

After the Bo Xilai trial: does corruption threaten China's future?

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Abstract:

A popular sentiment among Chinese that - *corruption could lead to the end of the state and anti-corruption could lead to the end of the Chinese Communist Party* - provides a unique perspective from which to interpret China's current prospects for institutional reform. This paper offers an assessment of the scandal involving Chongqing party secretary, Central Politburo member and former Minister for Commerce Bo Xilai, and identifies the underlying reasons for the deepening of corruption in Chinese politics. We argue that campaign-style anti-corruption efforts such as President Xi Jinping's crackdown on 'tigers' and 'flies' (powerful leaders and lowly bureaucrats) although useful for establishing the new leadership's presence have limited impact on elite and systemic corruption and can be camouflage for proxy power struggles, which impede China's political development.

Keywords: China, elite crime, Bo Xilai, Xi Jinping, corruption, authoritarian resilience

Introduction

At the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) 18th Congress in November 2012, China's past president Hu Jintao warned that corruption could lead to 'the collapse of the Party and the downfall of the state'.¹ At the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCP Central Committee in November 2013, Xi Jinping the newly appointed president and

¹ Tania Branigan, 'China's Hu Jintao warns congress corruption could cause fall of state', *The Guardian*, (8 November 2012), available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/08/china-hujintao-warning-congress-corruption> (accessed 19 November 2013).

general secretary also highlighted the endemic nature of corruption—risking the legitimacy of the Party and impeding China’s economic reform—and stressed the importance of strengthening anti-corruption systems.² Xi was quoted by *Reuters* in November 2012 described corruption as "worms breeding in decaying matter" and reflecting on the ‘Arab spring’:

‘In recent years, some countries have stored up problems over time leading to seething public anger, civil unrest and government collapse. Corruption has been an important factor in all this. A great deal of facts tells us that the worse corruption becomes the only outcome will be the end of the party and the end of the state! We must be vigilant! ...Recently, our party has had serious discipline and legal cases of a despicable nature which has had a bad political effect and shocked people.’³

Corruption associated with toxic food adulteration, bogus medicines, grave abuses of power, and criminal ‘black societies’, have been at the forefront of public scandals and without reform further occurrences could rapidly erode the legitimacy of police and judicial organs as well as the CCP. The recent trial of the former Chongqing party secretary and member of the ruling Communist Party's elite 25-member Politburo Bo Xilai exposed the friction between personal power and wealth, and fidelity to state and party. The scale of corruption is significant and elite corruption has arisen from the ‘...collusive relationship between high-ranking cadres and the emerging business community including criminal enterprises, wherein those with political power have material incentives to facilitate profit-making by their ‘business partners’’.⁴ For example, the Bank of China inadvertently reported that between 1994-2008 as many as 18,000 fugitive corrupt officials left the country for destinations in Europe, America and other parts of Asia, plundering an estimated USD 120 billion from state-owned enterprises and other criminal activities.⁵ The costs of domestic public order have also rapidly grown, and for the first time domestic security outlays approved by the 2012 National People’s Congress (NPC) exceeded defence, in part over concerns about the growth of mass incidents, fraud, corruption and organized crime and the need to strengthen stability (*weiwen*) and harmony.⁶

² ‘Commentary: China embarks on era of key reforms’, *Xinhua*, (5 December 2013), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2013-12/05/c_132943741.htm (accessed 16 December 2013).

³ Anath Krishnan, ‘Corruption may lead to unrest: Xi’, *The Hindu*, (19 November 2012), available at: http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/corruption-may-lead-to-unrest-xi/article4112139_ece (accessed 2 October 2013).

⁴ Andrew Wedeman, ‘The intensification of corruption’, *China Quarterly* 180, (2004), pp. 859-921, p.920.

⁵ Lewis L., ‘Mistakenly-released report reveals embarrassing extent of Chinese Corruption’, *Times* (re-published in *The Australian*), (17 June 2011), available at: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/accidentally-released-report-revealsembarrassing-extent-of-chinese-corruption/story-e6frg6so-1226076938605> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶ Liping Sun, Yuan Shen, Yuhua Guo, Jun Jin, Xing Ying, and Xiangyang Bi, ‘Tsinghua Report- New Thinking on Stability Maintenance: Long-term Social Stability via Institutionalised Expression of Interests’, *Lingdao Zhe* (Leaders) 33, (2010), pp. 11-24 (in Chinese); Susan Trevaskes, *Policing Serious Crime in China: From “Strike*

Fighting corruption has again become the top priority for the new leadership. However, is China's anti-corruption strategy designed to curb corruption or purge political enemies? It seems customary in Chinese politics that every new leader cracks down on corrupt senior officials at the beginning of their reign.⁷ A campaign or *yanda* (strike hard) style anti-corruption strategy enables new leaders to establish their authority throughout the country, but its selective application may risk further tension among China's leadership and could subvert the evolution of China's democratic processes, especially within the CCP.

Since late-2012 President Xi Jinping has intensified the CCP's fight against corruption. President Xi has frequently vowed to crack down on 'tigers' and 'flies'—powerful leaders and lowly bureaucrats—in order to '...keep power restricted within the cage of regulations'.⁸ So far, the most high-ranking tiger to fall from grace is Bo Xilai. The dramatic fall of Bo Xilai became China's foremost political scandal since the purge of Zhao Ziyang, the former CCP leader, in 1989.⁹ Bo's demise eclipsed that of the equally lionized Liu Zhijun the former Minister for Railways who was arrested in the wake of the 2011 Wenzhou train collision on bribery and corruption charges. These were associated in part with wealth accumulated by his brother and with apparent plans, according to the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) to bribe entry into the Party Central Committee and ultimately the Politburo.¹⁰

This paper analyses the fall of Bo Xilai, discusses petty and grand corruption, and how the unintended effects of anti-corruption campaigns erode public trust in the state. The paper is structured as follows: we briefly describe the rise of Bo and his Chongqing model ('sing red and smash black' campaign) and the challenge this approach posed to the political system. We then describe Bo's extraordinary fall through the actions of his trusted aide Wang Lijun, who although outside the tight Bo circle had won patronage and support from Bo.¹¹ Bo's case revealed the prevalence of corruption among government officials and how anti-corruption drives can also be selectively used to target political rivals. Finally, we consider President Xi's anti-

