

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's signature anti-corruption campaign has attracted attention because of its high-profile investigations and arrests, but it has also advanced government policies in areas beyond corruption control. This article discusses the campaign's recent developments and how the party leadership has used it as an all-purpose tool for governing during Xi's second term. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2017, the campaign has become more institutionalized and has brought down even more high-ranking officials. At the same time, the Xi administration has used anti-corruption work to support a wide range of recent policies and directives, such as the party's anti-poverty and anti-crime initiatives. The administration's sweeping inspections of party and state institutions have been integral to the anti-corruption campaign, but they have also aimed to improve general policy implementation, support organizational reforms, and ensure loyalty to Xi and the Chinese Communist Party. Governing through the campaign in this way has helped advance Xi's political vision, in which a strong and disciplined party leads the country and penetrates every area of China's state and society.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's signature anti-corruption campaign has persisted for almost a decade since its inception in late 2012 and it shows few signs of ending soon. The campaign has stunned domestic and foreign audiences with its unprecedented parade of high-profile arrests and televised confessions by officials accused of corruption. The campaign brought down several "big tigers" in its early years, including former Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission Zhou Yongkang, former vice-chairmen of the Central Military Commission Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong, former director of the General Office of the Chinese Communist Party Ling Jihua, and vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Su Rong. The best-known case internationally is that of Bo Xilai, the party boss in the important Chongqing municipality and at the time a contender for promotion to the Politburo Standing Committee, who was expelled from the party and charged with corruption and other abuses of power in 2013. Since then, the campaign has brought down hundreds of high-ranking officials, including dozens of high-ranking military officers and heads of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The number of anti-corruption investigations into officials at all levels rose sharply after the 18<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in November 2012, and it totaled almost 2.7 million officials by the arrival of the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 2017.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “党的十九大举行第一场记者招待会 介绍加强党建工作和全面从严治党有关情况,” 新华网, 2017年10月19日, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/19/c\\_1121828330.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/19/c_1121828330.htm)

Many commentators have discussed how Xi has used the anti-corruption campaign to consolidate his personal power within the regime, most obviously by investigating political rivals for corruption.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, anti-corruption investigations at the elite level have proven to be selective, avoiding Xi's family and close allies.<sup>3</sup> However, as others have noted, this complex campaign also has a much broader governance function. In addition to tackling the enduring problem of corruption throughout the Chinese state, the campaign has also advanced government policies in areas beyond corruption control. This article discusses the campaign's recent developments and how the party leadership has used it as an all-purpose tool for governing during Xi's second term (October 2017 to the present) as general secretary.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section reviews how the anti-corruption campaign has become institutionalized and has expanded since the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. The second section analyzes how the Xi administration has used the campaign to support a variety of recent policies and directives, while the third section examines how discipline inspections combine anti-corruption work with supervision of other party, state, and SOE functions. Finally, the fourth section discusses how governing through the anti-corruption campaign supports the realization of Xi's highly authoritarian vision of how China should be ruled.

### **Institutionalization and Expansion**

In recent years, the party leadership has acted to strengthen the institutional foundations of the anti-corruption campaign, most significantly by establishing the National Supervision Commission (NSC, 国家监察委员会) in March 2018. The NSC is a massive state body that integrates the anti-corruption functions of multiple government organizations, including the Ministry of Supervision (监察部), the Bureau of Corruption Prevention (预防腐败局), and the Anti-Corruption Administration of the Supreme People's Procuratorate (最高人民检察院反贪总局). The NSC joined the previous leading anti-corruption body, the party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI, 中央纪律检查委员会), to become "one team with two names" (两块牌子一套人马) working out of the same physical office.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Simon Denyer, "China's Leader, Xi Jinping, Consolidates Power With Crackdowns on Corruption, Internet," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2013, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinas-leader-xi-jinping-consolidates-power-with-crackdowns-on-corruption-internet/2013/10/01/fd8ceeee-1eb7-11e3-9ad0-96244100e647\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chinas-leader-xi-jinping-consolidates-power-with-crackdowns-on-corruption-internet/2013/10/01/fd8ceeee-1eb7-11e3-9ad0-96244100e647_story.html); "China's Xi Purging Corrupt Officials to Put Own Men in Place: Sources," Reuters, April 17, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-corruption-xi-insight/chinas-xi-purging-corrupt-officials-to-put-own-men-in-place-sources-idUSBREA3F1UT20140417>; Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *Chinese Politics in the Era of Xi Jinping: Renaissance, Reform, or Retrogression?* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Minxin Pei, "How Not to Fight Corruption: Lessons from China," *Daedalus* 147, No. 3 (2018): 219–20.

<sup>4</sup> "六个问题带你读懂监察委到底是啥?," 人民网: 中国共产党新闻网, 2018年3月26日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0326/c64371-29889434.html>

Official media summarize the main reasons for the NSC's establishment as: "to limit all public power within the cage of the system" and to better supervise "unclear areas" where there are overlapping bureaucratic mandates or enforcement gaps.<sup>5</sup> Crucially, the NSC goes beyond the CCDI by policing the wrongdoings not only of the 91.9 million party members but also of the tens of millions of state employees, many of whom are not party members.<sup>6</sup> The NSC also fills enforcement gaps between the party and government. One enforcement gap, for example, involved non-party village committee members who violated discipline or broke the law but whose behavior did not rise to the level of a crime. While this kind of infraction would not be subject to the narrow category of "government punishment" (政纪处分), it is now possible for the NSC to apply the more broadly defined "administrative punishment" (政务处分).<sup>7</sup> The six levels of administrative punishment are: a warning, recording a misdeed, recording a large misdeed, demotion, dismissal, and (permanent) expulsion.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Supervision Law that established the NSC further empowers investigators to find and use evidence of misconduct. Previously, the investigatory findings of discipline inspections could not be used directly as evidence in trials.<sup>9</sup>

The campaign's institutionalization can also be seen in the promulgation or revision of various laws, regulations, and party codes meant to strengthen corruption control. These include the "Rules of the Chinese Communist Party for Disciplinary Action" (中国共产党纪律处分条例) revised in July 2018, the "Regulations for Chinese Communist Party Accountability" (中国共产党问责条例) revised in September 2019, and the Law on Governmental Sanctions for Public Employees (公职人员政务处分法) passed in June 2020.<sup>10</sup> For example, the 2018 revisions to

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<sup>5</sup> 姚茜, "杨亚澜, 为什么有了纪委, 还要设立监委?" 人民网, 2019年11月12日, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1112/c429373-31450715.html>

