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Party Watch Annual Report 2018

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About this Report

The “Party Watch Annual Report 2018” discusses Chinese political developments during the period between October 2017 and October 2018. This compilation serves as an analytical resource for China watchers as they assess trends in China’s politics since the 19th Party Congress. It discusses the Party’s policies and directions from six perspectives: the centralization of power under Xi Jinping, the establishment of the National Supervisory Commission, the rising sophistication of external propaganda work, the growing visibility of global united front work, the expansion of the Party’s international liaison work, and the Party’s use of technological innovation as a tool to retain power.

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Introduction: Trends Since the 19th Party Congress

David Gitter

The “Party Watch Annual Report 2018” discusses Chinese political developments during the period between October 2017 and October 2018. This compilation serves as an analytical resource for China watchers as they assess trends in China’s politics since the 19th Party Congress. It discusses the Party’s policies and directions from six perspectives: the centralization of power under Xi Jinping, the establishment of the National Supervisory Commission, the rising sophistication of external propaganda work, the growing visibility of global united front work, the expansion of the Party’s international liaison work, and the Party’s use of technological innovation as a tool to retain power.

Each of these perspectives demonstrate how the Party intends to meet China’s growing need for more balanced, high-quality development domestically and global strength and prestige abroad—what CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping calls the “China Dream.” In exchange, the leadership demands society’s loyalty to CCP-led governance. Achieving these objectives is viewed by the CCP center as dependent on centralized power under Xi; this power will be wielded to overcome stiff resistance from vested interests of the old power structure as well as Xi’s political opposition.

A careful read of the report discerns two macro trends that are deserving of future analytical attention.

First, the CCP has turned to its traditional organizational strengths as a Leninist party in order to assail (or preemptively deter) opponents of CCP policies at the granular level. The National Supervision Law of March 2018 has created a nationwide bureaucracy, the National Supervisory Commission, to penetrate all levels of society down to every locality. It extends the CCP’s disciplinary powers to nearly anyone exercising public authority. Supplementing this real-world Party penetration is the CCP’s “virtual” penetration of society through the leveraging of high technology. The report discusses what Chinese authorities have called “source governance,” or the utilization of surveillance, big data, cloud computing, and other technologies to identify and manage problems (including individual people) at their source. We can expect this trend of granular control to continue in both the physical and virtual domains for the foreseeable future.

Second, the CCP leadership under Xi exhibits a growing willingness to take on the risks arising from exercising influence through Party channels. Such risks go beyond the dangers of an anti-Xi coalition of opposition forces pushing back against Party penetration at home and also

includes the danger of an international coalition abroad uniting against the most assertive aspects of the CCP's foreign activities. Indeed, this year we have seen an international backlash against the CCP's international united front operations, which aim to influence people abroad—such as foreign elites and the Chinese diaspora—to work towards Party goals. We have also seen growing efforts to identify and check CCP external propaganda, now firmly under the purview of the CCP Central Propaganda Department. But the CCP seems increasingly intent on wielding its own power, evident through the strengthening of both united front work and external propaganda work since the 19th Party Congress. This is also apparent from the enhancement of the CCP International Department's activities. The department has had unprecedented levels of success since the 19th Party Congress in getting foreign politicians (many likely unwittingly) to publicly sign on to Xi's vision for China and the world. And, corresponding with source governance tactics at home, the department has been empowered to carry out “inter-party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics,” which involves targeting international politics at their perceived source—foreign political parties.

With these two larger trends in mind, summaries of each section are as follows:

Timothy Heath's section opens our annual report with a prescription to China watchers for an overhaul in the way we anticipate the PRC's political developments. This is because in Xi's “New Era,” Heath sees competing interest groups becoming the new drivers of elite politics, replacing the formerly dominant drivers of patronage networks or collective governance. He assesses that the Party elite in China have accepted the centralization of personalistic power under Xi because they seek to realize a full transformation in the country's economic growth mechanism; this in turn requires the destruction of cronyistic political networks benefiting from labor-intensive export- and investment-driven growth. Made up of elites that stand to lose their fortunes and entitlements, these networks likely comprise the strongest danger to Xi. The end result has been a top-down model of control that relies on the crushing of rivals and a cult of personality around Xi in Party propaganda. He concludes that this changing political dynamic ultimately requires China watchers to innovate analytical techniques to properly understand the new cleavages between the winners and losers of Xi's policies.

Kerry Brown's section covers the most significant structural change to the party-state in decades: the creation of the National Supervisory Commission (NCS), made possible through the passing of the National Supervision Law in March 2018. This bureaucracy brings supervision power, previously shared with the state, back under the control of the Party center. As Brown writes, it extends the Party's jurisdiction in granular fashion down to “literally anyone doing anything with a link to governance and organization.” And while the Party has fostered what Brown terms “transparency with Chinese characteristics” by promising “rule by law” at the Fourth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, it ultimately remains accountable only to itself. The new National Supervision Law codifies this fact. Brown suggests this is at least a tacit admission by the CCP

that it needs a legal basis for its total control of the state. Even so, he concludes that practice will remain the sole criterion for truth: if the application of supervisory powers is mishandled and draconian, the Xi leadership may indeed find itself subject to angry and unmanageable public backlash.

David Shambaugh's section assesses the CCP's increasing emphasis on external propaganda work to achieve its objectives, made most clear since the 19th Party Congress by bureaucratic changes to the propaganda apparatus that included the creation of a "Voice of China" super-entity under the management of the CCP Central Propaganda Department. Shambaugh explains that this ramping up of external propaganda work has been more prominent since 2012, even as the importance of influencing foreigners has been long understood. He notes that the Chinese government continues to perceive a slanted Western media monopoly that portrays China unfairly, necessitating the Party to fight a "discourse war" against it. While Shambaugh assesses that it is still too early to tell exactly what the bureaucratic reorganizations described above mean in practical terms, the recentralization of external propaganda authority in the Central Propaganda Department is at least clear. Shambaugh concludes that the above activities are only set to increase, even as the successes of such expensive endeavors seem suspect: it is not at all apparent that there has been an improvement in China's global image of late.

Anne-Marie Brady's section on united front work since the 19th Party Congress is a renewed call for action to unite against the CCP's united front activities abroad. She reiterates that the target of these activities are the Western democracies that represent the "old era" of global order and notes with urgency that increased global attention on CCP united front activities has only led to a strengthened CCP offensive—not a tactical retreat. Indeed, Brady points out that even the veneer of separation between the Party and state has been removed following the Congress, evident from the absorption of the State Council's State Ethnic Affairs Office, State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office into the United Front Work Department. She assesses these changes mean that the Party leadership no longer finds it necessary to hide international united front activities, which include attempts to leverage overseas Chinese as agents of diplomatic objectives, pressure foreign universities and movie studios to accept Chinese censorship guidelines, and coopt foreign elites into supporting Beijing's goals. The Party now feels it operates from a position of strength compared to its united front targets.

Julia Bowie's section unveils the latest activities of the CCP International Department. Viewed by the Party as a unique tool of influence that enables meetings with current and future foreign leaders unencumbered by normal diplomatic limitations, this organization deserves far greater attention from China watchers. Bowie notes that the Xi leadership has made clear its big plans for the department, which proudly boasts its role in generating a global consensus around China's foreign policy and spreading the desire to learn from Xi's ideological contributions and

the Chinese governance model. These efforts take place under what the department now calls “party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics,” which seeks to guide political parties toward supporting party-state interests and diplomatic goals behind the scenes. While it is unclear whether this framework for extending CCP influence can be as successful as the International Department claims, Bowie concludes that the department’s activities merit further study given the CCP’s efforts to expand its activities and place it closer to the center of China’s foreign affairs.

Last but certainly not least, Samantha Hoffman’s section concludes the annual report by delving into the CCP’s latest advantage in asserting its control over an increasingly sophisticated society: technology as a tool of political power. This effort began as early as the 1980s under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership and has now progressed to the point where the Party appears capable of dealing with threats at their source—what the Party has called “source governance.” Hoffman explains that this concept relates not only to managing individuals and social unrest but also other pre-emptive threats to state security such as corruption, the economy, and allocation of services. However, Hoffman concludes that technology is not a cure-all as it does not address the long-existing problems of corruption or lack of true rule of law that seem set to stifle the Party’s ambitious agenda.

David Gitter is the president of the Center for Advanced China Research, where he specializes in research and analysis of authoritative open source Chinese language materials. He previously worked in various analytical capacities in the private, public, and non-profit sectors, including the Congressional Research Service (CRS), the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD), Project 2049 Institute, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), focusing on Chinese foreign policy and broader Asian security issues. Gitter received his MA in Asian Studies from the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University. He has lived, worked, and studied in Beijing, China and has working proficiency in Mandarin.

Elite Politics in the New Era: Xi's Centralization of Power and the CCP's Strategy for Long-Term Survival

Timothy R. Heath

The rapid centralization of power under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authority and President Xi Jinping since 2012 calls for new frameworks to understand and anticipate political developments in China. Competing interest groups are becoming the main drivers of elite politics in the “new era” of reform, diminishing the value of studying patronage network-based factions or the collective leadership model. Analysis of elite politics that focuses on the emerging cleavages between the potential winners and losers of China’s reform process will prove more fruitful.

Since 2012, Chinese politics have experienced a rapid centralization of power under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authority and President Xi Jinping’s assertion of a personalistic style of rule. Central leaders have supported these developments primarily to address two inter-related tasks critical to the CCP’s long-term survival: a transformation in the mode of economic growth and an overhaul in the party’s approach to governance. Successful realization of these tasks depends on the breakup of well-resourced and extensive patronage networks within which the CCP is embedded.

Given the country’s weak institutions and legacy of Leninist rule, the illiberal political strategy adopted by party leaders—however dismaying—likely represents the most direct and least risky way to overcome this opposition and enact structural reforms. Even so, the challenge of destroying and replacing much of the Party’s cronyistic political networks with more effective, responsive governance-focused networks remains risky and prospects for success are uncertain.

As competing interest groups become the main drivers of elite politics in the “new era” of reform, older analytical frameworks, like factional networks and the collective leadership model, are becoming less relevant to the study of Chinese politics. Analysis of elite politics in coming years that focuses on the emerging cleavages between the potential winners and losers from this process could prove more fruitful. The most potent opposition to Xi Jinping will likely draw from the ranks of wealthy, well-connected elites who stand to lose vast fortunes and privileges from reform. How this conflict plays out will bear directly on the prospects for CCP rule and China’s revitalization.

Older Analytical Frameworks for CCP Politics

Since the advent of the reform and opening period in the late 1970s, Chinese elite politics featured several key trends. First, Party leaders oversaw a general institutionalization of political processes. Deng instituted norms for leadership selection, and the CCP under Jiang and Hu saw even greater gains in establishing norms for retirement, leadership selection, and decision-making within Party organizations.¹

Second, authorities upheld the norm of collective decision-making. Determined to avoid repeating the destructive experience of Mao Zedong's unconstrained autocracy, Deng Xiaoping established mechanisms of collective decision-making. Subsequent leaders respected the constraints and upheld the consensus-based decision-making of the Politburo Standing Committee, comprised of between seven to nine people, as the ultimate authority. The workings were mysterious and opaque,² but top leaders appeared to make important decisions only after arriving at consensus.

Third, Chinese leaders appeared to rely on informal personnel networks established through the length of their career.³ Whether based on regions, as in the case of Jiang Zemin's network of Shanghai-based colleagues, or organizations, as with Hu Jintao's contacts from his tenure in the Communist Youth League, observers noted how these factional networks appeared to dramatically impact elite politics.⁴ These trends appeared well established by the end of Hu's tenure, and most observers felt little reason to doubt their continuation.

Centralization of Power Under CCP Authority

Astonishing political developments over the past few years have overturned long-held assumptions about China's political trajectory. Among the most striking of developments has been the abrupt and rapid centralization of political power under CCP authority. President Xi has established himself at the nexus of an array of elite supra-government small groups, the most important of which have been the National Security Commission and the Leading Small Group

¹ Alice Lyman Miller, "The Problem of Hu Jintao's Successor," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 19 (October 24, 2006). https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/clm19_alm.pdf.

² "Hu Jintao Rises to the Top in China, Remains a Mystery." *Voice of America*, March 14, 2003. <https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2003-03-14-15-hu-67456377/385424.html>

³ Cheng Li, "The Powerful Factions Among China's Rulers." Brookings Institution, November 5, 2012. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-powerful-factions-among-chinas-rulers/>

⁴ "Long after Retirement, Jiang Zemin Continues to Exert His Influence." *South China Morning Post*, September 08, 2012. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1032511/long-after-retirement-jiang-zemin-continues-exert-his-influence>

for Comprehensive Deepening of Reform.⁵ These moves have upended decades of efforts to institutionalize collective decision-making and earned Xi the sobriquet “chairman of everything.”⁶

The centralization of power has also strengthened the Party’s role in government, business, and society. In March 2018, China issued a blueprint for government restructuring that extended the power of the CCP and merged government bureaucracies. The plan gave the Party’s Propaganda Department control of censorship of film, news media, and publications and handed responsibility of overseas Chinese affairs and religious affairs to the Party’s United Front Work Department. The blueprint upgraded the authority and status of key leading small groups for reform, cyber security, and finance.⁷ Earlier this year, China also established a new anti-graft agency, the National Supervisory Commission, which replaced the State Council’s Ministry of Supervision and was integrated with the Party’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), extending the reach of the anti-corruption campaign.⁸ As noted in the Second Quarterly Party Watch Report, the creation of the National Supervision Commission apparatus increases the CCP’s coercive control over the Chinese state by extending and proceduralizing the CCP’s investigative and detention powers over non-CCP elements of China’s bureaucracy.⁹

Equally disconcerting has been Beijing’s promotion of Xi Jinping’s personal authority in a manner eerily evocative of the CCP’s worshipful treatment of Mao Zedong. In March, 2018, the National People’s Congress, China’s national legislature, voted unanimously to amend the constitution to remove presidential term limits.¹⁰ The moves followed a portentous 19th Party Congress, at which the ruling party enshrined “Xi Jinping Thought” as its latest guide to action. No Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping has had an eponymous ideology inscribed in the

⁵ "How Leading Small Groups Help Xi Jinping and Other Party Leaders Exert Power." *South China Morning Post*, January 20, 2014. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1409118/how-leading-small-groups-help-xi-jinping-and-other-party-leaders-exert>

⁶ Javier C. Hernández, "China's 'Chairman of Everything': Behind Xi Jinping's Many Titles." *The New York Times*, October 25, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/25/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-titles-chairman.html>

⁷ Chris Buckley, "China Gives Communist Party More Control Over Policy and Media." *The New York Times*, March 21, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-jinping.html>

⁸ Jamie P. Horsley, "What's So Controversial About China's New Anti-Corruption Body?" *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/whats-so-controversial-about-chinas-new-anti-corruption-body/>

⁹ David Gitter, Julia Bowie, and Brock Erdahl, "Quarterly Report 2 | January-April 2018." *The Party Watch Initiative*, June 01, 2018. <https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2018/06/01/Quarterly-Report-2-January-April-2018>

¹⁰ Chris Buckley and Steven Lee Myers, "China's Legislature Blesses Xi's Indefinite Rule. It Was 2,958 to 2." *The New York Times*, March 11, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/11/world/asia/china-xi-constitution-term-limits.html>

constitution while still in office.¹¹ The 6th Plenum of the 18th Congress also designated Xi the “core” of the CCP Central Committee, an honorific title last used with Deng Xiaoping. And since his ascent, official propaganda has relentlessly cultivated images of Xi Jinping as a paternalistic leader that many have compared to a “cult of personality.”¹²

Xi Jinping’s anti-graft campaign has allowed the leader to eliminate political opponents and accrue more power, as well as carry out the ostensible purpose of tackling graft. By 2017, officials reported that more than 1 million Party members had been disciplined.¹³ High profile “tigers” targeted by the campaign have included former Politburo member and security czar Zhou Yongkang and Ling Jihua, former director of the General Office of the CCP. The investigations have rocked the military, netting former vice chairs of the Central Military Commission Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong.¹⁴

The Party has also stepped up a ruthless crackdown on anyone who might question these developments. Authorities have increased arrests critics, dissidents, and activists while extending censorship and media controls. According to the activist group Amnesty International, human rights in China are at their worst level since 1989’s Tiananmen Square massacre.¹⁵

Western and some Chinese commentators have swiftly and universally condemned the developments, warning that Xi appears poised to revive a brutal autocratic rule despite the savage excesses of the Mao years. University of California San Diego’s Susan Shirk stated that Xi Jinping “is taking China back to personalistic leadership.”¹⁶ Carl Minzer, a professor at Fordham University, concluded China’s “reform era is over.”¹⁷ Gordon Chang declared that Xi

¹¹ “China to Enshrine Xi’s Thought into State Constitution Amid National ‘Fervor’.” Reuters, January 19, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-politics/china-to-enshrine-xis-thought-into-state-constitution-amid-national-fervor-idUSKBN1F812P>

¹² Philip Wen and Christian Shepherd. “China Cranks Propaganda, Xi Jinping’s Cult of Personality into Overdrive Ahead of Party Congress.” *Business Insider*, October 12, 2017. <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-propaganda-xi-jinpings-cult-of-personality-party-congress-2017-10>

¹³ “China’s Anti-corruption Campaign Expands with New Agency.” BBC News, March 20, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-43453769>.