Hard" to "Kill Fewer" (Routledge, London, 2010); Chris Buckley, 'China domestic security spending rises to \$111 billion', *Reuters*, (5 March 2012), available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/05/us-chinaparliament-security-idUSTRE82403J20120305> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁷ Huang Wenguang, 'China's Corruption Purge Continues Against Zhou Yongkang', *The Daily Beast*, (2 September 2013), available at: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/09/02/china-s-corruption-purge-continues-against-zhou-yongkang.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁸ Ding Lin, 'Xi Jinping vows "power within cage of regulations"', *Xinhua*, (22 January 2013), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-01/22/c_132120363.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁹ Jaime A. FlorCruz, 'From Gang of Four to Bo Xilai: Reporting from China's show trials', *CNN*, (28 August 2013), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/28/world/asia/china-gang-of-four-trial-florcruz/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013); 'Bo Xilai's trial: Pacifying the Maoists', *The Economist*, (19 August 2013), available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/08/bo-xilai-s-trial> (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹⁰ Evan Osnos, 'Boss Rail: The Disaster That Exposed the Underside of the Boom'. *The New Yorker*, (22 October 2012) available at: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/22/121022fa_fact_osnos (accessed 19 November 2013); Lu Hui, 'China's Railway Minister Under Investigation Over "Disciplinary Violation"'. *Xinhua News*, (12 February 2011), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-02/12/c_13729242.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹¹ John Garnaut, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Bo* (Penguin Harmondsworth, 2013).

corruption campaign and demonstrate how this can help achieve short-term political goals by neutralising rivals. However, such campaigns have not in the long run curbed corruption, advanced transparency or heightened legitimacy.

The Chongqing Model

Since 2010, policy debates between conservatives and reformers among the CCP had centred on how to balance economic development with the distribution of wealth. Two different approaches emerged in 2011 in the so-called ‘cake theory’ dispute between Bo Xilai and Guangdong party secretary Chief Wang Yang (the former Chongqing party chief and since 2013, Vice-Premier). The liberal Wang Yang emphasized the importance of continued economic development by stressing that ‘one must bake a bigger cake first before dividing it’ (‘baking a bigger cake’). Bo, in response, argued that ‘[Wang’s solution] is wrong in practice. If the distribution of the cake is unfair, those who make the cake won’t feel motivated to bake it’ (‘dividing the cake’).¹² Thus divisions over development policies between conservatives and reformers within the party had firmed.

The son of Bo Yibo, one of the immortals or the Eight Elders of the Communist Party, Bo Xilai was widely recognized as a promising ‘second red generation’ leader. He was also perceived as the putative figurehead of the ‘new left’, an amorphous movement characterised by nostalgia for Mao. Bo’s ambition like many ‘princelings’ was to rise to the highest levels of power—the Politburo Standing Committee. Decisions about who holds leadership at these levels are often made a decade in advance, so at the 16th Party Congress in 2002, cadre were identified and groomed for the handful of senior leadership posts to fall vacant in 2012. Bo senior personally launched a campaign to support his son’s candidacy, but Xi Jinping another ‘princeling’ who like Bo Xilai survived the tumult of the cultural revolution gained more support and Bo failed to be elected to one of these prized posts. Bo’s father still sought a seat on the powerful nine-member Politburo Standing Committee at the 17th Party Congress in October 2007 but his death in January 2007 reduced Bo’s political capital. Nevertheless, he managed to gain a seat on the 25-member Politburo and became the party chief of Chongqing. Becoming a party chief in a remote area normally reduced a junior politburo member’s chances of returning to Beijing and serving on the Politburo Standing Committee. Despite the apparent setback Bo Xilai, attempted to use his new position as a springboard for promotion and return to Beijing.¹³

The Chongqing model was based on social and economic policies designed to tackle the challenges confronting China’s rapidly expanding cities such as poor public services, crime and corruption, bleak living conditions and high costs of transport.

¹² Jaime A. FlorCruz and Peter Shadbolt, ‘China’s Bo Xilai: From rising star to scandal’, *CNN*, (23 September 2013), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/08/world/asia/china-bo-xilai-profile/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹³ Dan Steinbock, ‘The real Bo Xilai story’, *Asia Times*, (17 September 2013), available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/CHIN-01-170913.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

Two major campaigns known as ‘singing red’ and ‘smashing black’ were launched with the media panache now associated with Bo and enabled him to establish a cult-like base of support among the masses.¹⁴ The ‘sing red’ (revolutionary songs) campaign was launched in Chongqing in June 2008 to celebrate the Communist Party's 90th birthday in order to promote ‘red’ culture and the campaign was adopted by many other cities.¹⁵

Crime groups are known as ‘black societies’ in China so ‘smashing black’ or *dai hei* was Bo and police chief Wang Lijun’s ruthless crackdown on organized crime that also exposed collusion between some cadre (‘umbrellas’) in the Public Security Bureau and courts and the city’s crime groups.¹⁶ Bo Xilai’s smashing black campaign targeted ‘red-black collusions’ (mutually beneficial networks between gang bosses and police officers and other officials) and wealthy businessmen who monopolized markets through the use of threats and violence.¹⁷ Under the leadership of Bo and Wang Lijun, the Chongqing government achieved success and national prominence via its ‘strike black’ anti-corruption campaign. From October 2009 to November 2011, 5618 suspects were arrested and over 550 criminal groups were suppressed. Seventy-seven government officials, some at senior levels such as Wen Qiang, Chongqing’s former director of the municipality’s justice bureau and deputy police chief, were arrested for allegedly protecting local criminal groups and illegal entrepreneurs.¹⁸

The government allowed peasants to register as urban residents and launched a large-scale public housing project.¹⁹ Under the leadership of Bo Xilai, Chongqing was one of the fastest-growing province-level regions in 2011, achieving an impressive 16.4% year-on-year growth.²⁰

The Chongqing model attracted criticism by politicians and scholars outside Chongqing. The ‘strike black’ campaign was condemned because it used torture, and falsified evidence against political enemies as well as crime groups.²¹ Tong Zhiwei, a leading law scholar, criticized the trials of Chongqing gang members for neglecting

¹⁴ Zachary Keck, ‘With Bo Xilai on trial, China adopts Chongqing model’, *The Diplomat*, (21 August 2013), available at: <http://thediplomat.com/china-power/with-bo-xilai-on-trial-china-adopts-chongqing-model> (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹⁵ Jaime A. FlorCruz, ‘Red culture campaign sweeps China’, *CNN*, (1 July 2011), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/06/30/china.red.campaign/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹⁶ Jaime A. FlorCruz, ‘The rise and fall of China's Bo Xilai’, *CNN*, (16 March 2012), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/16/world/asia/florcruz-xilai-china/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

¹⁷ Roderic Broadhurst, ‘The suppression of black societies in China’, *Trends in Organized Crime* 16 (1), (2013), pp. 95-113.

