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**Hunting Tigers and Swatting Flies:
Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign**

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To the memory of my Mother

Abstract

Hunting Tigers and Swatting Flies: Xi Jinping's Anti-Corruption Campaign

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Why has Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, launched one of the most aggressive anti-corruption campaigns in the history of the country? To answer this question, I constructed a database of over 100 high-level officials who have come under investigation during the campaign. I find that the campaign is disproportionately targeting officials from certain provinces. To understand why, I test a hypothesis that states: Xi is targeting corrupt officials from specific geographical regions for reasons unrelated to combating pervasive corruption, indicating factional politics are driving at least a part of the campaign. I find mixed support for the hypothesis. Out of the four provinces tested against the hypothesis, Sichuan is the only one that Xi appears to be targeting under the guise of anti-corruption. I put these findings in comparative perspective and find that the basic characteristics of Xi's campaign are similar to Jiang Zemin's 1995 anti-corruption campaign. This finding further supports the hypothesis that factional politics are driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign. I conclude that Xi's anti-corruption campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China's historical factional politics.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The goal of this report is to understand why Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, has launched one of the most aggressive anti-corruption campaigns (*fan fubai douzheng*) in the history of the country (Wam, 2014). To this end, I test a hypothesis that may explain why Xi started the campaign. The analysis shows that factional conflict may be driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

Why Study Xi's Anti-Corruption Campaign?

The main reason to study the current anti-corruption campaign is to better understand the priorities of the new Chinese leadership. Several previous explanations have been advanced to explain anti-corruption campaigns. Manion (2004) argues that Chinese anti-corruption campaigns are a response to the inadequacies of regular anti-corruption enforcement mechanisms (Manion, 2004). This explanation suggests anti-corruption campaigns stem from a genuine concern about corruption. Gillespie and Okruhlik (1991) argue, by contrast, that anti-corruption campaigns can have goals completely unrelated to anti-corruption. Anti-corruption campaigns, for example, can be political instruments. They may be used to "delegitimize the previous regime, to purge opposition, to manipulate the political agenda, or to decrease the incidence of corruption and thereby legitimate the current regime" (Gillespie and Okruhlik, 1991: 82). Quade (2007) argues that anti-corruption campaigns are actually linked to macroeconomic policies.

Determining which—if any—of these explanations apply to the current campaign can shed light on Xi Jinping’s priorities as a leader. If he is serious about tackling corruption, this may be a sign he is a reformer. By contrast, a political purge masked as an anti-corruption campaign may indicate more of the status quo. A study of the current campaign can thus reveal clues about the direction of the regime under Xi Jinping.

The Current Campaign

Table 1 displays the province-of-birth and level in government of officials in the database under investigation for corruption. A review of the table reveals some interesting initial observations. First, according to the database, high-level officials born in Jiangsu, Shanxi, Sichuan, or Shandong provinces are disproportionately being put under investigation. These four provinces together have nearly more high-level officials under investigation than the combined total of the seventeen remaining provinces. Second, the geographic distribution of these four provinces is diverse. Jiangsu and Shandong provinces are located on China’s eastern coast, whereas Sichuan and Shanxi are situated inland. The provinces with the highest number of officials under investigation, in other words, do not appear to be geographically clustered. Third, three provinces—Shanxi, Sichuan, and Shandong—have a similar number of high-levels officials under investigation. Fifth, the majority of officials under investigation are at the provincial—rather than the national—level. However, these provincial level officials are still senior officials. Finally, the targeting of high-level officials from provinces located in the top-

half of the table—e.g., Zhejiang, Guangxi, Henan, Heilongjiang, Shaanxi¹, etc.—appears to be limited in scope.

Provinces	Officials Investigated (%)	National Level Official	Provincial Level Official
Zhejiang	1 (1.0%)	--	1
Guangxi	1 (1.0%)	--	1
Shaanxi	1 (1.0%)	--	1
Henan	1 (1.0%)	--	1
Heilongjiang	1 (1.0%)	1	--
Jiangxi	1 (1.0%)	--	1
Yunnan	2 (1.9%)	1	1
Hunan	2 (1.9%)	--	2
Anhui	2 (1.9%)	--	2
Inner Mongolia	2 (1.9%)	1	1
Jilin Province	3 (2.9%)	3	--
Beijing	3 (2.9%)	2	1
Liaoning	4 (3.9%)	2	2
Hebei	4 (3.9%)	2	2
Hubei	6 (5.8%)	3	3
Guangdong	6 (5.8%)	1	5
Jiangsu	8 (7.8%)	3	5
Shanxi	10 (9.7%)	1	9
Sichuan	22 (21.4%)	6	16
Shandong	11 (10.7%)	3	8
Unknown	12 (11.7%)	10	2
Total	103 (100%)	39	64

Table One: Investigated Officials' Province-of-Birth and Level in Government²

Of all the patterns noted above, the most perplexing is this: why are high-level officials born in Jiangsu, Shanxi, Sichuan, or Shandong provinces disproportionately being

¹ Interestingly, the targeting of officials born in Shaanxi province—Xi Jinping's home province—is extremely limited, with only one official listed in the table as under investigation.

² Sources for this data include biographical searches on the Communist Party of China Official Website (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/>), the CDIC website (<http://www.cdi.gov.cn/>), *Chinavivae.com*, and *Baidu.com*.

put under investigation? To answer this question, I test a hypothesis, which is introduced in the next section.

Main Hypothesis

The main hypothesis is as follows: Xi is targeting corrupt officials³ from specific geographical regions for reasons (i.e., disrupting factions) unrelated to combating pervasive corruption, indicating factional politics are driving at least part of the campaign; in other words, Xi Jinping is directly targeting factions in specific geographical regions under the guise of anti-corruption.

. This hypothesis assumes that factions⁴ in China have some kind of geographical basis. While geographical origins rarely form the sole base of a faction, they undoubtedly represent a key element (Pye, 1981: 7). The historical record of China, in fact, bears out this important role geographical origins play in elite cohesion and political divisions. For example, regarding elite cohesion, Hunan, and Hubei provinces—Mao Zedong’s historical base of support—received disproportionate representation in the Eighth and Ninth CCP Politburos (Li, 2014: 4; Houn, 1957: 395; Domes, 1969). Similarly, Presidents Jiang Zemin (Jiangsu province), Hu Jintao (Jiangsu province), and now Xi Jinping (Shaanxi province) have favored appointing loyal officials from their respective

³ By “officials,” I mean individuals who work within the CCP governing structure, individuals who are connected to the CCP through a state-owned enterprise (SOE), or individuals who work outside the CCP structure, but have significant connections to CCP officials.

⁴ A faction is “a personal network of reciprocity that seeks to preserve and expand the power of the patron” (Shih, 2009: 50). These informal networks in China include the Princelings (*taizi*), Youth League Faction (*tuanpai*), fellow provincials (*tongxiang*), fellow classmates (*tongxue*), and the Shanghai Gang (*Shanghai bang*) (Che. Li, 2013: 1). For more information on factions and informal networks in China, see Li, 2001b or Finklestein & Kivlehan, 2002.

home provinces to prominent leadership positions (Li, 2014: 43; Li & White, 1998: 238; Li, 2004; Li, 2001a).

For CCP leaders consolidating power, the task of disrupting factions with a geographical base of power, or “independent kingdoms” (*duli wangguo*), is no less important than the task of appointing loyal officials from their respective home provinces (Dittmer & Wu, 1995: 475). In a system that lacks “credible formal institutions and procedures to measure and transfer power,” these geographical bases of power can produce serious political divisions and, therefore, pose a significant threat to the governing authority of CCP leaders (Shih, 2009: 48). Historically, Chinese leaders have reacted to these threats by targeting—often under the guise of anti-corruption—the senior officials associated with these factions (Li, 2007; Faison, 1997). Is this also the case with Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign?

To test the hypothesis, I disaggregate the data in Table One, placing the officials born in Jiangsu, Shanxi, Sichuan, and Shandong provinces in separate tables. In each table, I, then, compare officials’ birth province⁵ with their work history (i.e., where they served/worked) and (if any) factional affiliations. If the work history is different from the province-of-birth, I exclude that official from the analysis.

⁵ It is important to note that place of birth may be a false indicator of an official’s factional affiliation. That is, cadres “spend more than half of their careers rising through a particular *xitong*, or bureaucratic system, which is divided both geographically and functionally” (Shih, 2009: 54; Lieberthal, 2004: 218). In this system, it is possible for an official to come up in a *xitong*—and/or be a member of a faction—that is outside their respective home provinces (e.g., an official born in Jiangsu—the base of Jiang Zemin’s Shanghai Faction—may never join Jiang’s faction). To account for this possibility, I choose to include in the analysis, if necessary, officials who have left their birth province and have migrated to the province in question.

I, finally, analyze in detail the linkages and connections between the officials in the province. If the hypothesis is confirmed, this analysis should show 1) the presence in the province of an organized network, or “independent kingdom,” of officials associated with a particular faction or group 2) a high number of officials clearly associated with or linked to the faction 3) the faction exerting an extraordinary level of control over the business or politics in the province 4) and the influence of the faction is generally contained within the province (Dittmer & Wu, 1995: 475). If these indications are present in the evidence, the hypothesis is confirmed; otherwise, the hypothesis is disconfirmed, which suggests sheer coincidence or an alternative explanation all together explains why officials from the province are being disproportionately targeted.

Although I test the hypothesis against the four aforementioned provinces, the majority of chapter two is devoted to examining the relationships in Sichuan province. There are two reasons why I devote such a large amount of space to Sichuan province. First, although Zhou had pockets of power of power in other provinces, I find that Zhou’s base of power is primarily situated in Sichuan province. Without analyzing Sichuan province in detail, it would be impossible to convey to the reader the sheer amount of power Zhou wielded in the province and why he, consequently, posed a threat to Xi’s governing authority. And, second, the space limitations of this report preclude a full analysis of the networks in each of the four provinces. As a result, I primarily focus on Sichuan province, which effectively conveys the sheer amount of power Zhou and his surrogates wielded.

In the third chapter, I put the findings in chapter two in comparative perspective. I do this by addressing three questions: 1) are the characteristics of the current campaign—examined in chapter two—different than previous campaigns 2) if they are different, how so and 3) do these differences—or the lack thereof—help explain why Xi launched the current anti-corruption campaign?

To answer these questions, I compare and contrast the current campaign with two previous anti-corruption campaigns in China. The two campaigns analyzed are Deng Xiaoping/Jiang Zemin's 1989 anti-corruption campaign and Jiang Zemin's 1995 anti-corruption campaign. I first compare and contrast the 1989 campaign with the current campaign before turning to the 1995 campaign.

Chapter three concludes that Xi seems to be disproportionately targeting officials in Sichuan province. This supports the hypothesis that Xi is targeting officials in Sichuan province under the guise of anti-corruption, indicating factional politics may be driving at least part of the campaign. The findings in chapter three further support this hypothesis. I show that Xi's current campaign has striking parallels to former president Jiang Zemin's 1995 anti-corruption campaign, in which the latter also targeted the network of a high-level Chinese leader. The statistics of the 1995 campaign are also similar to the current campaign.

The findings in chapter three are important because they show that the characteristics of the current campaign—analyzed in chapter two—are far from anomalous. It is also possible to surmise from the comparative analysis that Xi and Jiang

launched their respective campaigns for similar reasons. I conclude that Xi—like Jiang—most likely came to power with a genuine desire to clean up corruption in the government. But, Xi may have realized that he could never fulfill his commitment to fighting corruption in the eyes of the public without completely dealing with the fallout from the Bo Xilai affair, which included Zhou Yongkang. This parallels the situation faced by Jiang, who sought to destroy Chen Xitong’s “independent kingdom” in the 1995 anti-corruption campaign. All together, the comparative analysis in chapter three shows that the current campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China’s historical factional politics.

Methodology

To test this hypothesis, I constructed a database that contains information on officials who have come under investigation during the campaign. The database includes the name, geographical base, work history, secondary associations, and other general biographical and background information of officials targeted during the anti-corruption campaign.

This database, of course, is far from exhaustive—an unavoidable limitation of the study. According to some reports, in just the first half of 2014, over 60,000 officials have come under some kind of formal investigation (Zhou, 2014). Moreover, during the course of the campaign (starting around Fall 2012), over 180,000 officials have been targeted for disciplinary violations (Makinen, 2014). So, given the sheer magnitude of the campaign, it is unrealistic for any researcher to compile a comprehensive database of all high and

low-level officials under investigation. I define high-level officials as those at the county or division level and higher.