¹⁴ Charles Clover, “Xi Takes Aim at Military in Anti-graft Drive.” *Financial Times*. February 11, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/3dba1f32-0c2a-11e8-8eb7-42f857ea9f09>

¹⁵ “Human Rights under Xi ‘worst since Tiananmen Crackdown’: Amnesty.” *South China Morning Post*, November 17, 2017. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2120318/human-rights-china-under-xi-jinping-worst-tiananmen>

¹⁶ Susan L. Shirk, “China in Xi’s ‘New Era’: The Return to Personalistic Rule.” *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 2 (April 2018): 22-36. <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/media/29.2--Shirk--AdvanceVersion.pdf>

¹⁷ Carl Minzer, *End of An Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 2018.

Jinping is “deinstitutionalizing the Communist Party” and warned of a “great leap backward.”¹⁸ Chinese commentators who denounced the decision to remove term limits for Xi discovered censors quickly suppressed the criticism.¹⁹

Why China’s Leaders Support Xi’s Strongman Rule

One of the most surprising aspects of China’s sudden turn to strongman rule is how little political conflict Xi’s assertion of power has provoked among the country’s top elites. Despite the reversal of numerous sensitive norms—including the violation of implicit norms prohibiting assaults on top leaders—there has been very little factional violence to date of the type that plagued the country’s most powerful leaders, Mao and Deng, in their respective efforts to consolidate power.

Some commentators warn that such an outcome is only a matter of time. In 2016, Claremont College’s Minxin Pei predicted, “a coalition of opposition forces will likely thwart his quest to build a highly centralized and personalized regime that rules with an iron fist.”²⁰ A commentator in the *Japan Times* similarly warned that the pursuit of “absolutism” risked “creating a pressure cooker syndrome” that could explode in violence.²¹

But even if these predictions bear out, the fact that Xi’s initial consolidation of power engendered so little resistance strongly suggests that these initial moves enjoyed substantial political support among the top leaders in the Central Committee. Symptomatic of Xi’s grip on power, over 99% the 2,980 deputies of 13th National People’s Congress voted in favor of the amendments to the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) that included the removal of term limits for the PRC presidency and vice presidency.²²

Insight into why the nation’s top leaders may have supported Xi’s centralization of power requires a look at the exceptional nature of the challenges confronting China. The 19th Party

¹⁸ Gordon G. Chang, “Xi Jinping’s Great Leap Backward.” *The American Conservative*, July 09, 2018. <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/xi-jinpings-great-leap-backward/>

¹⁹ “Critics Silenced Ahead of China’s Move to End Presidential Term Limits.” *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 2018. <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-china-xi-jinping-20180310-story.html>

²⁰ Minxin Pei, “In Beijing, Signs of a Major Political Power Struggle in the Offing.” *Fortune*, March 28, 2018. <http://fortune.com/2016/03/28/china-politics-xi-jinping-power-struggle/>

²¹ Brahma Chellaney, “Xi’s New Strength Obscures China’s Internal Risks.” *The Japan Times*, October 29, 2017. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/10/29/commentary/world-commentary/xis-new-strength-obscures-chinas-internal-risks/#.W1XWIS2ZM3o>

²² Nectar Gan, “Xi Cleared to Stay as China’s President, Just 2 Dissenters in 2,964 Votes.” *South China Morning Post*, March 12, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2136719/xi-jinping-cleared-stay-president-chinas-political>

Congress provided only a vague hint at the growing crisis facing Beijing when it declared the country's most essential challenge to be the contradiction "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life." These mild-sounding words hint at a critical point: the Party's old strategy for maintaining power—economic growth in exchange for political support—has become obsolete. To ensure long-term survival, the Party must satisfy the demands of an increasingly prosperous, better-educated people with rising expectations. Higher per capita income is a starting point, but as the extensive list of policy goals in the 19th Party Congress report made clear, the new strategy also requires the Party to improve the quality of education and health care, establish a fairer rule of law, clean up the environment, and defend the nation's dignity and interests, among other goals.

To fulfill this ambitious agenda, the CCP needs to achieve two inter-related tasks: transform the country's mode of economic growth and improve the quality of its governance. China powered its rise on the backs of a typical development strategy pioneered by other East Asian economies. While lucrative, labor-intensive export and investment driven growth has also exacerbated problems of inequality, pollution, and unrest.²³ Moreover, the economic gains from growth have raised wages, rendering many low-cost industries uncompetitive. Chinese leaders increasingly rely on debt to fuel growth, but the strategy threatens to throttle long-term growth if left unresolved.²⁴

The task of economic rebalancing overlaps with that of improving the quality of governance because a successful economic transformation involves the establishment of institutions, mechanisms, and policies that incentivize people to consume and carry out the type of creative, enterprising work required for higher-quality growth. Examples include the expansion of social welfare services, higher quality education, establishment of a more reliable legal system, and control of corruption—all of which require responsive, efficient, and effective governance.²⁵ Chinese authorities recognize that the two tasks are inseparable and have outlined a comprehensive reform agenda that addresses issues of economic rebalancing and governance accordingly.²⁶

²³ Andrea Boltho and Maria Weber, "Did China Follow the East Asian Development Model?" *The European Journal of Comparative Economics* 6, no. 2 (2018): 267-86.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a23d/717e19ca011b92b2d05309b79579a0952c45.pdf>

²⁴ Tom Orlik, Fielding Chen, Qian Wan, and Justin Jimenez, "Sizing Up China's Debt Bubble: Bloomberg Economics." Bloomberg, February 08, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-08/sizing-up-china-s-debt-bubble-bloomberg-economics>.

²⁵ Michael Pettis, "How Much Investment Is Optimal?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 10, 2013. <http://carnegieendowment.org/chinafinancialmarkets/52078>.

²⁶ Yunbi Zhang, "Leading Group's Focus Is to Deepen Reform." *China Daily*, October 17, 2017. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpnationalcongress/2017-10/17/content_33352410.htm

The pursuit of comprehensive reform inherently carries a serious political difficulty, however. The establishment of new industries, governance structures, and institutions requires the dismantling of obsolete industries, political structures, and patronage networks that stand in their way. Some of these individuals and organizations have amassed considerable wealth and power and are unlikely to surrender these easily.

In 2012, a "China 2030" paper jointly published by the World Bank, China's Development Research Center of the State Council, and China's Finance Ministry concluded that the groups most likely to resist reform would be "vested interests," which the report identified as "those enterprises that enjoy partial or full monopoly in key markets as well as firms, groups, institutions, and individuals who obtain special privileges and benefits or enjoy preferential treatment from the current power structure and institutional setting." These groups "reap economic rents from distortions implicit in the current price, institutional, and administrative structures." The report warned that these interests are likely to be "very influential, powerful, resourceful, and resolute in protecting their interests." The report singled out in particular potential resistance by collusion between government officials, state monopolies, and the property and energy industries, which are closely linked to the government.²⁷

Minxin Pei has vividly described the problem some of these elites pose. He explained how officials eager to cash in on their political power set up their immediate family members in business or find partners in the private sector. As Pei noted, such cronyistic arrangements have proven incredibly lucrative, created powerful parasitic patronage networks, and account for a large portion of corruption cases tried by the government.²⁸ Xi Jinping's PhD advisor, Sun Liping, likely had these individuals in mind when he similarly warned in 2012 that the biggest opponents of reform would be powerful political elites.²⁹

The power and influence of such vested interests is exacerbated by defects in the nature of Leninist rule. China's "fragmented authoritarianism" has become more fragmented and less effective due in part to capture by such powerful patronage networks. Analysts in particular have criticized institutions of collective decision-making for aggravating problems of weak

²⁷ "China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society." World Bank, February 27, 2012. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/02/27/china-2030-executive-summary>.

²⁸ Minxin Pei, "China's Crony Capitalism: The Dynamics of Regime Decay." *The National Interest*, October 02, 2016. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-crony-capitalism-the-dynamics-regime-decay-17905>.

²⁹ Malcolm Moore, "China's Reforms Stalled by 'Powerful Vested Interests.'" *The Telegraph*, January 12, 2012. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/9009915/Chinas-reforms-stalled-by-powerful-vested-interests.html>.

governance, ministry stovepiping, procrastination in reforms, and irresponsible decision-making.³⁰

Nor is China unique in confronting such a situation. The political problem inherent in large-scale economic transformation has confronted all countries that have experienced rapid industrialization. In each case, authorities eager to keep the country growing frequently clash with powerful elites who have profited from the old ways of business. Experts Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson have identified such elite political resistance as one of the most important reasons that developing countries stall out in the “middle income trap.”³¹ So intractable is the typical opposition to reform that only a few countries have successfully transitioned to a higher income growth model.³² The few countries that successfully managed the process, including the United States, have typically required strong political leadership and a centralization of power to overcome elite opposition and impose needed changes.³³

CCP Leaders Coalesce Behind Xi's Vision

The political problem outlined is compounded in a single-party state by the unavoidable necessity of destroying large portions of the ruling party's patronage networks in order to replace them with new leaders and governance structures better suited to the new imperatives. The process must also be carried out in a manner that maintains the legitimacy of the ruling party to minimize the risk of political instability.

Awareness of the political dangers of structural reform likely informed President Hu Jintao's reluctance to attempt a more confrontational approach to reform. But Hu's years-long effort to voluntarily enlist the cooperation of the country's elites ultimately failed, resulting in a widely held judgment that he presided over a “lost decade.”³⁴ By the end of his tenure, Hu and other top

³⁰ Zheng Yongnian, “18th Party Congress and China's Problem with Reform” [十八大与中国的改革问题]. Ifeng, August 02, 2012. <http://finance.ifeng.com/opinion/mssd/20120802/6861685.shtml>

³¹ Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *The Role of Institutions in Growth and Development*. Working paper no. 10. Commission on Growth and Development. World Bank, 2008. https://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPREMNET/Resources/489960-1338997241035/Growth_Commission_Working_Paper_10_Role_Institutions_Growth_Development.pdf

³² Barry Eichengreen, Donghyun Park, and Kwanho Shin, *Growth Slowdowns Redux: New Evidence on the Middle-Income Trap*. Working paper no. 18673. The National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2013. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18673>

³³ Timothy R. Heath, “The Brutal Politics of China's Economic Overhaul: What Xi Can Learn from FDR.” *The Washington Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 14, 2017): 79-93. doi:10.1080/0163660x.2017.1328925

³⁴ Eve Cary and Cheng Li, “The Last Year of Hu's Leadership: Hu's to Blame?” Brookings Institution, December 20, 2011. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-last-year-of-hus-leadership-hus-to-blame/>

leaders recognized the futility of this approach and concluded that only a high degree of top-down centralized direction could overcome elite resistance and ensure needed reforms. The 18th Party Congress report reflected the growing consensus in favor of centralized decision-making when it called for “top-down design” to “improve the mechanism for coordinating structural reforms and conduct major reforms in a holistic way according to the overall plan.”³⁵

As Hu’s vice president, Xi Jinping witnessed firsthand the failures of cooperative approaches to recalcitrant elites. Once in power, he instead endorsed the “top-down” approach and moved quickly to build consensus among political elites in favor of a more centralized approach in part by making the case at major work conferences, meetings, and training events, and in part by directing the indoctrination of officials through the party school system.³⁶ Xi also benefited from trends already well under way in Hu Jintao’s tenure that favored a centralization of power. Both Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping invested considerable time and resources into strengthening their control of the central support staff. They also expanded and elevated the role of this staff in the policy-making process.³⁷ The introduction of Politburo study sessions and expanded meetings in the 2002 time frame, for example, provided a regular venue for Party experts to coach, mentor, and teach senior leaders, a function managed by the Central Policy Research Office (CPRO) and Central Committee General Office.³⁸ Under Xi, the CPRO has also been designated the administrator of the general office of the all-important Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, while the General Office administers the National Security Commission.³⁹ Xi has also added two departments to the CPRO to handle the expansion in responsibility.⁴⁰

The influence of a “top-down,” centralized, systems-engineering approach to coping with China’s problems can be seen in many of the major policy decisions and actions undertaken since 2012. These groups have in some cases established new institutions and mechanisms to

³⁵ "Full Text of Hu Jintao's Report at 18th Party Congress." Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, November 27, 2012. http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/18th_CPC_National_Congress_Eng/t992917.htm

³⁶ Sangkuk Lee, "An Institutional Analysis of Xi Jinping’s Centralization of Power." *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 105 (2017): 325-36. doi:10.1080/10670564.2016.1245505

³⁷ Alice Lyman Miller, "The Central Committee Departments under Hu Jintao." *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 27. <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/CLM27AM.pdf>

³⁸ Gang Chen, "Politburo Group Study Sessions: Is the Chinese Communist Party Becoming More Technocratic?" *East Asian Policy* 04, no. 02 (2012): 45-52. doi:10.1142/s1793930512000141.

³⁹ Alice Lyman Miller, "More Already on the Central Committee’s Leading Small Groups." *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 44. <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm44am.pdf>

⁴⁰ “Two Superagencies Open in Succession, Li Zhanshu and Wang Huning Split Management of the National Security Commission” [兩大超級機構相繼運作 栗戰書王滬寧分掌國安辦改革辦]. *Ta Kung Pao*, March 07, 2014. <http://news.takungpao.com.hk/2014lh/article/2014-03/2330619.html>

better support the Party's new governance agenda. For example, the "Plan of Deepening Reform of Party Institutions" adopted by the 19th Central Committee's Third Plenum in February and approved by the March session of the National People's Congress (NPC) laid out 60 reforms across the political system, including changes in the Party, in the NPC and the State Council, in state regulatory bodies, in the united front's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, in police and military security forces, in mass organizations, and in local organizations. According to Alice Miller, the institutional reforms mandated by the Third Plenum and the 2018 NPC session are the "most extensive in scope, if not in depth, of the entire post-Mao era."⁴¹

Centralization of Power: End of Reform or New Era of Reform?

Understanding the imperatives and context for the dramatic consolidation of Xi's power can help inform a more thorough assessment of its ramifications. Xi's consolidation of power and violation of decades-long norms of elite politics enables the purging of rivals, crushing of enemies, and opportunities to reward supporters. The propaganda machinery's fawning promotion of a cult of personality risks setting up dangerous abuses, to say nothing of the increasing repression of the state.

