

Politics under Xi Jinping: Centralization and its Implications

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Abstract

This article discusses the centralization implemented by the Xi Jinping administration and its meanings. What the Xi Jinping administration envisages to realize by this centralization is that a disciplined party will centralize the government, military, and industry from the center to the periphery, thereby establishing a fair and sound market economy. The Xi Jinping administration believes that if China continues to diversify and liberalize its economy while maintaining a trend in which connections and honor take precedence over the rule of law, corruption will be fostered and the country will be thrown into disorder by the slackening of governance. The administration is trying to achieve centralization by strengthening the authority of its leaders, strengthening discipline, conducting thorough supervision through the use of inspection (*xunshi* 巡视) and controlling and exposing people through the rule of law. However, excessive centralization provokes opposition not only from liberal intellectuals, but also from the party leadership. There is a high possibility that the centralization will be watered down by the bureaucracy, who are pretending to obey but secretly betraying. In addition, if the design and operation of credit scoring systems result in human rights violations, the international community will be forced to intensify its criticism.

Keywords: Xi Jinping, Centralization, Inspection

I. Introduction

This paper analyzes the centralization that the Xi Jinping administration has consistently pursued since its inception. What measures are the Xi Jinping administration taking to realize this centralization? What kind of governance does it envisage to realize by centralization? Is it consistent with the values of democracy, freedom, and the market economy? I would like to present basic answers to these questions by organizing and analyzing several policy groups that can be seen as moves toward centralization.

Before taking up the main subject, I would like to clarify the focus of the analysis on the centralization discussed in this paper. The focus of this paper is not so much on the centralization of policy-making authority as on the strengthening of controls in the policy implementation process. In other words, the administration of Xi Jinping, which is seeking to unify the chain of command, subordinate the actors involved in implementation to the chain of command, thereby reducing their discretionary power, and to take a stance that does not allow incompleteness or deviation in implementation, will be called into question.

Incompleteness and deviation in policy implementation has been a problem faced by

many countries in all eras all over the world. The first research on execution process in the field of political science and public administration was carried out by Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky. They empirically studied the process of implementing an anti-poverty program in Oakland, California, and documented the process by which proper implementation of upper-level decisions is prevented due to a chain of customary decisions by a number of actors involved in the program's implementation (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984 [First published in 1973]). Michael Lipsky, on the other hand, focused on the role of street-level bureaucrats in dealing directly with clients for policy implementation, and argued that their professionalization, which allows them to exercise substantial interpretations and discretions in policy execution, invigorates interactions with members of the general public and contributes to overcoming the dysfunctions of bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980). Focusing on the multilayered nature of national power, Joel Migdal suggested the concept of a state that is restricted by the interaction and mutual transformation between government/bureaucracy and society at each administrative level, which he described as "state in society." Migdal's view of the state is different from Max Weber's unified view of the state, which is characterized by the rational bureaucracy, the law, and the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force (Weber, 1992). Migdal assumes the following four levels when drawing a multilayered nation. The first level is the front line (the trenches). These were tax collectors, police officers, teachers, infantry soldiers, and low-level government officials. They must carry out national policies in the face of strong social resistance. The second level is the local offices (the scattered field offices). Regional or local organizations (local bureaucracy, legislative bodies, courts, military, public security, etc.) fall under this category. They implement national policies and instructions by modifying them to local specifications or establish and implement their own local policies. The third level is the central organization of the government. It is an organization that forms and enforces central policies and has concentrated resources to do so. Finally, the headquarters, is the top leader of the nation. In such a multilayered nation, when the central government implements systems and policies, it inevitably involves interactions and mutual changes with various groups and individuals of society at each level. As a result, the state as a whole becomes a collection of layers with different logic and orientation, and state power is constrained. States use their organizations to create new rules and change public behavior but attempts to do so inevitably create resistance. Resources allocated for the implementation of the policy are often used in a different way than those envisioned in the capital by policy makers (Migdal, Joel S., 1994; Migdal, Joel S., 2001: 65-66). The principal-agent theory is often used as an administrative framework for the exercise of discretion by local enforcement agencies (agent) in the policy execution process. This is a framework to explain the situation in which local governments (agent) that are commissioned by the central government (principal) to implement policies do not implement policies as intended by the central government because of the asymmetry of the available information and for their own benefit (Kiser, Edgar, 1999). Considering the multilayered nature of the power structure, it is assumed that the principal-agent relationships are established one after another.

China, too, has long had issues of imperfections and deviations in central government policy enforcement. Shin Yamamoto points out as follows: In other words, China had an imperial autocracy until the period of the Qing dynasty, but its governance over the local communities below the prefectures was not necessarily tight.¹ After the Warlord Era, which was the ultimate form of decentralized state, in the latter half of the Minguo period, the Kuomintang government aimed to establish a modern nation-state and tried to establish a centralized system, but the government was still incompetent, and combined with the turmoil caused by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, could not control the peripheral society (Yamamoto, 2018). In this sense, it can be said that the People's Republic of China was the first state which succeeded in spreading power to the ends of its vast lands to a certain extent. However, on the other hand, due to the inertia of history as described above, the shortage of human resources and the bureaucratic structure that forms an inverted pyramid,² it was not easy to carry out the central policies to the end. Furthermore, after the Chinese economic reforms, in the midst of the trend of decentralization (*fangquan* 放权), a collusive public-private concession network was established in local regions by taking advantage of new opportunities to make money, and corruption became widespread, leading to a lack of macroeconomic control by the central government and a loss of substance in policies. Furthermore, some researchers think that the way of thinking that deeply permeates the Chinese people and society through history is the basis of this phenomenon. In other words, in Chinese thinking, "public (*gong* 公)" refers to everything that is not private property and sharing it with everyone is considered to be fair. This leads to the following way of thinking; "if my relative or a person who has a connection (*guanxi* 关系) with me becomes an executive of the party or the government and has control over a number of 'public' resources, I am entitled to the privileges and benefits derived from him/her." Executives themselves think that it stands to reason and saves face only when they share their honor and fame, as well as the goods, wealth, positions, and power derived from them (Zhai, 1995; Zhai, 2011, et. al). In this way, the behavior that stands to reason that has been cultivated throughout history sometimes conflicts with the behavior based on laws and policies, but bureaucrats themselves are far from knowing the difference between the two.