Furthermore, data from investigations of low-level officials, which would constitute the bulk of any comprehensive database, reveal very little about why Xi launched this campaign. The Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC)⁶—the supervisory agency for all Chinese Communist Party (CCP) corruption cases—is composed of smaller, provincial Discipline Inspection Commission (DIC) branches. These provincial DIC branches are responsible for enforcing party discipline among local cadres, who are often located at the township or county level. These low-level officials have limited—if any—ties to important prefectural or provincial political figures, insignificant patronage networks, no role in implementing central policies, and often fly under CDIC’s radar (Ting, 2008: 145). Therefore, a database full of one-off, bottom-up provincial DIC investigations would provide few concrete clues to understand why Xi Jinping—since the 18th Congress—has systematically targeted high-level officials at an “unprecedented” rate (Xie, 2013; Wam, 2014; Guo & Bradbury, 2014).

By contrast, high-level provincial officials (i.e., at or above the prefecture level) under suspicion for corruption are often directly investigated by the CDIC. Ordered by central leaders, these CDIC-led investigations—which generally supersede any related investigation by local party committees—have the power to “call meetings, interview

⁶ CDIC is one of the most “feared and powerful” Chinese Communist Party organizations. It has the authority to bypass obstructionist mid-ranking bureaucrats and indefinitely detain officials under suspicion for corruption. It reports its findings directly back to the General Secretary of the Communist Party (i.e., Xi Jinping) (Ting et al., 2014). For basic information on the CCP’s discipline system, see the CDIC’s website (<http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/>). For more detailed information, see Manion, 2004: pp. 120-130.

people, and review concerned documents for investigation purposes” (Ting, 2008: 145). The investigation teams, then, report their findings directly back to the central leaders (Ting, 2008: 145).

Because CDIC investigations are ordered by central leaders, patterns in the public information about CDIC-related investigations are probably more indicative of Xi’s motivations than one-off, isolated DIC investigations of low-level, sub-provincial officials. So, given the goal of this study—understanding Xi’s motivations for the campaign—I restrict (with some exceptions) the database to high-level officials⁷—i.e., the “tigers” (*laohu*)⁸—who have been targeted by CDIC head and Xi confidante/ally, Wang Qishan (Li, 2014: 9; S. Zhang, 2014; Pei, 2014a).

As a result, the database contains around 100 high-level CCP officials under suspicion for corruption. I found these officials by culling prominent Western and Chinese media sources and official Chinese government press releases. I only selected officials who (allegedly) engaged in clear corrupt acts, including embezzlement (*tanwu*), bribe taking (*shouhui*), misappropriation (*nuoyong*), privilege seeking (*yiquan mousi*), illegal earnings (*feifa shouru*), and others (Yan, 2004: 27-30).

The date range in the database is from the start of Xi’s anti-corruption campaign to around August 2014. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the precise start date of the anti-corruption campaign, Xi started to first give public speeches about anti-corruption in

⁷ High-level officials are those at the county or division level and higher.

⁸ This is part of a Chinese expression—“hunting tigers and swatting flies” (*laohu cangying yiqi da*)—that refers to punishing both high and low level officials tainted by corruption. I borrow this expression for the title of the report.

late (November-December) 2012, which is most likely the start of the campaign; this is also around the same time he ascended to the leadership of the party (Wong, 2012; Xi, 2012). Historically, Chinese leaders have marked the beginning of an anti-corruption campaign by giving a series of speeches on the subject (Manion, 2004).

There are also significant challenges in establishing the factional affiliations of Chinese officials. A faction is “a personal network of reciprocity that seeks to preserve and expand the power of the patron” (Shih, 2009: 50). Some factions are incredibly informal, which makes it difficult to prove their existence. Other factions are more formal and established, which makes them easier to identify. However, even with these more formal factions, identifying the members is often a subjective task⁹ (Che. Li, 2013: 1; Li, 2001b).

In this report, I use a descending scale—informed by the aforementioned definition—to determine factional associations. On the top end of the scale, I place the officials who worked under or with the patron and are clear members of the faction. For these officials, I find clear evidence that they exchanged favors with the patron and helped preserve his power; this evidence aligns with the aforementioned definition of factions. For example, Zhou maintained a coterie of aides and advisers, all of whom

⁹ For example, Zhou Yongkang’s (who changed his given name of Yuangen to Yongkang) biography and credentials as a member of the princeling faction are, in fact, subject to debate. Some reports claim Zhou’s father is Zhou Yiping (1915-1990), who served as deputy political commissar of the Commission of Science Technology, and Industry for National Defense between 1982 and 1985 (Bo, 2010: 21-22). Other reports argue that Zhou’s father is Zhou Yisheng, a poor farmer and fisherman from Wuxi, Jiangsu province (Xie & Wang, 2014). The evidence suggests that Zhou—if Zhou Yiping is, in fact, his father—would barely qualify as a princeling. That is, unlike other princelings (e.g., Bo Xilai, Xi Jinping, and Zeng Qinghong), Zhou’s father never served in a prominent position—a prerequisite for princeling status.

worked with or under Zhou in various capacities. These aides and advisers subsequently occupied other positions across the country, but presumably maintained their factional ties to Zhou. Zhou's family members are also placed at this end of the scale.

On the middle of the scale, I place the officials who worked closely with or under one of the patron's aides, advisers, or surrogates and are members—at some level—of the faction. For these officials, I find evidence that they exchanged favors with the patron's surrogates and helped preserve these surrogates' power, which, in turn, preserved the patron's power; this evidence aligns with the definition of factions above. For example, Zhou's surrogates in Sichuan exchanged favors with a vast network of officials. These officials had no direct contact with Zhou himself, but benefitted immensely from cultivating a relationship with Zhou's surrogates. To be sure, the officials in this network had far ranging levels of association with Zhou's faction and may have never realized that their actions indirectly expanded Zhou's power in the province. Despite variable levels of association and officials' potential ignorance, I—following the basic definition of factions above—still regard these officials as members of Zhou's faction. I indicate with a question mark in the following tables lingering uncertainty about an official's level of association with a faction.

On the bottom end of the scale, there are the officials who have no discernable ties to the patron or his surrogates; that is, there is no public evidence that these officials exchanged favors with Zhou, his surrogates, or any other faction. This high level of uncertainty is why these officials are placed at the bottom end of the scale. Without more

evidence (e.g., direct interviews), it is impossible to know with precision the status of these officials vis-à-vis certain factions.

The information in the database comes from numerous sources. Some of the more general information in the database, such as geographical base or work history, comes from official CCP media sources. These include newspapers (e.g., *People's Daily*), news agencies (e.g., *Xinhua News*), and CCP websites. For more detailed and sensitive information on corruption investigations, I turn to Chinese and Western media sources. The Chinese news sources, among many others, include *Caixin* (a financial and business news periodical), *Caijing*, (a public affairs and business periodical), *21st Century Business Herald* (a business magazine), and *Boxun*¹⁰ (a peer-contributed news website operated by individuals living outside China), and *Southern Weekend*¹¹ (a weekly newspapers based in Guaghzhou). The Western news sources include *The South China Morning Post*, *Bloomberg News*, *The New York Times*¹², *The Washington Post*, *Reuters*, *The Associated Press*, and several other news gathering organizations.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, I test each province—Jiangsu, Sichuan, Shanxi, and Shandong—against the hypothesis. As the analysis shows, I find mixed results for the

¹⁰ The material on *Boxun* is often compiled by anonymous contributors, which raises questions about its credibility. I note in the text when sources with suspect credibility are cited.

¹¹ *Southern Weekend* is “by far the largest and most influential Chinese paper that consistently produces top-flight investigative journalism” (Rosenthal, 2002).

¹² *The New York Times* and *Bloomberg*, in particular, have reported extensively on Xi’s anti-corruption campaign and related sensitive internal affairs, infuriating the CCP (Forsythe et al., 2014; Jacobs, 2014; Lawrence et al., 2014).

hypothesis in each of the four provinces. I explain these findings in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Hypothesis

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the database and introduced the main hypothesis of the report. In this chapter, I test the aforementioned hypothesis that: Xi Jinping is directly targeting—under the guise of anti-corruption—factions in specific geographical regions.

I find mixed levels of support for the hypothesis. Whereas Jiangsu and Shandong provinces disconfirm the hypothesis, Sichuan province overwhelmingly confirms the hypothesis. Shanxi province neither confirms nor rejects the hypothesis.

In the following, I test the hypothesis, starting with Jiangsu province below. Due to the space limitations of this report, I shorten the analysis of Jiangsu and Shandong; this is because there is no one faction that clearly predominates in the provinces. I devote more space in the report to analyzing Sichuan province, where Zhou Yongkang's faction is clearly the strongest. A figure¹³ located in the supplemental section of the report illustrates the key relationships in Jiangsu, Sichuan, Shanxi, and Shandong provinces.

Hypothesis One: Jiangsu Province

After testing the hypothesis, I find that Xi is most likely not targeting factions in Jiangsu province under the guise of anti-corruption; this disconfirms the hypothesis.

Table two below displays the results. I find that the majority of officials in the table are associated with the Zhou Group, which, on the surface, suggests the existence of a

¹³ Sources for the figure are noted in the bibliography section and in the text below. I—due to space limitations—shorten the analysis of Jiangsu province and omit the analysis of Shandong province. The figure in the supplemental section of the report illustrates the relationships in these provinces.

Name	Province of Birth	Work History	Factional Affiliation	Last Job Held
Zhou Yongkang	Jiangsu	Sichuan	Jiang (princeling?)/ Zhou Group	Politburo Standing Committee
Zhou Yuanqing	Jiangsu	Jiangsu	Zhou Group	Zhou Yongkang's Brother
Zhou Lingying	Jiangsu	Jiangsu	Zhou Group	Zhou Yuanqing's Wife
Zhou Bin	Jiangsu	Beijing	Zhou Group	Owned Beijing Sun Rising Energy Corp.
Ni Fake	Jiangsu	Anhui	Unclear	Anhui Deputy Governor
Ji Jianye	Jiangsu	Jiangsu	Jiang (Shanghai Gang? ¹⁴)	Major of Nanjing
Zhu Xingliang	Jiangsu	Jiangsu	Zhou Group?	Owned Suzhou Gold Mantis Construction
Wang Shuaiting	Jiangsu	Hong Kong	Unclear	Vice Chairman China Resources Holding

Table Two: Factional Affiliation and Work History of Officials Born in Jiangsu¹⁵

political base of power. Although these officials controlled significant resources and may be behind cases of corruption, there is little evidence suggesting they established a powerful network of associated officials in the province; this kind of network would be necessary to establish a powerful base of political power. Second, the officials associated

¹⁴ A question mark placed behind a factional association label indicates uncertainty about the degree to which the official in question is a member of said faction. For example, I insert a question mark when an official has indirect ties to a known member of the faction. Although this official is linked to the faction, it still remains unclear the true status of the official vis-à-vis the faction. Without more evidence (e.g., direct interviews), it is impossible to know with precision the status of an official in a faction. The question mark indicates to the reader this level of uncertainty.

¹⁵ Sources for the data include C. Li, 2014, biographical searches on Communist Party of China Official Website (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/>), *Chinavivae.com*, *Baidu.com*, and multiple newspaper articles. For more information, see the in-text citations below the table.

with the Zhou Group¹⁶ exercised the majority of their financial and political influence outside Jiangsu province, which suggests little interest existed in establishing a political power base in the province. They wielded most of their power in Sichuan and other provinces.

Finally, the individuals associated with the Zhou Group in the province seem to have little influence—in contrast to officials in Sichuan province (see below)—over the internal politics of the province. This short review illustrates that—in contrast to Sichuan province below—Jiangsu province is hardly a formidable base of power for the Zhou Group. That is, the evidence indicates that Jiangsu province poses a limited threat to Xi Jinping’s ruling authority, which is why Xi, again, appears not to be targeting officials in the province under the guise of anti-corruption. This finding, therefore, disconfirms the hypothesis that Xi Jinping is directly targeting Jiangsu province under the guise of anti-corruption.