<sup>6</sup> To be clear, the Supervision Law authorizes the NSC to supervise every state employee who is "exercising public power" (行使公权力), which is some unstated percentage of China's roughly 50 million (as of 2016) state employees (公共财政供养人员, not the narrower category of 公职人员). See: "中国公务员总数首次披露: 716.7万人," 新华网, 2016年06月21日, [www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-06/21/c\\_129077723.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-06/21/c_129077723.htm); "如何判断一名'履行公职的人员'是否属于监察对象——必须聚焦是否'行使公权力'这个关键," 中国纪检监察杂志, 2018年6月12日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201806/t20180612\\_173629.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201806/t20180612_173629.html); Neil Thomas, "Members Only: Recruitment Trends in the Chinese Communist Party," MarcoPolo, July 15, 2020, <https://macropolo.org/analysis/members-only-recruitment-trends-in-the-chinese-communist-party/>

<sup>7</sup> "政务处分与政纪处分、党纪处分有什么不同?" 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年7月7日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/hdjl/nwwd/202007/t20200707\\_221513.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/hdjl/nwwd/202007/t20200707_221513.html)

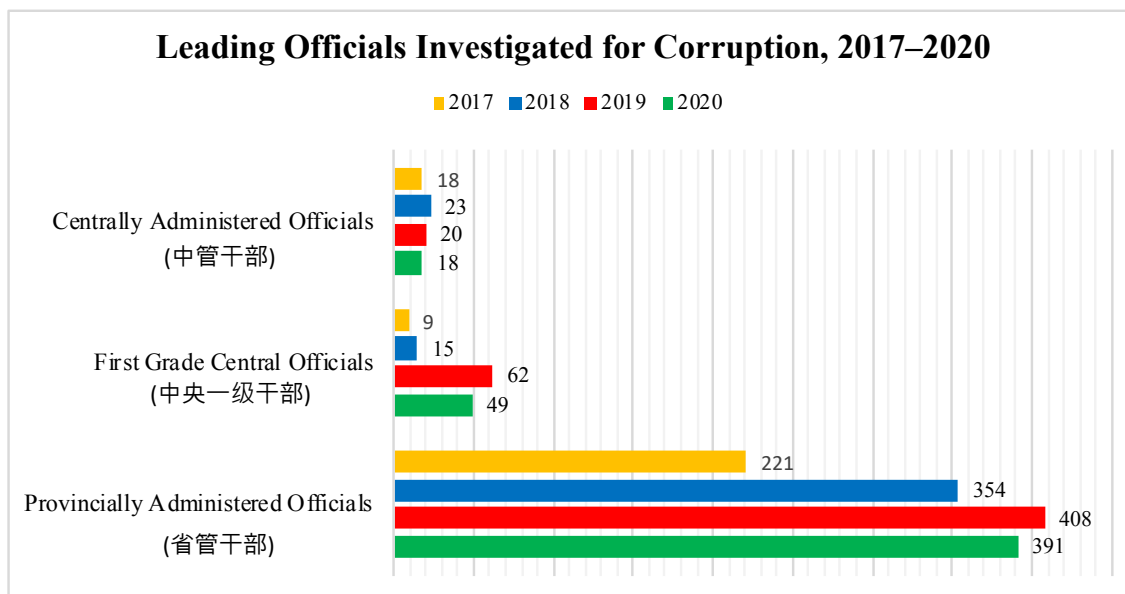
<sup>8</sup> "解读政务处分法|准确把握政务处分种类和适用规则," 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年7月6日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202007/t20200706\\_221407.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202007/t20200706_221407.html)

<sup>9</sup> 姚茜, "杨亚澜, 为什么有了纪委, 还要设立监委?" 人民网, 2019年11月12日, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1112/c429373-31450715.html>

<sup>10</sup> Although "administrative punishment" as a legal category had a basis in the 2018 Supervision Law, it was later formalized in this law, which took effect in June 2020. See "中华人民共和国

the important “Rules for Disciplinary Action,” clarifying which activities are considered corrupt, seek to strengthen enforcement. In the revised Rules, Article 13 further restricts which state-sector jobs ex-party members can hold, Article 27 enumerates what constitute fireable offenses, Article 76 clarifies rules on nepotism and hiring regulations, and Article 94 forbids insider trading on the stock market. Several revisions make officials more accountable for offenses committed by their subordinates (Articles 9, 50–51, 125). The revised Rules also integrate the new NSC into anti-corruption work.<sup>11</sup>

In tandem with the campaign’s institutionalization, anti-corruption enforcement has expanded during Xi’s second term, though this growth may finally be leveling off. Xi’s declaration in December 2018 that “the struggle against corruption has won an overwhelming victory” was not an endpoint for the campaign but rather a call to continue a successful initiative.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, a record 621,000 people were punished for corruption or other disciplinary violations across the country. The 2019 total was slightly lower, but still higher than that in any other year during the campaign so far.<sup>13</sup> The year 2019 was also the high-water mark for anti-corruption investigations into high-ranking officials (and virtually all who are investigated are eventually prosecuted).  
Figure 1:



Sources: “2019 年反腐败 ‘成绩单’ 亮眼,” 中国共产党新闻网, 2020 年 01 月 03 日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0103/c64371-31533341.html>; “疫情防控年反腐败不停

公职人员政务处分法,” 全国人民代表大会, 2020 年 6 月 20 日, <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202006/2ce1931bad6d479192a0072ee67b9da9.shtml>

<sup>11</sup> “《中国共产党纪律处分条例》修订前后对照表,” 新华网, 2018 年 8 月 27 日, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-08/27/c\\_1123332297.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-08/27/c_1123332297.htm)

<sup>12</sup> “巩固发展反腐败斗争压倒性胜利,” 人民日报, 2019 年 1 月 16 日, [http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2019-01/16/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20190116\\_4-01.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2019-01/16/nw.D110000renmrb_20190116_4-01.htm)

<sup>13</sup> “2019 年全国纪检监察机关处分 58.7 万人 包括 41 名省部级干部,” 新华社, 2020 年 1 月 17 日, [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/17/content\\_5470136.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/17/content_5470136.htm)

歇,” 2021 年 1 月 18 日, [http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/index/content/2021-01/18/content\\_8408997.htm](http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/index/content/2021-01/18/content_8408997.htm).

High-ranking officials investigated since the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress include four Central Committee members, six officials with the military rank of at least major-general, and two former provincial party chiefs, Qin Guangrong (Yunnan province) and Zhao Zhengyong (Shaanxi province).<sup>14</sup>

The party has also turned up the pressure on corrupt officials who have fled abroad by making improvements to its “SkyNet” operation (“天网”行动), which began in April 2015. In August 2020, the NSC reported to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress that SkyNet is more effective due to new initiatives to combat the use of offshore accounts and to build up a team of experts to cooperate with international law enforcement.<sup>15</sup> Between 2014 and June 2020, Chinese agents coaxed or coerced 7,831 suspects back from over 120 countries and recovered roughly \$2.9 billion.<sup>16</sup> Official media praise SkyNet's deterrent effect, noting that the number of party members fleeing the country each year is declining.