However, these distressing features of China's politics are not incompatible with the CCP's main objectives: stable growth and incremental institutional reform to improve governance and thereby ensure long-term CCP rule. Under Xi, the economy has continued to grow at a relatively high rate between 6-7%, and the World Bank has reported progress in the country's economic rebalancing.⁴² China remains politically stable and Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party enjoy high levels of support, especially among the working and poorer classes.⁴³ A survey by Transparency International found the anti-graft campaign had made some progress, and that corruption in China now lags that of India.⁴⁴ The plan for reorganizing the government, released at the NPC, will likely strengthen the central government's regulatory authority, which is badly needed to control some of the country's persistent financial, economic, and environmental

⁴¹ Alice Lyman Miller, "Only Socialism Can Save China; only Xi Jinping Can Save Socialism." *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 56 (May 17, 2018). <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm56am.pdf>

⁴² "China Maintains Strong Growth and Reform Momentum, Says World Bank." World Bank, December 19, 2017. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/12/19/china-maintains-strong-growth-and-reform-momentum-says-world-bank>

⁴³ Tom Phillips, "Chairman Xi Crushes Dissent but Poor Believe He's Making China Great." *The Guardian*, October 14, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/14/xi-jinping-crushes-dissent-but-making-china-great-again>

⁴⁴ Suparna Goswami, "Study Finds India Is Asia's Most Corrupt Country, While Japan Comes In Last." *Forbes*, March 08, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suparnagoswami/2017/03/08/study-finds-india-is-asias-most-corrupt-country-while-japan-comes-in-last/#73143cdb1201>

abuses.⁴⁵ The court system is experiencing improvements as well. Plaintiffs are receiving fairer hearings in cases that do not touch on Party rule.⁴⁶

In short, Xi Jinping and his allies are using the centralization of power to promote the policy goals that they regard as essential to ensuring the CCP's long-term survival—even as they exploit the power for personal ends.

Way Ahead: Analysis by Interest Group

To paraphrase Xi Jinping, elite politics in China have truly entered a “new era,” and analysts will likely need new methods to better understand and anticipate political developments. Techniques and concepts suitable for the study of Chinese politics during the first decades of reform and opening are already losing their salience. The limitations of older analytic techniques can be seen in the widespread but errant predictions early in Xi's tenure that the incoming president would prove a “very weak leader” owing to his apparent lack of a strong factional network and the norms of collective decision-making.⁴⁷

Indeed, the value of studying patronage network-based factions, a staple of political analysis in the Deng, Jiang, and Hu eras, is already fading because such groupings no longer play as critical a function as before. And as their hold on politics weakens, the collision between more loosely knit, disparate coalitions spanning political and economic entities will likely instead occupy a more definitive role in elite politics. For example, individuals associated with the state bureaucracy, banks, shadow lenders, and fixed asset investments are likely to find themselves on the losing end of reform, and can be expected to form the core of opposition to Xi's reform agenda accordingly. By contrast, middle class professionals, workers in growth sectors, and manufacturers of products and providers of services for middle class consumers will see opportunities if reforms succeed, and thus have a strong incentive to support Xi Jinping. Reforms to manage urbanization, clean up the environment, improve the professional competence of the military, and others each carry their own respective winners and losers, and supporters and opponents of change can be expected to emerge accordingly. Complicating the picture, these disparate groups may form alliances across industries and social and political groups to augment their relative power and advance or frustrate changes.

⁴⁵ Chris Buckley and Keith Bradsher, "China Unveils Superagencies to Fight Pollution and Other Threats to Party Rule." *New York Times*, March 13, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/13/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-congress-pollution-corruption.html>

⁴⁶ "For Some Plaintiffs, Courts in China Are Getting Better." *The Economist*, September 30, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/china/21729753-cases-do-not-threaten-communist-party-are-receiving-fairer-hearing-some-plaintiffs>

⁴⁷ "Xi To Be 'Weak' President." Radio Free Asia, November 12, 2012. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/xi-jinping-11122012110129.html>

Similarly, older institutions such as collective decision making no longer hold such an inviolable place in elite politics, as Beijing's leaders prioritize structural reforms to meet long-term goals over the sanctity of long-held norms. Future study should focus on how Beijing may realize its various policy goals, with the expectation that established norms may be readily sacrificed to achieve those goals, if better options do not avail themselves. As an example, Xi appointed a key personal ally and supporter of the Third Plenum agenda, Wang Qishan, to the PRC vice presidency, despite the violation of retirement norms.⁴⁸

New issues will also likely arise from the centralization of politics. The over-centralization of power risks creating bottlenecks in decision-making. Bureaucrats fearful of the new coercive power may face political disincentives to reveal accurate but unwelcome information to the leadership. The Party's "hijacking" of government functions also risks making the policy making process more opaque and unpredictable. Xi Jinping has dramatically altered the structure of elite politics now and for years to come. To master the novel and complex changes and more accurately anticipate future developments, analysts will need to innovate their techniques and methods accordingly.

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⁴⁸ Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping, Seeking to Extend Power, May Bend Retirement Rules." *New York Times*, March 02, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/02/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-retirement-rules.html>

"Supervision Power": Party Discipline Under Xi Jinping

Kerry Brown

The National Supervision Law, passed in March 2018, provides a legal basis for the centralization of power under the Chinese Communist Party. While three pillars of state power—executive, parliamentary, and legal—have been institutionalized since the beginning of the Deng era, the National Supervision Law codifies the medium through which the Party has always expressed and exercised its power: “supervision power.” A flexible tool, highly granular in its application, “supervision power” allows the Party to involve itself in people’s daily lives in ways that have not been the habit since the Mao era ended in 1976.

The passage of the National Supervision Law in March 2018 has been interpreted as evidence that all power is being drawn toward Party Secretary Xi Jinping as an individual and the Party that he leads, often to the detriment of the state.⁴⁹ This is because the National Supervisory Commission (NSC), created alongside the passage of the law, brings supervision power, which had previously been shared by the Party and the state, back into central Party control, and extends Party-mandated supervision across all government workers. That extends the jurisdiction of Party supervision to a huge number of people, including workers in state-owned enterprises, universities, schools, hospitals, and all other areas where the employer is ultimately the state.

A narrative has emerged out of the Xi era that supports this interpretation of predatory Party movement. It is clear that the anti-corruption struggle Xi’s leadership instigated in 2013 carried a heavy political element. The campaign was meant to operate as a corrective to the years of excess during the late Hu Jintao era (2002-2012), when officials seemed to be getting out of control, feathering their own nests, and looking after their own networks rather than the broader Party good. The causes célèbres of this phenomenon were the shenanigans of Chongqing Party Secretary and Politburo member Bo Xilai, his connection to the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood in 2012, and the misbehavior of figures like former General Office Director Ling Jihua and retired Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang, who were dealt with the following year. All of these powerful figures were investigated and expelled from the Party.

⁴⁹ See Joseph Fewsmith, “The 19th Party Congress: Ringing in Xi Jinping’s New Age,” *China Leadership Monitor* 55 (Winter 2018). “The congress made clear that the party is in charge of China and Xi Jinping is in charge of the party,” p 1. <https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm55-jf-final.pdf>.

The anti-corruption campaign was intended to serve as a kind of quasi-cultural revolutionary struggle. The issue was the hedonistic, self-serving attitude spreading among officials and the need to remind them of their prime responsibility—the corporate, collectivist needs and aims of the Party. Under Xi, those aims have sharpened to a more nationalist bent and are focussed on delivery of the first and second centenary goals in 2021 and 2049 respectively, for the Party and then the state.⁵⁰

National rejuvenation and the delivery of the “China Dream” needed a disciplined, focused, and loyal cadre of Party workers—not a rabble of fragmented groups, busy enriching themselves with off-balance wealth, kickbacks, and graft, and antagonizing and alienating the public. The Xi leadership also felt a clear need to demonstrate and make clear and tangible the self-cleansing of the Party—and that meant a very public, very dramatic movement.

But the “tigers and flies” drama in which seemingly no one was immune from the sweep of the Central Commission for Discipline and Inspection (CCDI) under Wang Qishan, its enforcer from 2012 to 2017, did not last long. And while there has been a steady trickle of victims of the anti-corruption purge right to the present, with a promise to ensure continued pressure, the tactics have evidently shifted.⁵¹ Were such a movement to continue perpetually with such intensity, it would raise the question of whether the Party was intrinsically prone to corruption and could never correct itself. The logic of the anti-corruption campaign post-19th Party Congress therefore is now that a new Party culture and ethos have presumably been cultivated and anti-corruption thinking and action have been internalized by cadres at all levels, the primary task of the campaign must be to consolidate this new atmosphere.

This gives some context to the conditions under which the new Supervision Law was drafted and ultimately passed. In the Xi era, while many are fixated on the personal power that he seems to have accrued, the real story is how the Party has imposed itself across almost all areas of society and governance.⁵² The political necessity for this extension of the Party’s reach comes from a pragmatic acceptance that the Party is, through accident as much as design, the only unifying, broad-based institution in the country that can carry China as a nation towards fulfilment of its

⁵⁰ These are all spelled out in Xi Jinping, “The Governance of China Vol. 2” (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2017).

⁵¹ Kerry Brown, “The Anti-Corruption Struggle in Xi Jinping’s China: An Alternative Political Narrative,” *Asian Affairs* 49, Iss. 1 (February 2018): 1-10; Konstantinos Tsimonis, “Sharpening Swords and Strengthening Cages: Anti-Corruption under Xi,” in *The Chinese Nineteenth Party Congress: Start of a New Era*, ed. Kerry Brown (Singapore: World Scientific, 2018), 55-87.

⁵² See, as an example, “Can Xi Jinping Make Use of the Power He Has Accumulated,” *The Economist*, March 31st 2018. <https://www.economist.com/china/2018/03/31/can-xi-jinping-make-use-of-the-power-he-has-accumulated>

great national rejuvenation goal. This is partly because the Party has, since the Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989, destroyed any viable opposition.

It is also partly because no other entity that could be trusted—neither the army nor the state—had the capacity to extend itself into the areas the Party currently penetrates. The Party reaches down as an organization to every single one of China’s 40,000 plus townships, to its 800,000 village level entities, even into the households of most citizens (it has, after all, 90 million members, meaning there is a good chance that most families will have, somewhere in them, Party members). For Chinese unity, therefore, not just Xi but the whole leadership around him sincerely believes that it is a simple choice—the Party or nothing.

“Transparency with Chinese Characteristics”

In view of that, the Party’s main effort since 2012, beyond the enforcement of discipline in officials and the restoration of their status and reputation amongst the public (most survey and anecdotal evidence shows the anti-corruption struggle has been a popular success), has been a parallel attempt to legitimize the Party and state through a stronger rule by law. The primary agenda of the Xi leadership, despite complaints about it being dictatorial and centralizing, is to carry out a program of renewed reform that goes beyond the purely economic—the default up till 2012.⁵³

The acknowledgement of the creation of a ‘new normal’ in the Chinese economy and a more diverse, bourgeois, urbanized society has been accompanied by attempts to encode and create frameworks upon which this new paradigm is founded. The Third Plenum of the 18th Party Central Committee in 2013 delivered an extensive manifesto full of new promises covering fiscal, administrative, and other issues. In 2014, the focus shifted to the legal area. The Fourth Plenum then promised “rule by law,” not “rule of law.” In essence, that means “socialist law”—a system in which the Party continues to be accountable only to itself but at least recognises this is its legal language.⁵⁴

Such “transparency” with Chinese characteristics has had some interesting outcomes. The law for overseas non-governmental organizations passed in 2016 was widely criticized for the extra controls it imposed and for restricting the space for civil society domestically. But in many ways, the law only codified what was already widely practiced. Obnoxious and autocratic as it may

⁵³ For a lengthy, searing critique for the Xi’s power culture, from within, see Xu Zhangrun, “Imminent Fears, Immediate Hopes,” trans. Geremie Barmie, China Heritage. <http://chinaheritage.net/journal/imminent-fears-immediate-hopes-a-beijing-jeremiad/>

⁵⁴ On the Fourth Plenum, see Zachary Keck, “4th Plenum: Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics,” The Diplomat, October 20th 2014. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/10/4th-plenum-rule-of-law-with-chinese-characteristics/>

have been at least it was open rather than covert. In China, such changes often stand for progress of a sort.⁵⁵

The same can be said of the Supervision Law, a draft of which was issued at the end of 2016, inviting comments and feedback. The law places Party centralization at the heart of everything—and gives it a legal base. It is at least a tacit admission that the Party does need to have a stated legal foundation for the way it extends its control over all state spaces. A common criticism of the state constitution currently in force is that there are no stipulations on the relationship between the state and the Party (which after all has its own separate constitution). Now at least we know the answer: the Party believes it should have complete and absolute control over the state.

The quasi-liberal moves in the 1980s to set up a constitutionalist movement and to codify areas of competence and clear boundaries for Party and state has, under Xi, lost whatever little life it still had.⁵⁶ And the Xi leadership has been savage and persistent in turning down all attempts to promote and breathe new life into any constitutionalist ideas. In this context, the rewriting of the 1982 state constitution removing time limits for the president, the most notorious development of the 2018 National Congress, can be viewed as a deliberate piece of sabotage and heavy messaging. Xi may well not continue on as President after 2023 (though most believe he will). But the point has been made: the Party, and only the Party, runs China. And it has complete discretion over how precisely it does this.⁵⁷

“Supervision Power”: A Tactical Narrative of the National Supervision Law

For all the monopolizing and centralizing that catches the headlines, the Xi leadership is above all a tactical one. This is because, unlike Mao Zedong, a figure with whom he is often compared, Xi has to deliver to a rising, highly demanding, and expectant middle class. They will be the figures that decide the future of China rather than any particular CCP leader. It is therefore important to work out not only the political narrative of the National Supervision Law but also

⁵⁵ Nectar Gan, “Why Foreign NGOs are Struggle with the New Chinese Law,” *South China Morning Post*, 13th June 2017. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2097923/why-foreign-ngos-are-struggling-new-chinese-law>.

⁵⁶ For an overview of the debates about Chinese constitutionalism, see Lison Harris, “China’s Constitutionalism,” in *Interpreting Hong Kong’s Basic Law: The Struggle for Coherence*, ed. Fu Hualong, L. Harris and SNM Young (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 243-257.

⁵⁷ A comprehensive discussion of the Xi attitude towards constitutionalism can be found in Larry Catá Backer, “Chinese Constitutionalism in the New Era: The Emerging Idea and Practice of Constitution in the 19th CPC Congress Report,” Working Papers Coalition for Peace & Ethics, No. 11/1 (November 2017). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3066974> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3066974>

the tactical narrative. What part does the law play in the game of achieving the clear endpoint—sustainable, stable one-party rule? The key thing to think about here is the issue of “supervision” and “supervision power.”

Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of modern Chinese nationalism, talked in the early part of the twentieth century of there being five divisions of powers needed in China: executive power, legal power, parliamentary power, supervision power, and examination power (meaning in this case, the right to set school university and other public exams).⁵⁸ Under the Communist Party, at least since the era of Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s when more effort was put into establishing stronger institutions, there have been three pillars: executive (through the State Council), parliamentary (through the National Peoples Congress), and legal (through the Supreme People’s Court).

The glaring omission here is precisely where the Party expresses and exercises its power. Until now, it has existed almost like a supernumerary body, known about but not labeled. With the addition of what we can call “supervision power,” that has been partially rectified—because it is a Party, not a state, legal, or parliamentary body that exercises this power. The National Supervision Law is so extensive in its remit, with a list under its 15th article that encompasses “Civil servants of organs of the Communist Party of China, organs of the people’s congresses and their standing committees, people’s governments, supervision commissions, people’s courts, people’s procuratorates, organs of committees of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference at all levels, organs of the bodies of the democratic parties at all levels, organs of the federations of industry and commerce at all levels, and personnel managed with reference to the *Civil Servants Law of the People’s Republic of China*.”