¹⁸ Peng Wang, ‘The rise of the Red Mafia in China: a case study of organised crime and corruption in Chongqing’, *Trends in Organized Crime* 16 (1), (2013), pp. 49-73; Andrew Wedeman, ‘The challenge of commercial bribery and organized crime in China’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 22 (79), (2013), pp. 18-34.

¹⁹ William A. Callahan, *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 84.

²⁰ ‘Models of development: Chongqing rolls on’, *The Economist*, (28 April 2012), available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21553495> (accessed 19 November 2013).

²¹ Michael Bristow, ‘Torture claims emerge in China's Bo Xilai scandal’, *BBC*, (21 April 2012), available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-17790632> (accessed 19 November 2013); Vincent R. Johnson and Stephen C. Loomis, ‘The rule of law in China and the prosecution of Li Zhuang’, *The Chinese Journal of Comparative Law* 1 (1), (2013), pp. 66-83.

due process and discriminating against local private businesses.²² The liberals soon characterised Bo's 'red colour movement' as a 'Maoist revival'.²³ Wang Yang the former party secretary of Chongqing from 2005 to 2007 and Guangdong party secretary criticized the Chongqing model by noting '... people need to study and review Communist Party history rather than just singing of its brilliance'.²⁴ Bo's campaign against organised crime was also an implicit criticism of Wang Yang's period at Chongqing, namely that he had tolerated organised crime. Zhang Ming, a political scientist at the People's University of China, noted the incongruence: '... red songs are mostly about revolution and the violence... now they only use red songs to praise the party and the party members, so it's pointless'.²⁵ Wang Yang whose handling in 2011 of the farmer's protests in Wukan sparked by the provocation of corrupt land seizures also brought him national prominence. He was able to resolve the 'Wukan Spring' peacefully by allowing a local election of the village chief and the punishment of the former village head for abuse of office and illegal land transfers. Wang Yang was promoted in March 2013 to Vice-Premier and may help lead market-based solutions to pressing problems such as the debt-risk confronting many small and medium state owned enterprises.²⁶

However, given the growing gap between rich and poor and social tension in contemporary China, Bo's Chongqing model, offered a way to balance economic growth with social equality, and was widely supported by the masses. The anti-crime and anti-corruption campaign made Bo a hero of the country's 'new left'. Bo's charismatic leadership style and his close ties within the People's Liberation Army as well as the party hierarchy could have provoked a challenge to China's collective leadership system which discourages charismatic personalities – fearing 'cults' of personality.²⁷ In this case, the conviction of Bo Xilai was vital for Xi Jinping to cement his formal transition to power and ensure the continued support of the departing leaders. As Francis Fukuyama argued:

²² Tong Zhiwei, 'Chongqing daheixing shehui guanli moshi yanjiu baogao', *21ccom.net*, (20 February 2012), available at: http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/ggzhc/article_2012021353482.html (accessed 19 November 2013).

²³ Willy Lam, 'The Maoist revival and the conservative turn in Chinese politics', *China Perspectives* (2), (2012), pp. 5-15.

²⁴ Louisa Lim, 'Cake Theory Has Chinese Eating up Political Debate', *NPR*, (06 November 2011), available at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/11/06/142047654/cake-theory-has-chinese-eating-up-political-debate> (accessed 19 November 2013). Wang Yang is currently serving as Vice Premier of the PRC.

²⁵ Edward Wong, 'Repackaging the Revolutionary Classics of China', *The New York Times*, (29 June 2011), available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/30/world/asia/30redsong.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

²⁶ James Pomfret, 2013 'Special Report: Freedom fizzles out in China's rebel town of Wukan' *Reuters*, (28 Feb 2013), available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/28/us-china-wukan-idUSBRE91R1J020130228> (accessed 19 November 2013); Kent Ewing, 'Guangdong Boss Bets on Velvet Glove', *Asia Times Online*, (7 January 2012), available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/NA07Ad02.html> (accessed 28 October 2013).

²⁷ 'China: Bo Xilai affair could provoke challenge to entire system', *Democracy Digest*, (16 March 2012), available at: <http://www.demdigest.net/blog/2012/03/china-bo-xilai-affair-could-provoke-challenge-to-entire-system> (accessed 19 November 2013).

‘Bo Xilai was really a potential bad emperor – he was the only one in the elite circle with the charisma to break out of the post-Mao consensus... If Bo had been promoted, he could have upended the system and broken all the rules’.²⁸

Bo’s downfall

The trigger for China’s most public scandal since 1989 was a personal dispute between Bo Xilai and Wang Lijun, then deputy mayor and police chief of Chongqing. On 24 September 2012, Wang was sentenced by the Chengdu City Intermediate People's Court to 15 years in prison for bending the law for selfish ends, defection, abuse of power and bribe-taking.²⁹ Wang Lijun was convicted of abusing his power to cover up the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood by Gu Kailai, Bo’s wife, and a family aide, Zhang Xiaojun. During his trial Bo Xilai claimed that his wife and Wang were intimates and this explained their motivations over the Heywood murder.

When Wang Lijun secretly reported the involvement of Gu Kailai in the Neil Heywood murder case to Bo, Wang apparently hoped to trade this information for a promotion or at least to divert an investigation into alleged corruption while serving in Dalian but instead was allegedly slapped, punched and threatened.³⁰ In February 2012, a fearful Wang fled to the US consulate in Chengdu, despite the risk of being labelled a traitor. Inside the consulate, Wang offered evidence implicating Bo’s family in the Neil Heywood case. His request for political asylum was denied and he was taken into custody by China’s state security ministry.³¹ The Wang Lijun incident led to the usual thorough investigation of Bo’s associates, family and his wife for the alleged murder of Heywood. Bo was removed from his party posts soon after.

At the trial of Gu Kailai on 9 August 2012, Gu admitted to poisoning Heywood, claiming that a business dispute between them led Heywood to use threatening words against Gu’s son, Bo Guagua. On 20 August 2012, Hefei intermediate court sentenced Gu to a suspended death sentence, which subject to good behaviour is normally commuted to life imprisonment after two years. A year later on 22 September 2013 Jinan Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Bo Xilai to life imprisonment for taking 20 million RMB (\$USD3.3 million) in bribes, embezzlement of about 5 million RMB (\$USD817 000) dating back to his post in Dalian, and abuse of power related to his role in covering up the murder of Heywood. The court also deprived him of his political rights for life and confiscated all his property.³²

²⁸ Jamil Anderlini, ‘China seeks to erase Bo Xilai influence’, *Financial Times*, (23 September 2013), available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c9c8d264-243c-11e3-a8f7-00144feab7de.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

²⁹ ‘Wang Lijun sentenced to 15 years in prison’, *Xinhua*, (24 September 2012), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-09/24/c_131868689.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁰ ‘Did Bo Xilai Slap or Punch Wang Lijun?’, *The Wall Street Journal*, (23 September 2013), available at: <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/09/23/did-bo-xilai-slap-or-punch-wang-lijun> (accessed 19 November 2013).