### Anti-Corruption Supports Other Policy Initiatives

The campaign's increased institutionalization and expanded enforcement in recent years have allowed it to provide significant support to government policies in issue areas beyond corruption control.

At Xi's personal instruction, the NSC and the CCDI have worked to ensure that the government meets its promised goal of eliminating absolute poverty in China by the end of 2020.<sup>17</sup> In 2019, a special round of national inspections focused on corruption and related problems in anti-poverty programs.<sup>18</sup> From January to November 2019, more than 99,000 people were disciplined for corruption related to poverty alleviation efforts. Secretary of the CCDI and Chairman of the Central Leading Group for Inspection Work Zhao Leji argued that inspection work and supervision of the party help ensure the “six guarantees” (六保) of economic development.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> High-ranking officials (高级干部) are generally considered to be those at the “deputy ministerial or deputy provincial level” or higher. See, for example: “中共中央保密委员会关于高级干部保守党和国家秘密的规定,” 中国共产党新闻, 1990 年 12 月 13 日, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/71380/71387/71590/4855405.html>

<sup>15</sup> “加强反腐追逃追赃法治化、规范化——聚焦全国人大常委会首次听取国家监委专项工作报告,” 新华网, 2020 年 8 月 10 日, [www.xinhuanet.com/2020-08/10/c\\_1126350419.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-08/10/c_1126350419.htm)

<sup>16</sup> “首次！全国人大常委会听取国家监委专项工作报告,” 中国共产党新闻网, 2020 年 8 月 11 日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0811/c64371-31817756.html>

<sup>17</sup> “金佳绪, 十九大后, 习近平反腐不歇脚,” 新华网, 2018 年 1 月 19 日, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-01/19/c\\_1122281826.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-01/19/c_1122281826.htm)

<sup>18</sup> “中央脱贫攻坚专项巡视整改进展情况全部公开,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, <http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/sjdelxszg/>

<sup>19</sup> “赵乐际：充分发挥巡视监督作用 有力促进全面建成小康社会,” 中央纪委监察部网站, 2020 年 5 月 9 日,

Unsurprisingly, official pronouncements have rejected suggestions that the anti-corruption campaign in any way conflicts with the country's economic development plans.<sup>20</sup>

In January 2018, the party's Central Committee and the State Council launched a nationwide anti-crime campaign targeting gangsters and connections between criminal organizations and officials, as discussed in a previous issue of *China Leadership Monitor*.<sup>21</sup> The Central Committee and the State Council instructed the NSC and the CCDI to treat anti-crime work as an important component of anti-corruption work for the duration of the campaign.<sup>22</sup> At the intersection of the two issues is the problem of local officials who, because they are corrupt, provide a "protective umbrella" (保护伞) to criminal activity in areas under their purview.<sup>23</sup> In July 2020, a new campaign promising a "Yan'an-style rectification" (延安整风) began to root out disloyalty and indiscipline among "political-legal personnel" (政法队伍), such as police, judges, and prosecutors.<sup>24</sup> Here too, branches of the NSC and the CCDI in various localities have launched investigations into offenders who were not "completely loyal, completely clean, and completely reliable."<sup>25</sup>

In January 2019, the Third Plenary Session of the 19<sup>th</sup> CCDI announced that the finance industry, where corruption is admitted to be especially common, would be a major focus for the year.<sup>26</sup> Official media explained that anti-corruption work in this area contributes to structurally reforming the finance sector, reducing financial risk, and building the oft-promised "moderately

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[http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/19zyxsgz/yw\\_19zyxsgz/202005/t20200515\\_217373.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/19zyxsgz/yw_19zyxsgz/202005/t20200515_217373.html)

On the six guarantees, see: 杨志勇, "从'六稳'到'六保', 释放了哪些重要信号," 人民网: 人民论坛, 2020年6月28日, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0628/c40531-31760654.html>

<sup>20</sup> "姚树洁: 对'反腐并不会影响经济发展'的科学解析," 人民网-人民论坛, 2015年03月30日,

<http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2015/0330/c112851-26771590.html>

<sup>21</sup> See Sheena Chestnut Greitens, "The Saohe Campaign, Protection Umbrellas, and China's Changing Political-Legal Apparatus," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 1, 2020, <https://www.prcleader.org/greitens-1>

<sup>22</sup> "中共中央 国务院发出《关于开展扫黑除恶专项斗争的通知》," 新华网, 2018年1月24日, [www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2018-01/24/c\\_1122309773.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2018-01/24/c_1122309773.htm)

<sup>23</sup> "77668人因涉黑涉恶腐败和'保护伞'问题被处理," 新华社, 2020年8月19日, [www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2020-08/19/c\\_1126388625.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/legal/2020-08/19/c_1126388625.htm)

<sup>24</sup> "全国政法队伍教育整顿试点吹响集结号," 司法部政府网, 2020年7月30日, [http://www.chinalaw.gov.cn/news/content/2020-07/30/zfyw\\_3253482.html](http://www.chinalaw.gov.cn/news/content/2020-07/30/zfyw_3253482.html)

<sup>25</sup> Chris Buckley, "'Drive the Blade In': Xi Shakes Up China's Law-and-Order Forces," *New York Times*, August 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/20/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-communist-party.htm>; "全国政法队伍教育整顿试点工作启动 深查执法司法腐败整治六项顽瘴痼疾," 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年7月9日,

<http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0709/c64371-31777086.html>

<sup>26</sup> "习近平在十九届中央纪委三次全会上发表重要讲话," 中华人民共和国中央人民政府, 2019年1月11日, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-01/11/content\\_5357069.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-01/11/content_5357069.htm)

prosperous society” (小康社会).<sup>27</sup> Reducing financial risk is one of “three tough battles” (三大攻坚战), alongside ending poverty and curbing pollution, that the party leadership has emphasized since late 2017.<sup>28</sup> Dozens of high-ranking officials in the financial sector, including at least three “centrally administered” officials (中管干部) and 35 first-grade central government and provincial-level officials (中央一级及省管干部), came under investigation in 2019.<sup>29</sup> In January, prosecutors announced investigations into several former top executives of subsidiaries of Huarong Asset Management Co., a major state-controlled asset management company that had already been rocked by the arrest of its president Lai Xiaomin in 2018.<sup>30</sup> In another notable case, Hu Huaibang, former chairman of the China Development Bank, was convicted in July 2020 of receiving \$12 million in bribes and engaging in other corrupt exchanges.