Hypothesis One: Sichuan Province

Table three below displays the factional affiliations and work histories of officials who are from Sichuan province and who are under investigation. The findings suggest that it is likely that Xi is directly targeting factions in the province under the guise of anti-corruption; this confirms the hypothesis. First, as the table below indicates, the number of

¹⁶ The Mandarin word for “group”—*jituan*—carries a special meaning in Chinese history and politics. In Chinese history and politics, this word has usually been associated with officials who carry out anti-party activities, such as the Lin Biao Anti-Party Group (*Lin Biao fandang jituan*) or the Jiang Qing Anti-Party Group (*Jiang Qing fandang jituan*). For a debate on the merits of labeling Zhou Yongkang’s corruption network as an anti-party group, see “Zhou Yongkang,” 2013a. For a more general discussion on the historical background of the Mandarin word *jituan*, see Guo, 2011.

Name	Province of Birth	Work History	Factional Affiliation	Last Job Held
Wu Bing	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Runs Zhongxu Investment Corp.
Li Chongxi	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Sichuan Vice Secretary General
Deng Hong	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Founder of ETG
Wang Junlin	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Chairman of Langjiu Corp.
Shen Dingcheng	Sichuan	Beijing	Zhou Group	VP of PetroChina
Liu Han	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Chairman of Sichuan Hanlong
Tan Li	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Vice-Governor of Hainan
Dai Xiaoming	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Led Chengdu Industry Investment Group
Sun Jiancheng	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Party Secretary of Qingbaijiang (Chengdu)
Zhao Miao	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Member of the Chengdu Municipal Committee
Ran Xinquan	Sichuan	Beijing	Zhou Group (?)	VP PetroChina
Wang Daofu	Sichuan	Beijing	Zhou Group (?)	Chief PetroChina Geologist
He Huazhang	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Led Chengdu Propaganda Dept.
Tan Jianming	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Led Xingrong Investment Corp
Zhang Jun	Sichuan	Sichuan	Zhou Group (?)	Led Chengdu Jianrong Group
Huang Kengding	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	Chengdu Jianrong Group CEO
Xu Mengjia	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	Ya'an CCP Committee Secretary
Yuan Ling	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	Peng'an County Party Secretary
He Yan	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	Guoteng Group Chairman
Ping Xing	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	CEO Chengdu HT Investment
Wu Tao	Sichuan	Sichuan	Unclear	PSB Chief in Jinjiang District (Chengdu)
Liao Shaohua	Sichuan	Guizhou	Unclear	Zunyi (Guizhou) Party Secretary

Table Three: Factional Affiliation and Work History of Officials Born in Sichuan¹⁷

¹⁷ Sources for the data include C. Li, 2014, biographical searches on Communist Party of China Official Website (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/>), the CDIC's website (<http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/>), *Chinavivae.com*, *Baidu.com*, and multiple newspaper articles. For more information, see the in-text citations below the table.

officials (constituting a significant majority) associated at some level with the Zhou Group in Sichuan province far exceeds the number of officials in Jiangsu province. These officials control significant resources, which they have used to establish a complex network of associated officials, companies, and business ventures throughout the province; the result is a formidable base of political power (i.e., an “independent kingdom”) in the province (Dittmer & Wu, 1995: 475). Second, the information in the table also indicates that the majority of meaningful political and financial influence wielded by individuals associated with the Zhou Group occurs inside the province. Finally, the officials associated with the Zhou Group seem to have immense influence over the internal politics of the province, with key positions filled by Zhou acolytes or individuals who have ties to Zhou. The following review shows that—in contrast to Jiangsu province above—Sichuan province is a formidable base of power for the Zhou Group. That is, the evidence indicates that Sichuan province poses a serious threat to Xi’s ruling authority, which is the most likely reason for why Xi—under the guise of anti-corruption—would directly target factions in the province. These findings, therefore, confirms the hypothesis. In the following section, I analyze the most powerful officials who constitute this formidable base of power in Sichuan.

Liu Han. Liu Han is the first—and the most powerful—of several tycoons with a work history in Sichuan province to come under investigation during Xi’s anti-corruption campaign. Liu Han, a businessman from Guanghan, Sichuan, amassed a fortune (over ¥40 billion RMB) behind a complex network of business ventures in banking, real estate,

mining, and natural resources (Zou, 2014). In many of these ventures, Liu Han made immense profits by straddling the line between legal and illegal behavior, a pattern that came to define his career. Liu Han also burnished his public image by participating in the community, serving as member of Sichuan’s Chamber of Commerce and Political Consultative Conference (J. Luo, 2014a). These business and community pursuits earned him a reputation as one of the most daring, confident¹⁸, well-connected, and philanthropic¹⁹ businessmen in Sichuan province.

But behind—and often in support of—this public image and business empire²⁰, Liu Han and his younger brother, Liu Wei²¹, ran a vast criminal underworld across Sichuan province. The subsequent legal investigation²² reveals Liu Han controlled a “mafia style” gang that—in pursuit of lucrative real estate or other business deals—intimidated residents and bribed officials alike (H. Lu, 2014; J. Zhang, 2014). These bribed officials provided Liu Han and his gang with a “protective umbrella” (*baohu san*), shielding them for years from the authorities and sure prosecution (J. Zhang, 2014). This

¹⁸ *The Wall Street Journal* once quoted him as saying, “Liu Han will always be a winner, and Liu Han will never be defeated” (Aredy, 2013a; Aredy, 2012).

¹⁹ In 1999, Liu Han established the Liu Han Hope Primary School in Beichuan, Sichuan, the epicenter of the 2008 Great Sichuan Earthquake. The school building—unlike others in the area—emerged unscathed following the earthquake. In addition, Liu Han donated more than 50 million Yuan to charity groups following the disastrous earthquake. He received widespread plaudits for this philanthropy. In 2009, Shanghai-based *Hurun’s Report* ranked him as 16th on their list of Chinese philanthropists (A. Chen, 2014; Y. Luo, 2014).

²⁰ Liu Han’s business empire—based out of Sichuan Province—spanned the globe, with lucrative holdings in the United States Australia, and Africa (Aredy, 2012; “Chinese Tycoon,” 2014; Aredy & Han, 2013).

²¹ Liu Wei (also known as Liu Yong) served as a torchbearer in Guanghan, Sichuan for the 2008 Beijing Olympics torch relay (He, 2013a).

²² In the Spring of 2014, Liu Han and the 36 members of his gang (including his brother, Liu Wei) stood trial in Xianning, Hubei province. The court sentenced Liu Han, his brother, and several other gang members to death; the other gang members received life sentences (Zhai, 2014a). For a list of the 36 members of the gang, see Gu & Wang, 2014.

protection allowed Liu Han's gang, among other things, to acquire a small arsenal of weapons²³ and commit murder with impunity, killing at least nine individuals in cities all across Sichuan province (Y. Luo, 2014).

The largest source of this political protection most likely came from Zhou Yongkang and his network of associates in the province; Liu Han's reign in Sichuan happened to coincide with Zhou's time as Sichuan party secretary (1999-2002) (Dong, 2014). The evidence suggests that Liu Han often traded favors with officials associated with the Zhou Group (J. Luo, 2014b). Although Liu Han's precise status as a Zhou Group member is unclear²⁴, he certainly interacted with—and gained protection from—officials associated with the Zhou Group (Pan et al., 2014). All together, Liu Han's network—often in partnership with the Zhou Group—represented an extremely powerful base of political power in the province; this base of power existed far outside the control of the national government, thereby threatening Xi's governing authority. A review in the following sub-sections of Liu Han's rise and career in Sichuan reveals the extraordinary breadth of this political power.

Liu Han: The Zhou Group and Political Protection. Among all the officials in his political network, Liu Han arguably expended the greatest amount of resources maintaining a relationship with Zhou Bin, whose father, Zhou Yongkang, previously ran Sichuan province. An egregious example of this is a Sichuan tourism asset—the Jiu Ding

²³ At the time of his arrest, Liu Han possessed 3 military grade hand grenades, 20 guns, 677 bullets, 163 shotgun cartridges, and more than 100 knives (Y. Luo, 2014; “Details of Suspected,” 2014).

²⁴ There is an unverified report that Zhou Yongkang called Liu Han his “godson,” suggesting the existence of a close relationship. Indeed, some reports indicate that Liu Han received significant assistance from Zhou Yongkang in building and expanding abroad his business empire (Zhai, 2014b; Wu, 2014).

Mountain Scenic Area—that Liu Han purchased from Zhou Bin and his wife, Huang Wan²⁵ (J. Luo, 2014b; J. Luo, 2014d). In 2002, Sichuan Chaoyue Corporation, which Huang Wan and Zhou Bin controlled, bought the land rights from the local government to develop and run the Jiu Ding Mountain Scenic Area for a period of 50 years. After acquiring the rights, Sichuan Chaoyue commissioned a Florida-based architectural firm to develop a master plan for the scenic area. According to reports, however, the project inexplicably stalled and, in 2004, Sichuan Chaoyue transferred the rights to develop the scenic area to Liu Han’s first company, Sichuan Hanlong, for ¥20 million RMB (J. Luo, 2014b; J. Luo, 2014d). This exorbitant price tag stunned one of Liu Han’s former employees, who surveyed the scenic area—situated in a desolate area of northwestern Sichuan—and estimated the actual value to be at no more than ¥5 million RMB (J. Luo, 2014b; J. Luo, 2014d). She relayed this information to Liu Han, who, in response, said, “if it is not too much”—referring to Zhou Bin’s offer—“we can agree” (J. Luo, 2014b). After this deal, Liu Han, with his immense wealth, continued to strategically give favorable business deals to Zhou Bin in exchange for additional political protection (J. Luo, 2014b; J. Luo, 2014d).

²⁵ The whereabouts of Huang (Fiona) Wan are unknown, which means the authorities have probably detained her (Zhai, 2014c). Huang Wan, a Chinese-American, managed several of Zhou Bin’s business ventures, including his largest company, Beijing Zhongxu (Zhou, 2013). She also started a television production company, which produced several police-inspired dramas. This production company received assistance from the Ministry of Public Security, which Zhou Yongkang headed at the time (Zhai, 2014c). Her mother, Zhan Minli—also an American citizen—lives in Southern California and holds ownership in many—some reports indicate at least nine—of Zhou Bin’s business ventures; that is, Zhan Minli is a “white glove” (*bai shoutao*) for Zhou Bin (Aredy et al., 2014). For more information on Huang Wan and Zhan Minli, see Wang et al., 2013.

With Zhou Bin firmly in his political network, Liu Han easily cultivated quid-pro-quo relationships with other powerful Zhou Yongkang acolytes across Sichuan province, including Li Chongxi (Deputy Party Secretary of Sichuan province)²⁶, Tan Li (Mianyang City Municipal Committee Secretary)²⁷, Guo Yongxiang (Vice Governor of Sichuan), and Li Chuncheng (Mayor of Chengdu) (Pan et al., 2014; “Details emerge,” 2014; Yu et al., 2014a). Liu Han also strategically forged relationships with local Sichuan PSB officials, including Liu Xuejun (Deyang PSB political commissar), Liu Zhongwei (Shifang deputy prosecutor general), Lu Bin (Deyang PSB equipment manager), and Liu Xiaohui²⁸ (Mianyang Deputy PSB Bureau Chief) (“Details emerge,” 2014; Xu & Ma, 2013). These three officials, in exchange for money and job promotions, furnished Liu Han with weapons, blocked criminal investigations, and protected his gang from the authorities (J. Zhang, 2014). This PSB “protective umbrella” emboldened Liu Han to execute more violent acts against rival gangs and competing business interests, leaving a trail of bodies and blood across Sichuan province (J. Zhang, 2014; “Details of Suspected,” 2014).

²⁶ According to reports, Li Chongxi (see table three)—a close former aide to Zhou Yongkang—“headed a mining rectification project team in Ganluo County in Sichuan’s Liangshan Yi autonomous prefecture” (“Details Emerge,” 2014). He subsequently sold the rights for these mines at “10 locations for a total of ¥535 million RMB, including a single sale worth ¥160 million RMB.” Li often sold these rights to Liu Han, whose company—Sichuan Hanlong—generated massive profits off these mines (“Details Emerge,” 2014; Wan, 2013; Huang & Zhou, 2014).

