliefs (if studied), stability of coalitions (how long the coalitions existed, defection of coalition members), and science members of coalitions;
- Whether there was learning within a coalition and between coalitions, and the presence of learning brokers along with whether there were changes of belief systems at the deep core, policy core, and secondary levels;
- Whether there was policy change and, if so, what types of policy change, what were the pathways to policy changes (learning, external, internal, negotiation, etc.); and
- Strengths and weaknesses of the studies and whether the study improved the ACF.

To identify the articles, we used the Chinese keywords “*changyi lianmeng*,” “*changdao lianmeng*,” and “*zhichi lianmeng*”⁵ in the China Academic Journal Database of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) Net to search for all of the Chinese journal articles that apply the ACF to study China’s policy processes.⁶ The first author and a research assistant separately read the first 26 articles found by the “*changyi lianmeng*” keyword. We excluded articles that did not mention the ACF literature, that applied ACF to study policy processes outside China, and that mentioned the ACF in theoretical discussions only. Based on these criteria, the research assistant then conducted the rest of the search. We identified and coded 57 Chinese articles from the 2,518 articles found by the search. We applied the same searching processes to the Distinguished Master Theses Database and Doctoral Theses Database, and coded 18 Chinese master’s and doctoral theses drawn from the 1,349 theses (Appendix).

We used the English keywords “Advocacy Coalition Framework” and “China policy processes” to search scholar.google.com for studies that applied the ACF to China’s policy processes. Using the same criteria used when searching the CNKI Net, we identified six articles published in peer-reviewed journals from the 9,800 articles and books produced by the search. In total, this review included 81 studies, including 75 Chinese and 6 English studies. Most of the studies were published after 2010. The first Chinese language application was published in 2006 and the first English language application was published in 2012 (Figure 2).

The coding was conducted separately by the first author and one research assistant. To ensure intercoder reliability, disagreement about coding was discussed and reconciled.⁷

Results

Basic Overview of the Applications

Table 1 summarizes some of the basic coded items from the 81 ACF applications in China. All six English applications focus on environmental policy subsystems, such as river dam projects, waste management, climate change policies, and environmental protection policy. Many Chinese applications study nonenvironmental policy subsystems, such as education, urban/economic development, population, labor, public health, and public administration.

Similar to existing global reviews,⁸ most (53) of the applications study subsystems at the national level, while 8 study subsystems at the regional or provincial level, and 17 at the local level. As in the review of Swedish studies (Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016), a few applications (3) study subsystems spanning multiple levels of government.

Table 1 shows that relatively stable parameters are discussed in about half of the applications: 41 discuss the characteristics of stable parameters, including the basic attributes of the problem area, distribution of natural and social resources,

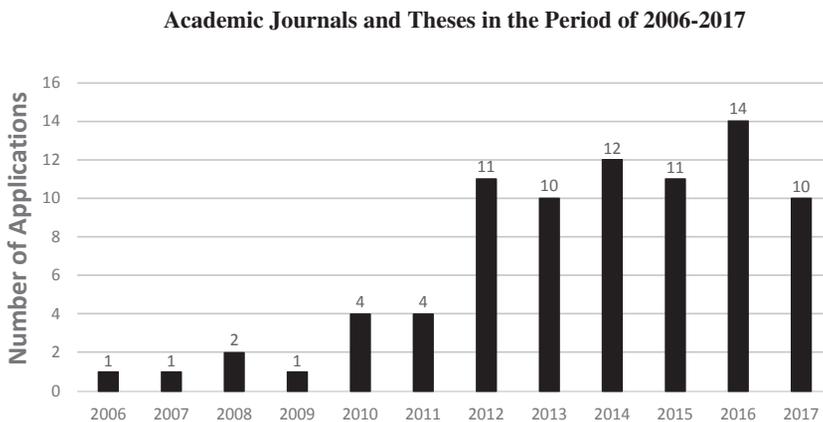


Figure 2. The Number of ACF Applications Published in Chinese and English Academic Journals and Theses in the Period of 2006–17.

Table 1. Summary of the 81 ACF Applications in the Chinese Context

Number of applications focusing on topical categories per subsystem	
Environment = 22	
Education = 19	
Urban/economic development = 17	
Labor = 5	
Population = 9	
Public administration = 2	
Public health = 2	
Other = 5	
Number of applications by level of government ^a	
Local level = 17	
Regional/provincial level = 8	
National level = 53	
Mixed = 3	
Number of applications incorporating relatively stable parameters	
No = 40	
Yes = 41 →	Reported relatively stable parameters across applications ^b
	Fundamental social cultural values = 23
	Basic attributes of the problem area = 15
	Basic constitutional/political structure = 12
	Fundamental social structure = 11
	Distribution of social resources = 10
	Fundamental Economic structure = 11
	Basic legal framework and tradition = 8
	Distribution of natural resources = 6
Number of different data sources across applications ^b	
Documents = 81	
Interview = 14	
Questionnaire = 4	
Content analysis = 15	
Observation = 3	
Focus group = 0	
Number of applications that tested hypotheses	
Yes = 9	
No = 72	

^a“Local level” includes city-level, district-level, or county-level governments. The “Mixed” category includes both national and lower level governments.