In this way, the issues of incompleteness and deviation of policy implementation in China today cannot be understood only from the perspective of the dysfunctions of bureaucracy, social resistance, and asymmetry of information, which the previous research has focused on as mentioned above. It is a problem of political inertia that has been formed over a long period of time, a problem of the structure of bureaucracy, and a problem connected with a concession structure and the way of thinking embedded in society. What the Xi administra-

¹ In addition, in the bureaucratic system under Imperial rule, bureaucrats at the lowest rank sought their own interests and manipulated administration in various ways behind the scenes (Sterba, 1978).

² Regarding the problem of personnel allocation in the Chinese bureaucratic organization, Shi'a and Yu Jiang pointed out that the allocation of personnel could not keep up with the uniform allocation of personnel, and some organizations had become a dead letter; that the shortage of personnel in the bureaucratic organization was universally compensated by "business organization" and that the personnel structure from the central government to the local government had an inverted pyramid structure, with the shortage becoming more pronounced at the local and base levels (Shi, Yu, 2012).

tion is trying to destroy through the series of centralization policies is nothing but this long-standing governance structure.

In the following sections, we analyze the activities of the Xi Jinping administration toward centralization of policy execution by classifying them into five policy groups—(1) creation of a strong leader, (2) control of ideology and speech, (3) tightening of the party discipline and organization through anti-corruption campaigns, supervision, and inspection, (4) construction of a system in which the party controls everything, and (5) information control and the introduction of a credit rating system—to reveal the political blueprint developed by the Xi Jinping administration.

II. Forms of centralization (1) Creation of a strong leader

To realize centralization in policy implementation, the Xi Jinping administration pushed for the creation of a strong leader from the outset. Needless to say, the existence of an authoritative leader is effective for spreading policies of the CPC Central Committee to all corners of the Party organizations and society, beyond the multilayered bureaucracy that is difficult for the party to control. In addition, it is inferred that the leaders of the Hu Jintao administration, who experienced political turmoil and a crisis caused by Bo Xilai (former Party Secretary of Chongqing City) and Zhou Yongkang (former member of the Politburo Standing Committee) after experiencing political stagnation due to the decentralization and rift within the Politburo Standing Committee, shared the view that it was necessary to overcome this situation by strengthening the leadership of Xi Jinping, the new General Secretary.

Based on this recognition, measures to make Xi Jinping a strong leader have been implemented since the inauguration of the administration, mainly in the following three aspects.

II-1. Authorization of Xi Jinping

The first is Xi Jinping's authorization. In order to make Xi Jinping, who was originally not well known in the party, a friendly but dignified strong leader, the media was used to create an image. While reporting a humane scene where Xi Jinping is eating meat buns in a common diner (http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-12/28/c_118748144.htm) or his office where family photos are displayed (http://www.chinareform.org.cn/gov/governance/Practice/201401/t20140103_185080.htm), they repeatedly publicized Xi Jinping's outstanding qualities and achievements through the media. In the communique issued by the sixth plenary session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (held in October 2016; hereinafter referred to as "18th CPC Central Committee"), all CPC members were required to unite around the "CPC Central Committee Centered on Comrade Xi Jinping" and firmly defend the authority of the CPC Central Committee and the centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee (<http://www.xinhuanet.com/poli->

tics/2016-10/27/c_1119801528_3.htm). This gave Xi the title of “core of the CPC Central Committee,” which Hu Jintao, the former General Secretary, did not receive. Furthermore, at the 19th CPC National Congress (October 2017), socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new Xi Jinping era was incorporated into the CPC constitution as one of the ideologies to be adhered to, and at the first session of the 13th National People’s Congress (March 2018) of the following year, it was also incorporated into the national constitution. A campaign to learn Xi Jinping’s lectures and thoughts was launched nationwide from the beginning, triggered by the publication of *Xi Jinping The Governance of China* (September 2014), and in 2019, *Xuexi Qiangguo* 学习强国, an app and PC software for learning Xi’s lectures and thoughts were distributed by the Publicity Department of the CPC, showing a rapid increase in popularity.

II-2. Institutional arrangements that create a strong leader

Efforts to create a strong leader were also made on the institutional front. More specifically, the Committees or Leading Groups established within the CPC Central Committee as part of the coordinating and consulting body had been managed by the Politburo Standing Committee members under the Hu Jintao administration, but under the Xi Jinping administration, a system was established in which Xi Jinping oversees almost all policy domains. As of May 2019, Xi Jinping served as Chairman and Chief of the National Security Commission of the CPC Central Committee (President: Xi Jinping, Vice President: Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu), the Central Committee for Finance and Economics (Chief: Xi Jinping, Deputy Chief: Li Keqiang), the Central Committee for Foreign Affairs (Chief: Xi Jinping, Deputy Chief: Li Keqiang), the Central Committee for Overall Reform (Director: Xi Jinping, Vice Director: Li Keqiang, Wang Huning, Han Zheng), and the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission (Director: Xi Jinping, Deputy Director: Li Keqiang, Wang Huning), which are committees that oversee important and comprehensive political domains.

With regard to the military, former General Secretary Hu Jintao did not follow the precedent set by Jiang Zemin and Deng Xiaoping and resigned as Chairman of the Central Military Commission when the General Secretary was replaced. As a result, Xi was able to assume the position of Chairman of the Central Military Commission at the time of his inauguration as General Secretary and take control of the military.

In addition, the fact that the first session of the 13th National People’s Congress carried out a constitutional amendment that included the abolition of the term of office of the president is also important in preventing Xi Jinping from becoming a lame duck in anticipation of the next leadership change and in maintaining his authority.

II-3. Personnel allocation to support the strong leader

Furthermore, in terms of personnel allocation, Xi Jinping built a more docile regime by eliminating political enemies through anti-corruption campaigns and placing his confidants

in key posts. Zhou Yongkang (former Politburo Standing Committee member sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2015), who had a close relationship with former General Secretary Jiang Zemin under the regime of former Hu Jintao, and was a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in charge of public security; Ling Jihua (former Director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and former Head of the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee; stripped of party membership in July 2015), who was a direct subordinate of former General Secretary Hu Jintao; and Sun Zhengcai (former Party Secretary of Chongqing; stripped of party membership in September 2017), who had been considered a strong candidate for the next leader, were punished for corruption, and their personal connections were wiped out. Former and incumbent CMC officials, including Gu Junshan (former Deputy Director of the General Logistics Department of the People's Liberation Army; sentenced to death in the first instance in August 2015 with a two-year suspended sentence), Xu Caihou (former Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission; stripped of party membership in June 2014, died of illness in March 2015), Guo Boxiong (former Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission; stripped of party membership in July 2015), Fang Fenghui (former General of General Staff and a member of the Central Military Commission), and Zhang Yang (former Chief of the General Political Department and a member of the Central Military Commission; killed himself in November 2017), were also charged with corruption.