²⁷ After becoming Mianyang Municipal Committee Secretary in 2005, Tan Li and his ex-wife received a number of “gifts” from Liu Han, including ivory worth hundreds of million RMB and an emerald bracelet (Pan et al., 2014). Liu Han and Sichuan Hanlong acquired Fenggu Wine Corporation—based in Mianyang—at far below market prices; Tan Li may have facilitated this business deal (Xiao, 2014). Tan Li also supervised two major infrastructure projects in Mianyang, in which he—according to several senior Mianyang cadres—accrued significant personal profits (Xiao, 2014).

²⁸ According to reports, Liu Han—in exchange for weapons—gave Liu Xiaohui stock in Sichuan Jinlu Group, a corporation that Liu Han partially controlled (Xu & Ma, 2013).

Without all this political protection, Sichuan Hanlong, which often hired thugs to terrorize residents²⁹ and eliminate enemies³⁰, would have never flourished in the way it did. Founded in 1996, Sichuan Hanlong—located, at first³¹, in Sichuan’s second largest city, Mianyang—aggressively pursued real estate, mining and construction ventures across Sichuan province (Pan et al., 2014). Sichuan Hanlong often secured these contracts for real estate, mining, and infrastructure projects—including an airport, bridge, and highway in Mianyang—by bribing local leaders (Pan et al., 2014). On occasion, however, Sichuan Hanlong faced opposition to its projects—which often required land requisitions—from local residents, who staged protests and petitioned the local government (Xiao, 2013). Liu Han and Sichuan Hanlong responded to these displays of contention with violence, suppressing with impunity any forms of dissent.

One egregious example of this is the Xiaodao Village development project in Mianyang (Xiao, 2013). After receiving official permission to redevelop the village, Sichuan Hanlong decreased the compensation the local government had previously promised to give to the dislocated Xiaodao villagers (Xiao, 2013). The villagers

²⁹ Residents in Mianyang, Deyang, and Guanghan—cities in Sichuan which Liu Han controlled—rarely uttered Liu Han’s name out of fear of retribution. In fact, this fear became a general catchphrase—especially in Guanghan—with residents saying, “Liu Han is coming!” to indicate that something is amiss or imminent doom (“Sichuan Guanghan,” 2014).

³⁰ Inter-gang violence—generally perpetrated by Liu Han—plagued Sichuan Province for years. In 2010, Liu Wei—Liu Han’s brother—carried out a brazen gang hit in the middle of the day on a Sichuan rival—Chen Fuwei—at a Guanghan tea shop, killing three people in a volley of gunshots. Zeng Jianjun—one of Liu Han’s henchmen—also murdered a rival gang boss in the middle of a Guanghan street. The trail of blood and bodies hit nearly every corner of Sichuan, culminating in at least 9 deaths. Interestingly, the official media reports seem to be highlighting the violence associated with Liu Han’s gang and downplaying the high-level officials—i.e., the Zhou Group—who protected the gang (“Details of Suspected,” 2014).

³¹ Sichuan Hanlong later moved to the capital of Sichuan province, Chengdu.

consequently launched protests, which temporarily stymied Sichuan Hanlong’s planned development project (Xiao, 2013). Liu Han, in response, commissioned his gang of thugs to intimidate the village residents; this intimidation sparked a violent confrontation in which Tang Xingbing—a member of the gang—brutally stabbed a villager to death (“Details of Suspected,” 2014; Pan et al., 2014; Xiao, 2013). Because of Liu Han’s powerful political network—which included Zhou Yongkang and local PSB officials—the project still moved forward. Indeed, Tang Xingbing escaped punishment for the lurid murder, boasting later that, “Nothing happened to me after the killing, and that made me bolder and more unscrupulous” (“Details of Suspected,” 2014; Pan et al., 2014; Xiao, 2013).

In conclusion, Liu Han’s Sichuan political network—generally composed of officials from the Zhou Group—constituted a formidable base of power, which stood far outside the control of the national government; this base of power, therefore, threatened the ruling authority of Xi, prompting him to target—under the guise of anti-corruption—these officials in the province. Without this political network, authorities would have uncovered far earlier the illegal behavior, violence, and intimidation that underpinned Liu Han’s business empire in Sichuan. In the following section, I briefly explore the key surrogates who further reinforced Zhou Yongkang’s extraordinary base of power in Sichuan province.

Zhou Yongkang’s Sichuan Surrogates. After serving as party secretary (1992-2002), Zhou Yongkang departed Sichuan for Beijing, leaving behind a network of

powerful surrogates to run the province (Dong, 2014). These surrogates represented a formidable base of power unto themselves, which threatened Xi’s ruling authority; this further confirms the hypothesis.

The surrogates colluded with prominent Sichuan officials and business tycoons—the majority of whom are displayed in table three—on local development and infrastructure projects. Such collusions involved the surrogates giving preferential contracts and land deals to these tycoons and businessmen; they, in return, gave the surrogates significant kickbacks. The most egregious cases of this collusion occurred in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province. Li Chuncheng³², a Liaoning province native who worked closely with Zhou³³ in Sichuan before becoming Chengdu mayor and party secretary, launched an ambitious urbanization campaign, in which he delivered—in return for bribes—extremely favorable contracts, policies, and land deals to Sichuan corporations and state-owned enterprises (Tam, 2012). Li Chuncheng also controlled the local PSB³⁴ and propaganda department, shielding these (often illegal) development projects—which often sparked violent protests—from public criticism. In the following sub-sections, I briefly explore the complex network of Sichuan businessmen and officials behind Li Chuncheng’s (and Zhou Yongkang’s) base of power in Chengdu, which

³² Li Chuncheng came under official investigation for “disciplinary violations” on December 6th, 2012 (Zhou, 2012a).

³³ According to reports, Zhou Yongkang regarded Li Chuncheng as one of his “favorite subordinates” in Sichuan province, confirming the existence of a close relationship (“Li Chuncheng,” 2014; Wang et al., 2012a).

³⁴ Wu Tao (see table three), the head of the PSB in the Jinjiang District of Chengdu, maintained a close relationship with Li Chuncheng. Wu Tao gave Li Chuncheng two passports, which they used in their failed attempt to escape the authorities (Zhiling, 2013).

existed far outside the control of the national government. I also analyze two other prominent Zhou Yongkang surrogates—Li Chongxi and Guo Yongxiang³⁵.

Li Chuncheng: Dai Xiaoming and Ping Xing. Li Chuncheng—through his urbanization campaign—launched ambitious real estate and infrastructure projects across the city, infusing Chengdu with new economic life³⁶ (Y. Huang, 2014). This campaign—which demolished³⁷ large swaths of Chengdu—also generated significant profits for land developers and businessmen, who colluded with or received preferential treatment from Li Chuncheng; many these developers and business are connected to prominent state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

The SOE Chengdu Industry Investment Group (CIIG), which Li Chuncheng³⁸ surrogate Dai Xiaoming³⁹ (see table three) led, served as an important financing platform for Li’s urbanization campaign, funding infrastructure and urbanization projects in districts across the city (Y. Lu, 2014). A petrochemical refinery in Pengzhou—a county-level city inside Chengdu’s jurisdiction—represented one of CIIG’s largest—and most

³⁵ Li Chongxi, Li Chuncheng, and Guo Yongxiang—all powerful Zhou acolytes in Sichuan Province—are affectionately referred to as the “Two Li’s, and One Guo” (Yu & Hu, 2014b).

³⁶ Under Li Chuncheng’s leadership, Chengdu’s GDP—in a thirteen year period—jumped from ¥180 billion RMB to ¥700 billion RMB (Y. Huang, 2014).

³⁷ Locals decried Li Chuncheng’s propensity for demolishing “some of the most distinct and culturally rich neighborhoods in Chengdu” (A. Li, 2012). The locals consequently gave Li Chuncheng the nickname Li “Demolish the City” (*Li Chaicheng*), which is a homonym on the Chinese characters in his name (A. Li, 2012).

³⁸ Li Chuncheng called Dai Xiaoming one of his most competent people, suggesting a very close relationship (Tan & Li, 2012).

³⁹ According to reports, Dai Xiaoming—after being detained himself for “economic problems”—“spilled the beans” on a number of corrupt officials involved in the Xindu land deal, including Li Chuncheng (who he worked under in various positions), Mao Yixin (the Director of Land and Resources for Xindu District who authorities found with ¥38.7 million RMB) and Mao Zhigang (the former chairman of the Bank of Chengdu, who worked with Dai at CIIG). (Boehler, 2013b; “Chengdu Gongtou,” 2012; Zhuang, 2012; “Chengdu Land,” 2012; Zhuang, 2012).

controversial—infrastructure investments (Liu, 2014). The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Chengdu Petrochemical Company, which CIIG controlled, held, respectively, 51 and 49 percent stakes in the Pengzhou project (“Chengdu Gongtou,” 2012). Although the National Development and Reform Commission approved the project in 2008, lingering concerns over the environmental impact⁴⁰ of the project prevented the refinery from becoming fully functional until 2014 (Liu, 2014).

To assuage these concerned residents—most of whom staged protests⁴¹ over the refinery—the city of Chengdu promised to undertake a legal review of the project (Huang, 2014a). This review inexplicably never came, and the project subsequently moved forward after the local government lobbied Beijing⁴² (Huang, 2014a). Questions later surfaced concerning why the CNPC and CIIG squashed the review and refused—after Ministry of Environment requests—to move the project to another location. (“Chengdu Gongtou,” 2012; Tu, 2014). The evidence—albeit ambiguous—suggests that Dai Xiaoming, the leader of CIIG, delivered—in exchange for support of the Pengzhou project—kickbacks to more than twenty Sichuan officials, including Li Chuncheng⁴³; the

⁴⁰ Pengzhou is situated on one of China’s most active fault-lines, which produced the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake. Pengzhou also sits in a basin, making it difficult for wind to come in and disperse any pollution (Moore, 2013a).

⁴¹ Protesters—who numbered in the hundreds—claimed that “the government had not done proper environmental reviews of the project,” which the evidence presented above appears to confirm (Wong, 2008). Indeed, environmentalists produced official studies demonstrating that refinery posed significant risk to the local environment. The authorities in Chengdu “mobilized a heavy response to [the] planned protest, going as far as to alter the working week” (Moore, 2013a).

⁴² The local Chengdu government apparently “lobbied hard for Pengzhou to be chosen”—despite these environmental concerns— “sending millions of Yuan every month to Beijing to seduce executives at the CNPC,” which Zhou Yongkang and his acolytes controlled (Moore, 2013a).

⁴³ The location—inside Chengdu’s jurisdiction—of the refinery also gave Li Chuncheng significant tax receipts, boosting the local economy (“Chengdu Gongtou,” 2012).

project, in effect, became a rent-seeking tool⁴⁴ for these officials (“Chengdu Gongtou,” 2012; Tu, 2014).

Dai Xiaoming (and Li Chuncheng) is also likely linked to Zhou Bin, who, according to reports⁴⁵, helped secure the Pengzhou project for the Chengdu government through connections his father, Zhou Yongkang, maintained at CNPC (Moore, 2013a). CNPC oil-interests in Chengdu, in turn, apparently rewarded Zhou Bin for his help by giving Wilson Engineering—a Hong Kong company with a long history of doing business with CNPC and Zhou Bin—the lucrative contract to construct the Pengzhou refinery (Moore, 2013a; Wen, 2014). Zhou Bin maintained a close relationship with the chairman of Wilson Engineering, Hua Bangsong⁴⁶, who secretly owned or held shares⁴⁷ in his company on Zhou Bin’s behalf (some reports even suggest that Zhou Bin actually served as the acting director of the company) (Yu, 2014; Wang, 2013; Wen, 2014; “Wilson Allegedly, 2013). All this evidence suggests that Zhou Bin—through these secret shares—amassed significant profits behind the Pengzhou refinery project (Wen, 2014).

⁴⁴ This evidence is substantiated by a local resident, who said that Li Chuncheng—whom Dai often represented—“colluded with state owned oil monopolies, and those then in power were bribed by ex-security tsar Zhou Yongkang, who is also in control of CNPC” (Gu, 2013).

⁴⁵ An inside source in the petrochemical industry said, “It was Zhou Bin who acted as the middleman and helped the local government to land the project.” The source also said that Zhou Bin is the ultimate target of the Pengzhou investigation (Moore, 2013a).