^bAny of these application may report more than one relatively stable parameter or data source.

fundamental social-economic structure and cultural values, basic constitutional structure, legal framework, and Chinese traditions.

Some applications describe how rapid economic reforms have destabilized the “relatively stable parameters” in China, such as economic marketization, political structural change, and changing social values. These changes facilitated the emergence of new coalition actors and beliefs, and increased private resources, knowledge, and public spaces for advocacy coalition to influence policy processes (Feng & Xiong, 2013; T. Huang, 2013; Stensdal, 2014; Tang, 2014; Wang & Tan, 2013; Wong, 2016).

Table 1 summarizes the sources of data for the ACF studies of China. Like applications in other systems (Jang et al., 2016; Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016; Weible et al., 2009), most studies of China do not use rigorous methods to collect

and analyze data. All of the applications analyzed documents, including government policy decisions, policy plans, speeches of leaders, official statistics, and news articles (T. Huang, 2013; Wei Li, 2012; Xu & Xie, 2014). Like previous studies based on fieldwork in China, these studies included internal government documents that can only be obtained through investigators' requests (Thøgersen, 2006).

Fourteen applications use interviews, and four applications use questionnaires as data source. Fifteen applications use content analysis and three use observational data collection techniques. The use of informal interviews and participant observation to collect data is likely under-reported in the reviewed studies. Requiring interviewees in China to sign a consent form may deter their participation in research projects (Liang & Lu, 2006). Researchers often get useful information (such as criticism of a government policy and the political system) through anonymous conversation with informants that are not audio-recorded (Solinger, 2006). The use of internal documents and informal interviews can enhance the validity of research in an authoritarian context, but sacrifice its transparency.

Most ACF applications (72 out of 81) do not formally test hypotheses (Table 1). Nevertheless, the theoretical foci of many applications involve traditional ACF theoretical themes. Of the 81 applications, 79 focus on coalitions; 68 on learning; 75 on policy change;⁹ and 63 on the trio of coalitions, learning, and policy change.

Twenty-one applications discuss other reasons to apply the ACF. Some seek to test the applicability of the ACF in Chinese political context (Q. Li, 2013; Wei Li, 2012) whereas others test its applicability to a specific policy subsystem (Feng & Xiong, 2013; C. Wang, 2010). Some focused on the roles of policy forum and policy brokers (Tian & Wei, 2015; Wang & Bai, 2014), conditions for forming new beliefs and new coalitions (T. Huang, 2013), conditions for forming consensus between competing coalitions (Zhao & Xie, 2016), etc. Others aim to identify new solutions to improve policies (Cai & Gao, 2017; Su, 2016; Wei, 2015; Xu & Meng, 2017).

While they are not shown in Table 1, 21 applications use other theoretical approaches to analyze policy changes. Five studies apply the game theory; 5 apply the multiple stream theory; and 14 use other theories, such as neo-institutionalism, the policy-stage model, fragmented authoritarianism, the epistemic framework, disruptive innovation theory, policy network theory, and policy learning theory.

Findings About Advocacy Coalitions

Figure 3 summarizes the results on the number of coalitions and their respective stability. An open question about the ACF in China is whether advocacy coalitions even exist. Of the applications that document one or more coalitions, 6 identify 1 coalition, 56 identify 2 coalitions, 13 identify 3 coalitions, and 3 identify 4 coalitions.¹⁰ Sixty-five applications identify competing or opposing coalitions.¹¹ These results unequivocally show that there are competing advocacy coalitions in China's authoritarian political system.

How many coalitions were identified?	Were coalitions stable or unstable?
One coalition: 6	Unstable: 3
Two coalitions: 56	Stable: 26
	Unstable: 8
Three coalitions: 13	Stable: 5
	Unstable: 4
Four coalitions: 3	Stable: 3

Figure 3. Number of Coalitions and their Reported Stability.

Notes: Some applications did not report the stability or instability of the coalitions.

Among the studies, 73 use beliefs to identify coalitions. Most of these applications (69) identify advocacy coalitions based on policy core beliefs, 46 examine deep core beliefs, and 46 examine secondary beliefs.

One of the major premises of the ACF is that coalitions will maintain some degree of stability over time, especially when policy core beliefs are threatened. The stability or instability of coalitions is examined in 49 of the reviewed studies. Of these, 34 find stable coalitions and 15 find unstable coalitions. In terms of stability and number of coalitions, we find that instances with just one coalition are observed as being unstable whereas instances with four coalitions are stable. There is also a strong propensity for instances of two coalitions to be more stable ($n = 26$) than unstable ($n = 8$). Among the applications ($n = 65$) that identified competing or opposing coalitions, there are more instances of coalition stability ($n = 31$) than instability ($n = 9$), suggesting that coalition stability is also highly associated with intercoalition competition in China.

As shown in Figure 3, 15 studies report unstable coalitions. Notably, nine studies identify coalition defection. In one instance, changes of relatively stable parameters such as economic marketization, do create imperative for Chinese governments to adapt policy beliefs and make policy changes in response to new problems quickly, but also find defection of coalition members after these policies are implemented (Wei, 2015). In another instance, changes of social and economic structure cause change of private training market structure (external change), which increases resources for the nongovernmental coalition and pressures some members of the governmental coalition to learn and change position from opposing to supporting the establishment of teachers' certification system (Liu & Li, 2017).