It then extends to “personnel engaged in public affairs at organizations authorized by laws or regulations, or lawfully retained by state organs, to administer public affairs, managerial personnel of state-owned enterprises, personnel engaged in management in state-run education, scientific research, culture, health care, sports, and other such units, personnel engaged in collective affairs management at basic-level mass organizations of self-government and other personnel who perform public duties in accordance with law.” In the end, the National Supervision Commission has the ability to inspect, investigate, hold to account, and then deal with literally anyone doing anything with a link to governance and organization.⁵⁹

As usual with “socialist law with Chinese characteristics,” the wording of the things that can be investigated, how they can be investigated, and what actions can then be taken is so abstract as to

⁵⁸ On Sun’s constitutional thinking, see Yu-long Ling, “Dr. Sun Yatsen’s Doctrine and its Impact on the Modern World,” *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 19, No. 1 (April 2012), 1-11.

⁵⁹ See “Translation: Second Draft of the Supervision Law,” NPC Observer, February 5, 2018. <https://npcobserver.com/2018/02/05/translation-second-draft-of-the-supervision-law/>

be almost meaningless. Counterrevolutionary crimes were removed from the criminal law statutes over two decades ago. But with this new law, anti-state and therefore anti-Party actions are criminal and punishable offences, with the added bonus that the Party can define what these crimes are almost on a case-by-case basis. It is no wonder then that during the consultation for the law from 2016 to 2017, there were 13,268 responses, far more than any other legislation slated at the same time.⁶⁰ Chinese people are evidently aware, and concerned, about these sweeping new powers. But so far, that has not stopped them from being rolled out.

“Supervision power” in this light operates as a wonderfully flexible tool. It can be applied anywhere, in any way that might be necessary. But more importantly, it is highly granular in its application. The Party is becoming personal again, trying to involve itself in people’s daily lives in ways that have not been the habit since the Mao era ended in 1976. The supervision powers that the new law accords the NSC, it must be stressed, apply not to institutions but to people within those institutions. The Supervision Law, therefore, is not written to hold the State Council to account but officials in the State Council. It is not applicable to the National People’s Congress but to individual members of the Congress. The same applies to Party officials and any other government workers. The National Supervision Law and its prescripts and scope relates to them as people, not to the entity they work as part of. And it is they as individuals who will be held to account and can be subject to “supervision” and supervision power.

To understand the significance of these newly codified powers, the key question to ask is just how meaningful and workable they will be. The emerging social contract under Xi is such that the Party will fulfill its responsibilities and a cleaned out cadre of officials will adhere to a new mode of acting according to specific codes of behaviour in order to fulfill its collective responsibility to deliver national rejuvenation objectives. But the corollary of that is to ask for responsibility and discipline from society and to have their unified commitment to work with, beside, and through the unified Party apparatus to achieve this.

Here things become far stickier. Can the Party really make this kind of demand when its ideology and belief system is largely unheeded by Chinese society and its legitimacy was until recently built upon the delivery of economic and material goods? The idea that in such a complex and diverse society as China has now become the Party can use such a broad and crude set of supervision measures it has used within its own organization to enforce the same fear and discipline across every sector of Chinese society is a massive and unproved assumption. And as was found with the anti-corruption struggle, one side effect was such widespread fear amongst officialdom that decisions simply stopped being made and no one would dare to do anything unless told by someone higher up for fear of falling foul of the new movement. The same sense

⁶⁰ See Li Jianqiu, “In Depth: What Changes Will the New Supervision Draft Law Bring to China?” iFeng, December 22 2017. http://news.ifeng.com/a/20171222/54402971_0.shtml

of fear might occur, even more widely and with even more debilitating effects, with the full implementation of the new supervision system.

Outlook

The Xi leadership has proved an ambiguous one for the outside world. Centralization of power and the kinds of enforcement of discipline seen within China seem to violate most democratic and liberal principles. And yet they have ironically made things slightly easier to work out within the country for outsiders. In the Hu era, no one properly knew the source of decision-making (witness the meeting between American Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Hu Jintao in 2011 when a stealth fighter had been used for the first time and the seeming bemusement on the face of the Chinese president who appeared unaware of the test).⁶¹

In Xi's China, we have a much clearer idea—the center in Beijing is where what gets said goes, and it is there, and with a clear set of key stakeholders, that business needs to be transacted. For major national issues therefore it is Xi and Xi alone that needs to be spoken to. Strangely, this parallels the current situation in Washington, though it has to be said that Xi seems to have far more respect for his bureaucracy than his counterpart in America. China appears orderly and clear in its decision-making hierarchy now. And, as already stated, it might have objectionable regulations and laws, but at least these are clearly spelled out in black and white to take issue with rather than being based on supposition.

The Xi leadership is comprehensive by its own description. The key ideological slogan before the writing of Xi Jinping Thought into the Party Constitution in 2017 at the 19th Party Congress was the “Four Comprehensives” of 2015, which promised to comprehensively deepen reform, comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society, comprehensively govern the nation according to law, and comprehensively strictly govern the Party. These map out the magnitude of his leadership's ambitions. The Supervision Law and the NSC relate to the third of the “comprehensives”—to “govern the nation according to law.” The argument would be that the anti-corruption struggle started the process of better governing the Party and that the various economic and administrative changes made since 2012 have contributed to the first two.

“Comprehensive,” of course, is one largely positive way to describe how things are unfolding currently in China now. But it could easily tip into a far more negative word—“overreaching.” And overreach, if that is what does ensue, will occur during implementation of the new law. Under Deng, “practice was the sole criterion for truth.” So will it be with supervision powers. If their implementation is mishandled and they prove to be as draconian as many fear, then the public backlash might be fierce—and unmanageable. If the Xi leadership can seemingly be so

⁶¹ Elizabeth Bumiller and Michael Wines, “Test of Stealth Fighter Clouds Gates Visit to China,” *New York Times*, January 11th 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/12/world/asia/12fighter.html>

disoriented, as seemed to be the case, by the Trump administration's imposition of tariffs, then what might be the impact of an angry revolt against heavy handed, arbitrary attempts at Party supervision?

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China's External Propaganda Work: Missions, Messengers, Mediums

David Shambaugh

In order to achieve the Chinese Communist Party's goal of improving its image abroad, President Xi Jinping has overseen the intensification of the external propaganda blitz begun in 2007 by former top leader Hu Jintao. This emphasis on the role of external propaganda work in achieving CCP objectives was further reflected in bureaucratic changes announced this year intended to improve the CCP's ability to influence international public opinion. Thus, China's international activities in the information space and media domain have become a key element in China's global posture.

Since coming to power, President Xi Jinping has overseen the intensification of the external propaganda blitz begun in 2007 by former top leader Hu Jintao. As Xi told the November 2014 Foreign Affairs Work Conference in Beijing: “We should increase China’s soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China’s messages to the world.”⁶² This is the task of CCP propagandists. Thus, on February 19, 2016 Xi paid an important visit to the headquarters of the *People’s Daily*, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV, where he stressed the importance of external propaganda work.⁶³

This increasing emphasis on the role of external propaganda work in achieving CCP objectives was further reflected in bureaucratic changes announced this year intended to improve the CCP’s ability to influence international public opinion. China Central Television, China Radio International, and China National Radio were all merged under a single entity entitled Voice of China (mirroring the United States’ Voice of America), a state-entity under the management of the CCP’s Central Propaganda Department.⁶⁴

Since then, Xi Jinping has continued to emphasize the importance of external propaganda work. At the August 2018 National Meeting on Ideology and Propaganda, Xi stated: “To present good

⁶² Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech at Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, November 29, 2014. http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml.

⁶³ Xinhua, “Xi Completes Media Tour, Stresses Party Leadership,” February 19, 2016. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/20/c_135114528.htm.

⁶⁴ Chris Buckley, “China Gives Communist Party More Control Over Policy and Media,” New York Times, March 21, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/world/asia/china-communist-party-xi-jinping.html>

images, we should improve our international communication capability, tell China's stories well, disseminate China's voice, show an authentic and comprehensive China to the world, and raise the country's soft power and the influence of Chinese culture.”⁶⁵

The Chinese Communist Party has long distinguished between “external propaganda” (对外宣传) and “internal propaganda” (对内宣传).⁶⁶ The latter has always been aimed at audiences inside China, while the former has targeted foreigners abroad. Indeed, the CCP recognized early on the importance of trying to shape the views of foreigners potentially sympathetic to their cause. In the Yan'an base area, CCP propagandists cultivated and subjected left-leaning journalists—such as Agnes Smedley, Edgar Snow, Theodore White, Annalee Jacoby, John Hersey, and Anna Louise Strong—to the CCP narratives on a variety of subjects.

After coming to power in 1949, the new regime established a number of mechanisms to target foreign audiences around the world.⁶⁷ For most of the 1950s-1970s these activities were mainly carried out by the CCP International Liaison Department and media units affiliated with Xinhua News Agency, and they were primarily targeted at socialist and developing countries.

Beginning in the late-1970s, commensurate with China's general opening to the West and to Asia, its cultural diplomacy, party-to-party diplomacy, and media activities began to broaden internationally. Then, after 2012, China's external “image activities” began to ramp up and go global.⁶⁸ This coincided with the popularization of Joseph Nye's concept of “soft power” (软实力) within the CCP, which Chinese leader Hu Jintao referred to in his 17th CCP Congress speech that year. Since then, the world has witnessed a dramatic increase of attention, resources, and explosion of activities associated with the Chinese government's desire to affect and control international views of China.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ “At National Meeting on Propaganda and Ideological Work, Xi Jinping Stresses That it is Necessary to Raise the Banner High, Win the Support of the People, Cultivate New personnel, Invigorate Culture, Present a Good Image, and Urges to Better Accomplish the Mission and task of Propaganda and Ideological Work Under the New Situation,” Xinhua Domestic Service, August 22, 2018.

⁶⁶ In the last decade Chinese authorities have officially been translating *xuanchuan* as “publicity,” so as to give it a less sinister connotation to foreigners. But “propaganda” remains the accurate translation for *xuanchuan*.

⁶⁷ See Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy* (London: School of Oriental & African Studies/The China Quarterly, 1962); Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

⁶⁸ See David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapter 6.

⁶⁹ See David Shambaugh, “China Soft Power Push,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-06-16/china-s-soft-power-push>; Mingjiang Li and Gang Chen, *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011); Kingsley

Thus “external propaganda work” has long been an important foreign policy instrument for the Chinese Communist Party and People’s Republic of China. It is not necessarily a new phenomenon, but it has become a real priority of China’s party-state.

Messaging

Over the years the themes of external propaganda have varied substantially—in parallel with the dramatic fluctuations in domestic political campaigns (运动) and related slogans (口号), shifts in ideology (意识形态), meta propaganda narratives (提法), and substantive elements in China’s diplomacy (外交). The shifts in propaganda lines (宣传路线) throughout PRC history have thus been dizzying and anything but consistent.

Inside China, the regime has subjected its citizens to decades of indoctrination and political study (政治学系) in attempts to publicize its policies and priorities. Chinese examinations—including the rigorous university entrance exam (高考) or civil service exam (公务员考试)—similarly require test takers to memorize stock answers to stock questions (all of which can be known in advance from the exam preparation manuals).

The PRC is also a state that places a lot of stock in declarative policies. Words matter a lot to the CCP and PRC. When they make a declaratory policy statement, they expect others to take note. They also expect others to memorize, internalize, and parrot back verbatim the specific propaganda narrative, slogan, or policy. In Chinese this is the very political act of political allegiance—or as the CCP puts it: to “unify thought” (统一思想).

The Chinese communist government puts strong stock in slogans both domestically and externally. Slogans are usually Chinese character compounds of 4, 8, 16, 28, or 32 characters in length, and are often used as propaganda devices. Slogans and state-set narratives have long been intrinsic to Chinese communist political culture. They are meant to simultaneously motivate the intended recipient audience and, at the same, summarize the content of a specific policy. Slogans are not only supposed to convey policy and indoctrinate recipients, but the main purpose is to force uniformity of thought and articulated language. Therefore, the appropriate response within the Chinese political system when hearing a slogan is to parrot it back (repeat it) *word for word* (verbatim)—so as to reflect the fact that the recipient has internalized it and accepts it.

Edney, Stanley Rosen, and Ying Zhu (eds.), *Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: China’s Campaign for hearts and Minds* (London: Routledge, 2018).

In Chinese this is known as the act of *biaotai* (表态), “declaring where one stands.”⁷⁰ Thus, to *biaotai* to a *kouhao* (slogan) is a ritualistic, rhetorical, and significant political act—the essence of loyalty to the regime. In essence, it is a prime example of what the late Sinologist Lucian Pye referred to as an act of “feigned compliance.”⁷¹ To *biaotai* does not mean that one actually believes or complies with a given *kouhao* or government policy—it is an expression of compliance through verbal conformity. It is a political ritual of pretension.

The Messengers: The External Propaganda Bureaucracy

The bureaucratic nexus of this Orwellian operation has long centered on five main institutional actors: the CCP Propaganda Department, CCP International Liaison Department, Xinhua News Agency, the State Council Information Office, and the Political Work Department of the People’s Liberation Army. To be sure, other ministries are involved—such as the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, China Radio International (formerly Radio Beijing), China Central Television (中央电视台), the Foreign Languages Press (外文局), State Council Foreign Experts Bureau (专家局), CCP Central Committee Bureau of Translation & Compilation (中央编译局), and other organs. But these bodies are more the implementers of external propaganda, whereas the former group are the formulators.

For the first three decades of the PRC these organs conducted their external propaganda work as a subset of their domestic propaganda work. But beginning in the early 1980s, the CCP Propaganda Department began to organizationally distinguish between internal and external propaganda and set up a separate bureaucratic apparatus to promote the latter. On April 8, 1980 the CCP Politburo established a separate External Propaganda Leading Group (对外宣传小组), or EPLG, to oversee the increasingly sprawling apparatus under the *joint* sponsorship of the CCP Central Committee and State Council. Prior to this time external propaganda was the joint responsibility of the Foreign Affairs Leading Group (中央外事领导小组), which was established in 1958, and the Propaganda & Education Leading Group (中央宣教领导小组).

The latter was temporarily abolished in February 1988 (when its duties, functions, and staff of 33 were absorbed by the CCP Propaganda Department), but it was restored two years later in March 1990.⁷² The EPLG’s composition has varied over time, but in 1990 it had eleven members.⁷³ It

⁷⁰ Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1985), p. 41.

⁷¹ This is a central argument in Lucian Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China’s Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies of the University of Michigan, 1988).

⁷² The documents abolishing and restoring the EPLG are available in General Office of the Central Propaganda Department (ed.), *Dangde Xuanchuan Gongzuo Wenjian Xuanbian, 1988-1992* [Selected Documents on the Party’s Propaganda Work] (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao chubanshe, 1993, *neibu faxing*), pp. 1704, 1904, 1936.

has always been chaired by the Politburo Standing Committee member in charge of ideology and propaganda work. Currently that is Wang Huning. Previously it was Liu Yunshan, and before him Li Changchun. In addition, as with other leading groups, the composition of the EPLG is comprised of the ministerial level officials from leading agencies in this policy system (系统).

On January 25, 1991 the Central Committee and State Council jointly decided to merge the State Council's Information Office (国务院新闻办公室) together with the EPLG.⁷⁴ This phenomenon is described in Chinese as “one organ, two signs” (一个机构两块牌子), but in fact, the SCIO is the administrative staff office to the EPLG. The EPLG sets external propaganda policy, and the SCIO implements it. The new director of the SCIO is Xu Lin, who previously served as head of China's Cyberspace Administration.⁷⁵ The SCIO is the “front” organ that the world—and particularly the foreign press corps in Beijing—see, but it is in fact one operational side of the EPLG and external propaganda work. Among other responsibilities, it is responsible for coordinating the compilation and publication of all government White Papers.