³¹ Jamil Anderlini, ‘China jails Wang Lijun for 15 years’, *Financial Times*, (24 September 2013), available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dddc7e84-05ea-11e2-bce8-00144feabdc0.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

³² ‘Bo Xilai gets life in prison’, *China Daily*, (22 September 2013), available at: http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/22/content_16984347.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

The CCP leadership response to the Bo Xilai case was to depict it as a simple criminal matter rather than a political struggle.³³ Bo's sentence, according to China's state media, was a victory against corruption.³⁴ The 'throat and tongue' of the CCP, the *People's Daily*, editorialized '...the resolute punishment of Bo Xilai according to law has fully shown that there are no exceptions in the face of party discipline and state laws'.³⁵ The live micro-blogging of the statements of witnesses during the trial of Bo Xilai also supposedly reflected 'historic transparency' and 'historic progress for the rule of law' in China.³⁶

However, since the trial of Bo Xilai began on 22 August 2013, there have been opposing voices. Zhang Zhi'an, a journalism professor at Sun Yat-Sen University in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, argued that the micro-blog broadcasts were selective and not genuinely available in real-time.³⁷ Others concerns have been raised about the details of the Bo family connections with the murdered Heywood and the extent and nature of his corruption.³⁸ The Chongqing trials were also the first 'black society' cases where systematic use of telecommunications surveillance was undertaken and that this capability was also used to monitor political rivals.³⁹

Many Western analysts speculated that the severity of Bo's sentencing was due to his spirited defence during his trial, which made party leaders unhappy.⁴⁰ Bo is depicted by some Western media as a scapegoat in a political purge despite the trigger of murder and Wang's cover-up. As Minxi Pei suggests, 'Bo's ambition, aggressiveness and ruthlessness threatened his rivals and constituted his real crime'.⁴¹ Although the three charges against Bo excluded the worst abuses of the 'smash black' campaign, details of his corruption emerged when his wife, Gu Kailai testified about how the Bo family maintained close links with entrepreneur, Xu Ming, who allegedly bribed them

³³ 'China Voice: Why do rumors repeatedly arise in Bo Xilai incident?', *Xinhua*, (29 April 2012), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-04/29/c_131560026.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁴ 'Unremitting, lawful effort against corruption: People's Daily', *Xinhua*, (22 September 2013), available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-09/22/c_125426185.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁵ 'Jianchi fazhi fanfu, jianshe lianjie zhengzhi', *People's Daily*, (23 September 2013), available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2013-09/23/nw.D110000renmrb_20130923_5-01.htm (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁶ Zheng Haijian, 'Cong Bo Xilai gongshen ganshou fazhi zai zhongguo de liliang', *People's Daily*, (22 August 2013), available at: <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n/2013/0822/c1003-22664003.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁷ Qiang Zhang, 'Microblogging the Bo Xilai trial: Transparency or theatre?', *BBC*, (23 August 2013), available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23806657> (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁸ Kerry Brown, 'Former diplomat Kerry Brown discusses the fate of Bo Xilai on The World', *ABC News*, (21 August 2013), available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-21/former-diplomat-kerry-brown-discusses-the-fate-of/4903840> (accessed 19 November 2013).

³⁹ Jonathan Ainsfield and Ian Johnson, 'Ousted Chinese Leader is Said to Have Spied on Other Top Officials', *New York Times*, (25 April 2012), available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/26/world/asia/bo-xilai-said-to-have-spied-on-top-china-officials.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴⁰ 'The Bo Xilai: End of the road?', *The Economist*, (28 September 2013), available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/china/21586884-tough-sentence-popular-leader-end-road> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴¹ Minxin Pei, 'The Legacy of Bo Xilai', *The Diplomat*, (25 September 2013), available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/25/the-legacy-of-bo-xilai> (accessed 19 November 2013).

to obtain commercial favours.⁴² The murder of Heywood by a ‘disturbed’ Gu Kailia further manipulated by Wang Lijun are likely facts sufficient to have driven Bo to do all he could to stop any resulting scandal.

Structural and symbiotic corruption

Government officials control resource allocation, which create the institutional incentives for corruption.⁴³ The public trial of Bo showed how corrupt officials achieve repeated promotion without any apparent fear of criminal investigation.⁴⁴ Bo’s case also raised questions about ‘...why the party authorities had not known or not acted on his supposed larceny from over a decade ago, but managed in fact to allow him further promotion’.⁴⁵

The intertwining of corruption and promotion originates from China’s distinctive Confucian bureaucratic culture, which centres on ‘the rule of man’ rather than ‘the rule of law’. Guanxi—the reciprocity of personal relationships—has customarily been embedded in the behaviour of the Party elite. As Xuezhi Guo observed, ‘...[in theory], the Party relied heavily on Leninist discipline and Communist ideology to control the action of its members, but in practice these standards were enforced through personalized relationships’.⁴⁶

Drawing on an analysis of a biographical database of Central Committee members, political scientists Victor Shih, Christopher Adolph and Mingxing Liu found that, in the post-reform era, factional ties with senior party leaders, educational qualifications, and provincial revenue collection were key determining factors in senior promotion, rather than performance.⁴⁷ This suggests the ‘hidden rule’ of the promotion system is the cultivation of connections and revenue.

Political factions in China usually form around senior officials’ *guanxi* or inter-personal networks. Factional ties can be formed on the basis of having worked in the same region (e.g. the ‘Shanghai faction’⁴⁸ led by Jiang Zemin) or in a work unit (e.g.

⁴² ‘Bo Xilai rejects insane wife Gu Kailai’s testimony’, *BBC*, (23 August 2013), available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23806575> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴³ Kilkon Ko and Cuifen Weng, ‘Critical Review of Conceptual Definitions of Chinese Corruption: a formal–legal perspective’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 20 (70), (2011), pp. 359–378.