⁴⁶ The authorities detained Hua Bangsong, suggesting that he is linked to Zhou Bin, Dai Xiaoming, or other prominent Sichuan province officials. The week before Hua Banson’s detainment, authorities targeted four other prominent oil industry figures—all of whom maintained ties to Zhou Yongkang. Wilson Engineering released a statement that said Hua Banson is assisting authorities in an investigation (Gough, 2013; Areddy, 2014).

⁴⁷ Wilson Engineering, however, denies that this is true (G. Wen, 2014).

The Pengzhou project also implicated Jiang Jiemin⁴⁸—another Zhou Yongkang acolyte—who supervised the equipment acquisition process for the refinery in his role as chairman of the CNPC (Wen, 2014). All together, the evidence shows that Li Chuncheng—who sought further economic growth for Chengdu—colluded with Dai Xiaoming to illegally bring the Pengzhou project to Chengdu. CIIG and Dai Xiaoming are connected to several other Chengdu projects⁴⁹, in which he accepted or demanded bribes of over ¥12 million RMB, \$1.75 HKD, and \$160,000 (X. Li, 2014a).

Compared to Dai Xiaoming, the evidence of collusion between Ping Xing (see table three)—former chairman of the SOE Chengdu HT Development Corporation⁵⁰—and Li Chuncheng on land development projects is far more ambiguous and circumstantial (Rose et al., 2013). Chengdu HT exhibited inconsistent and unspectacular development until 2003, at which time the company tapped Ping Xing to serve as CEO and, later, chairman of the board. The company subsequently had a complete reversal of fortune (S. Yang, 2013). Under Ping Xing’s leadership, Chengdu HT accumulated significant profits by reselling land acquired from farmers and the local government, in which Li Chuncheng served as mayor and municipal committee secretary (S. Yang,

⁴⁸ Li Dongsheng—Jiang Jiemin’s “trusted” CNPC aide in Sichuan—came under investigation for an illegal business deal involving the procurement of equipment for the Pengzhou refinery. According to reports, three companies—two American and one Japanese—submitted bids to provide the equipment for the Pengzhou project. Sources claim the two American companies offered far superior equipment for the project than the Japanese company. Despite this, the Japanese company still won the bid. It later emerged that Li Dongsheng—while visiting Japan—received sexual services from a Japanese actress, which the Japanese company that won the bid apparently foot the bill for (Xiao & Zheng, 2014; G. Wen, 2014).

⁴⁹ For example, Chengdu HT Real Estate Company, which is a subsidiary of Dai Xiaoming’s CIGG, went into a joint venture with Cao Yongzheng’s Niandai Investment Corporation to develop the Tianfu Guoji District in Chengdu. This means Dai Xiaoming is connected to Zhou Yongkang through Cao Yongzheng, who had a very close relationship with Zhou Yongkang (Wen, 2014).

⁵⁰ Original name for the company is Chengdu Gaoxin District Investment Corporation (Yang, 2013).

2013). The government also infused Chengdu HT⁵¹ with massive amounts of capital, rising from an initial ¥50 million RMB to over ¥11 billion RMB; most of this capital went to developing a technological zone—the Gaoxin District⁵²—in Chengdu (S. Yang, 2013).

Reports claim—but fail to fully substantiate—that Ping Xing and Li Chuncheng are “linked in countless ways,” which may refer to the Gao Xin District project. That is, Li—through his urbanization campaign—shared an interest with Ping Xing in developing this area; such mutual interest may have spurred the former to give the latter preferential land deals (S. Yang, 2013). Without more definitive evidence, however, it is difficult to pinpoint the extent to which Li Chuncheng and Ping Xing colluded on the Gao Xin district or any other project (Jia, 2014; S. Yang, 2013).

Li Chuncheng colluded or engaged in illegal activity with several other officials associated with prominent SOEs, including (see table three) Zhang Jun and Huang Kengding (Chengdu Jianrong Group), Tan Jianming (Xingrong Investment Corporation), Wu Zhong (Chengdu Investment Holding Group), and Mao Zhigang (Bank of Chengdu) (He & Wang, 2013; He, 2013b; W. Li, 2014b; X. Li, 2014b). The details of these cases are similar in nature to those of Dai Xiaoming and Ping Xing above.

⁵¹ Chengdu HT’s assets exceed ¥33 billion RMB, including nine subsidiary corporations with stakes in countless ventures. Without more detailed information, it is difficult to unravel the connections Ping Xing maintains with these subsidiaries (Q. Yang, 2013).

⁵² Ping Xing, who also served as the chief of the Gaoxin District Planning Bureau, accepted a number of bribes from companies interested in gaining approval for projects in this Gaoxin District (Jia, 2014). Xu Liang, the Deputy CEO of Chengdu HT, is also under investigation for accepting bribes. For more information, see Jia, 2014.

Li Chuncheng: Wang Junlin and Deng Hong. Li Chuncheng also colluded on real estate projects with two prominent Sichuan tycoons under investigation—Deng Hong⁵³ and Wang Junlin. Wang Junlin (see table three), chairman of Sichuan Langjiu Group—a liquor company—came under investigation for unclear reasons, but later reports indicate that he and his brother, Wang Jungang, acquired land for a real estate development project—called the Lushan International Community—in the Shuangliu District of Chengdu (Wang, 2012). Chengdu Wanhua—a real estate company that Sichuan Langjiu partially controlled—developed the Lushan International Community, which offers high-end villas and apartments (Wang, 2012). Wang Junlin maintained a very close relationship⁵⁴ with Li Chuncheng, who most likely secured the land in Shuangliu for Wang Junlin and Chengdu Wanhua (Tu, 2014). According to reports, Chengdu Wanhua, in fact, obtained the development rights for thousands of mu of land in the Shuangliu District at an incredibly low price; this evidence suggests Wang Junlin and

⁵³ Deng Hong came under investigation in December 2013 for three crimes: land speculation, tax evasion, and loan fraud. Deng also held a number of hotel properties in the Maldives, Micronesia, Samoa, British Virgin Islands; all these properties came under increased scrutiny. In addition, Deng also built hotels in Lhasa (Tibet) and Jiuzhaigou (Sichuan) that generated significant controversy among local Tibetans and environmentalists (Wong, 2014b; G. Li, 2013). Although authorities did detain Deng, he appeared in public in late September of 2014. It is unclear why authorities released him from their custody; it may be that he is being temporarily released pending further investigations or the authorities withdrew their case against him (“Chengdu Hui Zhan,” 2014).

⁵⁴ According to reports, Li Chuncheng—seeking a promotion—visited Beijing in 2012. Wang Junlin—underscoring their close relationship—helped Li Chuncheng network during his time in Beijing. The promotion, in the end, never came, and Li subsequently came under investigation (Tu, 2014). Before coming to Sichuan, Li Chuncheng “offered tens of thousands of RMB in bribes to notoriously corrupt official Han Guizhi,” whom Li served with in Harbin (Heilongjiang) (Tam, 2012). It is believed that Li’s checkered past in Harbin hurt his chances of receiving a promotion from Beijing for a nation-wide position (Tam, 2012).

Li Chuncheng colluded on land development projects across Shuangliu District (Tu, 2014; Wang, 2012).

Deng Hong, who is the founder of Entertainment and Travel Group (ETG), also secured land in Chengdu at prices far below the market rate; in return, Deng gave Li Chuncheng⁵⁵—who facilitated the land deals—personal favors and kickbacks. The most egregious example of this is the New Century Global Center, which is considered to be the largest building⁵⁶ in Asia. The building, in southern Chengdu, occupies an expansive tract of land, which Deng Hong won through an auction in 2008. At this auction, Deng spent ¥480 million RMB, or the equivalent of ¥7.9 million RMB per hectare, to secure the 86.7 hectares of land (Tu, 2014; “Deng Hong,” 2014). Reports later revealed that the Chengdu government never actually publicized the auction, thereby excluding competing bidders and depressing the bidding price for EIG (“Deng Hong,” 2014). By comparison, land in an adjacent area sold for ¥29.9 million RMB per hectare, suggesting Deng Hong and Li Chuncheng did collude on the project (“Deng Hong,” 2014).

Deng also received preferential treatment from Li Chuncheng on other real estate projects, including a 2003 exhibition center that occupied 1500 mu of land in Chengdu (Moore, 2013b; Tu, 2014). Deng purchased this land for ¥28 RMB per mu, but sources later revealed this price to be significantly lower than the market price, which actually stood at around ¥70 RMB per mu (“Deng Hong,” 2014). These sources also revealed that

⁵⁵ Li Chuncheng regarded Deng Hong as one his favorite developers in Chengdu (Tu, 2014).

⁵⁶ The New Century Global Center became a source of embarrassment for the local government and Beijing authorities, as they bristled at the extravagance of the project (Moore, 2013b).

Li Chuncheng served on ETG’s board, which would be another explanation for why Deng received favorable treatment on these two and land deals and others (Moore, 2013b).⁵⁷

Deng Hong—in addition to giving kickbacks—introduced Li Chuncheng to Cao Yongzheng (non-Sichuan native; see table four below), an enigmatic soothsayer⁵⁸, spiritual advisor, and businessman who specialized in *qigong*—a Chinese martial art—and controlled a company called Niandai Energy⁵⁹ (Huang, 2014b; “Can the Xinjiang,” 2013). Deng Hong subsequently spent millions of RMB for Cao Yongzheng⁶⁰ to move Li Chuncheng’s ancestral tomb in accordance with feng shui and Taoist principles (Liu et al. 2014; X. Li, 2014a). Thereafter, Li Chuncheng and Cao Yongzheng forged a tight bond, with the latter apparently providing the spiritual inspiration⁶¹ for a few of Li’s

⁵⁷ Underscoring his relationship with the local government, a newspaper quoted Deng Hong as saying, “I really don’t have anything to do with my fellow businessmen. My business depends on the government” (Pomfret, 2012).

⁵⁸ Cao Yongzheng became famous in China in the 1990s for accurately predicting the outcome of future events, such as China’s bids for the 2000 and 2008 Olympic Games. He also claimed to possess “supernatural abilities” to heal the chronic illnesses of prominent individuals (“Fortune Telling,” 2014; Liu et al., 2014).

⁵⁹ Cao Yongzheng is linked to China’s second largest oil-field, where, according to reports, Niandai Energy—his company—received 88 percent of the oil sales generated from a block of wells. Niandai Energy, however, never invested in the wells, which suggests some kind of improper relationship—most likely with the Zhou Group—is facilitating the oil deal (Huang, 2014b).

⁶⁰ Cao Yongzheng—a Shandong native—maintained a very close relationship with the Zhou Group. He held, in particular, a close relationship with Zhou Yongkang, who, according to reports, introduced Cao Yongzheng by saying, “This is the person I trust the most” (K. Huang, 2014). Cao Yongzheng also maintained a close relationship with Guo Yongxiang, another Zhou acolyte in Sichuan province who served as Vice Governor of Sichuan (“Fortune Telling,” 2014).

⁶¹ Cao Yongzheng wrote a controversial book—called *Chengdu Way of Life (Chengdu Fangshi)*—that discussed plans and methods for developing the city and countryside. At the same time, in 2007, China’s State Council approved the establishment of districts to experiment with reforming the city and countryside in Chengdu and Chongqing municipality. Cao Yongzheng’s book consequently skyrocketed in popularity after the State Council’s decision. However, it is unclear the extent to which the book informed Li Chuncheng’s urbanization campaign in Chengdu (Liu et al., 2014; Huang, 2014).

urbanization projects (Huang, 2014). Li Chuncheng, for example, remodeled Tianfu Square—a prominent landmark in central Chengdu—infusing it with Taoist images and feng shui architecture. These decisions are why the authorities charged Li Chuncheng with engaging in “feudalistic and superstitious activities,” as well as accepting bribes (Huang, 2014).

Cao Yongzheng also helped launch the official career of He Huazhang (see table three), who worked closely with Li Chuncheng as chief of Chengdu’s Propaganda Department (Huang, 2014). As chief of Chengdu’s Propaganda Department, He Huazhang actively promoted and shielded from criticism Li Chuncheng’s controversial—and sometimes illegal—urbanization projects, which targeted farmlands on the outskirts of Chengdu. Because Li’s urbanization projects often required land requisitions, He Huazhang spent a significant amount of time censoring news reports⁶² about contentious—and occasionally violent—land protests and the crackdowns that inevitably followed. The most serious act of contention over a land requisition occurred in Chengdu’s Jin Niu District, where resident Tang Fuzhen ascended to the roof of her requisitioned home, doused herself with fuel, and set herself alight (Li, 2009; Johnson, 2013)⁶³.