In 2019 and 2020, the NSC and the CCDI stepped up their oversight of companies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the gargantuan infrastructure development push that is deepening China’s involvement in the 140 countries that have signed on as of January 2021.<sup>31</sup> A common criticism of the BRI in many of these countries has been that China is exporting corruption.<sup>32</sup> Recognizing this, the NSC and the CCDI hosted a new sub-forum on clean governance at the annual Belt and Road Forum in April 2019. At the forum, Deputy Secretary of the CCDI Li Shulei opened his speech by arguing that “cleanliness is a real necessity for the BRI to progress steadily and go far.”<sup>33</sup> Fourteen countries and international organizations signed the “Clean Silk Road Beijing Proposal” (廉洁丝绸之路北京倡议) to strengthen cooperation among Chinese and local parties involved in BRI infrastructure projects, such as local banks, anti-

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<sup>27</sup> “让党员干部从害怕被查处到敬畏党纪国法,” 中国共产党新闻网, 2020年08月19日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0819/c64371-31828486.html>

<sup>28</sup> “三大攻坚战,” 人民网:中国共产党新闻网, 2017年9月08日, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0908/c413700-29524031.html>

<sup>29</sup> “2019年打虎不停 中国金融反腐进入关键期,” 多维新闻, 2019年12月31日, <https://www.dwnews.com/中国/60162935/2019年打虎不停中国金融反腐进入关键期>

<sup>30</sup> “China Prosecutors Order Arrest of Four Ex-Executives at Huarong for Bribery,” Reuters, January 22, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-corruption-china-huarong/china-prosecutors-order-arrest-of-four-ex-executives-at-huarong-for-bribery-idUSKCN1PG13X>

<sup>31</sup> “已同中国签订共建‘一带一路’合作文件的国家一览,” 中国一带一路网, 2019年4月12日, <https://www.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/xwzx/roll/77298.htm>

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Will Doig, “The Belt and Road Initiative Is a Corruption Bonanza,” *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/15/the-belt-and-road-initiative-is-a-corruption-bonanza/>; Jonathan E. Hillman, “Corruption Flows Along China’s Belt and Road,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 18, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/corruption-flows-along-chinas-belt-and-road>; T. Wing Lo, Dina Siegel, and Sharon I. Kwok, eds., *Organized Crime and Corruption Across Borders: Exploring the Belt and Road Initiative* (London: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>33</sup> “凝聚共识, 以廉洁保障‘一带一路’稳致远——廉洁丝绸之路分论坛记者观察,” 中国纪检监察杂志, 2019年5月1日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201905/t20190501\\_193300.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201905/t20190501_193300.html)

corruption agencies, and businesses.<sup>34</sup> The CCDI announced that, following a pilot program in Laos in 2017, more anti-corruption inspectors would be embedded in major BRI projects in foreign countries, most of which are led by SOEs.<sup>35</sup>

After the Chinese government finally acknowledged that Covid-19 was spreading out of control in early 2020, the NSC and the CCDI began to supervise local efforts to stop the spread. For example, in September 2020, the anti-graft agencies reported that 1,112 cadres in Beijing had been disciplined for failing earlier in the year to do their duties and fulfill their responsibilities in the fight against Covid-19.<sup>36</sup> The agencies' local branches monitored factories producing face masks and other health equipment, enforced new restrictions on travel and social contact, and took complaints directly from citizens about cases of local officials taking advantage of the health crisis for private gain or ignoring citizen complaints.<sup>37</sup> As the virus receded, inspection teams supervised the “return to work and return to production” (复工复产) in many areas.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, the CCDI launched new initiatives in 2020 to root out medical corruption and corruption related to land management and ownership issues, such as illegal construction on farmland.<sup>39</sup> Medical corruption is worrying for the party because ordinary citizens experience it directly. Party leaders call medical corruption a “chronic illness” that weakens implementation of the “Healthy China Strategy” (健康中国战略) that Xi first announced in October 2016. Reducing corruption in land management could potentially reduce rural unrest in many parts of China.

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<sup>34</sup> “廉洁丝绸之路北京倡议,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2019年4月26日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201904/t20190426\\_192942.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201904/t20190426_192942.html)

<sup>35</sup> “China to Tackle Corruption in Belt and Road Projects,” *Financial Times*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/a5815e66-a91b-11e9-984c-fac8325aaa04>

<sup>36</sup> “因疫情防控不力 北京 1112 人被处理,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年9月24日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202009/t20200924\\_226138.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202009/t20200924_226138.html)

<sup>37</sup> Michael Laha, “China’s Anti-Graft Body Joins the Fight to Control the Coronavirus Narrative,” Center for Advanced China Research, February 6, 2020, <https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2020/02/06/China%E2%80%99s-Anti-Graft-Body-Joins-the-Fight-to-Control-the-Coronavirus-Narrative>; “为战‘疫’干部撑腰鼓劲——吉林省纪检监察机关及时澄清涉疫情防控不实信访举报问题纪实,” 中国共产党新闻, 2020年3月26日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0326/c64371-31649044.html>

<sup>38</sup> “湖北省纪检监察机关深入一线严督实导,” 中国共产党新闻, 2020年4月3日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0403/c64371-31660754.html>; “适应疫情发展变化精准监督检查促央企防疫复工两手抓,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年4月10日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202004/t20200410\\_215080.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202004/t20200410_215080.html)

<sup>39</sup> “重点领域正风反腐观察深挖彻查医疗腐败,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年8月4日, [http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200804\\_223204.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200804_223204.html); “重点领域正风反腐观察紧盯工程土地领域权力运行,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年8月14日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200814\\_223734.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200814_223734.html); “中央纪委国家监委开展农村乱占耕地建房问题整治专项监督 严肃追究顶风乱建违建行为,” 中国共产党新闻网, 2020年8月7日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0807/c64371-31813687.html>



Local officials' seizure of private land or acceptance of bribes in return for allowing developers to undertake illegal construction projects has often inflamed public opinion. Party instructions are explicit that anti-corruption enforcement should focus on cases or areas where "the public has a strong reaction" (群众反映强烈) or "political and economic problems are intertwined" (政治问题和经济问题交织).<sup>40</sup>

## Inspections Combine Anti-Corruption Work With Other Goals

Throughout Xi's campaign, the party leadership has used sweeping inspections to combat corruption and to supervise a wide range of other party, state, and SOE functions. What do recent inspections reveal about how anti-corruption work has supported other governance tasks during Xi's second term? By examining publicly available post-inspection reports, I find that the party's Central Inspection Teams (CITs, 中央巡视组) have generally investigated and pressured target organizations to address four kinds of problems: 1) corruption and other disciplinary violations, 2) internal organizational or management problems, 3) weak implementation of the party's policies or directives, and 4) insufficient loyalty to Xi and to the Chinese Communist Party.