Different from expectation 1, despite changes of some relatively stable parameters in some cases, competing advocacy coalitions tend to be stable. One explanation is that both coalitions in competition have connection to governmental actors who

provide the former resources to stick to their policy beliefs (Han, Zhao, & Chen, 2016; W. Huang, 2012; C. Wang, 2016). Likewise, different from part of expectation 2, 65 applications identified competing or opposing coalitions. They also reported what political activities of policy actors engage in coalition competition, including bottom-up initiations:

1. Scholars and experts conduct government-commissioned policy research or self-initiated investigations, provide government policy recommendations, publicize research findings and policy problems through (social) media and professional forums, and sign petitions to appeal for policy change (Feng & Xiong, 2013; Hao, Wang, Su, & Qin, 2016; W. Huang, 2012; Su, 2016).
2. The media expose policy problems, publish investigative reports, and disseminate the interests and views of affected social groups (Cui, Xu, & Jiang, 2015; Han et al., 2016; Xu & Huang, 2012).
3. Citizens make complaints and petitions to the governments, organize protests and demonstrations when governments fail to respond to their complaints, and publicize problems and express their views through social media (Tian & Wei, 2015; Wang, Yu, & Tan, 2013; Wang & Tan, 2013).
4. NGOs investigate problems; publish research reports; mobilize public attention, business resources, and volunteers' participation to solve problems; promote policy beliefs; educate the public; and provide information and policy suggestions to governments (Wang & Li, 2016; Zou & Bao, 2015). Occasionally, they raise concerns with the international communities and mobilize technical and financial resources from international allies (Tian & Wei, 2014).
5. Government actors mobilize experts, interest groups, and media; release policy-related information; conduct policy experimentation to promote their policy beliefs; and censor public debates (W. Huang, 2012; K. Zhang, 2014; P. Zhu, 2014).

Although this list of political activities identified in the reviewed studies overlaps somewhat with the political activities identified in ACF studies of Western democracies (e.g., Weible & Heikkila, 2016), it does not include many activities found in more open political systems, such as taking legal action against administrative agencies (e.g., lawsuits) and protests that challenge the Party's rule.¹³ In China, various stakeholders, ranging from citizens to lower level governments, being excluded from policy-making processes, disagree with the top-down policy decisions by not complying with policy requirements, staging demonstrations, delaying policy implementation, and fabricating performance data (Cui et al., 2015; T. Huang, 2013; K. Zhang, 2014).

The list of political activities also shows a pattern of advocacy strategies that is somewhat different from the pattern in Western democracies. In Western democracies (e.g., Switzerland, the United States, Denmark), inside strategies include activities that seek to access policymakers and influence politics directly, such as preparing submissions to the government, participating in government consultations, and sitting on government boards; outside strategies include activities that exert pressure on policymakers from the outside (e.g., mobilizing public opinion

and influencing media agenda). Inside strategies are often used by business or private interest groups, and outside strategies are often used by public interest groups (Betzold, 2013; Binderkrantz, 2008; Kollman, 1998). A recent study showed that nonprofit organizations will use both inside and outside strategies to advocate for policy change (Gen & Wright, 2018).

The pattern observed in China is that inside advocacy strategies are not only adopted by private interest groups (W. Huang, 2012; F. Liu, 2007; Xu & Huang, 2012), but are often used by scholars and public interest NGOs whose activities include preparing submissions and petitions to administrative agencies, lobbying members of political consultative conferences and representatives of People's Congress, and publicizing their work in the state-sponsored media (Cui et al., 2015; Feng & Xiong, 2013; Han et al., 2016). When adopting outside strategies such as voicing concerns and disseminating information through (social) media, engaging in policy debates in open forums, and organizing public participation, nongovernmental actors in China often adopted muted strategies, such as legitimizing these activities by obtaining government sponsorship, referring to laws and official discourses, and refraining from challenging the government's decision-making authority; this pattern is possibly another indicator of a repressive political system (Han et al., 2014; T. Huang, 2013; Tian & Wei, 2014, 2015; Wang & Li, 2016; Zou & Bao, 2015).

Although there are no directly comparable statistics, the reviewed studies point to some important features of China's policy subsystems that probably differ from those of Western democracies. First, public sector actors are frequently identified coalition actors.¹⁴ Second, scholars and experts, most of whom are employed by state-sponsored organizations in China (X. Zhu, 2013), are mentioned as coalition actors in 52 applications. Third, members of the public, such as students, peasants, parents, residents, drivers who are affected by the policy, are mentioned as coalition actors by 44 applications, but none of the applications discuss any associations or self-organization of these groups. Fourth, public interest NGOs and international organizations only appear as coalition actors in 15 and 6 applications, respectively. Fifth, other nonstate actors who are often identified as coalition actors include business stakeholders (30 applications), media reporters/journalists/public intellectuals (30 applications), and the general public (24 applications). In the absence of the freedom to self-organize and given state control over legal authority, associational resources, and access to venues (Cai, 2008; Guo, 2013; Wanxin Li, 2012; Wang & Zhang, 2015; Zeng, 2013), policy subsystems are often dominated by top-down actors such as government officials and scholars.