Propaganda towards Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao is not viewed within the purview of “external propaganda,” and is accordingly overseen jointly by the CCP United Front Department, the Taiwan Affairs Office and the Hong Kong & Macao Affairs Office of the State Council. Propaganda aimed at foreigners resident in China and short-term visitors such as tourists and businessmen are also priorities for the SCIO, which is also responsible for managing the flow of information and media flowing into China from abroad.

As a result of the sweeping reorganization of the State Council at the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2018, it appears that the EPLG has been reabsorbed back within the Central Propaganda Department—thus no longer enjoying its semi-autonomous status—but this is not entirely clear.

⁷³ Central Committee Document No. 265 [1990], *Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Zhongyang Duiwai Xuanchuan Xiaozu Zucheng Renyuan Zhuzhi de Tongzhi* [Notice Regarding the Membership of the Central External Propaganda Leading Group] in General Office of the Propaganda Department, *Dang de Xuanchuan Gongzuo Wenjian Xuanbian* [Selected Documents on Party Propaganda Work] (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao chubanshe, 1993), p. 1919.

⁷⁴ Wang Jingsong, *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Zhengfu yu Zhengzhi* [PRC Government & Politics] (Beijing: Zhongyang Dangxiao chubanshe, 1995), p. 401.

⁷⁵ Nectar Gan, “China Names Former Internet Tsar Xu Lin as New External Propaganda Chief,” *South China Morning Post*, August 21, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2160623/china-names-former-internet-tsar-xu-lin-new>

Missions & Mediums

The Chinese government is of the view that Western media possess a monopoly (垄断) on international information concerning China, and that these media have an ingrained bias against China. The primary overarching mission of external propaganda work is, therefore, to break the monopoly (大垄断), acquire China's own "discourse power" (话语权), engage in "discourse war" (话语战争) with Western media, and "tell China's story well" (将中国故事好).⁷⁶

Derivatively, external propaganda work is thus oriented towards four principal missions: (1) publicizing Chinese government policies and perspectives; (2) promoting Chinese culture abroad; (3) countering what is perceived to be hostile foreign propaganda (such as the so-called "China threat theory") and negative images of China; and (4) propagating China's foreign policy on international questions. Each of these functions involves considerable efforts, resources, technology, and personnel. It is an increasingly important effort and component of China's foreign policy.

External propaganda covers a variety of mediums. It includes the international broadcasting of China Radio International, CCTV broadcasting to Taiwan of Cross-Strait Voice (海峡之声), China Global Television (CGTN), publications such as *People's Daily* foreign edition (海外版), *China Today*, *Beijing Review*, *People's China*, *China Pictorial*, *China Daily*, *Liaowang* weekly edition, and various publications of the Foreign Languages Press. The March 2018 NPC reorganization also folded a number of these organs (notably CRI and CGTN) into a newly created "Voice of China" (中国之声). As with the EPLG, it is still too early to tell exactly what this reorganization means in practical terms—but it is all commensurate with a recentralization of propaganda work under the CCP Propaganda Department.

Xinhua News Agency also plays a central role in external propaganda work. Xinhua is China's official state news service and a Central Committee organ. From its inception, Xinhua has always had a dual role: to report news and to disseminate Party and state propaganda. This has been true both domestically and internationally. Altogether Xinhua now has approximately 3000 journalists, of which 400 are posted in 117 bureaus abroad, with plans to expand to 180 bureaus by 2020. In addition to opening new bureaus Xinhua is strengthening the staffs of existing ones (particularly in the Northern American, European, and Asian markets) and diversifying its product line beyond traditional news reporting to substantially beef-up its web presence, video and audio streaming, and multimedia. Xinhua's external service mainly publishes descriptive news reports and seeks to develop a large client base based on marketing a cheaper product than the big Western wire services. In 2010 Xinhua had 80,000 paying institutional subscribers—which produces a strong revenue stream. Xinhua is especially targeting the developing world

⁷⁶ This is a phrase originally used by Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

where Western media have less presence and there is no real domestic competition for international news.

External propaganda work also very much involves a range of “united front” exchange organizations, such as the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (CCP United Front Department), Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs (Foreign Ministry), China Association for International Understanding (CCP International Department), China Association for International Friendly Contact (PLA General Political Department), China Institute of International Strategic Studies (PLA General Staff Department Second Department), Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, and others. To a certain extent, external propaganda work also extends to the work of international affairs think tanks such as the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (Ministry of State Security), China Institute of International Studies (Foreign Ministry), and others.

External propaganda is by no means all about politics. In fact, Beijing places a high priority on promoting its own cultural traditions abroad; indeed, it is China’s 5000 years of civilizational heritage that may be its strongest soft power asset. The Seventeenth Central Committee of the CCP even devoted a whole plenary session in October 2011 to the issue of *culture*, with the final plenary communiqué declaring that it was a national goal to “build our country into a socialist cultural superpower,” claiming that “it is a pressing task to increase the state’s cultural soft power and enhance the international influence of Chinese culture.”⁷⁷ As such, China is assertively promoting its culture abroad through fine arts, performing arts, sports, music, film, literature, and architecture. In each of these areas China is beginning to make inroads abroad. Art exhibitions of China’s rich imperial past have always been popular around the world. China’s traditional heritage is often marketed abroad as part of a series of “Year of China” festivals staged in different countries. Many overseas exhibitions are mounted by the Ministry of Culture’s China Arts and Entertainment Group, a large state-owned enterprise. The State Council Information Office is also involved in staging exhibitions abroad.

China is also using what it calls “host diplomacy” (接待外交) and special events to good effect. A large number of governmental and non-governmental conferences take place in China every year. Some, such as the 2014 APEC meeting or the 2017 Belt & Road Forum, are real extravaganzas. China’s hosting of the 2016 G-20 summit was a similar showcase event. The 2010 Shanghai Expo and 2008 Olympics won international acclaim. The annual Boao Forum (China’s tropical version of the Davos World Economic Forum), China Development Forum, Beijing Forum, Tsinghua University World Peace Forum, Shanghai World Forum on China Studies, Global Think Tank Forum and other large-scale conclaves bring leading figures from around the world to China every year.

⁷⁷ Xinhua, “CPC Central Committee Plenum Ends with Cultural Development Guideline,” October 18, 2011. <http://english.cntv.cn/20111018/114732.shtml>.

In addition to these forums, China's government affiliated exchange organizations play a large role in efforts to influence foreign expert opinion. The CCP's International Department (and its front organ the China Center for Contemporary World Studies) convenes an annual "Party & the World" conference, but also brings a steady stream of foreign politicians to China for all-expenses-paid "study tours." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' affiliated Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs has long done the same. The Hong Kong based China-US Exchange Foundation is also actively promoting the voices of Chinese scholars through its website and Chinese government positions through monetary research grants given to American institutions.

In sum, external propaganda work encompasses a diverse set of institutions, activities, and mediums. It is only going to become more important in the future.

External Propaganda Work is an Increasing Priority

Clearly, the CCP and State Council have prioritized improving China's image abroad. Huge amounts of resources are being allocated to this purpose—nobody knows for sure how much, as the budgets of involved institutions are not made public and it depends on how one defines the parameters of external propaganda work. For example, are Confucius Institutes to be counted? Should *all* Ministry of Culture projects abroad be counted? Should *all* of Xinhua News Agency activities abroad be included? What about China's Ministry of Education—should scholarship support for foreign students studying in Chinese universities be counted? So, there are obvious methodological questions concerning the financing and activities related to China's external cultural exchanges. And how are we to distinguish between *legitimate* public diplomacy (公共外交) work and external propaganda work? *All* countries practice public diplomacy in attempts to publicize their cultures and government policies abroad. China is surely no different. So, what is the distinction between public diplomacy and propaganda?

These are all vexing questions to keep in mind when considering, and researching, China's external propaganda work and so-called "influence activities" abroad. But one thing is certain: China's international activities in the information space and media domain have increased significantly in recent years and have become a key element in China's global posture. They are not likely to decrease.

The real remaining question is, however, is all the effort actually *improving* China's image around the world? So far, the evidence (judging from public opinion surveys) is that China's global image remains *mixed* and there has been no appreciable *improvement* in China's "favorability" ratings. If anything, they have *declined* in several regions (Africa, Asia, Western Europe, Latin America, and North America). Thus, to date, those who administer China's external propaganda machinery and activities should not be too satisfied—although it is likely

that they are, as Chinese officials live in an “echo chamber” and tend to believe their own propaganda.

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Exploit Every Rift: United Front Work Goes Global

Anne-Marie Brady

As the CCP's united front work aimed at the outside world has consolidated since the 19th Party Congress, there are strong signs that a concerted response to deal with the challenge of the CCP's political interference activities is underway in targeted nations. As united front work is traditionally covert, one might have expected that ever-growing international attention would lead to it changing tactics and going underground—the tactic of a weaker player. Conversely, CCP united front work aimed at the outside world has gone on the offensive, fighting on all fronts, indicating that the CCP leadership believes it is in a position of strength and has no reason to hide its efforts. Targeted governments must develop internally-focused resilience strategies that will protect the integrity of their political processes and institutions at the same time as partnering with like-minded states to form their own “united front against the united front.”

“The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and most thoroughly, carefully, attentively and skilfully making use without fail of every, even the smallest, ‘rift’ among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional. Those who fail to understand this, fail to understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific, modern Socialism in general.”⁷⁸ V. I. Lenin

“Those who correctly apply this policy can muster a mighty revolutionary army of the masses in their millions upon millions to concentrate the attack on the chief enemy and triumph in the revolution” People's Daily, 1 November 1977

Since coming to power in 2012, Xi Jinping has led a massive expansion of “united front work,” a form of political warfare that the CCP has perfected over many decades. The united front is a

⁷⁸ V.I. Lenin, *“Left-wing” Communism, An Infantile Disorder* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1950), 91.

classic Leninist tactic with the goal of forging the broadest possible coalition of interests so as to undermine the “chief enemy.” So when we look at Xi Jinping’s united front strategy, we need to both examine its participants and also work out its targets.

International debate on China’s increased united front work and political interference activities under Xi has so far frequently focused on the CCP’s United Front Work Department. But this is insufficient, and it reflects the lack of attention to studying Party affairs since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.

It cannot be emphasized enough: united front work is a task of *all* CCP agencies (some more than others) as well as a basic task of *every* CCP member. Every CCP agency, from the International Liaison Department to the Central Propaganda Department to the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, is tasked with engaging in united front activities, as are PRC government departments and local authorities. As up to seventy-five percent of the CEOs of China’s major companies are now Party members, we also need to examine the work of China’s private corporations in united front work activities.

The PRC is a party-state. Since the 19th Party Congress, Xi has removed any veneer of separation between the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese state. So while the United Front Work Department does indeed play an important role in CCP united front work, comprehending China’s modern political warfare tactics requires a deep understanding of all the CCP’s agencies, their policies, their leadership, their methodology, and the way the party-state system works in China.

Like the Bolsheviks, the CCP uses united front work in both domestic and foreign policy. Xi Jinping is running China in crisis mode and the return of direct Party control over key fault lines such as ethnic affairs, especially with regard to Uighurs and Tibetans, religious affairs, and the Overseas Chinese is indicative of this. After the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, three government agencies, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, the State Administration for Religious Affairs, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, were absorbed into the CCP’s United Front Work Department. In March 2018, another significant merger is reported to have occurred: the CCP’s International Liaison Department, in charge of CCP links with foreign parties—which until the Xi era had become an organization looking for a purpose for its existence—was joined with the Office of the Central Leading Group on Foreign Affairs, and it was given extra powers and resources.⁷⁹ This change reveals how the CCP’s revolutionary and transformative foreign policy agenda and methods are now being fused with the Chinese state’s more mainstream foreign policy activities such as trade, investment and top-level

⁷⁹ “China to restructure foreign affairs team in push for greater role on the world stage, source says.” *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2136651/china-restructure-foreign-affairs-team-push-greater>.

diplomatic meetings. The last time that these two aspects were joined was in the 1940s before the CCP came to power.

It is the foreign aspect of China's contemporary united front work that has hit the international headlines due to a series of revelations about the scale of CCP united front work/political interference activities in Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, and now the USA. The post-1978 policies of the USA and other Western nations to engage with China on all fronts—while normalizing and ultimately downplaying the role of the CCP in Chinese politics—is eroding before our eyes. Suddenly, Pekingology is back in favour, and many analysts are now scrambling to understand CCP policies and institutions.

The CCP's united front work aimed at the outside world has consolidated since the 19th Party Congress, carrying on trends established over the previous five years. Xi-era united front work activities focus on four key areas⁸⁰: 1, Stepped-up efforts to manage and guide the Chinese diaspora—both Han Chinese and ethnic minorities such as Uighurs and Tibetans—so as to utilize them as agents of Chinese foreign policy while meting out increasingly harsh treatment do those who do not cooperate; 2, Coopting and cultivating foreign economic and political elites in the nations of the world to support and promote the CCP's global foreign policy goals; 3, A global, multi-platform, strategic communication strategy to promote the CCP's agenda; and 4, The formation of a China-centered economic and strategic bloc—One Belt One Road, or as the CCP prefers to call it in discussions with foreigners: the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Xi government's Belt and Road Initiative is a classic united front activity. It is pitched as “beyond ideology”⁸¹ and designed to create a new global order, which CCP analysts describe as “Globalization 2.0.” The CCP has a longstanding policy of developing relationships with foreign and overseas Chinese personages (the more influential the better) to influence, subvert, and, if necessary, bypass the policies of their governments and promote the interests of the CCP globally.⁸² Through the united front strategy, the CCP has seeded allies and clients throughout the economic and political elite of many countries at the national as well as the local level and is getting them to promote acceptance for the Belt and Road Initiative in their respective countries.

Because Xi is running China in crisis mode, his government also needs to bring the information environment in China under control—and unlike his predecessors he has the power to do so. In

⁸⁰ As discussed in great detail in my paper: Anne-Marie Brady, “Magic Weapons: China's Political Influence Activities Under Xi Jinping,” Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, September 18, 2017. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/magicweaponsanne-mariebradyseptember162017.pdf>

⁸¹ “Peng Guangqian: “One-Belt-One-Road” Strategic Concept Reconstructs the International Order” [彭光谦:“一带一路”战略构想与国际秩序重构] *Xinhua* January 9, 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20170219183554/http://www.taiwan.cn/xwzx/gj/201501/t20150109_8645599.htm.

⁸² Zhao Pitao, “Summary of Foreign Affairs “ [外事该说], (Shanghai: Science Publishing House, 1995) 167.

order to do this in a porous global information environment, the CCP must try to curb debates related to China's interests outside the country as well as within. This is why the Chinese diaspora as well as the international China Studies community have been the focus of united front activities, from interference in the editorial line of overseas Chinese language media to pressure on leading academic presses and universities to succumb to CCP censorship guidelines.

Unfortunately, decades of post-Cold War complacency, arrogance about the superiority of liberal democracies over communist systems, as well as the cumulative economic impact of market liberalist theories on the public sector has left the foreign targets of China's political interference operations spectacularly unprepared to deal with the challenge they are only now beginning to perceive. Adding to these longstanding problems, since 9/11, Western intelligence agencies have been almost exclusively focused on counter-terrorism, and few have any Chinese-speaking specialists, let alone specialists on the CCP.

In many countries, Chinese-language teaching has been outsourced to the Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms, which are guided by CCP censorship requirements, but, astonishingly, subsidized by their foreign hosts. In effect, we have all been paying for the CCP to promote the Party line in Chinese language teaching and China Studies.

Foreign media outlets such as the *Washington Post* and Australia's Fairfax publish inserts from *China Daily*, Voice of America's Chinese language programs take instruction from the CCP on sensitive China-related stories, Hollywood only makes movies which will pass the CCP censors, and Twitter closed down the Twitter feed of the CCP's *bête noire*, high-profile whistleblower Guo Wengui.