⁴⁴ Corruption charges against Chinese politician Bo Xilai can be date back to 1999 when he was the mayor of Dalian. For more details see: Sun Xi, ‘Bo Xilai: Anti-corruption failure in China’, *Worldpress*, (31 August 2013), available at: <http://www.worldpress.org/Asia/3980.cfm> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴⁵ Kerry Brown, ‘After Bo, China’s political dysfunction just as opaque’, *South China Morning Post*, (24 September 2013), <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1316103/after-bo-chinas-political-dysfunction-just-opaque> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴⁶ Xuezhi Guo, ‘Dimensions of Guanxi in Chinese Elite Politics’, *The China Quarterly* 46, (2001), pp. 69–90, p. 70.

⁴⁷ Victor Shih, Christopher Adolph and Mingxing Liu, ‘Getting ahead in the communist party: explaining the advancement of central committee members in China’, *American Political Science Review* 106 (1), (2012), pp. 166–187.

⁴⁸ The ‘Shanghai faction’ is a term used by political observers to represent an informal group of officials who rose to prominence in connection to the Shanghai municipal administration under former Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin. For more information, please see: Cheng Li, ‘One party, two coalitions in China’s politics’,

the ‘Tuanpai’⁴⁹ or CPP Youth league headed by Hu Jintao). In a guanxi network, members faithfully follow the informal rules of reciprocity and equality. On the one hand, these unspoken rules encourage, sometimes even require, high-ranking officials to distribute opportunities and promotions among those close to them in the network. On the other hand, low-level bureaucrats and entrepreneurs usually obtain promotions or business opportunities through bribery of senior officials.⁵⁰ Given that China’s political system lacks transparency and effective checks and balances, the socialist market has become a politically led market economy. As Yang Jisheng argued:

‘Power itself is traded as a scarce commodity. In China, power trades for money, power trades for power, and power trades for sex. This has permeated into every field of life including education, human resources and the law. In today’s China, if you want to achieve something, it doesn’t matter how talented you are but whether you are connected with people in power. Those in close relationships with government officials, such as their sons and daughters, secretaries, drivers and lovers, become power brokers’.⁵¹

The social embeddedness of government officials’ and party members’ behaviour in guanxi networks has resulted in widespread corruption in China. Given the patron-client like character of guanxi, money-power exchanges among network members are normal or even necessary within the guanxi network, although these interpersonal activities may fall within the sphere of corruption and nepotism when they are viewed from a criminal law perspective. These unwritten ‘rules of the game’ pose fundamental challenges to China’s anti-corruption efforts supposedly delivered by hybrid ‘party-state’ institutions charged with its eradication.⁵²

The existence of corrupt guanxi networks makes anti-corruption drives extremely difficult. Cracking down on corrupt senior government officials requires the Chinese government to destroy the guanxi networks that may shield these officials from legal punishment. Moreover, the principle of reciprocity and the essence of *mianzi* (face) in the guanxi network result in attempts to divert punishment onto individuals who are outside the network. In Chinese politics, if an anti-graft campaign targets a campaign leader’s allies, this would damage the campaign leader’s reputation and make him or her lose face within the guanxi network. The role and negative influence of these

The East Asia Forum, (16 August 2009), available at: <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2009/08/16/one-party-two-coalitions-in-chinas-politics> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁴⁹ The ‘Tuanpai’ or Youth League Faction refers to governmental officials in the Communist Party China who originated from the Communist Youth League. For more information, please see: ‘Viewpoint: The powerful factions among China’s rulers’, *BBC*, (6 November 2012), available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-20203937> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁵⁰ Ling Li, ‘Performing Bribery in China: guanxi-practice, corruption with a human face’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 20(68), (2011), pp. 1-20; Jing Vivian Zhan, ‘Filling the gap of formal institutions: the effects of Guanxi network on corruption in reform-era China’, *Crime, law and social change* 58 (2), (2012), pp. 93-109.

⁵¹ Yang Jisheng, ‘Taking on the power brokers’, *Financial Times*, (20 September 2013), available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/8c6375c2-1f42-11e3-b80b-00144feab7de.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁵² Yadong Luo, ‘The changing Chinese culture and business behavior: The perspective of intertwinement between guanxi and corruption’, *International Business Review* 17 (2), (2008), pp. 188-193.

pervasive guanxi networks on the independence of the legal system, and other government activities undermines Xi Jinping's efforts in this latest anti-corruption campaign.

Anti-corruption: panacea or Pandora's box?

Corruption has been described as a social evil, which impedes economic development, undermines efficiency in public administration, leads to political instability and a legitimacy crisis, and lowers the moral standards of the entire society.⁵³ The ability of the new political leaders to curb corruption is, therefore, fundamental to China's future. Anti-corruption campaigns, however, may mask a political purge or reveal an internal struggle.⁵⁴ The assumption here is that a certain degree of corruption is unavoidable in government and party circles, so that, unless blatant, all officials are at some risk of such charges regardless of their relative virtue. The threat posed by anti-corruption activities enables leaders to achieve internal control: party members who oppose current CCP policy or threaten interests of party bosses are vulnerable to corruption charges. The use of anti-corruption investigations against high-ranking 'tigers' by China's fifth generation leaders, however, risks undermining the solidarity among the elite and may subvert the prospects of advancing democratic reforms within the party and more broadly the institutional reforms left for later leaders by Deng Xiaoping.⁵⁵

The CCDI report submitted to the 18th NPC stated that 668,429 people had been given "party or administrative punishment" in the past five years. Of the cases investigated by the party's integrity agency, 24,584 individuals were handed over to judicial authorities. Yet little is known about the impact of the CCDI on the scale and scope of corruption. There are now many more high rank cadre (at *xian* or *chu* level) involved in CCDI investigations than in the past. For example in the early 1990s a handful at this level or higher (*sheng* or *bu*) were investigated but by 2008 this had grown to a few dozen at the higher ranks and in the mid-level ranks nearly five thousand.⁵⁶ A United Nations study of crime against Chinese business showed that corruption was a significant risk to many businesses but possibly not as extensive as Eastern Europe or other places undergoing rapid change.⁵⁷

From the perspective of many ordinary Chinese citizens, corruption is a local problem, which is closely linked to low- and mid-level government officials. But the trial of Bo

⁵³ Zengke He, 'Corruption and anti-corruption in reform China', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33 (2), (2000), pp. 243-270.

⁵⁴ Willy Lam, 'Hu draws blood in Wang Lijun scandal', *China Brief* 12 (5), (2012), pp. 1-3; Yawei Liu, 'Bo Xilai's Campaign for the Standing Committee and the Future of Chinese Politicking', *China Brief* 11 (21), (2011), pp. 8-11.

⁵⁵ Ezra F. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 390.