These bold revelations naturally provoked a great backlash within the party, but according to Akio Takahara, Xi Jinping pulled off a comeback and took the initiative in personnel affairs in the second half of 2016, and established Xi Jinping's one strongest regime.³ As a result, important posts in the second Xi Jinping administration were filled by Xi Jinping's former subordinates and confidants to support Xi Jinping's one strongest regime. Li Zhanshu (member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress), Zhao Leji (member of the Politburo Standing Committee, Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection), Ding Xuexiang (member of the Political Bureau, Director of the General Office), Liu He (member of the Politburo, Director of the Office serving the Central Leading Group for Finance and Economics, Vice Premier of the State Council), Yang Xiaodu (member of the Politburo, Secretary of the Secretariat, Deputy Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Director of the National Supervisory Commission), Chen Xi (member of the Politburo, Head of the Organization Department, President of the Central Party School and the Chinese Academy of Governance), Huang Kunming (member of the Politburo, head of the Publicity Department), Xu Qiliang (member of the Politburo, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CPC), Zhang Youxia (member of the Politburo, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the CPC), Cai Qi (member of the Politburo, Party Secretary of Beijing), Li Qiang (member of the Politburo, Party Secretary of Shanghai), Li Hongzhong (member of

³ Akio Takahara "Causal Analysis of China's Domestic Situation and Foreign Policy (2) Background to the Establishment of the 'One Strong Regime' under the First Xi Jinping Administration," Japan Institute of International Affairs 'China Report' Vol. 16 (https://www2.jiia.or.jp/RESR/column_page.php?id=286).

the Politburo, Party Secretary of Tianjin), Chen Min'er (member of the Politburo, Party Secretary of Chongqing), Li Xi (member of the Politburo, Party Secretary of Guangdong province), Li Jiheng (member of the Central Committee, Party Secretary of Inner Mongolia), and Chen Quanguo (member of the Politburo, Party Secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) are all regarded as confidants by Xi Jinping.

III. Various forms of centralization (2) Control of ideology and speech

The second form of centralization is the strengthening of ideological and free speech controls. In order to ensure that the party policies are carried to the lowest levels, it is desirable to instill in society statements that praise the party's authority and policies and the value systems that support them, such as Marxism, and to eliminate as much as possible negative statements and value systems, such as those rooted in the liberal democracy of the West. In addition, in order to prevent the inevitable enemies from using intellectuals and the media to launch a counterattack against Xi Jinping or the current administration in response to a large-scale anti-corruption campaign,⁴ it is necessary to pay close attention to published information to prevent inappropriate information from circulating in society. It seems that this kind of judgment was behind the strengthening of ideological and media control conducted since the inauguration of the Xi Jinping administration.

III-1. Control of speech and the media

Soon after the Xi administration was inaugurated, it distributed the "Directive on the current state of the ideological field" (May 2013). The document cited seven dangerous trends that would overthrow the Party's power—(1) constitutional democracy in the West, (2) universal values, (3) civil society, (4) neoliberalism, (5) views of the Western media such as freedom of the media, (6) promotion of historical nihilism, and (7) doubts about Chinese economic reforms—and called for the strengthening of ideological maneuvering to prevent these wrong trends from flowing into the country via the Internet and other media (Chris Buckley, "China Takes Aim at Western Ideas" *The New York Times*, August 19, 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/20/world/asia/chinas-new-leadership-takes-hard-line-in-secret-memo.html?_r=0).

On the other hand, Marxism has been repeatedly advocated in various documents. In the aforementioned communiqué of the 6th Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Central Committee's view on strengthening the party's political construction, it was stressed that the party should firmly maintain its position of

⁴ For example, Guo Wengui, a political merchant who rose to prominence in the development of real estate in conjunction with the Beijing Olympics, felt himself in danger after Ma Jian, Deputy Director of the Ministry of State Security, who had supported him, fell from power on suspicion of corruption in April 2015, and began to expose the corruption of the Communist Party and the scandals surrounding Wang Qishan (Former Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection), Xi Jinping's right-hand man, to Mingjing Live and VOA in the United States, where he was staying, and the Chinese government was pressed to respond.

taking Marxism as a leading ideology and that all members of the party should be aware of and devote themselves to cultivation of the mind.

The media clampdown is getting tougher. The employment qualification system for members of the media has been tightened, and coverage and reporting beyond the specified field and critical reporting without the approval of the affiliated organization are prohibited. As for the Internet, the Cybersecurity Law (enforced in June 2017; the full text is available at http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2016-11/07/content_2001605.htm), as well as revised Internet News Information Service Management Regulations (enforced in June 2017; the full text is available at https://www.cac.gov.cn/2017-05/02/c_1120902760.htm), the Internet Comment Service Management Regulations (enforced in October 2017; the full text is available at https://www.cac.gov.cn/2017-08/25/c_1121541842.htm), and the Miniblog Information Service Management Regulations (enforced in March 2018; the full text is available at https://www.cac.gov.cn/2018-02/02/c_1122358726.htm) were enacted from 2017 to 2018. As a result of the enforcement of these laws and regulations, the qualification requirement for posters and the obligation to register their real names have been tightened in relation to the transmission of various information on the Internet, and it has been clarified that providers have an obligation to immediately delete any posted content that does not conform to socialism, does not lead the public opinion in the correct direction, or is incompatible with the national and public interests, and report the record of the deletion to the responsible department.