Meanwhile, some China academics and analysts rely on PRC student interns to conduct their research—students whose loyalty is supposed to be managed by their government through the Chinese Students and Scholars Association or the Western Returned Scholars Association. They also accept funding from CCP front organizations; and all-expenses-paid trips to China; and they take up generous adjunct positions at Chinese universities. It is no wonder then, that at a time when one would expect the China field to be stepping up to explain the situation to their governments and the public, many of our leading China academics are instead remaining silent or downplaying the risk—sometimes using CCP talking points to do so.

Yet, there are strong signs that a concerted response to deal with the challenge of the CCP's increased political interference activities is underway, both in targeted nations and via joint efforts. In September 2018, Five Eyes partners formed a Counter Foreign Interference group, and the actions of China—and Russia—will be the main focus. The US Congress introduced several new bills in 2018, the Countering Foreign Propaganda Act, the Foreign Influence Transparency Act, and the 2019 Defense Authorization Act, all of which target China and Russia's political

interference activities. The US State Department has been allocated \$40 million to fund analysis of influence operations and develop a counter-strategy. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced a series of laws to curb Chinese influence. And Canada is leading efforts to unite like-minded states via trade agreements.

China's Counter-Strategy

One might have expected that the ever-growing international attention to China's united front work would lead to it changing tactics and going underground. United front work is traditionally covert and is the tactic of a weaker player. There have indeed been some attempts to disguise the origins of various China-related united front organizations in the wake of the growing international interest, and a change in propaganda messaging aimed at the outside world on key topics such as One Belt, One Road and the CCP government's detention of a million or more Uighurs and their children in detention centers and state orphanages.

But overall, despite the continual exposure of CCP methods and activities in the last year, CCP united front work aimed at the outside world has gone on the offensive, fighting on all fronts. This indicates that the CCP leadership believes it is in a position of strength *vis á vis* the US, the EU, and other governments and has no need to hide its efforts.

The devolved powers and autonomy of multiple political entities within democratic political systems leaves many gaps for CCP united front work to exploit, but, as countries from Pakistan to Myanmar have found, authoritarian political systems are not immune to CCP united front work either. Yet, some of the actions of the Trump administration are making it harder for both traditional allies and partners, as well as emerging partners, to stand with the United States—just at the very moment when it has finally labeled China's political warfare as a strategic threat.

China has followed an increasingly assertive foreign policy under Xi Jinping, but even more so since the 19th Party Congress when Xi announced that Chinese politics had entered a “New Era.” International pressure on China in the last year is hardening that stance: from the Trump administration's trade war and the growing international push back on China's militarization of the South China Sea to the formation of a loose global coalition against China's foreign interference activities and increasing international criticism of human rights abuses. On all these matters, Xi will not back down and is in fact going on the offensive.

Since the 19th Congress, in addition to continuing to expand united front work activities aimed at the outside world, China has launched a counter-strategy to combat international criticism of its political interference behavior. There are too many new united front actions across multiple countries to list them all in full, but I will highlight a couple of events and actions which stand out as significant:

- In November 2017, the CCP International Liaison Department hosted a massive conference for political parties around the world, which it called “CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting.” More than 600 delegates representing 300 political parties and political organizations from over 120 nations attended the meeting, including representatives from the US Republican Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, the Conservative Party of the UK, the Republican Party of France, and the Liberal Party of Canada. Participants at the meeting signed an agreement called the “Beijing Initiative,” which announces the “construction of a community of a shared future for mankind.”⁸³ The CCP International Liaison Department now has such a prominent role in Xi era united front work that some commentators are calling it the “New Comintern.”⁸⁴
- In June 2018, the Chinese government signed a cooperation agreement with Russia on external propaganda. Within China, the government launched a campaign against foreign and Taiwan spies.
- In August 2018, the CCP Central Committee urged “Chinese compatriots”—the 60 million ethnic Chinese living in countries outside China, the majority of them for decades, if not centuries—to “remember the call from the Party and the people, spread China’s voice, support the country’s development, safeguard national interests, promote Chinese culture and make new contributions to fulfilling national rejuvenation and building a community with a shared future for mankind.”⁸⁵ Rather than disguising its efforts to co-opt the Chinese diaspora and to use them as a tool of CCP foreign policy, Xi’s government has over-turned the CCP’s 1955 Bandung strategy of asking the Overseas Chinese community to make a choice as to their citizenship and political allegiance, and it is now openly calling them to its aid.

As Lenin recommends, Xi is exploiting every rift and is fighting on all fronts—at the same time as continuing to seek partners to unite with against the chief enemy: the USA and other Western democracies, whose engagement strategies were designed to undermine the CCP party-state system. For Xi Jinping, the Western democracies represent the “Old Era” of the global order, which the 19th Party Congress has declared is officially over.

⁸³ “Full Text of the Beijing Proposal of the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties High Level Dialogue” [中国共产党与世界政党高层对话会 北京倡议（全文）] *Xinhua*, December 3, 2017. http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2017-12/03/c_1122050731.htm.

⁸⁴ Jichang Lulu and Martin Hála, “A New Comintern for the New Era: The CCP International Department from Bucharest to Reykjavík”, *China Digital Times*, August 16, 2018. <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2018/08/jichang-lulu-and-martin-hala-a-new-comintern-for-the-new-era/>.

⁸⁵ “Top concern: Happiness of Compatriots.” *China Daily*, August 30, 2018. <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0830/c90000-9495358.html>.

Forging a United Front against the United Front

Now is the time for governments to take a leaf out of the CCP playbook: to “gather strengths, bide time—and unite with every force that can be united.” In other words, governments must develop internally-focused resilience strategies that will protect the integrity of their political processes and institutions at the same time as partnering with like-minded states to form their own “united front against the united front.”

Governments need to conduct their own in-depth investigations into CCP united front work activities within their countries and then devise a strategy to counteract them. Governments must define China’s meddling in their internal affairs as a national security issue and treat it accordingly. They may need to update legislation on aspects such as electoral financing, protocols around conflicts of interest for serving and retired public servants and politicians, and sales of strategic infrastructure. Governments should establish a genuine and positive relationship with their ethnic Chinese populations and work with these communities to support them to become resilient and autonomous from CCP attempts to control them.

It is time for our governments to face up to the impact of CCP political interference activities on the integrity of our political systems and make a correction in our relations with China so that our own societies’ interests come first. And they should join forces and support other nations who are also experiencing these interference strategies. To paraphrase *People’s Daily*, “those who correctly apply this policy” will be able to muster a powerful bloc of like-minded nations to defend against China’s hostile and undermining attacks on their political systems. And then, rather than a China-centered order, a multi-polar order might bring about a genuine Globalization 2.0.

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International Liaison Work for the New Era: Generating Global Consensus?

Julia G. Bowie

In recent years, party-to-party diplomacy conducted by the Chinese Communist Party's International Department, a feature of China's foreign affairs since its establishment, has flown under the radar and thus escaped the notice of foreign analysts. This year, however, the department has become more visible by institutionalizing its liaisons with foreign political parties through high-profile events reported widely in Party media, reflecting the increasing importance of party-to-party diplomacy under Xi Jinping. CCP theorists and propagandists insist that the International Department is a vital platform for projecting a positive image of China to the world and building global support for China's foreign policy. It therefore merits further scrutiny by analysts seeking to understand China's global influence operations.

The Chinese Communist Party's International Department (CCP/ID), one of the four official CCP departments that work directly under the Central Committee, has long played an important yet overlooked role in extending the Party's international influence. While its prominence in China's foreign affairs has waxed and waned as China's foreign affairs have undergone multiple transformations, throughout its almost 70-year history the department has pursued overlapping agendas with the country's diplomatic, intelligence, propaganda, and united front bodies, maintaining unofficial ties with foreign political parties, movements, and organizations in support of China's diplomatic objectives.

Initially established to cultivate diplomacy with other foreign socialist or communist parties, the CCP/ID has re-identified itself over the past few decades, developing relations with a wide variety of political parties worldwide. The department uses party-to-party exchanges as a more flexible channel to influence state-to-state relations and promote China's interests abroad, making it a unique diplomatic tool that often flies under the radar. Today, the CCP/ID boasts relations with more than 600 political parties in more than 160 countries. The CCP/ID itself claims to play an essential role in the country's overall diplomatic agenda, working to create a network of foreign organizations and political parties that support CCP objectives, strengthening

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foreign intelligence, and broadcasting a “good China story” to the world.⁸⁶ As David Shambaugh pointed out in one of the only studies of the organization to date, “no ruling party or government in the world mounts anywhere near as extensive an effort to maintain links with domestic political parties, groups, and personages as the CCP/ID.”⁸⁷

Recent events indicate that the importance of the CCP/ID in carrying out China’s foreign policy objectives is increasing under Xi Jinping. While many assumed the CCP/ID would gradually lose relevance, under Xi Jinping, the department has taken great pains to demonstrate that it remains essential to China’s foreign affairs by creating the underlying theoretical basis for its place in Xi Jinping’s new era diplomacy—“party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.” Under this framework, political party-based diplomacy is said to be an important channel for extending China’s external propaganda work as well as shoring up international support for Beijing’s foreign policy. Furthermore, the department’s relationships with political parties are being institutionalized in high-profile events intended to demonstrate global support for China’s rise on the world stage and its foreign policy objectives.

There is another reason to increase scrutiny of CCP/ID activities. Xi Jinping has begun placing more emphasis on the central and guiding role of the CCP in China’s foreign and diplomatic affairs. In a highly publicized speech at a meeting of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission in May, Xi called for “reinforcing the centralized and unified leadership of the Party over foreign affairs work,” stressing that the commission is to play a “coordinating role” in China’s foreign affairs decision-making and innovation of diplomatic theory and practice.⁸⁸ Just a month later at the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs, Xi repeatedly called for reinforcing and expanding the Party’s role in foreign affairs, stating, “we must insist on diplomatic power residing in the Party Central Committee.”⁸⁹⁹⁰ Amidst efforts to consolidate foreign affairs

⁸⁶ International Department, “A Brief Introduction to Our Department” [我部简介]. <http://www.idcpc.org.cn/gymb/wbjj/>.

⁸⁷ David Shambaugh, “China’s ‘Quiet Diplomacy’: The International Department of the Chinese Communist Party,” *China: An International Journal* 5 no. 1, (March 2007). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S0219747207000039>

⁸⁸ “Xi Jinping Presides over Convening of the First Meeting of the Central Foreign Affairs Work Committee [习近平主持召开中央外事工作委员会第一次会议],” *Xinhua*, May 15, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-05/15/c_1122836914.htm.

⁸⁹ Ng, T, “Xi Jinping to Diplomats: Toe the Communist Party Line,” *South China Morning Post*, June 25, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2152397/xi-jinping-puts-out-call-diplomats-toe-communist-party>.

⁹⁰ “Xi Jinping: Work Hard to Start a New Phase of Great Power Relations with Chinese Characteristics [习近平: 努力开创中国特色大国外交新局面],” *Xinhua*, June 23, 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-06/23/c_1123025806.htm.

decision-making powers within the Party, it can be expected that, as the CCP department that deals specifically with foreign relations, the CCP/ID will be accorded a more prominent role. In March, it was reported that the CCP/ID would actually be merged with the Central Foreign Affairs Commission in order to streamline the Party's foreign affairs bodies, though this has not yet been confirmed.⁹¹

"Party Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics"

At first glance, political party-based diplomacy appears to be a vestige of the PRC's earliest decades, when other communist parties were China's most important foreign relationships. However, under Xi Jinping, the CCP/ID insists that it remains a vital area of China's international engagement.

Since 2012, Xi Jinping has placed a greater emphasis on the role of political parties in international diplomacy leading the Party's theorists and propagandists to conceptualize and define "party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics" in the lead-up to the 19th Party Congress, to serve as the theoretical underpinnings of the CCP/ID's work.⁹² A 2017 book on the subject published by the Social Sciences Academic Press, which is affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), explains how the CCP envisions the role of party diplomacy in its foreign affairs, largely reflecting the stated goals of the CCP/ID in recent decades. Party diplomacy is meant to play a "guiding role" in China's international relations by encouraging foreign political parties, politicians, and political organizations to understand and respect China's values and interests.⁹³

In addition, party diplomacy is said to be particularly useful as a tool for generating a "global consensus" in China's favor, particularly regarding China's diplomatic goals.⁹⁴ At a press conference on the sidelines of the 19th Party Congress, CCP/ID Vice Minister Guo Yezhou (郭业洲) explained the logic behind using political party diplomacy in consensus building:

"Political parties play an important role in the political life of most countries. Dialogues between political parties facilitate deeper consensus in terms of values and

⁹¹ Teddy Ng, "China to Restructure Foreign Affairs Team in Push for Greater Role on the World Stage," *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2136651/china-restructure-foreign-affairs-team-push-greater>.

⁹² Yu Hongjun, *Party-to-Party Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics* [中国特色政党外交] (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, June 2017), 7-8.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 36-37.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 155.

developmental orientation, and strengthen political power for developing international relations.”⁹⁵

The CCP/ID is particularly proud of its achievements in this respect. In a self-congratulatory article published in *Qiushi Journal* in the weeks before the 19th Party Congress, the CCP/ID explained that it had utilized party exchanges to build support for China’s position in the 2016 South China Sea arbitration by getting over 240 political parties in more than 120 countries and over 280 well-known think tanks and non-government organizations to openly support China’s position,⁹⁶ supplementing the party-state’s wider effort to find allies in the dispute.⁹⁷

In addition to consensus building, party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics is valued for its propaganda utility in promoting a positive image of China to the world. Through the format of informal exchanges, political party leaders can “frankly exchange views” and “clear up deep doubts.”⁹⁸ In the aftermath of the 19th Party Congress, the CCP/ID has displayed confidence that the influence of China’s development and governance models can be utilized to draw foreign political parties into close cooperation with the CCP. Careful to avoid language that comes across as overtly promoting a “China model” for other countries to follow, CCP/ID officials proclaim that the CCP’s successful “governance and administration experience” provides a wealth of wisdom from which other countries can benefit.

In a 4 November *People’s Daily* interview, CCP/ID Minister Song Tao explained that he has witnessed an unprecedented desire by foreign political organizations to learn from the governance experience of the CCP and that the success of the CCP’s governance of China has become a “model for the world.” Song said that the CCP/ID would focus on demonstrating the meaning of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era so that

⁹⁵ “Press Conference: CPC’s United Front and International Relations,” State Council Information Office, October 23, 2017. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/32618/Document/1566519/1566519.htm>.

⁹⁶ International Department, “Deeply Learn General Secretary Xi Jinping’s Important Thought on the Party’s External Work and Strive to Open a New Page for the Party’s External Work—The Achievements and Implementation of the Party’s External Work since the 18th Party Congress [深入学习习近平总书记党的对外工作重要思想 努力开创党的对外工作新局面——十八大以来党的对外工作的成就与实践],” *Qiushi Journal*, October 15, 2017. http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2017-10/15/c_1121801004.htm.

⁹⁷ Tom Mitchell, “China Struggles to Win Friends over South China Sea,” *Financial Times*, July 13, 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/a9a60f5e-48c6-11e6-8d68-72e9211e86ab>.

⁹⁸ Niu Haibin, “Party Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics,” in *China’s Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, edited by Jiemian Yang (Hackensack, NJ: World Century Publishing Corporation, 2014): 462.

more foreign political parties can “understand, support, and agree” with China’s development path and the CCP governance model.⁹⁹

Institutionalizing Party Diplomacy

The CCP/ID is institutionalizing its own platform for political party exchange through the hosting of high-profile events for international political parties. From 30 November to 3 December 2017, the CCP/ID hosted its first “CCP in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting” (中国共产党与世界政党高层对话会) in Beijing. It was attended by 300 political leaders from over 120 countries, most notably Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi. The attendance of Xi Jinping and the conference’s proximity to the end of the 19th Party Congress indicated the meeting’s salience for the CCP’s post-Congress diplomatic agenda.