⁵⁶ Personal communication Fu Hualing, 8-9. November 2012.

⁵⁷ Roderic Broadhurst, Brigitte Bouhours and Thierry Bouhours, 'Business and the risk of crime in China' *British Journal of Criminology* 53 (2), (2013), pp. 276-296.

Xilai reveals ‘the rottenness at the heart of Chinese politics’.⁵⁸ Bo’s abuse of authority also led to investigations of the involvement of Zhou Yongkang, former head of the Ministry of Public Security, and chair of the powerful national political legal committee in allegations of bribery related to the construction of former President Jiang Zemin’s villa. The exposure of these grand corruption cases inevitably damage public confidence in the CCP and the state.⁵⁹

An anti-corruption drive is a proven political and disciplinary weapon within the CCP. For example, Chen Xitong, former Politburo member and mayor of Beijing, was dismissed from office in 1995 and sentenced to 16 years in prison for corruption and dereliction of duty in 1998. Chen’s removal from power was perhaps as much due to his public confrontation with Jiang Zemin as to his greed.⁶⁰ Another Politburo member removed from his position was Chen Liangyu. Chen was the former party chief of Shanghai, and was sentenced to 18 years in jail for his involvement in graft and misuse of Shanghai’s social security funds. His arrest occurred after he challenged Hu Jintao.⁶¹

Like previous leaders who employed anti-corruption campaigns as a strategy to consolidate their authority, Xi’s campaign is open to political opportunism. Perhaps the greatest beneficiary of Bo’s demise was Xi Jinping, who as the new President could legitimate his tenure with another ‘clean up’ of the party by arresting the ‘tigers’. It also seems that the ‘tigers’ being investigated or prosecuted this far are also Xi’s political rivals, while other ‘tigers’ are so far untouched.⁶² A partial and incomplete anti-corruption drive may further weaken leadership unity and further undermine the legitimacy of the CPP and continue to irritate the public.⁶³ In order to win public support, it is important that Xi’s anti-corruption drive is universal and even those from his own ‘string’ or guanxi network cannot escape punishment. One indicator of the genuine will to suppress corruption will be how rapidly public asset disclosure laws (for officials) are implemented and if the further development of vital unexplained wealth laws (cf. Article 395 PRC Criminal Code) added to the criminal

⁵⁸ ‘Chinese politics: the sacking of Bo Xilai’, *The Economist*, (17 March 2012), available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21550309>, (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁵⁹ Jamil Anderlini, ‘China corruption trials risk erosion of party legitimacy’, *Financial Times*, (25 September 2013), available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/3b3a5c50-25d8-11e3-ae8-00144feab7de.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶⁰ ‘Chen Xitong: Timely passing’, *The Economist*, (5 June 2013), available at: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/06/chen-xitong> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶¹ Jonathan Watts, ‘Shanghai’s Communist party chief sacked in corruption purge’, *The Guardian*, (25 September 2006), available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/sep/25/china.jonathanwatts> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶² ‘A Chinese power struggle: hunting tigers’, *The Economist*, (7 September 2013), available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21585004-cracking-down-corrupt-officials-xi-jinping-must-not-forget-fundamental-reforms-hunting> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶³ Yuhua Wang, ‘Bo Xilai and the dilemma of China’s anti-corruption campaign’, *CNN*, (25 September 2013), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/24/opinion/bo-xilai-china-corruption-yuhua-wang/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

law in 2009 occurs.⁶⁴ Illicit enrichment is also punishable through Party discipline mechanisms and from 2010 an asset disclosure system was required, albeit untested. There are also provisions for fines and seizure of criminal profits related to particular offences. The successful implementation of the new criminal procedure law will also be important, albeit that it exempts serious corruption and national security offences and authorises in these cases *shuanggui* (special imprisonment and interrogation exempt from due process).⁶⁵

These reforms are urgent but oligarchic interests and factional balances may impede these necessary changes. In October 2012, *The New York Times* reported that Wen Jiabao, China's immediate past prime minister, and his family possessed through complicated holdings and investments a \$2.7 billion fortune.⁶⁶ Wen responded with a rebuttal based on his personal frugality in order to protect his reputation, and the *New York Times*' report unsurprisingly did not result in an investigation into the legality of the Wen family assets. The wealth amassed by Wen Jiabao's family did suggest that aside from an individual's integrity, families and others associated with the senior leadership may benefit from the influence money may buy among the CCP's elites. A Bloomberg report in June 2012 also unearthed Xi Jinping's family fortune. According to that report Bloomberg asserted:

'[Xi's] extended family expanded their business interests to include minerals, real estate and mobile-phone equipment... Those interests include investments in companies with total assets of \$376 million; an 18 percent indirect stake in a rare-earths company with \$1.73 billion in assets; and a \$20.2 million holding in a publicly traded technology company.'⁶⁷

Bloomberg websites were promptly blocked by the Chinese government after it published these details,⁶⁸ yet such questions still remain: how best to handle links between the family business activities of senior leaders and the potential role of powerful business interests? In the absence of transparency and a clearly identified

⁶⁴ Article 395 (2009) strengthens the punishment of state functionaries who hold undeclared overseas bank accounts but does not extend to private or corporate suspects, and are relatively new (and ill-defined): "Where the property or expenditure of any state functionary obviously exceeds his *lawful income*, and the *difference is huge*, he shall be ordered to *explain* the sources. If he fails to do so, the difference shall be determined as illegal income, and he shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment not more than five years or criminal detention; or if the *difference is extremely huge*, shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment not less than five years but not more than ten years. The difference of the property shall be recovered." (author's italics)

⁶⁵ The new criminal procedure law was passed at the 5th meeting of the 11th NPC March 14, 2012 as the Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Law of the PRC (Order No. 55 of the President of the PRC) with effect from January 1 2013.

⁶⁶ David Barboza, 'Billions in Hidden Riches for Family of Chinese Leader', *The New York Times*, (25 October 2012), available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/business/global/family-of-wen-jiabao-holds-a-hidden-fortune-in-china.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶⁷ 'Xi Jinping Millionaire Relations Reveal Fortunes of Elite', *Bloomberg News*, (29 June 2012), available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-06-29/xi-jinping-millionaire-relations-reveal-fortunes-of-elite.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁶⁸ 'Bloomberg sites blocked in China days after Xi family wealth story', *Reuters*, (4 July 2012), available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/us-china-censorship-bloomberg-idUSBRE86306820120704> (accessed 19 November 2013).

asset disclosure practice, political leaders are always vulnerable to allegations of conflict of interest and favouritism. In short, how is one to know who are the real tigers and who are the true guardians of the public interest, if these issues of integrity are not addressed?