III-2. Control over potential actors of Western values

Another salient feature of the Xi Jinping administration's policies is stronger control over potential actors of Western values. One of the targets is outside-the-boundary NGOs. An outside-the-boundary NGO is an organization registered in the area outside the boundary (foreign countries, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan) and working within the boundary. According to the National People's Congress, as of April 2016, there were more than 7000 outside-the-boundary NGOs, mainly in the fields of environment and education ("China enacts a law to control overseas NGOs to strengthen social control" *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, April 29, 2016). They took various forms in conducting their activities, and many of them were working unregistered or as for-profit organizations. From May to July 2014, the Xi Jinping administration conducted a full survey on the outside-the-boundary NGOs and the relationship between such NGOs and Chinese organizations and individuals.⁵ Based on the survey results, a list of 1287 offshore associations (*li'an shetuan* 离岸社团) and counterfeit associations (*shanzhai* 山寨社团) has been published on 13 consecutive occasions since March 2016,⁶ and control over them has been tightened. A law was also created to manage out-

⁵ On June 17, 2014, a news article titled "Under the supervision of the National Security Commission of the CPC, a comprehensive nationwide survey will be conducted on the activities of foreign NGO organizations in China from May 2014 to the end of July 2014" was published in the government affair column of the *Yangguang nonglian net* (阳光农廉网) in Yuncheng city, Shanxi Province, but was deleted immediately after publication.

side-the-boundary NGOs. The Act on the Management of Activities of Outside-the-Boundary NGOs Within the Boundary (enacted in January 2017; the full text is available at http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/xinwen/2017-11/28/content_2032719.htm) explicitly stipulates in Article 5 that illegal acts, harm to China's national unity, security and ethnic unity, violation of China's national interests and the legitimate rights and interests of its people, engagement in and support of commercial and political activities, and illegal engagement in and support of religious activities are prohibited in activities in China. It requires the outside-the-boundary NGOs to register with the Ministry of Public Security instead of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which was the competent authority for social organizations in general, and to disclose the sources of funding for activities and financial statements in detail. A member of an NGO that has a connection with outside-the-boundary entities and is involved in advocacy activities for human rights, the rule of law, etc., was exposed.⁷

In addition, Christian churches, so-called human rights lawyers, scholars, and journalists were arrested one after another, and spaces for free speech were shut down. On July 9, 2015, more than 300 human rights lawyers were detained en masse ("709 crackdown").

IV. Various forms of centralization (3) Tightening of the party discipline and organization through anti-corruption campaigns, supervision, and inspection

The third form of centralization is the strengthening of the party discipline and organization through anti-corruption campaigns, supervision, inspection, and requested report (*ging-shi baogao* 请示报告) systems.

IV-1. Strengthening of the party discipline

In the month following his appointment as the CPC General Secretary, Xi Jinping issued the "Eight-point Regulation on Improving the Work Style and Close Interaction with Crowds" (December 2012), which calls for the shortening of meetings, elimination of wasteful documents, reduction of the number of attendants when going out, and tightening of the use of official vehicles (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2012/1205/c64094-19793530.html>). Fur-

⁶ The offshore associations and counterfeit associations are associations registered outside the boundary where the conditions for registration are relaxed and are active within the boundary. Many of them call for members by giving themselves names such as "China Association of XXX" or "Center for XXX Studies China," and collect membership fees, training fees, business permit issuance fees, etc. However, they are practically engaging in profit-making activities and lining their own pockets (<https://baike.baidu.com/item/离岸社团>).

⁷ For example, in January 2016, Peter Dahlin, a Swedish staff member of the Chinese Urgent Action Working Group, an organization that promotes governing by the rule of law, was deported from China after three weeks of detention, after being declared harmful to national security by the Chinese authorities. The Xinhua News Agency reported that for a long period of time, the Group had received a large amount of financial aid from seven foreign organizations including a foreign non-governmental organization, and in China, the Group had provided financial assistance to unqualified lawyers and a small number of visitors, and used them to collect negative information from various quarters, and distorted the information to provide the so-called "Report on Chinese Human Rights" abroad (<https://www.chinacourt.org/article/detail/2016/01/id/1793823.shtml>). In addition, the Beijing Zhongze Women's Legal Consultation Service Center, which had been promoting women's rights and providing legal support, was forced to suspend its activities. The American Bar Association had also offered judicial training and a program to promote the rule of law in China, but closed its Beijing office due to friction with the Chinese authorities that occurred after it announced that it would award Wang Yu, a detained Chinese lawyer, its International Human Rights Award.

thermore, he warned against four traits (the trend of formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and extravagance) and repeatedly issued circular notices ordering the implementation of three regulations (*fasanzhang* 法三章 : prohibition of new construction, reconstruction, and extension of government buildings, reduction of government employees, and reduction of three public expenses (expenses for overseas business trips, official vehicles, and entertainment)). “Some Rules on the Political Life of the CPC under the New Situation” and “Regulation of the Communist Party of China” were established in the 6th Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

All of these demands placed more emphasis on the so-called senior executives such as members of the Central Committee, Politburo, and Politburo Standing Committee, rather than on rank-and-file party members, and required them to observe the rules and strictly supervise each other’s actions that might undermine the unity of the party. The communique of the conference specifically provided that they must strictly control the party with iron discipline; stand against two-sided people (which refers to government officials and party members who commit acts of corruption or have anti-communist tendencies); stand against false reports and the concealment of facts; communicate the party’s identity without regard to their personal feelings and tell the truth without being bound by saving face; disregard privileges and consciously fight against privilege-centered mindsets; give importance to family traditions and fully educate and control their close relatives, and stand against executives’ use of their authorities to provide special facilities to their families and friends and against the involvement of executives’ close relatives in business and personnel matters (http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-10/27/c_1119801528_3.htm).

IV-2. Development of supervision, inspection, and requested report systems for party and government agencies

Under the slogan of “complete and rigid control of the party,” the Xi Jinping administration has also promoted the strengthening of the party discipline and the establishment of an inspection system to thoroughly carry out anti-corruption campaigns at the central, local, and peripheral levels. He strengthened the authority of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the party and launched a massive anti-corruption campaign under the leadership of party secretary Wang Qishan. At that time, the Xi Jinping administration first targeted the central organizations of the party—the Central General Office, the Central Organization Department, the Central Publicity Department, the Central United Front Work Department, the National People’s Congress institutions, the Office of the State Council, and the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference institutions—for which discipline inspections had been lax. In April 2015, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection sent inspection teams to these institutions to conduct their examinations.

In addition, the “CPC Regulations on Inspection Work” was revised twice, in August 2015 and July 2017.⁸ The inspection and supervision systems were extended from the central committee, provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities to

the city and prefecture levels.

