

The Dynamics and Trajectory of Corruption in Contemporary China

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Abstract

Analysis of the data on the anti-corruption crackdown launched by Xi Jinping in late 2012 and early 2013 shows that its primary effect was to dramatically increase the number of senior officials—popularly known as “tigers”—charged with corruption. Heretofore, much of the debate about the crackdown has focused on who was been taken down and why. In this article, I shift the focus away from the “who” and “why” questions to a deeper question: what led to the proliferation of tigers? That is, how did corruption spread among the senior ranks of the party-state? Drawing on data on the tigers’ involvement in corruption, I argue that corruption was “promoted” upward during the years that preceded Xi’s crackdown. Xi’s fight with corruption has thus been a battle with corruption that spread first among the middle ranks of the party-state and then moved upward into the leadership as corrupt officials rose up through the ranks.

Shortly after he was elected General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi Jinping launched a highly publicized crackdown on corruption. More precisely, he launched an unprecedented crackdown on corruption within the senior ranks of the party-state and extended the crackdown into the upper ranks of the military. The blow fell much more

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