In summary, the reviewed ACF applications have identified competing advocacy coalitions and bottom-up initiation of coalition political activities, which provide some evidence suggesting an increasingly pluralistic policy processes in China. Partially confirming expectation 2 (limited coalition competition or conflicts), some coalition political activities and advocacy strategies are more muted compared with those found in Western democracies.

Findings About Policy-Oriented Learning and Belief Change

The second theoretical emphasis in the ACF involves policy-oriented learning. Figure 4 summarizes the results of this review. Of the 81 applications, 68 observe learning¹⁵ and 3 do not observe. Of the 68 applications that observe instances of learning, 58 report learning within a coalition, and 50 report learning between coalitions.

Unexpectedly (according to expectation 3), we find that instances of within-coalition learning are nearly as frequent as instances of between-competing-coalition learning.

One explanation is that competing coalitions tend to learn from each other when higher level governments organized or endorsed the learning (i.e., learning brokers) (Dong & Chen, 2015; Hao et al., 2016; Hong, 2014; Tian & Wei, 2015; Wei & Zhang, 2008; Zhen, 2017).

Another explanation is that the coalition aligned with the government (the governing coalition) often learns from opposing coalitions and adjusts their beliefs (Fang, 2011; Xu & Xie, 2014). This is surprising because the governing coalition in authoritarian regimes controls considerable resources compared to the opposing coalitions. Some applications explained that learning and belief change of the governing coalition were often subject to the combined influence of international communities and domestic pressure to provide public goods and respond to interest groups' demands (e.g., Ren, 2012; Wei & Zhang, 2008). The governing coalition not only learned from technical information but also from procedural problems, such as implementing policy incrementally, listening to people's views, and consulting stakeholders (Han et al., 2014; Wei & Zhang, 2008; Wong, 2016; Zhou, 2010).

The ACF posits that brokers are an important mechanism for learning within and, especially, between coalitions. In the applications to China, we see a similar frequency of brokers being present in both within- and between-coalition learning. Twenty-nine studies identify brokers as facilitators of within-coalition learning (and seven do not find a broker). Twenty-seven studies identify brokers as facilitators of between-coalition learning (and 10 do not find a broker). Most of learning brokers

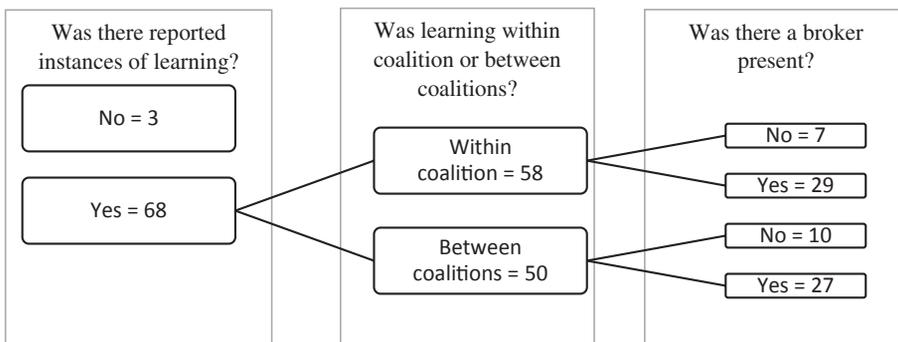


Figure 4. Instances of Learning Within and Between Coalitions.

Notes: Of the 81 applications, 10 do not discuss learning and 41 did not discuss brokers. There is also one application with mixed results regarding learning within and between coalitions.

are close to the government. Eighteen studies identify government actors (such as CCP, Supreme Court, Supreme Procuratorate, local governments, etc.) as learning brokers. Sixteen of the applications identify scholars and experts, most of them are state-sponsored, as learning brokers. Other learning brokers include service providers (three applications) and members of the People's Congress and People's Political Consultative Conference (one application).

Similar to learning, an important focus in the ACF is belief change. The ACF posits that the tendency for belief change will be highest for secondary beliefs, moderate for policy core beliefs, and lowest for deep core beliefs. Figure 5 summarizes the results of this review. Of the 71 studies that report belief changes, 52 identify changes in secondary beliefs, 37 report changes in policy core belief, and 5 report changes in deep core beliefs (Figure 5). The findings confirm the ACF hypothesis that deep core beliefs are the most stable, policy core beliefs are somewhat resistant to change, and secondary beliefs are the most likely to change over time (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999, pp. 121–122; Weible et al., 2009). Major disputes over deep core beliefs that apply to multiple policy subsystems are the importance of economic efficiency versus social equity or justice, the importance of national interests versus local or individual interests, priority of individual citizens' freedom and rights versus public interests, and role of government in the provision of public goods (e.g., Feng & Xiong, 2013; Liu, 2011; Wang & Li, 2016; Wang, Zhao, & Tan, 2012).