According to the “CPC Regulations on Inspection Work” (the full text is available at <http://news.12371.cn/2017/07/14/ARTI1500037507858103.shtml>) revised in July 2017, inspection is carried out by the CPC Central Committee and the Party Committees of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities. Supervision is carried out by the Party Committees of cities and prefectures, but there are no major differences between the two in terms of the procedures and contents. Inspection is defined as follows. First, the CPC Central Committee and the Party Committees of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities establish Leading Groups for Inspection Work (Group Leader: Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the same level, Deputy Group Leader: Head of the Central Organization Department of the same level) and inspection agencies.⁹ The Central Inspection Team is responsible for the following persons: (1) the Party Committees of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities; the Leading Groups and members of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, the government, and the Party Organization for the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC); major heads of the High People’s Court or the People’s Procuratorate Party Organizations of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities; and major heads of the Party Committees of sub-provincial divisions, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, the Government, and the CPPCC; (2) the Leading Groups and members of the central ministries; the Leading Groups and members of the central institutions and ministries and the Party Organizations for People’s Organizations (Party Committees); (3) the Leading Groups and members of the core state-owned companies, financial companies, Party Committees (Party Organizations) for businesses under the control of the Central Committee; and (4) the Leading Groups and members of other Party Organizations for which the Central Committee has required an inspection. In addition, the target and scope of the Inspection Teams of the Party Committees of the provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities are (1) the Leading Groups and members of the city, prefecture-level Party Committees, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, the government, and the Party Organization for the CPPCC; and major heads of the Junior People’s Court of the municipalities, People’s Procuratorate, People’s Court of the prefectures, and People’s Procuratorate Party Organizations; (2) the Leading Groups and members of the Work Groups of the Party Committees of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities; the Leading Groups and members of the government departments and the Party Orga-

⁸ Inspection is a traditional method that has been used since the establishment of the Communist Party and is not new. In particular, since the 1990s, when deficiencies in policy implementation at the local and regional levels were pointed out, the development of such systems has been repeatedly proposed and institutionalized as “CPC Regulations on Inspection Work”

⁹ As of May 2019, the Group Leader of the Central Leading Group for Inspection Work was Zhao Leji (member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the CPC and Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection), the Deputy Group Leader was Yang Xiaodu (member of the Politburo, Secretary of the Secretariat, Director of the National Supervisory Commission) and Liu Jinguo (Deputy Director of the National Supervisory Commission and Vice Secretary of Central Commission for Discipline Inspection), and the head of the Office was Wang Hongjin.

nizations for People's Organizations; (3) the Leading Groups and members of the core state-owned companies and the Party Committees (Party Organizations) for businesses under the control of the provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities; and (4) the Leading Groups and members of other Party Organizations for which the Party Committees of provinces, autonomous regions, and direct-administered municipalities require inspection. In addition, the following issues should be subject to crackdown by inspection: (1) issues such as violations of political discipline and rules, the existence of words and actions that violate the party's lines/doctrines/policies, disobedience to orders, disobedience to prohibitions, committing violations behind the scenes while pretending to be obedient, pursuing private interests by forming factions, and failure to adhere to the ideological work accountability system; (2) issues such as violations of the discipline for integrity and ethical behavior, use of power to pursue private interests, engaging in corruption and bribery, and being unethical and decayed; (3) issues such as employing people in violation of organizational discipline and rules, employing people with connections, buying and selling bureaucratic posts, buying votes, conducting arbitrary behavior, being weak and careless, and greatly disturbing the harmony; (4) issues such as violations of the discipline for interactions with the public, discipline for the performance of official duties, and discipline for daily life; the lax implementation of the spirit of Eight-point Regulation as defined by the CPC; and promoting formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, and luxury orientation.

So far, a huge number of people have been caught and punished as a result of inspection and supervision. At the first session of the 13th National People's Congress (March 2018), the Supreme People's Procuratorate reported that in the five years of Xi Jinping's first term, 254,419 corrupt officials were prosecuted (including 120 former high-ranking officials above the ministerial level), and the economic loss recovered from the prosecutions reached 55.3 billion yuan (approx. 930 billion yen) (the full text is available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018lh/2018-03/25/c_1122587415.htm).¹⁰

Inspection and supervision will continue to be expanded, as Xi Jinping declared, at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, that he will deepen political inspections, maintain methods to detect problems and scare people, and establish a network of top and bottom supervisors through inspection and supervision. At the first session of the 13th National People's Congress, the Supervision Law of the People's Republic of China was adopted, and the National Supervisory Commission was newly established as an organization independent from the State Council (equivalent to State Council, Supreme People's Court, and Supreme People's Procuracy). The Supervision Committees at each level are supposed to conduct joint work with the Commission for Discipline Inspection of the same level, and they are effectively integrated with the National Supervisory Commission and the

¹⁰ In addition, according to the statistics taken four years after the implementation of the Eight-point Regulation, a total of 146,431 cases of violations of the provisions were investigated and punished across the country, and 196,947 persons were punished, of which 98,836 were subject to party discipline and government discipline. Of those punished, 15 were provincial/division-level executives, 999 were district-level city/agency-level executives, 7,632 were prefectural/ministerial executives, and 90,190 were town- and sector-level executives, with the majority being low-level executives (<http://www.sankeibiz.jp/macro/news/161209/mcb1612090500005-n1.htm>).

Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, and prepared to conduct supervisions and inspections that expand the scope of inspection to executives who do not belong to the party.

IV-3. Supervision and inspection of the military

Supervision and inspection operations have also been thoroughly implemented on the military based on the CMC Regulations on Inspection Work (enacted in January 2018). Specifically, the Central Military Commission and the Party Committees of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Rocket Forces, Strategic Support Force, and Armed Police Force formed a Leading Group for Inspection Work (Group Leader of the Leading Group for Inspection Work of the Central Military Commission (CMC): Vice Chairman of the CMC; Deputy Group Leader of the Standing Committee: Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Committee of the CMC; Vice Chairman: Director of the Political Department of the CMC; Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission of the CMC; Group Leader of the Leading Group for Inspection Work of the Party Committee of arms and services and Armed Police Force: Party Secretary of each unit; Deputy Group Leader of the Standing Committee: Secretary of the Commission for Discipline Inspection of each unit; Deputy Group Leader: Director of the Political Department of each unit), under which a supervision organization was formed.