It is uncertain if the Bo Xilai trial will lead to yet other trials of so-called ‘tigers’ but further high profile cases. The CCDI investigation of Nanjing mayor Ji Jianye, for alleged bribery offences may suggest an erosion of the influence of former President Jiang Zemin. Ji also served as party head of Yangzhou, former President Jiang Zemin’s home-town and allegedly used this connection corruptly.⁶⁹ Western media and Chinese-language newspapers outside China have linked corruption investigations involving Jiang Jiemin, who headed the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, and four top executives of PetroChina, to Zhou Yongkang, former secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee (also known as ‘second centre of power’ in the CCP).⁷⁰ The reduction of the size of the politburo allowed for an apparent demotion of public security interests in the reduced Standing Committee but also the retirement of Zhou from the leadership group. Zhou Yongkang had been a resolute supporter of Bo Xilai.

If Xi’s ‘hunting tiger’ project targets the likes of Zhou Yongkang, it would break an unwritten rule devised by Deng Xiaoping after the Cultural Revolution, namely, past and present members of the Politburo Standing Committee are not allowed to prosecute each other.⁷¹ This rule is designed to ensure solidarity within the party and lower the cost of losing a political struggle. It seems likely that Xi might amplify divisions amongst China’s leadership if any formal charge was brought against Zhou and yet if he fails to pursue grand corruption then he will also undermine the legitimacy of party and state. These tensions undermine stability and the necessary evolution and reform of state, legislative and party institutions required in contemporary China.

Conclusion

After three decades of economic reform, China has transformed itself from a centrally-planned economy to a socialist market economy in which power and money are widely exchanged. China has also entered a new transitional phase with rising

⁶⁹ Simon Rabinovitch, ‘China corruption probe nets Nanjing mayor’, *Financial Times*, (17 October 2013) available at: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/df40f976-36e0-11e3-aaf1-00144feab7de.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁷⁰ Chris Buckley and Jonathan Ansfield, ‘Senior Chinese Official Falls Under Scrutiny as Some Point to Larger Inquiry’, *The New York Times*, (1 September 2013), available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/02/world/asia/senior-chinese-official-is-investigated-for-graft.html> (accessed 19 November 2013); Anon, ‘Net closes on former China security chief’, *Financial Times*, (11 October 2013), available at: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9540d4e2-3265-11e3-b3a7-00144feab7de.html> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁷¹ Jaime A. FlorCruz, ‘Is China’s corruption crackdown really a political purge?’, *CNN*, (5 September 2013), available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/05/world/asia/china-corruption-crackdown-florcruz/index.html> (accessed 19 November 2013); Heather Timmons, ‘Is Zhou Yongkang China’s Next Bo Xilai?’, *The Atlantic*, (28 August 2013), available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/08/is-zhou-yongkang-chinas-next-bo-xilai/279139> (accessed 19 November 2013).

labour costs, decelerating economic growth, a growing rural-urban divide, increasing income inequality, worsening environmental problems, and deepening social differences. These tensions combined with inadequate social security continue to undermine social stability.⁷² The Chinese government and citizens are looking for alternative models of development in order to tackle these challenges while preserving democratic centralism. The Chongqing model could have represented a bold attempt to re-invigorate the party and the masses. Bo's rule in Chongqing focused particularly on fostering state-led capitalism and cracking down on organized crime, made him one of the most popular politicians in China. The trials (2009-2011) of gangsters and cadre 'umbrella' became public spectacles that exemplified the CCPs determination to enhance public stability through clean government.⁷³ Bo's 'brand', the Chongqing model, was, however, criticized as '...part of a power struggle, designed to discredit Wang Yang, his predecessor in Chongqing, and rival for a standing-committee seat'⁷⁴. Bo had hoped to promote the Chongqing model as his means to gain a seat on the Politburo Standing Committee, but fate, tangled loyalties, a grim murder and his belief in his own immunity resulted in life imprisonment.

The downfall of Bo suggests that politics in China remains as contested as ever. The inner-party factional struggles reflect long-term disputes over how the CCP should undertake economic and political reform. Such factionalism transformed anti-corruption campaigns into instruments of personal power rather than that of the party. Zhao Ziyang's (China's state premier and General Secretary of the CPP until the 1989 Tiananmen incident) account of this rivalry showed the pervasiveness of 'gift' receiving among senior officials was such that no official was 'clean' and thus everyone was vulnerable to such charges when political and policy disputes become personalized.⁷⁵ Bo's case shares similar features (albeit the crimes extend beyond corruption to involve accessory to murder) to these previous events but more so than in the past because it revealed to the public the extent of the corruption among the most senior officials as well as the lowest. A collateral effect has been to diminish confidence in the rule of law. As political scientist Xia Ming and others observe if the party officials behave as if public goods are their private monopoly then any attempts at anti-corruption will be futile.

China's exceptional economic growth has occurred despite it's standing as a state with a high level of corruption – the corrosive effects of corruption are supposedly

⁷² Jane Golley and Ligang Song, 'Chinese economic reform and development: achievements, emerging challenges and unfinished tasks', in Garnaut Ross, Golley Jane and Song Ligang (Eds), *China: The Next Twenty Years of Reform and Development*, (ANU EPress, 2010), pp. 1-18.

⁷³ Willy Lam, 'The CCP's Disturbing Revival of Maoism', *China Brief* 9 (23), (2009), pp. 2-4.

Willy Lam, 'Hu draws blood in Wang Lijun scandal', *China Brief* 12 (5), (2012), pp. 3-5.