Findings About Policy Change

The third theoretical emphasis under the ACF involves policy change, for which Figure 6 summarizes this review's findings. Of the 81 applications, 72 focus on policy changes, including 37 that report major policy changes and 32 that report minor policy changes.¹⁶ The percentage of studies that distinguish between major and minor policy changes is higher than studies of other countries (Pierce et al., 2017). In

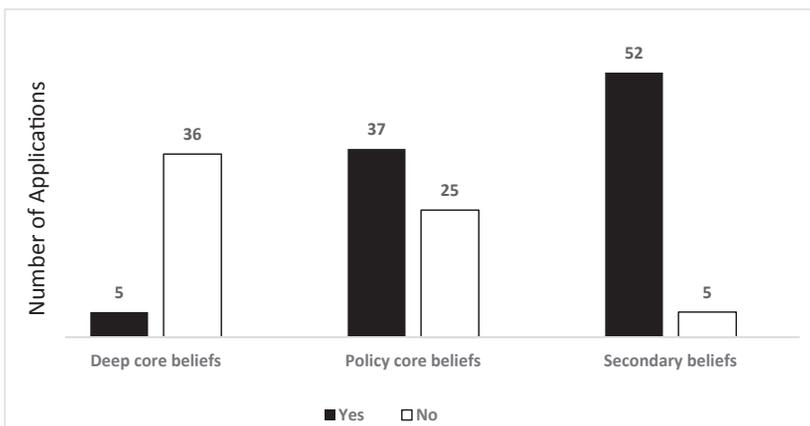


Figure 5. Frequency of Change in Beliefs by Belief System Tier.

Notes: Of the 81 applications, 10 do not discuss any form of belief change. Of those that discuss belief change, 40 do not discuss deep core belief change, 19 do not discuss policy core belief change, and 24 do not discuss secondary belief change.

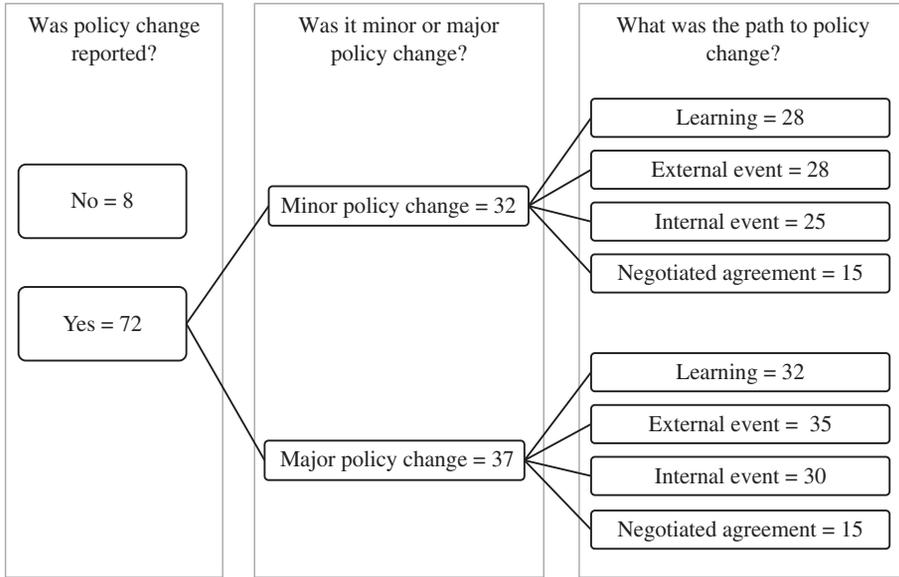


Figure 6. Reported Instances of Major and Minor Policy Change and Paths.
Notes: The numbers indicate the number of applications. Any instance of policy change reported in an article may include more than one reported path. Two instances of policy change are not reported as a major or minor policy change. Another instance of policy change reports a major policy change in one subcase and a minor policy change in another subcase. These three instances are excluded from Figure 6 when reporting the instances of major policy change and minor policy change.

one study, the policy change is described as “non-linear and complex” (Zhang, 2016, p. 191). The findings are surprising given expectation 4. One explanation is the top-down and bottom-up dynamics among different levels of governments in China.

In China, higher levels of governments often set the deep core and policy core components (i.e., the goals) of public policies. Local governments have discretion to adjust the secondary policy measures (i.e., the means) in accordance with local contexts (Jiang, 2013; Z. Wang, 2014). Higher level of governments make major policy changes, or change policy goals, after feedback from local policy implementation, mediating conflicts between competing coalitions and adapting to external changes (e.g., Han et al., 2016; Tian & Wei, 2015). Different Party leaders, being career officials promoted from within the government system, are well informed of both public controversies and within-government internal policy debates (e.g., Tian & Wei, 2015; Zhen, 2017). These leaders make major policy change under the influence of different policy orientation of various governmental actors and their external allies (e.g., Feng & Xiong, 2013; Stensdal, 2014). Although this feedback pattern and the territorial nested subsystems also occur in federally structured democratic countries (e.g., the United States or Switzerland) (Kuebler, 2007; Sabatier, 1998; Zafonte & Sabatier, 1998), in China’s authoritarian system, government directives and policy goals more often stem from the top and carry more force; however, there is flexibility in implementation at the subnational and local levels, where officials devise the means for achieving policy goals set by higher level governments and provide a range of feedback (Wang & Zhang, 2015; Wei & Zhang, 2008).