Li Chuncheng apparently considered the Jin Niu District project—and others in the area—as extremely important to Chengdu’s development, which explains why He

⁶² He Huazhang controlled a newspaper called *Chengdu Economic Daily* (*Chengdu Shangbao*), which most likely gave him unfettered access to individuals in the media world (Z. Chen, 2014; J. Wen, 2014).

⁶³ Tang Fuzhen’s self-immolation—despite receiving nationwide attention—is far from uncommon in China. In fact, over the past five years, “at least 39 farmers have resorted to this drastic form of protest” (Johnson, 2013).

Huazhang went to great lengths to censor reports of Tang’s Fuzhen’s self-immolation and other acts of contention in Chengdu newspapers (Y. Huang, 2014). While Li Chuncheng later defended the legality of the land requisitions, villagers in the Jin Niu District claimed that Li Chuncheng’s (and He Huazhang’s) downfall is linked to “unease over the methods used to take the land,” which likely refers to the pervasive collusion between the land developers/SOEs and Li Chuncheng (Y. Huang, 2014; Johnson, 2013).

Li Chongxi and Guo Yongxiang. Compared to Li Chuncheng above, there is far less evidence describing the relationships Li Chongxi (see table three) and Guo Yongxiang—the two other Zhou Yongkang surrogates—maintained with select officials in table three. The two officials, however, still engaged in corrupt acts across the province. Li Chongxi, the former Deputy Party secretary of Sichuan⁶⁴, maintained a close business relationship with Liu Han (see section above), who engaged in lucrative mining ventures across Sichuan province; Li Chongxi helped to illegally facilitate many of these mining ventures for Liu Han (see footnote 42) (“Details Emerge,” 2014; Wan, 2013; Huang & Zhou, 2014). It is thought that the majority of the corruption charges against Li Chongxi⁶⁵ stem from his involvement in Sichuan’s natural resource sectors (Wan, 2013).

⁶⁴ Li Chongxi also served as chairman of the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. Li also served as a secretary to Zhou Yongkang during his time in Sichuan Province (“Details Emerge, 2014; Dong, 2014). For five years, Li Chongxi served as the Deputy Director of Sichuan’s Commission for Discipline Inspection, in which he—ironically—investigated corrupt officials himself (“Third Sichuan,” 2013).

⁶⁵ Li Chongxi is also linked to Zhang Jun, the aforementioned chairman of the Chengdu Jianrong Group. According to reports, Zhang Jun paid for the renovation of Li Chongxi’s lavish villa in Chengdu. The “favor” suggests Zhang Jun and Li Chongxi maintained some kind of reciprocal relationship, in which they exchanged favors (Wan, 2013). Zhang Jun is linked to Li Chuncheng.

Similar to Li Chongxi⁶⁶, there is limited public evidence substantiating the relationships Guo Yongxiang (see table four below)—a Shandong native—maintained with political players in Sichuan province. Guo Yongxiang first served with Zhou Yongkang in the Shengli oilfield⁶⁷ (Shandong province) before following him to Sichuan province, where he again worked with Zhou at the Ministry of Land and Resources and, later, as deputy secretary general of the provincial party committee (“Sichuan Official,” 2014). Guo Yongxiang—after Zhou’s departure from Sichuan—became a powerful surrogate in the province, serving as Vice-Governor of Sichuan and then president of Sichuan Federation of Literary and Arts Circle (Choi, 2013; “Sichuan Official,” 2014).

Guo Yongxiang—as Vice-Governor of Sichuan—supervised agricultural, forestry, and water projects, which required giving major contracts to SOEs (“Guo,” 2014). The National Development and Reform Commission, in 2006, approved the construction of a hydroelectric station in Longtoushi on the Dadu River, which is located near Ya’an, Sichuan. China Guodian—one of China’s five major state-owned power companies—won the bid for the project (Yu, Huang & Wang, 2014; Z. Yu, 2013; Yu & Hu, 2014b). Shortly thereafter, however, the Sichuan government reversed course and

⁶⁶ According to a Sichuan official, Li Chongxi maintained a very low profile in Sichuan Province, which may explain why there is so little public data on his political network. The Sichuan official said he is “very subtle and very cautious” (Yu & Hu, 2014b).

⁶⁷ Three of Zhou Yongkang’s closest allies—Jiang Jiemin, Li Hualin, and Guo Yongxiang—“rose through the ranks of the oil industry at Shengli [oil field] under” Zhou Yongkang (Ma, 2013). It is thought that “petroleum politicians with the closest ties are probably those from CNPC who worked at the Shengli oil field before it was transferred to Sinopec in 1998, especially in the years 1988-96, when Zhou Yongkang was party secretary and director general of the Shengli Petroleum Administration” (Downs, 2008: 134). To understand who is connected to Zhou Yongkang at CNPC, a good “rule of thumb” is that anyone above the director level at CNPC who worked at Shengli was promoted by Zhou, including Jiang Jiemin” (Downs, 2008: 134).

gave the project to Zhongxu Industry, one of several companies controlled by businessman Wu Bing⁶⁸.

Wu Bing (see table three and chart 2.1), a Chengdu native, founded Zhongxu Investment⁶⁹ in 2001 in Hong Kong before establishing Zhongxu Industry (Chengdu) in 2006 (Yu, Huang & Wang, 2014; Z. Yu et al., 2013; Yu & Hu, 2014b). Sichuan Tianfeng Hydropower Resources—a subsidiary of Zhongxu Industry—funded the station in partnership with Sichuan Fengtian Corporation and Sichuan Tianyun Industry Investment Corporation, which is primarily controlled by Zhan Minli. Zhan Minli (see footnote 44) is the mother-in-law of Zhou Bin, who—for a period of time—controlled Beijing Zhongxu Yangguang Energy Technology Holdings (see footnote 19 and 42) (Yu, Huang & Wang, 2014; Z. Yu et al., 2013; Yu & Hu, 2014b). It is suspected that Guo Yongxiang colluded with Wu Bing and Zhou Bin on this project, which would plausibly explain why China Guodian abruptly lost the bid (Yu, Huang & Wang, 2014; Z. Yu et al., 2013). Wu Bing pursued other projects in Sichuan, including another hydropower project and an expressway; the extent to which Guo Yongxiang⁷⁰ gave Wu Bing preferential treatment on these projects is unclear (Yu et al., 2013).

⁶⁸ Wu Bing used various names, including Li Ruochen and Wu Yongfu. He also had a lower public profile than other officials, which may explain why there seems to be so little detailed information on his relationship with Guo Yongxiang and other officials (Yu, He & Wang, 2013; Zhai and Chiu, 2013).

⁶⁹ Zhongxu Investments is a massive company, with holdings in hydropower, entertainment, real estate, and oil technologies. Zhongxu Investment and Zhou Bin's Zhongxu Yangguang Energy Technology Holdings cooperated on several business ventures (Yu, Huang & Wang, 2014; Z. Yu, 2013; Yu & Hu, 2014b).

⁷⁰ Authorities have also charged Guo Yongxiang with “mortal turpitude,” which most likely refers to him keeping at least three mistresses (Zheng, 2014).

Section Conclusion. The political network—spanning numerous officials and sectors—analyzed above constituted a formidable base of political power (i.e., an “independent kingdom”) in Sichuan province. This base of power included high-level government officials (e.g., Dai Xiaoming, Li Chongxi) and tycoons (e.g., Liu Han). These officials dominated the internal politics of the province, filling key governmental positions with cronies, bribing officials, committing lurid acts of violence across the province, and colluding on development projects. The majority of these officials maintained some kind of connection to Zhou Yongkang or his surrogates, which gave Zhou a formidable base of political power. All this evidence indicates that Sichuan province most likely posed a serious threat to Xi Jinping’s ruling authority; this explains why Xi would directly target—under the guise of anti-corruption—the competing factions in the province. This finding, therefore, confirms⁷¹ the hypothesis. In the final section, I analyze the two remaining provinces—Shandong and Shanxi.

Hypothesis One: Shandong and Shanxi Provinces

Table four below displays the factional affiliations and work histories of officials who are born in Shandong and Shanxi provinces and who are under investigation. The findings suggest that it is highly unlikely that Xi Jinping is directly targeting—under the guise of anti-corruption—competing factions in Shandong province; this disconfirms

⁷¹ Reports indicate that Xi Jinping continues—even after CDIC officially charged Zhou Yongkang—to target Zhou’s network of officials in the province, which further confirms the hypothesis (“Sichuan Officialdom,” 2014; Page et al., 2014).

the hypothesis. The evidence on Shanxi province, by contrast, is far more ambiguous. I, as a result, can neither confirm nor deny the hypothesis for Shanxi province.

First, the number of officials clearly associated at some level with the Zhou Group in Sichuan province (see table three above) far exceeds the combined number of Shandong and Shanxi officials associated with the Zhou Group (see table four below). Second, the majority of officials under investigation in Shandong province have a work history outside the province, which obviates the need for a detailed analysis of the province. Furthermore, compared to Sichuan province, the Shandong officials listed in the table obviously have little influence over the internal politics in the province, with few positions in the province filled by Zhou acolytes or the members of any other known faction.

Shanxi Province, by contrast, has pockets of serious corruption—primarily tied to the coal industry—that have come under investigation during Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign. The public evidence shows that the officials associated with these pockets of corruption maintained marginal links to known factions in China and hardly represented a formidable base of power a la Sichuan province. Without any clear links to significant factions, it is difficult to confirm the hypothesis that Xi Jinping is directly targeting—under the guise of corruption—officials in the province. That is, there is little indication in the evidence that the officials in Shanxi province—in contrast to Sichuan province above—pose a serious threat to Xi’s governing authority. It is evident, however, that officials connected to the coal industry constitute an organized group, which clearly

wield a descent amount of power in the province. I, therefore, conclude that while it is possible Xi Jinping is directly targeting Shanxi province for reasons (i.e., disrupting factions) unrelated to anti-corruption, I can neither fully confirm nor disconfirm the hypothesis. Shandong province completely disconfirms the hypothesis. In the following sub-sections, I briefly analyze the officials in Shanxi province (I omit the analysis of Shandong province; see the figure in the supplemental section for more information).

Shanxi Province. In contrast to Shandong province, the majority of officials under investigation from Shanxi Province have a work history in the province. Authorities have targeted specific pockets of corruption in Shanxi, with a particular focus on corruption in coal mine acquisitions. Authorities have, in particular, focused on the city of Lüliang, where a national consolidation program prompted a number of lucrative coal acquisitions (Stanway, 2014). The Shanxi government—backed by the National Energy Administration—launched the program in 2009 to restructure and consolidate the Shanxi coal mining industry. This program aimed “to shut small private mines”—dominated by coal-bosses—“and to form a handful of state-owned giants,” which would be markedly safer than the accident-prone old mines (Hook, 2011; Stanway, 2014).