IV-4. Supervision and inspection of universities and the media

Supervision and inspection have also been conducted on universities and the media. The Central Inspection Team conducted an inspection of 31 universities under its jurisdiction, and in June 2017, it posted the results of 14 universities on the website of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (<http://www.jwjc.fudan.edu.cn/cc/91/c11388a117905/page.htm>). According to the survey, these universities generally have problems in hiring systems and personnel management, management of corporations they operate, and corruption. In particular, Peking University was judged to have a prominent problem in the appointment of personnel, confusion in corporate management, and prominent corruption involving affiliated hospitals. As a result, in October 2018, the Party Secretary was replaced at Peking University, and Hao Ping, who was the Party Secretary, was downgraded to principal, and Qiu Shuiping was appointed Party Secretary. Qiu was a graduate of Peking University and served as Vice Party Secretary of Beijing, Vice Secretary of the Standing Committee of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, and Party Secretary of the Beijing Ministry of State Security since 2013.

V. Various forms of centralization (4) Construction of a system in which the party controls everything

As a fourth form of centralization, I would like to cite the establishment of a system under which the party controls everything. The phrase “the party takes charge of all aspects of

the party, government, military, civil, and academics, including the east, west, north, south, and center” is included in the Constitution of the Communist Party of China, which was partially revised and adopted at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/19cpcnc/2017-10/28/c_1121870794.htm). In this section, I would like to discuss the fact that the party is trying to seize the power to govern its relations with the government and the military.

V-1. Consolidation of authority from the government to the party

The centralization of authority from the government to the party is symbolically reflected in the content of the “Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Deepening the Reform of the Party and State Institutions” adopted at the 3rd Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (February 2018) (http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2018-03/21/content_5276191.htm#1). The first feature of the reforms based on this bill is that policy decision coordinating and consulting bodies such as the Committees and the Leading Groups established in the CPC Central Committee were expanded. Specifically, the National Security Commission, the Central Committee for Comprehensive Law-Based Governance, and the Central Audit Committee were newly established. In addition, the Central Leading Group for Overall Reform and the Central Leading Group for Cybersecurity and Informatization, which were established under the Xi Jinping administration as Leading Groups, were upgraded to the Central Committee for Overall Reform and the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, respectively. Also, the Central Leading Group for Finance and Economics and the Central Leading Group for Foreign Affairs, which were established before the inauguration of the administration, were upgraded to the Central Committee for Finance and Economics and the Central Committee for Foreign Affairs, respectively.¹¹ In addition, the Central Leading Group for Education Work was newly established.

The second feature is that some of the government’s duties have been transferred to the party. For example, the State Administration of Civil Service (国家公务员局) was abolished, and the appointment and assignment of public officials, which had been handled by the State Administration of Civil Service, is now under the unified control of the Central Organization Department of the CPC (中国共产党中央委员会组织部). The administration of the National Computer Network and Information Security Management Center was transferred from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (工业和信息化部) under the State Council to the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission of the CPC (中央网络安全和信息化委员会). The newspaper publication management and movie management functions formerly handled by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film, and Television (国家新闻出版广电总局) were integrated into the Central Publicity Department of the CPC (中国共产党中央委员会宣传部).

In addition, with regard to policy areas related to ethnic minorities, religions, and over-

¹¹ A committee is considered to be a more regular and official organization than a Leading Group.

seas Chinese, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission (国家民族事务委员会), the State Administration for Religious Affairs(国家宗教事务局), and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of State Council (国务院华侨办公室) were integrated into the Central United Front Work Department of the CPC (中国共产党中央委员会统一战线部), and the Central United Front Work Department directly oversees them.¹² It is also noteworthy that the National Academy of Governance (国家行政学院), which aims to train national leaders, was merged into the Party School of the Central Committee of CPC (中共中央党校). It was said that the purpose of the reforms was to educate not only party leaders, but also government leaders, on socialism with Chinese characteristics for the new Xi Jinping era and to nurture Marxist leaders.

The series of reforms mentioned above can be said to remove the form of separation of the party and the government which had been maintained since the 1980s, and to pave the way for political monopoly by the party and direct control by the party.

V-2. Strengthening the leadership of the party over the military

Since the inauguration of the Xi Jinping administration, China has focused on military reform. In order to overcome the loosening of the chain of command and the deterioration of discipline within the military, and to rebuild an obedient army, Xi Jinping has repeatedly exposed and punished leading figures in the military, including Gu Junshan, Xu Caihou, Guo Boxiong, Fang Fenghui, and Zhang Yang, who developed the massive concession network in the military as noted earlier. In addition, under the initiative of the newly established Central Leading Group for Military Reform (Group Leader: Xi Jinping), major military reform was carried out in order to dismantle the concession network that had been formed based on the existing headquarters and military regions. These reforms, such as the establishment of a joint operational command structure for the integrated operation of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, the dissolution of the four headquarters (General Staff Headquarters, General Political Department, General Armament Department, General Logistics Department) and the reorganization into 15 departments, the reorganization of seven military regions and the introduction of a five-theater command system, the separation of non-combat sectors such as sports, literature, singing/dancing, and medical care, and the prohibition of private businesses by the military, transformed the organization and chain of command of the military, and through a series of reforms, the authority of the CMC, headed by Xi Jinping, was significantly strengthened. The Armed Police Force responsible for do-

¹² Prior to this, the CPC Central Committee held a Central United Front Work Conference in May 2015. The name of the National United Front Work Conference was changed to the Central United Front Work Conference, which was taken as a sign of the party's desire to take a leadership role in carrying out United Front work. In fact, in a lecture given at the conference, Xi Jinping emphasized the need to create a grand united front work mechanism that adheres to the leadership of the Party Committee, and in which the United Front Department takes the initiative and cooperates with each party concerned taking responsibility. (http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-05/20/c_1115351358.htm). In response to this conference, the CPC Unified Front Work Ordinance (Trial) was put into effect, and in July of the same year, the Central Leading Group for United Front Work was established, thus establishing organizations and systems to support the implementation of the united front work led by the party.

mestic security had been under the dual leadership of the State Council and the CMC, but from January 2018, it was unified under the leadership of the CMC.