With respect to the pathways for policy change, the findings show that all four pathways are identified. As expected according to the fifth expectation, policy-oriented learning, external events, and internal events are frequently reported as sources of policy change. Sixty applications identify policy-oriented learning as a source of policy change. Sixty-three applications identify external events, such as changes of public opinion (Tian & Wei, 2015), changes in other policy subsystems (Cui et al., 2015), changes in socioeconomic conditions (Xu & Huang, 2012), natural disasters, policy ideas, and experiences from other countries and the international community (Guo, 2013; Han et al., 2014; Wanxin Li, 2012; Wei Li, 2012), as factors of policy change. Some of these events are caused by changes of relatively stable parameters, such as social and economic structural changes (e.g., W. Huang, 2012; Xu & Huang, 2012). Fifty-five applications report internal events as factors of policy change, such as failures to implement policies (Wong, 2016) and failures to solve policy problems (C. Wang, 2010).¹⁷

As expected by the fifth expectation as well, compared with other pathways, fewer applications (30) report negotiated agreements as a factor of policy change, and all of these applications except one report negotiated agreement in combination with other factors as pathways to policy change. This shows that in policymaking in China, it is often difficult to form consensus among various government agencies and different levels of government because of their different policy orientations (Jiang, 2013; Wang & Zhang, 2015; Wang et al., 2012). In many cases, negotiation and learning between competing coalitions are imposed or led by governmental actors out of concern of policy failures or regime stability (Han et al., 2014; Tian & Wei, 2015; Wang & Tan, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

This review shows that the ACF helps us understand China's policy process and that applications in China also have implications for conceptual and explanatory components of the ACF. This section summarizes the results and offers more detailed observations and insights from the review. We also compare the results of this review of China's policy processes to the patterns often found in typical Western democracies.

This meta-review of 81 applications *confirms the ACF hypotheses about the existence of stable coalitions in policy subsystems, the occurrence of change across the ACF's three-tiered belief system, and the credence of the ACF's four pathways to policy change.*

This meta-review, however, suggests—at least in the applications analyzed here—some unexpected results. These unexpected findings have implications for studying China's policy processes and future study of the ACF.

First, competing coalitions and bottom-up initiation of coalition political activities can be found in an authoritarian and transitional China. One explanation is that changes in relatively stable parameters have affected coalition opportunity structures (institutional factors), and offer exploitive opportunities for changes in policy subsystems in China. Such forces for change are hardly mentioned or assumed to be constant in Western democracies, yet these forces are not unique to China.

Other scholars applying the ACF have observed similar phenomena and important role of institutional factors, including applications to South Korea (Jang et al., 2016), post-communist countries (e.g., Andersson, 1999; Sloboda, Szabo-Gilinger, Vigers, & Simicic, 2010) and non-Western democracies (e.g., Gupta, 2014). This review reinforces some of these findings and points to the need to assess the variation of relatively stable parameters and their impact on institutional factors (coalition opportunity structure) that enable changes in policy subsystem.

Second, competing coalitions tend to be stable in some cases, despite changes in relatively stable parameters. One explanation is that advocacy coalitions in competition have connection with governmental actors and control political resources in China. Previous studies have pointed out that some coalition resources are more important than others (Nohrstedt, 2011; Smith, 2000). Our review confirms these observations and further suggests that in authoritarian contexts, coalition actors' affinity with governments may stabilize subsystem resource distribution and coalition membership despite changes in relatively stable parameters.

Third, policy-oriented learning is as likely to occur between coalitions as within a coalition. One explanation is that competing coalitions tend to collaborate to learn from each other especially when higher level governments are the learning brokers in China. This is consistent with the earlier observations by Sabatier (1993) that elected officials/ chief executives and high civil servants (governmental actors) in Western democracies also tend to be policy brokers (p. 27). This review further suggests that learning brokers with varied political resources (i.e., higher level decision-making authority) may have different impact on inter-coalition learning.

Fourth, the governing coalition can learn and adjust beliefs despite their dominant role in the subsystems. One explanation is that the governing coalition in China, in order to maintain regime stability, is often subject to the combined influence of other policy subsystems or even other political systems, and domestic pressure to provide public goods and respond to interest groups' demands. ACF's applications in democratic systems have found that impacts from other policy subsystems and other political systems can be a major source of changes in policy subsystems (Albright, 2011; Howlett & Ramesh, 2002; Nohrstedt & Weible, 2010; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2009). This review suggests a possible mechanism, i.e., through domestic public/group pressure and concern for regime stability, for governing coalitions' learning in authoritarian context.

Last, major policy changes take place as frequently as minor policy changes despite government control of public analytical debates. One explanation is that, in China, higher levels of government officials, being promoted from within the government system, are often well informed of both internal and public policy debates and will make major policy changes under the influence of different policy orientations of local governmental actors and their allies. Although this feedback pattern also occurs in federally structured democratic countries (e.g., the United States or Switzerland) (Kuebler, 2007; Sabatier, 1998; Zafonte & Sabatier, 1998), in China, top-down actors' policy goals at the top level often carry more forces. This suggests that future ACF applications deal with different patterns of intergovernmental dynamics when explaining policy changes in different political systems.