In an interview with *People’s Daily*, Song Tao (宋涛) explained that the goals of the conference were threefold: first, it explains to foreign political parties the global significance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; second, it creates a platform for communication and dialogue among political parties in which the CCP plays a leading role; third, it creates an opportunity for the CCP to contribute to the efforts of global political parties to “build a better world.”¹⁰⁰

Xi’s speech at the conference elevated the role of political parties in China’s diplomacy by declaring the CCP’s intention to work with political parties across the globe to build a “community of shared future for mankind” (人类命运共同体), a concept promoted at the 19th Party Congress that describes how China will approach its role as a global leader. Xi called on political parties to develop a “new type of political party relations,” (新型政党关系) in which political parties work together to build a community of shared future for mankind and construct a “new type of international relations.”¹⁰¹ In January 2018, Song explained that the new type of political party relations is based on the building of a new type of international relations.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Wu Qimin (吴绮敏), Li Weihong (李伟红), and Yang Xun (杨迅), “Entering a New Era, the CCP’s International Influence Experiences an Unprecedented Rise [进入新时代, 中国共产党国际影响力空前提升],” *People’s Daily*, November 1, 2017. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-11/01/nw.D110000renmrb_20171101_1-04.htm.

¹⁰⁰ Ma Xiaoning (马小宁), Meng Xianglin (孟祥麟), and Li Weihong (李伟红), “Use Political Party’s Functions to Build a Better World Together [发挥政党作用 携手建设更加美好的世界],” *People’s Daily*, December 4, 2017. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2017-12/04/nw.D110000renmrb_20171204_4-03.htm.

¹⁰¹ Ma, Meng, and Li.

¹⁰² Song Tao (宋涛), “Build a New Type of Party Relations and a Better World [建立新型政党关系 建设更加美好世界],” *Contemporary World* 1 (2018). http://www.idcpc.org.cn/zlfb/201801/t20180104_94878.html.

The crowning achievement of the event was the signing of the “Beijing Initiative” by the conference participants, a document that embodies the CCP/ID’s goal of using diplomacy with foreign political parties to generate consensus backing China’s diplomatic goals. The document contains the signatures of the more than 300 political leaders who attended the conference. It extols the achievements of the CCP and endorses Xi’s leadership, Xi Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the Belt and Road Initiative, and “building a community of shared future for mankind.” Signatories are said to advocate respect for each country’s own development path and values, call for the abandonment of a “Cold War mentality,” note that China’s BRI-related concepts have “entered into people’s hearts day by day,” note that the CCP stands for humanity’s progress, and recognize that the CCP Central Committee with Xi at its core has displayed China’s role as a responsible power.¹⁰³

In May, the CCP/ID held another high-profile event reportedly attended by over 500 representatives of 200 political parties from over 100 countries around the world. The event, entitled “The Story of the CCP: Guangdong’s Practice of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” was held in Shenzhen because it is a “window for demonstrating the success of China’s reform and opening up.” At the conference Song Tao told attendees that reform and opening up is the only way to promote the development of the country and stated that the CCP is willing to share opportunities and seek common development with political parties of various countries.¹⁰⁴

A *People’s Daily* article providing key takeaways from the event stated that as sources of political decision-making, and the representatives and shapers of public opinion, political parties play an important role in “promoting the progress of human civilization.” China is therefore actively setting up a platform for political party exchange that will establish a “new type of political party relations.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Hu Ping, “Do ‘We’, the World’s Political Parties, Know that ‘We’ Have Issued an Initiative Extolling the CCP’s Global Leadership for a Better World?” China Change, December 5, 2017. <https://chinachange.org/2017/12/05/do-we-the-worlds-political-parties-know-that-we-have-issued-an-initiative-extolling-the-ccps-global-leadership-for-a-better-world/>

¹⁰⁴ “The Story of the Chinese Communist Party -- Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is Put into Practice in Guangdong” 中国共产党的故事——习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想在广东的实践”专题宣介会在深圳举行], *People’s Daily* Online, May 27, 2018. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0527/c33831-30016383.html>

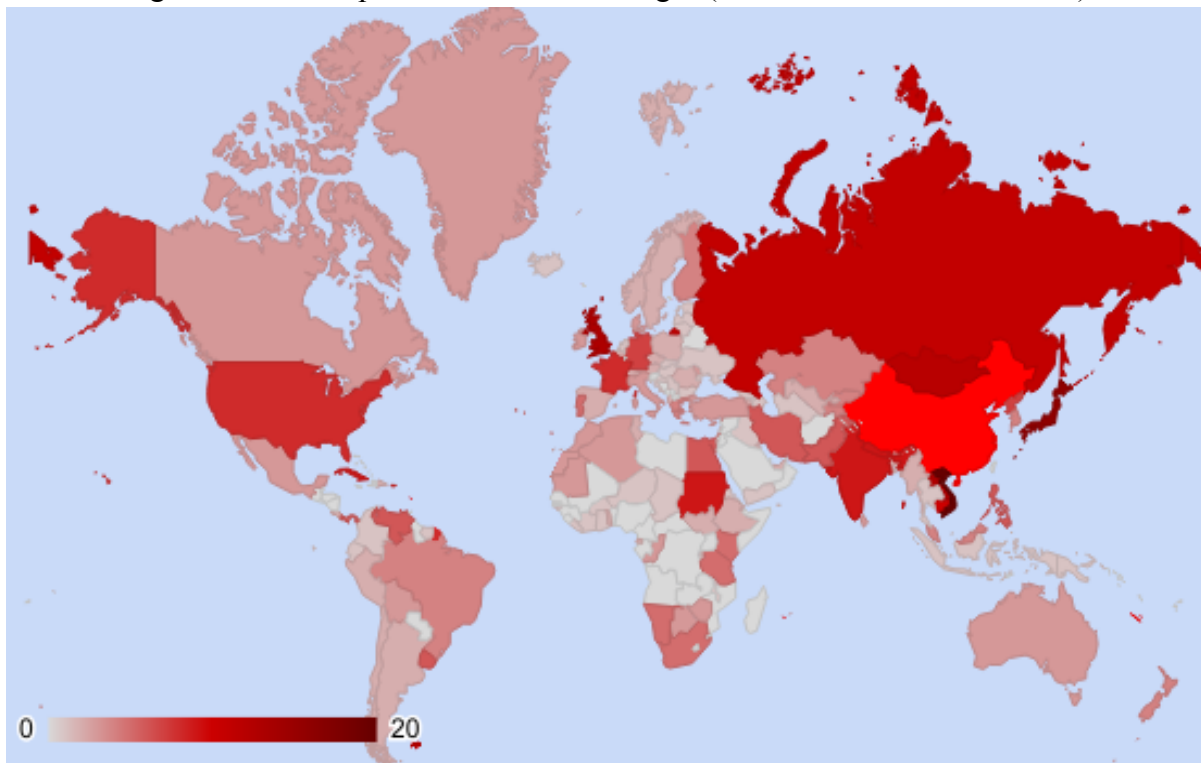
¹⁰⁵ Zhong Sheng, “Strengthen Political Party Dialogue, Jointly Promote Cultural Progress [加强政党对话 共促文明进步（钟声）],” *People’s Daily*, May 29, 2018. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2018-05/29/nw.D110000renmrb_20180529_3-03.htm.

Expanding International Contacts

The CCP/ID is actively expanding its activities, holding an unprecedented number of meetings.¹⁰⁶ From the 19th Party Congress in October 2017 to the beginning of October 2018, the CCP/ID has reported an approximate total of 440 exchanges with foreign political parties (see Figure 1). At the very least, where the CCP/ID chooses to focus its resources can provide insight into overall diplomatic priorities. The most attention was paid to peripheral countries, especially Vietnam and Japan, two countries with which China has ongoing territorial disputes. The CCP/ID also appears to focus more on relations with major powers, concentrating on Russia, the United States, and India.

Since the 19th Party Congress, the major foreign policy objective that the CCP/ID has promoted through its exchanges, attempting to generate an international consensus in its favor, is the Belt and Road Initiative. Exchanges are utilized to solicit support from political party leaders and seek public affirmations of support, which are then publicized (see Figure 2).

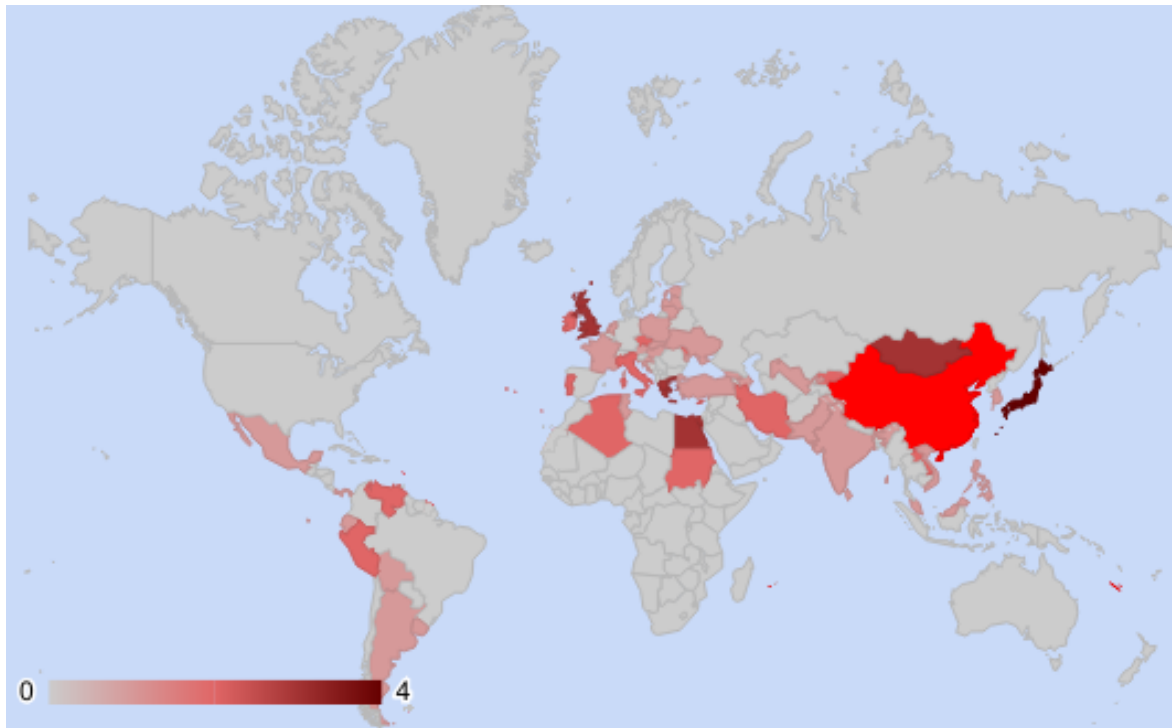
Figure 1: Total Reported CCP/ID Exchanges (October 2017-October 2018)



Source: International Department Website

¹⁰⁶ In 2007, David Shambaugh's study of the International Department reported that the CCP/ID conducted approximately 300 exchanges per year.

Figure 2: CCP/ID Exchanges Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative



Source: International Department Website

Generating Global Consensus?

Whether CCP/ID efforts are effective or if “party diplomacy with Chinese characteristics” is essentially an elaborate yet futile propaganda scheme remains to be studied. China was notably criticized for overstating claims of foreign support for its position in the South Chinese Sea, which the CCP/ID supposedly helped produce.¹⁰⁷ Regarding documents like the Beijing Initiative, one is hard pressed to believe that a signature of a given party representative actually demonstrates the position of that political party on China’s foreign policy—even a representative of the U.S. Republican Party signed the document. Far more likely is that these meetings and events have utility for locating and cultivating individual supporters of China within foreign political parties—a slower and more subtle method of exerting influence.

Regardless, it is clear that China’s leadership views party diplomacy as an important tool for extending China’s global influence and is investing considerable resources to expanding and institutionalizing CCP/ID exchanges and establishing the underlying theoretical basis for its

¹⁰⁷ Jeremy Page, “Beijing’s Claims of South China Sea Support May Not Hold Water,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 17, 2016. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/beijings-claims-of-south-china-sea-support-may-not-hold-water-1466138014>.

work. Given these developments, the CCP/ID appears set to play an enhanced role in augmenting China's state-to-state diplomacy in the pursuit of reshaping the international order to better accommodate China's interests. Its activities therefore merit increased scrutiny by analysts seeking to understand Beijing's global influence operations.

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Technology and Chinese Communist Party Power

Samantha Hoffman

The emergence of a technology-enabled police state in Xinjiang and the construction of China's social credit system are two examples of how CCP is utilizing technological innovation to improve its capacity for control. However, they are not entirely new developments attributable to Xi Jinping. Rather, they are connected to developments unfolding in China since the Deng era, in which political control has been tied to everyday economic and social management and technology is seen as a tool that will help support this system. As advances in artificial intelligence and big data progress, the Party's capacity to identify and predict threats will simultaneously improve the CCP's governance capacity and overall capacity for control.

Xi Jinping's October 2017 report at the 19th Party Congress called for:

*"Strengthening the construction of the social governance system, to perfect the social governance system with regards to the party committee's leadership, the government's accountability, society's cooperation, public participation, and assurance of the rule of law. Raising the standards of socialization of social governance, rule of law, intelligentization, and professionalization."*¹⁰⁸

The "intelligentization" of "social governance" refers to what one article concretely described as "[reconstructing] the form of how social production and social organization relate with each other" using information technology such as big data, cloud computing, and Internet of Things (IoT). The objective is to improve the parts and standards of the social governance process, thus making the entire social governance process "more optimized, more scientific, and more intelligent."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ "Xi Jinping: Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism With Chinese Characteristics for a New Era -- Report Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China." [习近平：决胜全面建成小康社会 夺取新时代中国特色社会主义伟大胜利——在中国共产党第十九次全国代表大会上的报告], *Xinhua*, 27 October 2017. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/27/c_1121867529.htm.

¹⁰⁹ Yaxia Yang. "Applying Big Data to Improve the Standards of Intelligentization of Social Governance [应用大数据提升社会治理智能化水平]" *Guangming Daily*, 10 April 2017. http://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2017-04/10/nw.D110000gmrB_20170410_3-11.htm.

Reconstructing the relationship between “social production and social organization” requires that the Party integrate itself with society and get accurate information about what takes place.¹¹⁰ The Party must prevent itself from becoming irrelevant in the society it governs, which is why the CCP has long tied its political control to everyday economic and social management. Technology is seen as a tool that will help support this system.

As advances in artificial intelligence and big data progress, the Party’s capacity to identify and predict threats will ideally simultaneously improve the CCP’s governance capacity and overall capacity for control. With this in mind, the emergence of a technology-enabled police state in Xinjiang or the construction of China’s social credit system, which have been prominent regular headlines in global media since the 19th Party Congress, are not entirely new developments attributable to Xi Jinping. Instead, they are connected to developments unfolding in China since the Deng era.

Technology and CCP Power

In September 2018, the National Development and Reform Commission said it made an agreement with the China Development Bank to invest USD14.8 billion in big data, cloud computing, and smart cities projects.¹¹¹ Innovation in these science and technology areas, in addition to things like artificial intelligence (AI) and IoT, has long been described as the driving force of China’s continued economic and social development.¹¹²

In 1988, Deng Xiaoping explained that “science and technology constitute a primary productive force.” More recently, Xi Jinping stressed that the “unprecedented power [of technology] drives economic and social development.” The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) objective of achieving a “moderately prosperous” society is thus tied to advances in science and technology.

Technology is the key to preventing the Party from becoming irrelevant by default as China’s society and economy develop. Technology largely supports the related tasks of problem identification, decision-making, and response. This has been true since the start of the “reform”

¹¹⁰ Hanning Yin. "The Mass Line is the Party's Lifeline and Fundamental Work Path [群众路线是党的生命线和根本工作路线]." *Red Flag Manuscript*, 10 September 2014. http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2014-09/10/c_1112427212.htm.