V-3. *Strengthening the leadership of the party over industry*

The leadership of the party over the business community has also been strengthened. In this section, I will discuss the characteristics of the policy of the Xi Jinping administration toward industry associations. As noted earlier, the Xi Jinping administration has strengthened its crackdown on advocacy groups and organizations with ties to overseas countries, while it has taken a policy of separating and nurturing industry associations, science and technology associations, public charitable organizations, and community service organizations from government agencies (*tuogou* 脱钩). It is true that many industry associations in China were born by splitting part of the government structure and placing a new name on it in order to avoid the pressure of the large-scale political organization reduction campaign in the 1990s, and many have survived as intermediaries who exclusively obtain various approvals for companies, taking advantage of the authority of the government. In recent years, there has been growing public criticism that these bureaucratic industry associations have preserved the irrational licensing system, become a hotbed of corruption, and hamper market reform.¹³ Therefore, immediately after the inauguration, the Xi Jinping administration announced a policy of setting a deadline for the separation of industry associations from the government, and since 2015, a series of legal reforms have been implemented. In particular, the “Comprehensive plan concerning the separation of industry associations and business associations from administrative bodies” (July 2015) issued by the General Office of the CPC and the General Office of the State Council provided a blueprint for the entire operation. Based on this plan, a Joint Work Group was formed by senior officials from various departments involved in the operation, with the National Development and Reform Commission playing a central role¹⁴. A decoupling trial operation of a total of 438 national-level industry groups was conducted during the three terms from November, 2015 (<http://www.>

¹³ At a regular press conference held by the State Council at the end of April 2015, Wang Feng (Director of the State Council Office of the Administrative Examination & Approval System Reform) stated that even after the reduction of the government structure and the release of authority, companies still had to spend a lot of time, energy, and money on mediation services, which have a beneficial relationship with the administrative sector, which is in charge of reviewing and ratifying the treaty. As a result, the fairness of these services has been hindered.

(<http://hk.criit.com/doc/1040/1/6/6/104016659.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=104016659> Viewed on January 31, 2019).

¹⁴ Wang Yong (State Councillor) is the Group Leader, Xu Shaoshi (Chairman, Development and Reform Commission), Li Liguang (Minister of Civil Affairs), and Meng Yang (Deputy Secretaries General of the State Council) are Deputy Group Leaders of the Joint Work Group. Other members are Xi Yuliang (the Central Organization Department Councillor), Li Yiquan (Deputy Director of the Office of the Central Organization Committee), Wang Xiufeng (Vice Secretary of the Work Committee for Organs under Central Committee), Yao Zhiping (Vice Secretary of the Work Committee for Central Government Organs), Cheng Guoping (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs), Lian Weiliang (Deputy Director of the Development and Reform Commission), Liu Lihua (Deputy Minister of Ministry of Industry and Information Technology), Gu Chaoxi (Deputy Minister of Civil Affairs), Liu Kun (Deputy Minister of Finance), Kong Changsheng (Deputy Minister of Human Resources and Social Security), Tong Daochi (Assistant Minister of Commerce), Wang Wenbin (Deputy Director of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission), Li Baorong (Deputy Director of the National Government Offices Administration), Yang Qiru (Vice President of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce). Office was established within the Development and Reform Commission. (<http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0721/c1001-27338704.html> Viewed on January 31, 2019).

jfgpa.com.cn/hylt/show/4391.aspx; <http://www.chinanpo.gov.cn/600101/97391/newstgindex.html>; <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2017/02-10/8146648.shtml> viewed on January 31, 2019).

At the same time as the separation from the administrative body, the party strengthened its leadership in the management of industry associations. In May 2015, the session of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China adopted the CPC Party Organization Work Ordinance (Trial), which proposed the establishment of a Party Organization in national institutions, people's organizations, economic organizations, cultural organizations, social organizations, and other organizations in general. In September of the same year, the General Office of the Communist Party of China issued the "Opinion Regarding Strengthening Social Construction and Innovation in Social Management (Trial)." Under this policy, the Central Organization Department promulgated the "Measures concerning the adjustment of the management system for the party's construction work after the separation of the national industry associations and business associations from the administrative organs (Trial)" (July 2015) and the Ministry of Civil Affairs promulgated the "Notice concerning the issue of simultaneous development of party construction work at the time of registration of establishment of a social organization" (2016) in order to separate industry associations from the administrative organs, aiming to thoroughly establish the party in conjunction with the separation work. It is not clear how party construction in industry groups will affect the operation of the groups, but a more specific blueprint can be seen in the notification issued by the CPC Commission for Discipline Inspection of Shenzhen, the CPC Non-Public Sector of the Economy of Shenzhen, and the Committee on Social Organization Work, and the Department of Civil Affairs of Shenzhen on the issuance of the 'Implementation opinion on strengthening the leadership of the party and promoting industry's autonomous development of the area of anti-corruption work' (March 23, 2018) (http://www.szmz.sz.gov.cn/cn/ztfw_yw/qxsxshht/tzgg/201804/t20180403_11662118.htm viewed on January 31, 2019). According to the notification, the purpose of the party construction in industry associations is to deepen the strict and complete governance of the party, explore new avenues of anticorruption operation in the areas of non-public sectors of the economy and social institutions, and build a new type of politics-commerce relationship that is 'friendly and clean (*Qinqing* 亲清)'. The establishment of the party's control over personnel affairs has been cited as the main way to build a friendly and clean relationship between politics and commerce through party construction. Specifically, it is recommended that competent party members be appointed as the first secretary of the Party Organization of the industry association, that the Party Organization within the industry association be constructed and maintained, and that a system be created in which the members of the Party Organization serve concurrently as the leaders of the industry association, and the secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection serves concurrently as the auditor of the industry association. In addition, the notification includes recommendations for excellent workers of party affairs and party members of industry associations, as well as those in charge of industry associations that are cooperative in the party construction work, to be representatives at the Party Congress, representatives at

the People's Congress, members of the Political Consultative Conference for each administrative level, or model workers. In addition, the notification calls for the establishment of an autonomous organization called "Industry Integrity Committee" or "Industry Autonomy Committee" in charge of the construction of the industry's credit system, led by the head of the Party Organization or the Secretary of the Commission for Discipline Inspection, in order to strengthen discipline within the industry and to impose disciplinary measures against violations of discipline and corruption.