The review also finds that consistent with China's authoritarian political context, some Chinese scholars have recommended that policy processes are made more inclusive to nongovernmental stakeholders (Hao et al., 2016; Tang, 2014; Wang & Tan, 2013; Zhao & Xie, 2016). In China, there are limited intercoalition competitions or conflicts showed by muted coalition political activities¹⁸ and less frequently negotiated agreement than policy-oriented learning, external events, and internal events (or their combination) as pathways to policy change. One explanation is that the policy subsystems in China tend to be dominated by government officials and government-sponsored experts (top-down policy actors). In policymaking, it is often difficult to form consensus among top-down actors. When learning and negotiated agreements do take place, the governmental actors are often the brokers for the consensus-making out of concerns for regime stability. By contrast, in Western democracies, negotiations are often driven by other factors such as hurting stalemate, leadership skills of mediators, and so on (e.g., Ingold, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). The implication for future ACF applications is that characteristics of intercoalition competition and negotiation may vary across political systems.

Although not explicitly proposed in any of the reviewed studies, some suggest that changes in the political leadership of the governing coalition can bring about policy changes (e.g., Han et al., 2014; Stensdal, 2014). Political leaders and the governing coalitions in authoritarian political systems often remain in power for long periods of time and thus affect many aspects of the subsystem affairs, including coalition resources, policy-oriented learning, and policy change.¹⁹ However, gaps remain in our understanding of such governing coalitions, especially in instances when learning and belief change occurs therein. Future application of the ACF to authoritarian political systems should focus more on the stability and dynamics of the governing coalitions.

Given the inside advocacy strategies adopted by nongovernmental actors in many of the reviewed studies, and the importance of governmental actors in coalition coordination, we expect to find many instances of centralized coordination structure dominated by governmental actors in authoritarian political systems.²⁰ Yet, this postulation remains mostly unexplored.²¹ There is a need for further research on the coordination structure of advocacy coalitions in authoritarian political systems.

Compared to other studies about China's policy processes, ACF applications not only identified governmental and nongovernmental actors who are involved in policy processes, but also what political activities these actors engage in to promote their policy beliefs in forming and maintaining competing coalitions. Although policy studies about China in aggregate may reach similar conclusions, adopting common vocabulary and theoretical foci under the ACF enables us to make a meaningful comparative analysis across policy subsystems. For instance, ACF applications have distinguished major policy change from minor changes, and identified multiple explanatory factors to changes (or lack of changes). By doing so, these applications provide a sophisticated picture of different policy processes in different policy subsystems in China, and offer a comparative perspective to explain why learning sometimes does not always drive policy change in China (Chan & Zhao, 2016;

Heilmann, 2011). Using the ACF, China's subsystem dynamics can also be compared to those in other political systems.

Applications of the ACF to China have revealed the complex policy processes in China's transition and authoritarian context. Some applications have identified the variation of some relatively stable parameters and their impact on subsystems. Others have also found the existence of advocacy coalitions that used muted strategies to influence public policy and the important role of top-down policy actors in learning, reconciling conflicts, and building alliances. These findings enrich the discussions about how authoritarian governments in China, through interacting with other policy actors, adapt to rapid external changes since the 1980s (Heilmann & Perry, 2011; S. Wang, 2011).

China's context itself has been evolving and arguably has become more authoritarian recently (Qiang, 2019). Such shifts and changes in the policy processes and politics in China definitely suggest a dynamic system and one that is difficult to draw generalizable lessons from a sample of ACF applications. Given such dynamism in China's policy processes and politics, we need to temper the insights in this paper. Yet, one of our conclusions remains that the ACF can provide a shared platform for researchers to capture the changing context and evolving features of policy processes over time.

Additionally, our findings remain speculative because the state control over Chinese scholarship and government censorship may result in the underreporting of the subsystem conflicts or understudying politically sensitive issues (e.g., religious policy).²² Researchers may be primarily examining issues with lower levels of political sensitivity, and it is possible that these cases have competing advocacy coalitions and major policy changes, whereas the vast majority of cases involve only one coalition or no coalitions and minor policy changes. To guard against such biases, efforts should be made to study and publish a more comprehensive population of policy subsystems both inside and outside China. Future studies should also use more systematic data collection methods to measure the key concepts of the ACF and ensure more rigorous testing of hypotheses.

Supporting the application of the ACF in China is not to elevate this one framework over others. Indeed, the Chinese political system is just as complex as any other and multiple theoretical approaches shall be employed to gain a more nuanced depiction of it. We encourage scholars to share their knowledge and insights, to learn from each other, and to develop an understanding of policy processes that is both tailored to localized contexts and generalizable. Only by creating both localized and generalized knowledge can we form the foundation for moving the science of policy processes forward and contribute to a better society.

Wei Li is an assistant professor in the Department of Government and Public Administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.

Christopher M. Weible is a professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado, Denver, USA.