The CCP has a long tradition of sending teams of inspectors to local governments to gather information and enforce central directives, but Xi has leaned on this practice more than his predecessors and has empowered inspectors to an unusual degree in order to strengthen his anti-corruption campaign. In each year since 2013 the Xi administration has launched several national rounds of inspections; each inspection typically has dozens of targets, including provinces, cities, government bureaus, SOEs, and other important institutions. Inspection targets are not announced in advance, and repeat inspections ("回头看") are built into the process in every round to prevent complacency.<sup>41</sup> CITs conducted a total of 297 inspections during Xi's first term—3.6 times as many as they did during the previous five-year period (2008–2012). In one term, the Xi administration for the first time in CCP history achieved full inspection coverage of provinces and municipalities, central state agencies, key state-owned enterprises, central financial units, and centrally managed universities.<sup>42</sup> Not only have the scope and frequency of the inspections increased but the Xi administration has also taken steps to increase their effectiveness, such as by making it more difficult for local officials to block or influence the

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<sup>40</sup> "人民日报一线视角：向群众反映强烈的问题亮剑," 人民网, 2018年9月3日, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0903/c1003-30266936.html>; "从通报看十九大后落马贪官共同特点：不收敛不收手," 中国纪检监察报, 2019年1月3日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0103/c64371-30501002.html>

<sup>41</sup> "巡视'回头看'到底看什么?" 新华网, 2017年6月18日, [www.xinhuanet.com/2017-06/18/c\\_1121164690.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2017-06/18/c_1121164690.htm)

<sup>42</sup> "十八届中央巡视实现全覆盖," 中华人民共和国中央人民政府, 2017年6月23日, [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-06/23/content\\_5204677.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2017-06/23/content_5204677.htm); "党的十八大以来中央巡视工作综述," 中国共产党新闻网, 2017年9月29日, <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0929/c117092-29566664.html>

inspection teams.<sup>43</sup> Inspection teams are normally composed of agents from the CCDI, the Central Committee's Organization Department (中央组织部), the National Audit Office (审计署), and several other, lower-level organizations.<sup>44</sup>

“Inspections are a major part of developing internal party supervision,” explains *Qiushi* (求是), a leading party journal under the Central Committee. The inspection is like writing the “first half of an essay,” and the resulting reforms are the “second half of an essay.”<sup>45</sup> Inspections have reportedly uncovered clues that have led to more than one-half of the investigations against “leading cadres” (领导干部) under Xi.<sup>46</sup> Visits from inspectors can have swift and dramatic consequences, and thus they produce a great deal of fear among bureaucrats and businesspeople. Inspection teams are usually embedded in the target organization to gather information for about two months, but there are also more permanent arrangements. In January 2016, the CCDI reported that it had installed permanent disciplinary inspection teams in all 139 central party and state institutions.<sup>47</sup>

Reports from provinces, government bureaus, SOEs, and other institutions that undergo inspections shed light on inspection goals. The party committees of inspected institutions must produce public “Reports on Inspection Rectification Progress” (关于巡视整改进展情况的通报), which are usually released between 6 and 12 months after the end of an inspection. These post-inspection reports detail how the institution has reformed or will be reformed to address the various problems that the inspection uncovered. The reports typically lay out anywhere between 10 and 100 reform measures that the institution is taking, within which there may be details about specific actions that support each measure.

For example, consider the post-inspection report that the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (国务院国有资产监督管理委员会), a special commission of the State Council that oversees SOEs, published in March 2020.<sup>48</sup> After undergoing an inspection from March to June of 2019, SASAC published this lengthy report explaining how it had

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<sup>43</sup> Xuezhi Guo, “Controlling Corruption in the Party: China’s Central Discipline Inspection Commission,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 219 (2014): 597–624; Yukyung Yeo, “Complementing the Local Discipline Inspection Commissions of the CCP: Empowerment of the Central Inspection Groups,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, No. 97 (2016): 59–74.

<sup>44</sup> “你知道吗？原来巡视组不是纪委派来的,” 中央纪委监察部网站, 2016年1月5日, [http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201601/t20160105\\_139706.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201601/t20160105_139706.html)

<sup>45</sup> “坚决做好巡视‘后半篇文章,’” 求是网, 2018年10月24日, [www.qstheory.cn/llqikan/2018-10/24/c\\_1123608415.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/llqikan/2018-10/24/c_1123608415.htm)

<sup>46</sup> “十八大后打虎一半线索来自中央巡视组,” 新浪新闻中心, 2016年1月4日, <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2016-01-04/doc-ixnept3647129.shtml>

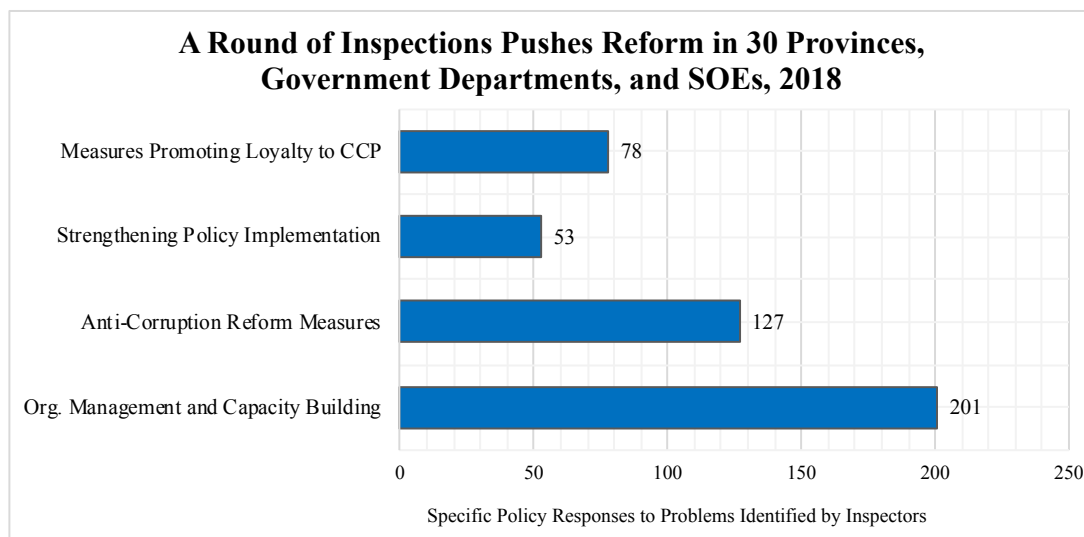
<sup>47</sup> “派驻监督在探索创新中实现全覆盖,” 中央纪委监察部, 2016年1月7日, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-01/07/content\\_5031209.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-01/07/content_5031209.htm)

<sup>48</sup> “国资央企统筹抓好巡视整改上下联动破解共性问题,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年3月24日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202003/t20200324\\_214128.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202003/t20200324_214128.html)

addressed or was in the process of addressing the inspection’s numerous pieces of “feedback.”<sup>49</sup> In response to one criticism that its work-style was overly bureaucratic with “a mountain of documents and a sea of meetings” (文山会海), SASAC claimed to have reduced outgoing paperwork by 45.4 percent, streamlined internal work assessments, and consolidated what were originally 50 information systems into one centralized data center for state-asset supervision data to be used by all central SOEs. Much of the back and forth between SASAC and the inspection team centered on the criticism that SASAC was mismanaging implementation of the Xi administration’s complex SOE reform program. But many other criticisms emerged as well, including regarding enforcement of Xi’s Eight-point Regulation (八项规定), which, focusing on regulating the culture and behavior of party members, has been implemented in connection with the anti-corruption campaign.<sup>50</sup>

To capture the relative weight of different kinds of problems that inspectors raised in a range of target institutions, I categorized all the measures reported in response to one round of national inspections, the First Round of Inspections Under the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee (十九届中央第一轮巡视) in 2018. The 30 target institutions for this round of inspections, mostly provincial governments, undertook a total of 459 measures.