⁷⁴ Anon, 2012, 'Chinese politics: the sacking of Bo Xilai', *The Economist*, (17 March 2012), available at: <http://www.economist.com/node/21550309> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁷⁵ Du Daozheng, *Du Daozheng riji: Zhao Ziyang hai shuoguo shenme* [Du Daozheng Diary: What Zhao Ziyang Said] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books Ltd, 2009), pp. 134-135; Zhao Ziyang, *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2009) (translation Adi Ignatious, Bao Pu, and Renee Chiang); personal communication Prof Xia Ming, The City University of New York, 12 November 2013.

destined to undermine both growth and legitimacy. The notion of ‘authoritarian resilience’ has been offered as the reason that corruption has been managed despite the weaknesses associated with authoritarian states that rely on coercion, centralized decision-making, and preference for personal power over institutional norms.⁷⁶ Yet a centralized approach is necessary as local authorities lack the capability to suppress the symbiotic forms of corruption that led to the systemic corruption illustrated by the Bo Xilai scandal. The policy dilemma is reflected by the “trap or gap” analysis of corruption. The ‘trap’ argues corruption has become increasingly predatory, institutionalised, and has developed a life of its own within the political system and the CCP will be forced to tolerate corruption in exchange for political loyalty. The ‘gap’ optimistically suggests the party will contain, if not control corruption, through further institutional reform and harnessing the influence of social media – a process underway with a series of anticorruption initiatives, which centre on rule-of-law, transparency, and tentative steps toward more open government. Indeed ‘...the Party has done more than it is willing to admit in creating institutions that may in the long run pose serious challenges to its rule.’⁷⁷

Although a hybrid democracy (one that might develop some of the conventional forms e.g. multi-party elections, separation of powers, a constitutional review, a free press and an independent judiciary) offers potential solutions, it seems unlikely that pragmatists like Xi Jinping will seek to achieve transparency, constitutionalism and democracy and risk stability and the loss of power. The anti-corruption focus does not suggest ‘...a CCP leadership that is receptive to grassroots movements, nor was this ever an implied intention. In fact, anti-graft measures appear to respond as much to internal CCP dynamics as public concerns, meaning that the *public remains an audience, and not an active participant*’.⁷⁸

Indeed it has been suggested that Xi Jinping at least flirted with the Chongqing approach and still may see some benefit in a revised version.⁷⁹ Wen Jiabao criticized Bo Xilai’s ‘singing red and smashing black’ campaign as evocative of the historical tragedy that was the Cultural Revolution. Ironically, since taking power, Xi has re-launched the Maoist model of ‘rectification’ (self-purification, self-improvement, self-innovation and self-awareness) to tackle the evils of the ‘Four Winds’ (formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism and waste).⁸⁰ Compared with Bo’s neo-Maoism, which was

⁷⁶ Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’, *Journal of Democracy* 14 (1), (2003), pp. 6-17; also see: Steven Heydemann and Reinoud Leenders, ‘Authoritarian Learning and Authoritarian Resilience: Regime Responses to the “Arab Awakening”’, *Globalizations* 8 (5), (2011), pp. 647-653.

⁷⁷ Fu Hualing, ‘Stability and Anticorruption Initiatives: Is There a Chinese Model?’ *University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law Research Paper* No. 2013/032, (12 July 2013), available at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2293025 (accessed 19 November 2013)

⁷⁸ Samantha Hoffman, ‘Power vacuum - China attempts to clean up corruption’, *Jane's Intelligence Review* 25 (11), (2013), p. 4 [our italics].

⁷⁹ John Garnaut, *The Rise and Fall of the House of Bo* (Penguin Harmondsworth, 2013).

⁸⁰ Russell Leigh Moses, ‘What to Make of Xi Jinping’s Maoist Turn’, *The Wall Street Journal*, (21 June 2013), available at: <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/06/21/what-to-make-of-xi-jinpings-maoist-turn> (accessed 19 November 2013).

used to mobilize the masses, Xi's Maoist-like revival focuses primarily on the Party and the People's Liberation Army.⁸¹ According to reports on social media such as *Weibo* reactions among the 'masses' has been one of ridicule and cynicism and among cadre fear of another 'anti-rightist' purge.⁸² The question remains will the current generation of leaders be able to "move heavy things as if they were light" (*juzhong ruoqing*) and transform China's political institutions and sustain its extraordinary resurgence. Pressing financial economic reforms aimed at reducing the distortions in resource allocation to state-owned-enterprises and banking risks are crucial to retaining legitimacy with the growing middle class are no longer played off with assertions of democratic centralism and campaigns against corruption.⁸³

Xi's apparent turn towards Maoism may be primarily symbolic to reaffirm the traditional values of the CPP but also suggests that he will continue to employ the anti-corruption drive tactic to deal with resistance within the Party. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee signalled readiness for deeper reforms, including establishing efficient anti-corruption systems and building a clean government. Xi's anti-corruption campaign has received support from the public, but there seems no hope of eliminating corruption without citizen engagement and equal application.

Xi may have positioned himself as a 'tiger-fighting hero' through the purge of Bo, and soon others but tigers are infamously dangerous and stability remains the key priority. Much may depend on how well the sixth-ranked Politburo Standing Committee member, Wang Qishan (an experienced finance expert) can manage to transform the CCDI and improve the transparency of its processes and with it improve confidence in the CCP. Indeed the dual track system for dealing with errant party members may itself need change despite the CPP's inherent distrust of independent police and courts. The recent secondment of experienced police investigators to assist the CCDI in complex and sensitive cases, such as those associated with Zhou Yongkang, may presage the strengthening of anti-corruption efforts and recognition of the importance of a professional investigative capability.⁸⁴ The survival and indeed the evolution of the CPP is unlikely to arise in a climate of repression but rather from further institutional adaption, democratization and openness within the Party and more broadly. An important step would be to strengthen the independence of the

⁸¹ Zachary Keck, 'Let's hope Xi Jinping's a Maoist', *The Diplomat*, (28 August 2013), available at: <http://thediplomat.com/china-power/lets-hope-xi-jinpings-a-maoist> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁸² Amy Li, 'Xi Jinping's 'criticism campaign' triggers online parody and sex jokes', *South China Morning Post*, (28 September 2013), available at: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china-insider/article/1318921/xi-jinpings-criticism-campaign-triggers-online-parody-and-sex> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁸³ Drysdale Peter, 'Left, right or straight ahead on Chinese reform', *East Asia Forum*, (14 November 2013), available at: <http://www.easiaforum.org/2013/11/11/left-right-or-straight-ahead-on-chinese-reform> (accessed 19 November 2013).

⁸⁴ Anon, 'Xi Jinping sets up special unit to probe Zhou Yongkang corruption case', *South China Morning Post*, (21 October 2013), available at: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1336219/xi-sets-special-unit-probe-zhou-yongkang-corruption-case> (accessed 19 November 2013).

courts, procurate and judicial police by reforming the role and function of the political-legal committees at all levels.

President Xi's emphasis on the threat of corruption and his marshalling of another anti-corruption drive may serve to conceal the real problem the CCP confronts, which is the failure of the party-state political system in an environment increasingly characterized by economic and social interdependence and opening-up. Elite corruption is a by-product of this political system, as it is of the usual motives of crime, and anti-corruption acts like a dose of 'antibiotics' that maintains short-term solidarity but also leads to resistant strains of bacteria. *Weiwēn* (keeping stability) alone will no longer suffice and the most likely solution is to stimulate political reforms initiated from within the government and the Party.