Notes

1. One notable exception is Jang, Weible, and Park (2016) who showed, through a review of more than 60 ACF applications, the utility of the ACF for understanding South Korea's democratic system.
2. We acknowledge that there are many different categorizations of democracies, such as presidential and parliamentary democracies or, majoritarian and consensus democracies (Schmidt, 2002). In this paper, Western Europe includes Britain, countries in the Continental Europe such as Germany and France, and Scandinavian countries. See Knutsen (2004).
3. For more complete descriptions and elaborations of the three areas of emphases and statements of the hypotheses, see Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017).
4. A global review by Pierce et al. (2017) found that 17 percent of applications from 2007 to 2014 identified coalition stability. A global review by Weible et al. (2009) found that 16 percent from 1987 to 2006 identified coalition stability. A review of 25 Swedish applications identified six studies that discussed coalition stability or defection (Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016). Although reviews by Pierce et al. (2017) and Weible et al. (2009) include studies of areas outside Western democracies, most focus on European and North American countries.
5. All three keywords refer to "advocacy coalitions" in Chinese.
6. Although their impact factors as reported by the CNKI vary, all but two of these journals are published by state-sponsored academic associations, research institutes or higher education institutions (such as universities, colleges, and local and national academies of social sciences). Of the 57 Chinese journal articles, 36 are published in journals included in two reputable academic indices released by Beijing University (Chinese Core Journals) and Nanjing University (CSSCI), six English journal articles are published in academic journals included in the Social Science Citation Index.
7. For example, some papers mentioned the stable parameters when introducing the ACF but did not analyze them in the empirical section of the paper. In our coding criteria, these papers are coded as "N" (Not Studied) for the "stable parameters." As another example, we coded the presence of a coalition as a "Y" (Yes) when either the belief coalition and/or the coordination of the coalitions is discussed.
8. The global review (2007–2014) by Pierce et al. (2017) found that 86 of the 175 applications they examined are about national governments, 28 are about local governments, and 39 are about state or regional governments.
9. The review by Pierce et al. (2017) found that 89 percent of the reviewed studies identified at least one coalition, but only 42 percent analyzed either policy change or stasis, and 29 percent identified policy-oriented learning. The review of 25 applications in Sweden found that 16 identified coalitions, 16 explained policy change, and 7 studied policy-oriented learning (Nohrstedt & Olofsson, 2016).
10. One application, not included in Figure 3, identified six coalitions but did not report coalition stability. In total, 90 percent of the reviewed studies identified two or more advocacy coalitions. The result is similar to the review by Pierce et al. (2017) (75 percent) and the review by Weible et al. (2009) (91 percent).
11. The competing or opposing coalitions are identified based on their competing or opposing beliefs. The number is only 65, because in some studies the coalitions do not oppose each other. For example, Francesch-Huidobro and Mai (2012) identified three pro-environment coalitions in Guangdong.
12. Such activities are mostly illegal and are called "casual walking (sanbu)" by media and scholars (Tian & Wei, 2015; Wang, Yu, & Tan, 2013).
13. Protests that challenged state policy were reported by a number of studies (e.g., T. Huang, 2013; Wong, 2016).
14. Central government actors were mentioned as coalition actors in 30 applications; local government actors in 36 applications; 31 applications mentioned public sector members in general as coalition actors such as Party officials, representatives of political consultative conferences and People's Congress, and so on; 13 applications mentioned members of government-sponsored public service organizations as coalition members. None of these actors are democratically elected, or belong to any competing political parties.
15. This percentage (84 percent) is much higher than the one (29 percent) reported by Pierce et al. (2017).

16. In comparison, the review by Pierce et al. (2017) found that only 12 percent of the studies identified either major or minor policy changes.
17. In comparison, the review by Pierce et al. (2017) found that 29 percent of the applications identified policy-oriented learning, 28 percent identified external events, 6 percent identified internal events, and 14 percent identified intercoalition negotiation as sources of policy change. The review of 25 applications in Sweden also found that policy-oriented learning (11), external events (14), and internal shocks (2) were frequently reported as sources of policy change.
18. This is in contrast to the findings by Gupta's (2014) application of the ACF to India, which found that coalitions will adopt confrontational strategies such as violent rallies when decision-making authority is concentrated and access to decision making is restricted.
19. For example, Singapore (Ortmann, 2012) and Vietnam (Vuong, Ali, Baldwin, & Mills, 2012).
20. For example, feminist movements in Morocco and Iran (Moghadam & Gheytanchi, 2010).
21. None of the reviewed studies about coalitions analyzed the network structures.
22. Studies show that the Chinese government tended to ban publications about mass protests and controversial events that threaten the Party's rule or national unification (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013; Wong & Kwong, 2019).

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Appendix

Chinese Articles and Theses of ACF Applications

Searching Keywords	No. of Articles Searched	No. of Articles Coded	No. of Theses Searched	No. of Theses Coded
"Changyi lianmeng" (倡议联盟)	300	25	96	5
"Changdao lianmeng" (倡导联盟)	422	15	215	9
"Zhichi lianmeng" (支持联盟)	1,796	17	1,038	4
Total	2,518	57	1,349	18