Figure 2:



Data source: “十九届中央巡视工作专题,” 中央纪委监察部, <http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/19zyxsgz/index.html> (accessed September 1, 2020).

The distribution of these reform measures indicates the priorities of the inspections. In total, just under 30 percent of these reforms were directly related to corruption control. Nearly every target

<sup>49</sup> “关于十九届中央第三轮巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中共国务院国有资产监督管理委员会, 2020年3月20日, [www.sasac.gov.cn/n2588025/n2588119/c14106525/content.html](http://www.sasac.gov.cn/n2588025/n2588119/c14106525/content.html)

<sup>50</sup> “落实中央八项规定精神 习近平总书记这样说,” 中央纪委国家监委驻市场监管总局纪检监察组, 2020年7月15日, [www.samr.gov.cn/jjz/xxyd/shzysx/202007/t20200715\\_319714.html](http://www.samr.gov.cn/jjz/xxyd/shzysx/202007/t20200715_319714.html)

institution was identified as having problems and reported having made reforms in all four areas. The table below gives common examples of each kind of reform.

Of course, post-inspection reports should not be read uncritically. Institutions sometimes announce reform measures but then implement them only weakly or not at all. However, these reports do show how inspection teams, under instructions from the party leadership, are attempting to reform party and state institutions, thereby providing new empirical insight into the goals of the party leadership. Each of the four common categories of reform is explored briefly below.

Table 1:

<b>Common Reform Initiatives Prompted by the First Round of Inspections Under the 19<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, 2018</b>	
<b>Anti-Corruption Reform Measures</b> - Check Nepotism and Illegal Activity by Officials’ Family Members - Eradicate Corruption in Statistics and Fake Statistics - Stop Cadres from Protecting Gangsters and Criminals	<b>Org. Management and Capacity Building</b> - Strengthen Cadre Selection and Promotion - Fix the Problem of Cadres Not Working or Working Slowly - Focus on Grassroots Party Building - Improve Oversight of State-Owned Enterprises
<b>Measures Promoting Loyalty to the CCP</b> - Study Xi Thought and the Spirit of the 19 <sup>th</sup> Party Congress - Increase Ideological Education, “Democratic Life Meetings”	<b>Strengthening Policy Implementation</b> - Improve Implementation of the Anti-Poverty Campaign - Improve Implementation of the Economic Development Strategy

Post-inspection reports generally discuss progress in addressing any number of corruption-related problems raised by the inspection. Among the 31 measures discussed in a November 2018 report by Fujian’s provincial party committee, for example, there were anti-corruption measures addressing conflicts of interest involving family members of officials, the misuse of government-owned housing, statistical corruption, low-level officials providing “protective umbrellas” for criminals, corruption in local SOEs managed by a particular city, and other problems.<sup>51</sup> The progress report listed the numbers and ranks of several dozen family members of officials who were discovered to be holding government and business positions that created conflicts of interest with party or government work. Nine provincial-level cadres,<sup>25</sup> departmental-level cadres, and one division-level cadre were transferred. All provincial-level

<sup>51</sup> “中共福建省委关于巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2018年10月25日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024\\_182020.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024_182020.html)

cadres in violation of rules regarding use of government-owned housing came into compliance and made apologies and self-criticisms. After investigations revealed that statistics about local finances were being manipulated, 19 people were held accountable, 24 SOEs were alerted to the problem, and the two involving SOEs were placed on a list of “untrustworthy SOEs.” In accordance with the ongoing anti-crime campaign, the province reported that it had disciplined 183 people involved in shielding criminals.<sup>52</sup>

Although corruption is an important issue, the most common type of problem inspections raise concerns how the target institution is managed or organized. Inspectors criticize many institutions for their bureaucratism (官僚主义), formalism (形式主义), and poor work-styles—a familiar cluster of issues often cited in official media as well.<sup>53</sup> These were major concerns in the management of the party journal *Qiushi*, for example, which underwent an inspection in the summer of 2020.<sup>54</sup> Inspectors often urge target institutions to strengthen leadership responsibility systems and improve personnel hiring and promotion practices, as they did for example after the 2020 inspection of the government-organized Red Cross Society of China (中国红十字会).<sup>55</sup>

Another frequent management problem—the phenomenon of “not working” (不作为)—is directly related to the anti-corruption campaign. Bureaucracies across the country have been wrestling with the problem whereby cadres work slowly or refuse to take any initiative, especially when dealing with businesses or conducting other official duties that involve money, because they are afraid of getting in trouble with the anti-corruption investigators.<sup>56</sup> The problem of “not working” as a response to fears of being punished for acting improperly is not new—it has occurred to some extent in every major anti-corruption campaign in CCP history.<sup>57</sup>

Post-inspection reports also discuss measures that the target institution has taken or is taking to ensure greater loyalty to both the CCP and its general secretary. Promises to “more deeply study Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” are standard and therefore are likely pro forma, but many other measures are not. For example, in response to

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<sup>52</sup> “中共福建省委关于巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2018年10月25日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024\\_182020.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024_182020.html)

<sup>53</sup> “要树立良好作风必须坚决反对形式主义官僚主义,” 旗帜网, 2020年7月6日, [www.qizhiwang.org.cn/n1/2020/0706/c422382-31772919.html](http://www.qizhiwang.org.cn/n1/2020/0706/c422382-31772919.html)

<sup>54</sup> “十九届中央第五轮巡视反馈情况全部公布,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年8月23日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200823\\_224256.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/202008/t20200823_224256.html)

<sup>55</sup> “中央第五巡视组向中国红十字会党组反馈巡视情况,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2020年8月23日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202008/t20200822\\_224225.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/202008/t20200822_224225.html)