The government tasked Zhang Zhongsheng—then Deputy Mayor of Lüliang—with consolidating the mines in and around Lüliang. To do this, Zhang Zhongsheng (see table four) forged relationships with a number of large SOEs, including China

Name	Birth Province	Work History	Factional Affiliation	Last Job Held
SHANDONG PROVINCE				
Cao Yongzheng	Shandong	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Led Niandai Energy Corp.
Tao Yuchun	Shandong	Guangdong	Zhou Group (?)	Kunlun Energy Manager
Li Dongsheng	Shandong	Beijing	Zhou Group	Public Security Vice Minister
Yan Cunzhang	Shandong	Beijing	Unclear	Manager at CNPC
Bo Qiliang	Shandong	Beijing	Unclear	Led PetroChina overseas operation
Guo Yongxiang	Shandong	Sichuan	Zhou Group	Deputy Sichuan Governor
Huang Sheng	Shandong	Shandong	Unclear	Shandong Deputy Governor
Zhu Changlin	Shandong	Sichuan/Henan	Zhou Group (?)	State Grid Corporation Head
Xu Yongsheng	Shandong	Beijing	Unclear	Deputy Director National Energy Administration
Song Lin	Shandong	Hong Kong	Unclear	Led China Resource Holding
Wang Xiaolin	Shandong	Shandong	Unclear	Led Shanxi Transport Dept.
SHANXI PROVINCE				
Shen Weichen	Shanxi	Shanxi/Beijing	Unclear	Party Secretary Chinese Association for Science and Technology
Wu Ding	Shanxi	Hong Kong	Unclear	CEO China Resources Holding
Ding Xuefeng	Shanxi	Shanxi	Zhou Group (?)	Mayor of Lüliang (Shanxi)
Yang Xiaobo	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	Mayor of Gaoping (Shanxi)
Jin Ruilin	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	Deputy Mayor of Datong (Shanxi)
Zhang Zhongsheng	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	Deputy Mayor of Lüliang (Shanxi)
Ling Zhengce	Shanxi	Shanxi	Shanxi Gang (?)	Vice Chair Shanxi's People's Political Consultative Conference
Du Shanxue	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	Shanxi Vice Governor
Nie Chunyu	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	CPC Shanxi Standing Committee Secretary General
Chen Chuanping	Shanxi	Shanxi	Unclear	Taiyuan (Shanxi) Party Secretary

Table Four: Factional Affiliation and Work History of Officials Born in Shandong and Shanxi⁷²

⁷² Sources for the data include C. Li, 2014, biographical searches on Communist Party of China Official Website (<http://cpc.people.com.cn/>), the CDIC's website (<http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/>),

Resources⁷³. China Resources—controlled by Song Lin⁷⁴—ultimately purchased coal mines in a number of cities, including Lüliang, Taiyuan (Shanxi provincial capital), and Jincheng (city in Eastern Shanxi) (Yanqin, 2014). Reports later revealed that Zhang Zhongsheng maintained a very close relationship with Song Lin (see table four), who is suspected of inflating the value of the mining assets purchased by China Resources (Levin and Hunter, 2014). Zhang Zhongsheng and Song Lin subsequently came under investigation⁷⁵ for unspecified discipline violations, which most likely refers to their apparent manipulation of the mining market (Levin and Hunter, 2014). Wu Ding, chief executive of China Resources Capital Holdings, also came under investigation following Song Lin’s case (Woodhouse & Kwok, 2014).

A number of officials associated with Lüliang have also come under investigation, including Ding Xuefeng (Mayor of Lüliang), Du Shanxue (Lüliang Party Chief), and Nie Chunyu (Lüliang Deputy Party Chief) (Guo & Yanqin, 2014; Ng, 2014b). Ding Xuefeng is connected to Zhou Yongkang through Li Dongsheng (Vice-Minister of China Ministry of Public Security) (see table four), who advanced Ding’s career in Shanxi; the subsequent investigation of Li Dongsheng—who is a close ally of Zhou Yongkang—apparently implicated Ding Xuefeng (Ng, 2014b). Ding Xuefeng is also linked to Zhou

Chinavivae.com, *Baidu.com*, and multiple newspaper articles. For more information, see the in-text citations below the table.

⁷³ China Resources—a state-owned conglomerate that predates the founding of the People’s Republic of China—has “420,000 employees and holding in everything from property, power, retail, pharmaceuticals and beer” (Burkitt & Areddy, 2014).

⁷⁴ Song Lin also kept a mistress, whom Song used as “as a ‘channel’ to receive huge bribes and launder money” (Anderlini, 2014).

⁷⁵ The investigation into Song Lin expanded to include He Jintao, the son of He Guoqiang, who is a former member of the Supreme Politburo Standing Committee. He Jintao had some unspecified role in the China Resources corruption case. The fate of He Jintao is unclear (“Corruption Probe,” 2014).

Yongkang through his second wife Jia Xiaoye⁷⁶, who, according to reports, “contributed to a fund to help Ding run for” the Lüliang mayorship (Ng, 2014c; “Focus of,” 2014). The greater significance of the relationship between Ding Xuefeng and Zhou Yongkang is unclear, but it does establish that the Zhou Group had some level of influence in the Province.

Section Conclusion. There are two general findings from the above analysis of Shandong and Sichuan Provinces. The analysis of Shandong province shows that that the majority of officials from Shandong have a work history outside the province, which means that it is highly unlikely Xi—under the guise of anti-corruption—is targeting officials in the province. That is, without a clear dominant faction in the province, there is no indication that Shandong province poses a significant threat to the governing authority of Xi Jinping. This finding, therefore, disconfirms the hypothesis.

The Shanxi findings are far more ambiguous than those of Shandong. Most Shanxi officials in table four have marginal—if any—links to known factions and hardly represent a serious base of power. Without significant links to factions, it is difficult to confirm the hypothesis that Xi—under the guise of anti-corruption—is targeting competing factions in the province. It is evident, however, that officials connected to the coal industry constitute an organized group, which clearly wield a descent amount of power in the province. While this group may have some level of influence in the province, there is no indication in the evidence that these officials—in contrast to

⁷⁶ Jia Xiaoye—who married Zhou Yongkang in about 2000—is a Shanxi native (“Focus of,” 2014).

officials in Sichuan Province—pose a serious threat to Xi’s governing authority. I can, therefore, neither confirm nor reject the hypothesis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I tested the hypothesis that: Xi Jinping—under the guise of anti-corruption—is directly targeting competing factions in specific geographical regions. In other words, Xi is targeting corrupt officials from specific geographical regions for reasons (i.e., disrupting factions) unrelated to combating pervasive corruption, indicating factional politics are driving at least part of the campaign.

The analysis of Sichuan province completely confirmed the hypothesis. Sichuan’s political network—spanning numerous officials and sectors—constituted a formidable base of political power (i.e., an “independent kingdom”) in Sichuan province. The evidence shows that this base of power—generally composed of Zhou Yongkang surrogates or officials linked to the Zhou Group—existed far outside the control of the national government, thereby threatening the governing authority of Xi Jinping.

The analysis of Jiangsu and Shandong provinces, by contrast, completely disconfirms the hypothesis. The political networks in these provinces hardly constituted a formidable base of power, with the majority of the officials under investigation in the two provinces operating outside the province or belonging to disparate factions—if any at all. This evidence, thus, explains why Xi is not directly targeting factions in the province under the guise of anti-corruption. There must be another explanation—or just sheer

coincidence—for why officials from Jiangsu and Shandong are being disproportionately targeted.

Finally, the analysis of Shanxi province neither confirms nor disconfirms the hypothesis. Rather, the results are ambiguous, indicating that there are possibly grounds for Xi Jinping to directly target the province, but no evidence in the data to suggest that he is doing so right now. I, therefore, can neither confirm nor reject the hypothesis.

In the next chapter, I put these findings in comparative perspective.

Chapter Three: Comparative Analysis

In the previous chapter, I find that Xi—under the guise of anti-corruption—is disproportionately targeting for investigation officials from Sichuan province, indicating factional politics may be driving at least a part of the current anti-corruption campaign. The purpose of this chapter is to put these findings in comparative perspective and draw larger conclusions about the findings in the previous chapter. I seek to answer three questions: 1) are the characteristics of the current campaign (examined in chapter two) different than previous campaigns 2) if they are different, how so and 3) do these differences—or the lack thereof—help explain why Xi launched the current anti-corruption campaign and further confirm the hypothesis?

To answer these questions, I compare and contrast the current campaign with two previous anti-corruption campaigns in China. The two campaigns I analyze are Deng Xiaoping/Jiang Zemin's 1989 anti-corruption campaign and Jiang Zemin's 1995 anti-corruption campaign. I find that Jiang Zemin's 1995 campaign is very similar to the current campaign. The comparative analysis also shows that the current campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China's historical factional politics. This finding further supports the hypothesis that factional fighting is driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign. I first compare and contrast the 1989 campaign with the current campaign before turning to the 1995 campaign.

	1989 Campaign	1995 Campaign	Current Campaign ⁷⁷
Leader	Deng Xiaoping/Jiang Zemin ⁷⁸	Jiang Zemin	Xi Jinping
Clemency Period	Yes	No	No
Sanctioned Citizen Involvement	Yes	No	No
Highest Ranking Corrupt Official	Deputy Minister of Rail Transportation Luo Yunguang	Mayor of Beijing Chen Xitong	Politburo Standing Committee Member Zhou Yongkang
All Cases	60,494	51,089	37,551 (?)
Cases Involving Large Sums ⁷⁹	13,057	29,420	? ⁸⁰
Cases Involving Senior Officials ⁸¹	875	2,193	2,871 (?)

Table Five: China's Anti-Corruption Campaigns in Comparison⁸²

⁷⁷ The current campaign, which started around late November 2012, is ongoing. See Xi Jinping's speeches for more information (Wong, 2012; "Xi Jinping," 2013; Xi, 2012).

⁷⁸ Although Jiang Zemin replaced Deng Xiaoping as party secretary general in late June 1989, the latter still wielded a significant amount of power in Beijing during this period (Gilley, 1998: 148).

⁷⁹ "Big sums" are defined until 1998, as money and assets valued at ¥10,000 RMB or more for bribery and embezzlement of public assets, ¥50,000 RMB or more for misuse of funds; beginning in 1998, values are ¥50,000 RMB and ¥100,000 RMB, respectively" (Manion, 2004: 171). This is the same approach Manion (2004) takes in her analysis.

⁸⁰ There is no information in China's 2013 Statistical Yearbook for this category.

⁸¹ "Senior officials" are those at the county or division level and higher. This is the same approach Manion (2004) takes in her analysis.

⁸² Sources for this table include Manion, 2004: 171; Yan, 2004: 49-50; and Wedeman, 2014. Data also comes from China's Statistical Yearbook (*Zhongguo Tongji Nianjian*).

The 1989 Anti-Corruption Campaign

Jiang Zemin launched the 1989 anti-corruption campaign a mere three weeks after the June 4th massacre of protesters in Tiananmen Square (Manion, 2004). The official explanation for the start of 1989 anti-corruption campaign mirrors the explanation given for the current campaign. In July 1989, Jiang Zemin wrote in an article in the journal *Party Building (Dang jian)* that:

There is indeed the danger of corruption...if we permit negative phenomena like corruption to go on for a long time, they certainly will prevent our party from displaying its fighting power. Our party and state might even perish...If all our party and government organs use their power to seek material benefits...wouldn't it be strange if our county did not collapse (as cited in Gilley, 1998: 157).

Xi—in launching the current anti-corruption campaign—similarly framed China's corruption problem in existential terms:

In recent years, the long pent-up problems in some countries have led to the venting of public outrage, to social turmoil and to the fall of governments, and corruption and graft have been an important reason...A mass of facts tells us that if corruption becomes increasingly serious, it will inevitably doom the party and the state (Wong, 2012).

Table five above shows that Jiang and Xi—despite giving similar justifications—discharged their respective campaigns in considerably different ways. One key difference is the presence of a clemency period.

Shortly after launching the anti-corruption campaign, Jiang on August 15th, 1989 issued a directive announcing a highly publicized clemency period, during which corrupt cadres (i.e., those under investigation for bribery, embezzlement of public assets, or profiteering) could surrender themselves and confess to their crimes in return for the

possibility of clemency (Manion, 2004). The directive, which followed existing Chinese laws, dictated that the clemency period last for over two and half months, through October 31st, 1989 (Manion, 2004). In the beginning, authorities had discretion to decide the terms of any clemency deal offered to a cadre under investigation. Later, the authorities issued a second directive, which “clarified the implications of clemency for particular crimes and circumstances” (Manion, 2004: 182). The second directive gave corrupt cadres under investigation for serious crimes (i.e., embezzling large sums of money) an even stronger “incentive to combine confessions of their own crimes with ‘meritorious acts,’ such as informing the authorities about crimes committed by others” (Manion, 2004: 182).

The clemency period dovetailed with another directive, which exhorted Chinese citizens to actively report cases of corruption to the authorities in return for monetary rewards (Manion, 2004: 184). The Tiananmen Square Incident, which brought the “party closer to overthrow than at any time since 1949,” partly prompted the authorities to engage the public in the campaign (Gilley, 1998: 159). Rather than risking another explosion of uncontrolled public anger over rampant corruption, authorities proactively encouraged “ordinary citizens to make their contributions to clean government singly, through official channels, by providing” information to authorities on corrupt cadres (Manion, 2004: 185). This decision also signifies the seriousness with which Jiang Zemin viewed the issue of corruption in 1989. That is, without active public involvement in the

anti-corruption campaign, the probability of detecting corruption at every level—rather than merely at the highest level—drastically decreased.