¹¹¹ Yawen Chen. "China to Invest \$15 billion in Big Data, Cloud Computing Over Next Five Years." *Reuters*, 19 September 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-technology/china-to-invest-15-billion-in-big-data-cloud-computing-over-next-five-years-idUSKCN1LZ17S>.

¹¹² Authorized Release: "Excerpts of Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Science and Technology Innovation" (1) Innovation is the Main Driving Force Leading Progress [授权发布: “习近平关于科技创新论述摘编” (1) 创新是引领发展的第一动力] *People's Network*, 1 March 2016. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0311/c402884-28192542.html>

period, but concrete systems have gradually been put into place since about 1994 via areas like e-governance and grid management. In the future, the progress will continue with investment in upgrades to e-governance and grid management, like “smart cities”.

The Chinese party-state leadership places the role of science and technology in its overall governance strategy, and this is linked directly to the CCP’s ideology. The key concept that allows us to understand the role of technology is “social management” or what is also known as “social governance.” Social management resembles a feedback loop, a cycle describing how the Chinese Communist Party shapes, manages, and responds to demands within both society and the Party itself. Some of these demands are the demands any government must respond to, but the overarching system is designed to enhance the CCP’s capacity to maintain and expand its own power.

The Party has clearly articulated that the process of innovating social management is its blueprint for maintaining power. The most visible manifestations of the Party’s objective to tie innovation in science and technology to this process are through systems such as “social credit,” “grid management,” and “smart cities.” Social credit involves the use of big data collection and analysis to support the monitoring, shaping, and rating of behavior via everyday economic and social processes. Grid management and successor smart cities integrate surveillance and other forms of data collection to improve both regular urban management and efforts to identify and manage threats to the Party’s political security. Each of these examples applies technology to social management and economic development to improve the CCP’s capacity for control while simultaneously supporting everyday governance.

Problem Identification, Decision-Making, and Response

A major component of social management policy is the idea that problems must be identified and managed at their source in order to prevent the emergence of challenges to the Party’s position in power. By managing problems at the source, the Party is focused on problem identification and response for a wide range of issues linked to social instability.¹¹³ These are not only related to the management of unrest or direct challenges to the Party but also (at least conceptually) to the management of issues like the allocation of resources, i.e. healthcare and social security or environmental protection.

This aspect of social management is what the CCP sometimes calls “source governance,” which is directly tied to the idea that ensuring the party-state’s security requires eliminating threats, requiring pre-emption via the social management process. One article, for instance, defined source governance as “[paying] more attention to the construction of civil utility and institutions,

¹¹³ Wei Liqun. “The Party’s 18 Great New Headways in Societal Governance [党的十八大以来社会治理的新进展]. *Guangming Daily*. 07 August 2017. http://www.cctb.net/llyj/xswtyj/ggzl/201708/t20170808_356556.htm

[and persevering] with scientific and democratic decision-making according to law, to prevent and reduce the emergence of social problems.”¹¹⁴ For this reason, social management is not narrowly about protest management. Instead, it is a broader pre-emptive management of threats to state security, which are inclusive of managing issues like social services allocation, corruption, or the economy.

In order to build the Party’s capacity to identify and respond to problems at their source, the CCP has prioritized science and technology as the tool social governance must rely on. The combination of technologies, ranging from surveillance, big data collection, cloud computing, and others, supports efforts to improve interdepartmental (and cross-agency) coordination and interoperability. Ultimately, this improves the Party’s capacity to identify and respond to problems preemptively or to emergencies as they unfold.

Present-day research related to decision-making emerges from a field that developed in the 1980s called “soft science” (软科学).¹¹⁵ Soft science is defined in China as a “system of scientific knowledge sustaining democratic and scientific decision-making,” and can be used in China to “ensure the correctness of our decision-making, and the efficacy of our execution.”¹¹⁶ In other words, the concept describes the application of technology to everyday governance and use of technology to inform the Party-state’s capacity to make and implement decisions.

These basic objectives are not entirely unique to China, but are found in global efforts to apply technology to issues such as emergency management. China is different because the concepts are inextricably linked to the CCP’s Leninist ideological and political security. Political security is the pre-condition for ensuring all other aspects of Chinese state security.¹¹⁷ “Political security” is the objective of ensuring the Chinese Communist Party’s leadership—as in both the core Party leadership’s authority over the whole Party and the Party’s authority over all of society.

E-government

¹¹⁴ ““十二五”规划纲要 (Outline of the 12th Five Year Plan).” 16 March 2011.
http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2011-03/16/content_22156007.htm

¹¹⁵ Newspaper Commentator, “Research Soft Science in order to promote Democratic and Scientific Decision-Making [研究软科学，促进决策民主化科学化]” *The People's Daily*, 27 July 1986.
<http://www.laoziliao.net/rmrb/1986-07-26-3#733575>

¹¹⁶ Si Zhuang. “Soft Science Necessitates the Mastery of Hard Skills [软科学需要硬功夫]” *The People's Daily*, 4 January 2007. <http://scitech.people.com.cn/GB/5242834.html>.

¹¹⁷ Central Party School Research Center on Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era. “Be Prepared for Danger in Times of Peace and Seek Security After Understanding the Danger-- In-Depth Study and Implementation of the 19th Party Congress Report on the State Security Concept [居安思危 知危图安——深入学习贯彻十九大报告坚持总体国家安全观的重要论述]” *Qiushi*, 15 February 2018.
http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2018-02/15/c_1122402297.htm.

The ideas were theoretically connected at the start of the reform era, but specific plans to connect economic and social development were being implemented by the mid-1990s. One starting point was e-government (“with Chinese characteristics”).¹¹⁸ As it is understood globally, e-government is defined as the use of technology to improve a government’s “ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government.”¹¹⁹ It is largely about improving ease of access to information and, along with it, things like government accountability.

In its earliest forms, e-government in China was often described in relation to improving official accountability. Similarly, in 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao tied e-government to government administrative system reform.¹²⁰ Accountability does not imply true transparency, and calls for accountability are not about objective anti-corruption efforts. Instead, it is about the Party cadres being accountable to the center and its demands. It is also about ensuring the Party masses effectively manage relations with society, using both cooperative and coercive means.

In China, therefore, e-government is not about the same form of government accountability that would be understood globally. It is more about integration of government resources, using technology, to improve processes like the CCP’s accountability *to* itself and its ability to ensure society’s accountability to the Party. Through the same process, the CCP’s the ability to govern and accomplish key tasks ranging from the allocation of resources to the strengthening of political-legal affairs should naturally follow.

China’s e-government plans first emerged between 1984 and 1990 when the State Council approved plans to develop national information systems covering about a dozen areas, including: the economy, banking, electrical power, civil aviation, statistics, taxation, customs, meteorology, and disaster mitigation.¹²¹ In 1993, the government initiated a series of national economic informatization systems engineering projects. These projects were initially known as the “Three Golden” Projects: “Golden Bridge,” a national information network and communications project; “Golden Gate,” a customs informatization project; and “Golden Card,” a project related to credit card and electronic banking development.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Gao Xinmin, “E-Government Enters a New Stage [电子政务进入新阶段,” *The People’s Daily*, 11 May 2002.

¹¹⁹ The World Bank. “e-Government.” <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/ict/brief/e-government>.

¹²⁰ Chengsheng Wang (ed.), *China E-Government Development Report No. 2* [中国电子政务发展报告 No. 2] in *Blue Book of Electronic Development* [电子政务蓝皮书], 153. Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005.

¹²¹ Yu Xu and Hongren Zhou, “Analysis and Forecast on China’s Informatisation (2010) [中国信息化形势分析和预测 (2010)]” in *Blue Book of Informatisation* [信息化蓝皮书], 8, Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2010.

¹²² Hongren Zhou, Hongyuan Xu, Yuxian Zhang, Changsheng Wang, and Xinhong Zhang, “China E-Government Development Report No. 1 [中国电子政务发展报告 No.1]” in *Blue Book of Electronic Development* [电子政务蓝皮书], Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2003 .

The “Three Golden” Projects were just the first stage of the multi-phased implementation of the Golden Projects. Gradually the initiative expanded to about a dozen projects between 1995-1999. These included “Golden Tax,” “Golden Health,” and “Golden Sea,” among others. The government has designed systems enabling economic development and overall modernization so that they simultaneously strengthen the center’s capacity for control.

By 2000, as a direct result of the Golden Projects, every province, autonomous region, and municipality across the country had established an office automation system (an intranet) connected to a State Council hub.¹²⁴ Since that time, the Golden Projects have allowed for the initial development of the “unified planning,” “unified standards,” “unified coordination,” and “unified deployment” of policies driving informatization of government departments across the country.¹²⁵

With the advancement of basic e-governance, the integration of information created a capacity for improved data collection and improved data management, which all enhance decision-making capacity. This directly benefits the social management process. The next step in using technology to improve decision-making was focused on grid policing, which was implemented in various cities and towns across China by no later than the 2001-2002 timeframe.

Grid Management

It is sometimes assumed that Xinjiang is the testbed for the use of technology applied to social control; however, this is largely untrue even if particular technologies used in Xinjiang are not used elsewhere or are not yet quite as visible elsewhere. For instance, Tibet and Xinjiang under Chen Quanguo were not the origin of the expansion of grid management; instead they are the places where grid management most visibly enhanced the CCP’s coercive control methods.

Grid policing was characterized mostly by enhanced monitoring and surveillance and more efficient data sharing within a designated area and within public security bureaus. One of the first

¹²³ Chengsheng Wang (ed.), “China E-Government Development Report No. 2 [中国电子政务发展报告 No. 2]” in “Blue Book of Electronic Development [电子政务蓝皮书]”, 134. Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2005.

¹²⁴ Xu and Zhou, “Analysis and Forecast on China’s Informatisation (2010) [中国信息化形势分析和预测 (2010)].

¹²⁵ Ying Li (ed.), “Report on China’s Software and Information Service Industry (2011) [中国软件和信息服务业发展报告 (2011)]” in *Blue Book of Software and Information Service Industry* [软件和信息服务业蓝皮书] 73, Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press, 2011).

openly reported examples of modern grid-ized (网格化) policing was in Shanghai.¹²⁶¹²⁷¹²⁸ It was described as a development that allowed preventative police actions to move from acting as a “passive force” to acting as an “active force.” As a result, it was described as enabling a move from a “static” system of management to a “dynamic” system of management.¹²⁹

Developments in the early 2000s would further expand the effort. Within a few years, the more encompassing “grid management” (网格化管理) began to publicly emerge as a concept. Grid management enables the organization of data to generate better awareness of the local operating environment and, as a result of the integration of information, improve predictive capacity and enhance the tracking and monitoring of individuals or problems (i.e. pollution).¹³⁰

Grid management describes the physical and virtual separation of urban areas. Grid management represents the initial effort to integrate technology to support the whole social management process. It can support everything from early-warning to enhancing emergency response. A 2006 *People's Daily* article said:

[We] should establish a public sentiment collection and analysis mechanism through improving e-government and important information systems, thus strengthening [our] capability to maintain social stability and increase the standard of social management; utilize information technology to establish an ‘emergency response logistical mobilisation command system’ and social warning system, forming an emergency response mechanism with a unified command, comprehensive function, agile reactions, efficient operation, to raise the capacity for protection of public security and emergency handling; attach importance to improving the ‘Golden Shield’ project, and improving the

¹²⁶ Lei Mao, "Social Security and Order Remain Steady; the Prevention and Control Capacity has Improved; the Number of Serious Criminal Cases in Shanghai have Decreased [社会治安保持平稳防控能力得到提高上海严重刑事犯罪发案数下降]," *The People's Daily*, 3 August 2001.

¹²⁷ Jinyi Zhao, "The Revelation of Shanghai's Public Security [上海治安启示录]," *The People's Daily*, 22 August 2001. <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shehui/43/20010822/540826.html>

¹²⁸ Ye Yang, "Successful Implementation of Strict Law and Order Prevention and Control -- Accounts of Shanghai Police Striking the Streetside 'Two [kinds of] Robberies' [严密治安防控的成功实践——上海警方打击街面“两抢”犯罪纪实]," *The People's Daily*, 14 August 2002. <https://rmrb.online/simple/?t1295238.html>

¹²⁹ Wenke Xin, "Satisfy the People [让人民满意]," *The People's Daily*, 14 August 2002.

¹³⁰ Jie Li and Changrong Qu, "The Police Force Goes Grassroots; Grid Deployment of the Force; Scientifically Strengthen the Force; Zhengzhou Building a Sturdy Social Security Prevention and Control System, For the First Eight Months This Year, Criminal Cases Have Declined by Twenty Percent [警力下沉 网格布警 科技强警 郑州筑牢社会治安防控体系 今年前八月各类刑事案件同比下降两成多]," *The People's Daily*, 15 October 2006.

*informatization level of CMPS works, strike against all kinds of illegal activities, and ensure people's lives and property are safe.*¹³¹

Recent developments in information integration include grid management-linked unified command platforms that support not only problem identification but also emergency response mechanisms for emergencies of all varieties. For example, in 2017, CPLC Secretary Meng Jianzhu visited Changsha South Railway Station, a transportation hub with a joint logistical and joint mobilisation command center. The center has “flat” command systems, a joint services mechanism, and video surveillance technology. Meng said the joint logistical and joint mobilization system solved communication problems with information resources, strengthened the “whole combat ‘joint’ mechanism,” and realized targeting procedures. He said the command center exemplified the technological concept related to the comprehensive governance of social order.¹³² Additionally, Meng said:

*We hope that they will play a role in coordinating, further concentrating the power of resources, establishing a robust information sharing, unified command, and cooperative combat mechanism, constantly improving the reaction speed and capacity, and strive to locate all kinds of security risks early, preventing them in advance, and with minimum effort.*¹³³

In September 2017, General Party Secretary Xi Jinping called for: “a more systematic and innovative social governance, stressing the need to improve the capability to predict and prevent security risks.”¹³⁴ Moving on from grid management, the Party is looking to achieve this innovation in areas like the development of “smart cities” or “safe cities” in China.¹³⁵ These will combine technologies, ranging from surveillance cameras, sensors, radio-frequency identification, and GPS, to sense, measure, and capture data from anywhere in a city. The idea is that the sharing and integration of information resources and data will improve the government’s

¹³¹ Renzhou Xin, “Fully Realizing the Effect Informatisation Has on Raising Governance Capacity [发挥信息化对提高执政能力的作用]”, *The People's Daily*, 4 June 2005.

<http://theory.southcn.com/llzhuanli/znl/ltt/200506080733.htm>

¹³² “Meng Jianzhu: Continuously Improving Social Governance's Scientific(-isation), Rule of Law(-isation) and Intelligence(-isation) Standards [“孟建柱：不断提高社会治理科学化法治化智能化水平]”, *Xinhua*, 24 March 2017. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-03/24/c_1120691230.htm

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Yan Zhang. “Security Innovation Seen as Crucial.” *China Daily*, 20 September 2017. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-09/20/content_32225951.htm

¹³⁵ For instance, see: China Electronics Standardization Institute. “China Smart City Standardisation White Paper [中国智慧城市标准化白皮书]” July 2013. http://www.cac.gov.cn/2014-09/28/c_1112661626.htm

capacity to analyze and handle complex situations in governance, thus improving the CCP's decision-making ability.

Conclusion

As technology enhances the Party's capacity to identify problems, support decision-making, and improve response, it is also attempting to use technology to prevent problems from emerging at all. Social management is the management of the entire society and also a management that is participated in by the entire society. As such, social management as a concept has always included a form of public "participation" in social management. The projects in problem identification, decision-making, and response also support the Party's effort to encourage participation in social management. This effort is most clear in the construction of China's social credit system.

Technology, however, is not a completely game-changing solution to the CCP's power problem. The obstacles to ensuring the Party's power that have long-existed, mostly centered around the lack of rule of law and corruption, do not disappear because of technology. In fact, technology may encourage further abuse. Technology might increase the Party's ability to control society, but it may also worsen the impact of the contestation for power within the Party.

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