<sup>56</sup> 郑永年, “中国如何避免‘官员不作为’现象,” 爱思想, 2014年11月11日, <http://www.aisixiang.com/data/79934.html>; “基层官员懒政现新变化 如何煮沸为官‘温吞水’?,” 新华网, 2016年1月13日, [www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-03/13/c\\_128795281.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-03/13/c_128795281.htm); “评论员观察：不作为岂能怪罪反腐败,” 人民网, 2016年1月21日, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/pinglun/n1/2016/0121/c78779-28071984.html>

<sup>57</sup> Christopher Carothers, “Combating Corruption in Authoritarian Regimes,” Dissertation Submitted to Harvard University’s Department of Government (May 2019), 295.

criticism from its 2018 inspection concerning insufficient party loyalty, Fujian organized more than 10,000 small groups of cadres to receive education on key political slogans and concepts presented in “folksy language,” reviewed and revised the political messaging of tens of thousands of propaganda carriers (such as newspapers and public banners), launched self-inspections in more than 75,000 work units, and created propaganda series for TV that aimed to stimulate “deep gratitude” to Xi and “emotional identification” with the leader.<sup>58</sup> These Xi-centered policies are far from unusual in the context of official media blanketing the country with personalistic political messaging. But inspection teams are pushing more general party loyalty initiatives as well, prompting provincial and municipal party committees to beef up political education, such as the study of CCP history or the “spirit of the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress,” and to revitalize the party tradition of “democratic life meetings” (民主生活会), at which participants make politically correct critiques of themselves and others.

Lastly, inspections regularly uncover inadequate implementation of party policies and directives and instruct target institutions to address such failings. Many of these instructions align with national policy initiatives, such as financial reform or the anti-poverty campaign, whereas others are region- or locality-specific. For example, inspectors recently gave citations for excessive local government debt in Jiangsu province, poor environmental management and pollution control in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and overcrowding in schools in Shandong province.<sup>59</sup> Inspection teams often instruct SOEs to better implement the Xi administration’s complex state-sector reform agenda and to align their business strategies with the regime’s state-led economic development model. As with corruption control, target institutions respond to inspections with (likely exaggerated) explanations of what they have done or are currently doing to fix these other policy implementation problems. For example, China State Shipbuilding Corporation, after being inspected in early 2019, created a reform plan with 213 specific fixes, and claimed to have completed a nearly perfect 212 of these by the end of 2019.<sup>60</sup>

Since many institutions have already been inspected more than once since 2013, one key type of policy implementation that they have to report on is implementation of the unfinished tasks from the previous inspection. These sections of the post-inspection reports show that the inspection teams do not simply leave instructions and move on, but rather they keep track of what the target institutions are and are not doing. The threat of further inspections is always hanging overhead.

## **The Campaign and Xi’s Vision**

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<sup>58</sup> “中共福建省委关于巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中央纪委国家监委网站, 2018年10月25日, [www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024\\_182020.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/yaowen/201810/t20181024_182020.html)

<sup>59</sup> “山东做好巡视后半篇文章 整改项项对账 问题清仓见底,” 中国纪检监察报, 2020年8月19日, <http://fanfu.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0819/c64371-31828124.html>

<sup>60</sup> “中共中国船舶集团有限公司党组关于十九届中央第三轮巡视整改进展情况的通报,” 中共中国船舶集团有限公司, 2020年3月22日, [www.cssc.net.cn/n135/n172/n186/c16522/content.html](http://www.cssc.net.cn/n135/n172/n186/c16522/content.html)

Since coming to power in 2012, Xi has shown that his political vision entails a strong and disciplined party leading the country and penetrating every part of China's state and society. The Xi administration made numerous moves to realize this vision during its first term, including rolling back the general liberalization of the Hu-Wen era, tightening controls on non-state media and the Internet, and cracking down on unapproved civil society organizations. The Xi administration has reversed the multi-decade trend of privatization (国进民退) and reasserted party control over SOE management.<sup>61</sup> Xi has centralized control over policy in key areas by moving decision-making power from existing institutions to new "Leading Small Groups" (领导小组); during his first term, Xi personally headed eight Leading Small Groups.<sup>62</sup> In addition, as is now widely acknowledged, Xi has revived certain elements of Maoist governance and has adopted a "more Leninist" understanding of the law.<sup>63</sup> Xi believes that the party should be paramount and ever-present. As he said in a speech in January 2016, "Party, state, military, civilian life, and education. North, south, east, west, and at the center. The party leads everything" (党政军民学, 东西南北中, 党是领导一切的).<sup>64</sup> And in March 2020, as the government faced a crisis over the spread of Covid-19, Xi insisted that to address this "serious situation" it was "necessary to strengthen the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee" (必须加强党中央集中统一领导).<sup>65</sup>

Governing through the anti-corruption campaign has contributed to the realization of Xi's vision; the campaign has enhanced both party oversight of state institutions and top-down control within the party. For example, the NSC's integration of anti-corruption organs in 2018 strengthened the CCDI's—and therefore the party's—direct control over state institutions involved in anti-corruption work, such as the public prosecutor's offices. The CCDI absorbed one-fifth of the agents and staff from nationwide procuratorates—a substantial institutional transfer.<sup>66</sup> The Xi administration has also tightened the party's supervision of the judiciary and undercut the rule of law to suit the purposes of the anti-corruption campaign. And the empowerment of the CITs to root out corruption in target institutions has strengthened a vertical institutional channel by which the party leadership can better monitor and influence the operations of central-level state organizations, sub-national governments, and SOEs.

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<sup>61</sup> Daniel H. Rosen, Wendy Leutert, and Shan Guo. "Missing Link: Corporate Governance in China's State Sector," Rhodium Group, November 2018, <https://rhg.com/research/missing-link-corporate-governance-in-chinas-state-sector/>

<sup>62</sup> Nis Grünberg, "The Rise of Leading Small Group Governance," Research Paper Presented at: International Conference on the Chinese Community Party in Action (East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, 2015). This and other leading small groups were later upgraded to "commissions."

<sup>63</sup> Jacques DeLisle, "Law in the China Model 2.0: Legality, Developmentalism and Leninism under Xi Jinping," *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, No. 103 (2017): 68–84.

<sup>64</sup> "习近平主持中共中央政治局常委会会议," 新华网, 2016年1月7日, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/07/c\\_1117705534.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/07/c_1117705534.htm)

<sup>65</sup> "习近平主持中共中央政治局常务委员会会议 研究新型冠状病毒感染的肺炎疫情防控工作," 新华社, 2020年1月25日, [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/25/content\\_5472188.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-01/25/content_5472188.htm)

<sup>66</sup> Ling Li, "Politics of Anticorruption in China: Paradigm Change of the Party's Disciplinary Regime 2012–2017." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28, no. 115 (2019): 47–63.