VI. Various forms of centralization (5) Information control and the introduction of a credit rating system

In order to effectively implement the concept of centralization mentioned above, the Xi Jinping administration is actively seeking to introduce a credit scoring system. In his speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping stated that he will carry out construction of a comprehensive Internet governance system, and concrete measures are being shown in each policy area.

For example, Article 9 of the aforementioned Internet Thread Comments Service Management Regulation (enacted in October 2017) requires providers to create a credit record (信用档案) that ranks users based on the content of their posts, to blacklist users who have posted content in violation of regulations, and to take disciplinary action, including account suspension. In addition, the Cyberspace Information Office at the central and provincial levels is required to provide a credit record and a blacklist management system, and to make regular credit evaluations of providers. (<http://www.cicpa.org.cn/Column/hyxxhckzl/zcyxs/201708/W020170830608134689858.pdf#search=%27聯網跟帖評論服務管理規定%27>).

Similarly, for industry governance, the introduction of credit scores has been proposed. The aforementioned Shenzhen City Notice, for example, requires industry associations to use big data to create credit records for member companies and industry workers, and to disclose member company credit information, government authorizations, and administrative penalties through websites and WeChat platforms. Through this process, the government departments, credit service organizations, financial institutions, and industry associations will gradually form an information-sharing mechanism to integrate industry-related credit information with policy-related credit information and establish a credit red-and-black list (紅黑名單) system. In terms of market management and public services, the red-and-black list system is said to be operated in such a way as to give preferential treatment to red member companies by simplifying the necessary procedures, and to take various disciplinary measures against black companies with low credit standing.

VII. Conclusion: What is centralization for? Does centralization work?

The five policy groups related to centralization are outlined above. What has emerged

from this is the ideal form of governance that the Xi Jinping administration envisions to realize by the centralization. The Xi Jinping administration's vision is that an immaculate and disciplined party will be able to control the government, military, industry, and universities from the center to the peripheral in a comprehensive and centralized manner, thereby ensuring the unity of the state, making the whole of society immaculate and disciplined, and creating a fair and sound market economy. Conversely, while aiming for a fair and sound market economy, there is no thought whatsoever of achieving this goal through political diversification or liberalization. They are trying to achieve this by strengthening the authority of their leaders, strengthening discipline, conducting thorough surveillance through inspection and controlling and exposing people through law. The reason for this is that if the Communist Party leadership takes steps to diversify and liberalize the economy while preserving the social trend in which connections and saving face prevail over the rule of law, not only cadres at the center but also those at local and basic levels will take advantage of this loosening of power to pursue their interests through collusive ties between the public and private sectors and to provide benefits to their families and close relatives, which will lead to chaos and anarchy. This belief is probably shared to some extent by many CPC leaders and the public.

However, if an excessively strong policy is launched based on such a conviction, it will provoke a backlash from various perspectives. One is the backlash from liberal intellectuals. After the suppression of the press and the 709 crackdowns, discontent is mounting among them. In July 2018, Xu Zhangrun's (Professor, Tsinghua University) article posted on the website of the Unirule Institute of Economics was circulated on the Internet, drawing attention.¹⁵ The contents were relentless criticism of the Xi Jinping administration, including "(a constitutional amendment to abolish the term of a president) will nullify the Chinese economic reforms, bring China back to the time of fear under Mao Zedong, and lead to a comical personality cult of a leader," "the 'creation of a god' by the party media seems to be from the totalitarian state of the past," and "we need to reflect on why such an act of stupidity was carried out."

What is riskier than the resistance of intellectuals is opposition from party leaders. Even if there is a consensus within the leadership on the need to establish a centralized executive system under strong leadership, there will be backlash within the party leadership if Xi Jinping, as an individual, attempts to use his power arbitrarily in decision-making, including decision-making for personnel affairs, beyond the scope of conventional collective leadership. The relentless crackdown in anti-corruption campaigns will inevitably create enemies of the Xi Jinping administration and Xi Jinping himself. The possibility cannot be ruled out that difficult situations such as a slowdown in the economy and intensifying tensions with the United States could stimulate debate within the leadership and fuel such discontent.

Furthermore, even if the apparent backlash described above can be contained, the prospects for achieving the objectives of centralization by the Xi Jinping administration are not

¹⁵ It was reported that Professor Xu Zhangrun was suspended in March 2019.

bright. So-called “pretending to obey but secretly betraying” people and passive resistance are likely to undermine efforts toward centralization. This can be inferred from the following passage that the CPC Central Committee itself referred to in “Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on strengthening the party’s political construction” (January 2019): We will absolutely prevent and ascertain the impropriety of any and all wrong words and conducts that deviate from the “two defenses”.¹⁶ We will not allow any form of “low grade red (低級紅)” (plain praise, apple-polishing) or “premium black (高級黒)” (elusive criticism, satire and irony), and will absolutely not tolerate any double-sided actions or false loyalty, which is to pretend to obey but secretly betray the CPC Central Committee.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Li Keqiang’s remarks in the report on government activities at the second session of the 13th National People’s Congress (March 2019)—that all administrative inaction must be held to account—suggest that a considerable number of people are resisting discipline in the form of wait-and-see or sabotage. A phrase often used in China in recent years— “pass the place with a great fuss (轰轰烈烈走过场)” —shows how, through repeated political campaigns since the founding of the country, Chinese bureaucrats have learned how to wait for storms to pass shrewdly, while showing exaggerated reactions to commands from above to save face.

If the Xi Jinping administration has a chance of winning in this situation, then the key lies in the mind control of people through the use of big data and the introduction of credit scoring systems. In this paper, I mentioned that authorities are in the process of creating credit records for Internet users and industry. It is unclear at this point how much these credit scoring systems are designed to restrict people’s freedom of autonomous thinking and speech, how much privacy is protected in operation, and how the Xi Jinping administration perceives the negative aspects of technocracy and the risks posed by the long-term path dependency that characterizes policies in the technology domain. Furthermore, if this were to be the case, this issue would no longer be a matter of Chinese governance, but directly linked to the global issue of how to govern a digital society that extends beyond national borders. If the design and operation of a credit scoring system at the hands of the CPC leads to human rights violations, the international community will be forced to intensify its criticism of China’s governance.

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¹⁶ “Two defenses” is a phrase that orders the firm maintenance of Xi Jinping’s position as the core of the CPC Central Committee and the whole party, as well as the authority and the concentrated leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

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