The Xi administration's broad prosecution of leading officials at all levels has shaken China's bureaucracies, undoubtedly weakening any potential organized resistance to central party directives. The campaign has strongly attacked what the party leadership perceives to be pockets of organized resistance in the state, by, for example, prosecuting corruption-sheltering "independent kingdoms" (独立王国), local leaders engaging in "sectarianism and clique-ism" (宗派主义山头主义), and "group cases" of corruption (窝案).<sup>67</sup>

Within the CCP, the campaign has contributed to a trend of power centralization. Anti-corruption work is upwardly accountable among party institutions and tightly controlled by a small number of top officials; even state media have sometimes called Xi's approach to corruption control "iron-fisted" (铁腕).<sup>68</sup> And because the Xi administration has strengthened and is relying on the same institutions to enforce corruption control and compliance with so many other policies, party members are under increased scrutiny not only for potential corruption but also for any potential disciplinary violations or signs of disloyalty. Moreover, domestic propaganda connected to the campaign, which has been ubiquitous, has often sought to cultivate party members' sense of attachment to a unified party mission. Consider the extensively promoted slogan "Remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind" (不忘初心, 牢记使命).<sup>69</sup> This slogan seeks to instill in party members a sense that they are all working together on a grand historical project of national rejuvenation that stretches back into the CCP's revolutionary past. The message is that not adhering to the rules of the party leadership would be a betrayal of that mission and also of the Chinese people.

### **Conclusion: What About Corruption?**

Has Xi's campaign, which has had such a broad impact on Chinese governance, actually curbed bribery, embezzlement, and other corruption? Answering this question is difficult because of the inherent secrecy of corrupt activity. Data from anti-corruption enforcement—on investigations carried out, tigers brought down, or illicit funds recovered, for example—shed light only indirectly on the actual incidence of corruption. Nevertheless, as I have argued elsewhere, the combination of extensive anti-corruption enforcement and institution-building over nearly a decade sets Xi's campaign apart from the superficial and short-lived anti-

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<sup>67</sup> “人民日报刊文：把国企当成‘独立王国’终将受到党纪国法严惩，” 澎湃，2018年4月10日，[https://m.thepaper.cn/wap/v3/jsp/newsDetail\\_forward\\_2066913](https://m.thepaper.cn/wap/v3/jsp/newsDetail_forward_2066913)；“反对宗派主义山头主义坚决维护党的团结统一，” 求是网，2017年1月13日，[www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-01/13/c\\_1120305173.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-01/13/c_1120305173.htm)

<sup>68</sup> For example: “习近平铁腕反腐3年 政治生态日渐清朗，” 中国青年网，2016年1月16日，[http://news.youth.cn/wzt/201601/t20160116\\_7532979.htm](http://news.youth.cn/wzt/201601/t20160116_7532979.htm)；“十九大后，习近平反腐不歇脚，” 新华网，2018年1月19日，[www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-01/19/c\\_1122281826.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-01/19/c_1122281826.htm)

<sup>69</sup> “不忘初心，牢记使命，” <http://chuxin.people.cn/> (accessed September 3, 2020)；“不忘初心，牢记使命主题教育” <http://www.12371.cn/cxsm/> (accessed September 3, 2020).



corruption initiatives typically announced by authoritarian governments.<sup>70</sup> The campaign's high level of enforcement has undoubtedly made engaging in corruption more risky, even if the effects are not uniform across the country.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, some of the campaign's economic effects suggest a decrease in corrupt behavior among officials: sales of luxury goods have dropped, corporate spending on "entertainment and travel costs" is down, high-end restaurants and hotels have suffered, land sales by local governments are suppressed following inspections, officials are receiving smaller discounts when purchasing apartments, etc.<sup>72</sup> Nor are new anti-corruption standards being abandoned, as occurs in many other authoritarian anti-corruption efforts. Rules that were introduced or enhanced early in the campaign, such as the Eight-point Regulation, continue to be enforced, with violators investigated and punished in large numbers.<sup>73</sup>

Critics charge that Xi's campaign is selective, reduces corruption only temporarily, and does not address the fundamental cause of corruption: the CCP's unaccountable monopoly on power. There is some truth to all these points. Xi's friends and allies have indeed been spared from anti-corruption prosecution. At the same time, the campaign is undeniably far-reaching at all levels of the party-state; the existence of a politically motivated carve-out does not mean that corruption cannot be reduced overall. Will suppressed corruption return immediately after the campaign ends? Perhaps, but the campaign has already lasted longer than any past anti-corruption drive and has included reforms strengthening the CCDI, the inspection system, and other institutions that will allow the central government to continue to monitor officials closely in the future. Still, can the CCP ultimately achieve and maintain clean government without accepting checks and balances, the rule of law, and monitoring by civil society and independent

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<sup>70</sup> Christopher Carothers, "Taking Authoritarian Anti-Corruption Reform Seriously," *Perspectives on Politics*, published early online, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720001371>, 1–17.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., Melanie Manion, "Taking China's Anticorruption Campaign Seriously," *Economic and Political Studies* 4, No. 1 (2016): 3–18; Elizabeth C. Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State* (London: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>72</sup> See, among other studies: Nancy Qin and Jaya Wen, "The Impact of Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign on Luxury Imports in China," Yale University Working Paper, April 20, 2015; Nan Chen and Zemin Zhong, "The Economic Impact of China's Anti-Corruption Campaign" (September 16, 2017), Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2996009>; Bin Ke, Na Liu, and Song Tang, "The Economic Consequences of Anti-corruption Campaigns: Evidence from China" (2018), Available at SSRN:

[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2963478](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2963478); Ting Chen and James Kai-sing Kung, "Busting the 'Princelings': The Campaign Against Corruption in China's Primary Land Market," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134, No. 1 (2019): 185–226; Yongqiang Chu, Weida Kuang, and Daxuan Zhao, "The Effect of the Anti-Corruption Campaign in China: Evidence from Housing Transactions" (July 14, 2019), Available at SSRN: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3437329](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3437329); Ren Yi and Dennis M. Patten, "The Impact of Governmental Pressure on Corporate Corruption Spending: Evidence from China," *Social and Environmental Accountability Journal* 39, No. 2 (2019): 124–36.

<sup>73</sup> "持之以恒落实中央八项规定精神," 新华, 2019年12月4日, [http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/201912/t20191204\\_205529.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/toutiao/201912/t20191204_205529.html)

media? The CCP's long history of struggling to curb cadre corruption, as well as the weight of scholarship on how clean government has been achieved in other countries, suggest not. Xi's campaign has been effective within an authoritarian context but also remains limited by it.

### **About the Contributor**

Christopher Carothers is a political scientist and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Contemporary China. His work has been published or is forthcoming in *Perspectives on Politics*, the *Journal of Democracy*, and the *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, as well as in policy journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The National Interest*. He thanks Wendy Leutert, He Jingkai, Saul Wilson, and Minxin Pei for their invaluable feedback on drafts of this article.

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