Contrasting The 1989 Campaign With The Current Campaign. The results of the campaign—displayed in table five—show the direct effect of these two directives. The 1989 campaign yielded more overall cases of corruption than the two other campaigns⁸³, which may be attributable to the clemency directive and surge of Chinese citizens reporting corruption (Manion, 2004). However, the number of corruption cases involving senior officials in Jiang’s 1989 campaign is far lower than the number in Xi’s campaign (Wedeman, 2014; Manion, 2004). One possible explanation for this discrepancy—aside from the bottom-up nature of Jiang’s campaign—is the apparent absence of factional conflict during the 1989 campaign. Although Jiang targeted high level officials such as the Vice Governor of Hainan (Liang Xiang), the Deputy Minister of Rail (Luo Yunguang), and even the son of a former Chinese leader (Deng Pufang, the crippled son of Deng Xiaoping), there is little evidence to suggest that factional politics played a role in these investigations or generally drove the campaign (Gilley, 1998). That is, unlike Xi’s campaign and even Jiang’s 1995 campaign, the 1989 campaign never intensely investigated the network of a prominent senior official. More than anything, as Gilley (1998) notes, Jiang’s anger and concern over the excesses (e.g., tax avoidance, bribe-taking, smuggling, profiteering, etc.) of China’s experiment with market reforms drove the anti-corruption campaign (159).

⁸³ The current corruption campaign is ongoing, which means that the 1989 statistic could still be broken in the future.

There is no such clemency period or high-level of citizen involvement in Xi's campaign. Although officials under investigation may secretly be receiving clemency deals, Xi has hitherto avoided mobilizing—as Jiang did in 1989—the public around a clemency period. To be sure, Xi has launched a website⁸⁴ where citizens can report cases of corruption and sanctioned a limited level of citizen involvement⁸⁵ in the anti-corruption campaign (“Wang You,” 2014; “China’s craze,” 2012). The public, however, still faces severe legal consequences for stepping too far into the anti-corruption campaign. Xi Jinping, for example, has cracked down on anti-corruption activists who have called for Chinese officials to “publicly disclose their wealth” (Jacobs, 2013).

In sum, unlike Jiang, whose 1989 campaign effectively harnessed public anger over corruption for a more comprehensive, bottom-up campaign, Xi has thus far limited public involvement in his campaign. This has produced a more controlled, top-down campaign, in which Xi has targeted more senior officials (see table five), but investigated fewer overall cases of corruption. Although Xi and Jiang similarly considered corruption to be an existential threat, the former has embraced a different and less comprehensive anti-corruption strategy than the latter. In the next section, I compare the current campaign with Jiang's 1995 campaign.

⁸⁴ For more information, see (<http://www.12380.gov.cn>).

⁸⁵ Most of this “citizen involvement” comes in the form of Internet users exposing the extravagant lifestyles of cadres (“China’s Craze,” 2012).

The 1995 Anti-Corruption Campaign

The roots of Jiang Zemin's 1995 anti-corruption campaign actually stretch all the way back to 1991, when investigators attempted to “look into then personal affairs of Zhou Beifang, the head of the Hong Kong operations of Beijing-based Capital Iron and Steel” (Gilley, 1998: 242; Miller, 2012). Zhou Guanwu—Zhou Beifeng's father—and his friend, Chen Xitong, successfully blocked the investigation. Chen Xitong—in his positions as Mayor of Beijing and Beijing party chief—dominated politics in the capital city, which explains why he managed to stop this investigation and others. In fact, Chen Xitong “ruled the city with such utter control that people would call it the ‘Chen System,’ a play on his given name, *Xitong*, a homonym of the Chinese word for system” (Gilley, 1998: 241; Manion, 2004: 193).

The authorities finally gathered enough evidence to prosecute a corruption case against Chen, who became the biggest target in Jiang's 1995 anti-corruption campaign. Authorities had for several years been investigating a company called Wuxi Xinning, which ran at the time an illegal fund-raising scheme; the State Security Bureau in Beijing owned Wuxi Xinning (Manion, 2004). During their investigation, authorities found a “trail of bribery and embezzlement that went right to the highest levels of Beijing” (Gilley, 1998: 243). Rather than directly targeting Chen, however, authorities pursued a strategy of “encirclement,” whereby associates who worked with or under Chen came under investigation first; after gathering enough evidence, authorities would then target Chen for investigation.

The most prominent Chen associates included Li Min and Wang Baosen. Li Min, the Deputy Chief of Beijing State Security Bureau, directed the fund-raising scheme in Beijing, bribing senior officials to participate in the scheme. After being detained, Li “spilled the beans” on other officials involved in the scheme, including Wang Baosen (Gilley, 1998: 244). Wang, the vice-mayor of Beijing, “diverted \$3.7 million in city money into the Wuxi fund-raising scheme” and—in coordination with Chen—accepted bribes to clear the way for controversial Beijing construction projects (Gilley, 1998: 244; Miller, 2012). Facing imminent prosecution for “economic crimes,” Wang drove his car to the outskirts of Beijing, ascended a remote hillside, and shot himself in the head (Miller, 2012: 3). Shortly thereafter, authorities investigated aforementioned Zhou Guanwu and Zhou Beifang.

With Wang gone and other key Chen associates under investigation, the authorities finally had Chen fully encircled. In September of 1995, authorities dismissed Chen from the Politburo and Central Committee. Nearly two year later, in August of 1997, the CDIC “expelled Chen Xitong from the CCP” and arrested him for a “corrupt and decadent life” (Miller, 2012: 4).

Comparing The 1995 Campaign With The Current Campaign. The characteristics of Jiang’s 1995 campaign—in contrast to his 1989 campaign—are similar in many respects to Xi’s current campaign. Like Jiang’s 1995 campaign analyzed above, Xi’s campaign has disproportionately targeted the network of one official—Zhou Yongkang. In pursuing Zhou and other high-level officials, Xi—following Jiang’s

strategy—has encircled them by first investigating their associates and allies (see chapter three). This is most likely why the two campaigns share a high number of cases involving senior officials (see table five). The high number of cases involving senior officials in the two campaigns is also indicative of a top-down, highly controlled campaign with a muted emphasis on public participation. In addition, the campaign never offered a public clemency period. The two campaigns are similar in all these respects.

Given the above similarities, I surmise that Jiang’s campaign may provide clues to why Xi launched the current campaign. Before Chen and the 1995 campaign, Jiang regarded anti-corruption as one of his “trademark issues” (Gilley, 1998: 242). However, this commitment to anti-corruption looked considerably less genuine when juxtaposed against the rampant corruption occurring in Beijing under the “Chen System.” Jiang realized he could never launch a nationwide anti-corruption campaign—at least a credible one in the eyes of the public—without tackling the blatant corruption right in his own backyard (Gilley, 1998).

Chen also posed a serious political challenge to Jiang and his ability to effectively govern. Chen and his friends’ “kind of local protectionism” and “cockiness” represented “perhaps the greatest challenge to Jiang’s hold on power and to the emergence of a strong central state...” (Gilley, 1998: 243). They closely associated with former leader Deng Xiaoping, who gave them a false sense of political security. Jiang shattered this sense of security after gaining the approval of the leadership—but not the approval of party elders like Deng Xiaoping—to crack down on Chen and his allies. In sum, Jiang launched his

1995 campaign with a genuine desire to clean up government. But, for the campaign to be credible, he needed to clean up his own backyard, in which Chen and his allies found refuge. Jiang also considered Chen to be a political threat.

Based on the above similarities, I surmise a combination of factional conflict (i.e., destroying “independent kingdoms”) and commitment to anti-corruption may also explain Xi’s campaign. Xi ascended to the presidency in the wake of the Bo Xilai affair, which exposed to the public widespread corruption and factional infighting at the highest level (Miller, 2012). Xi also came to office promising to fight corruption at every level (Wong, 2012). Similar to Jiang above, Xi may have realized that he could never fulfill his commitment to fighting corruption in the eyes of the public without completely dealing with the fallout from the Bo Xilai affair.

This fallout included Zhou Yongkang, who, according to reports, backed Bo Xilai and his “strike the black” campaign in Chongqing municipality (Miller, 2012; Shi et al., 2014). In fact, Zhou Yongkang—at the behest of Bo—apparently arranged for the phones of Xi Jinping and other Politburo members to be tapped (Shi et al., 2014). Although determining true factional affiliation is difficult (see chapter one), it appears most of the leadership (which is led by a member of the princeling faction) considered Bo Xilai (also a princeling) as a “political irritant” and an obstacle to a smooth political succession (Miller, 2012: 6). And, because Zhou is linked to Bo, the top leadership—in order to maintain a modicum of credibility on the anti-corruption issue—most likely had no

choice but to prosecute a corruption case against Zhou as well. In many ways, this mirrors how Jiang's 1995 campaign unfolded.

It thus appears that Xi targeted Zhou not so much for his corrupt actions, but rather for his prominent ties to Bo Xilai, whose actions and prominent allies—if gone unpunished—would diminish the credibility of any subsequent anti-corruption campaign and, more generally, the legitimacy of the CCP. After all, other prominent Chinese leaders—most notably the former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao—have amassed an immense level of wealth behind a web of business ventures and other illegal dealings; these ventures are hardly different than what Zhou and his family controlled in Sichuan and Jiangsu provinces (Barboza, 2012). These leaders, however, have thus far escaped punishment, which means that they have avoided the misfortune of being publicly associated with Bo Xilai, or other disgraced political figures.

Like Jiang above, Xi—based on his speeches—most likely came to power with a genuine desire to clean up corruption in the government (Wong, 2012). But, Xi may have realized that he could never fulfill his commitment to fighting corruption in the eyes of the public without completely dealing with the fallout from the Bo Xilai affair, which included Zhou Yongkang. All together, using Jiang's 1995 campaigns as a guide, it appears a combination of factional conflict (i.e., destroying “independent kingdoms”) and commitment to anti-corruption is driving Xi's campaign. The comparative analysis also shows that the current campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China's historical factional politics. This finding further confirms the

hypothesis that factional fighting is driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

A lingering question about the current campaign is why there is such a high level of variation in the number of senior officials targeted in each province. One possible explanation for this variation is that sub-provincial governments are competing to discover cases of corruption in an attempt to show loyalty to Xi (Boehler, 2014). This can account for why some provinces—such as Shanxi—are showing a high number of officials who have little discernable ties to Zhou's faction coming under investigation. This variation is an important topic that needs to be investigated in future studies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to put the findings in chapter two in comparative perspective. I sought to answer three questions: 1) are the characteristics of the current campaign (examined in chapter two) different than previous campaigns 2) if they are different, how so and 3) do these differences—or the lack thereof—help explain why Xi launched the current anti-corruption campaign and further confirm the hypothesis?

I find that current campaign is significantly different from Jiang's 1989 campaign. These differences—displayed in table five—show that the 1989 campaign emphasized public participation and offered officials under investigation clemency. The statistics of the campaign are also different, with the current campaign netting far more senior officials. All of this evidence shows that Xi's campaign is a top-down, highly controlled campaign with a muted emphasis on public participation.

Jiang's 1995 campaign, by contrast, is very similar to the current campaign. Like Jiang's campaign, the current campaign has pursued a high number of senior officials, with a muted emphasis on public participation and no (public) clemency period. Given these similarities, I surmise that Jiang's campaign provides clues to why Xi launched the current campaign. I, using Jiang's 1995 campaign as a guide, find that a combination of factional conflict (i.e., destroying "independent kingdoms") and commitment to anti-corruption is likely driving Xi's anti-corruption campaign. This comparative analysis also shows that the current campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China's historical factional politics. This finding further supports the hypothesis that factional fighting is driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

In the final chapter, I discuss the broader implications of the study.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

In this report, I find that Xi Jinping appears to be targeting officials in Sichuan province under the guise of anti-corruption. I put this finding in comparative perspective, comparing the current campaign with two previous anti-corruption campaigns. I establish that the characteristics of the current campaign are strikingly similar to Jiang's 1995 anti-corruption campaign. This finding further supports the hypothesis that factional fighting may be driving at least a part of Xi's anti-corruption campaign. In the end, I show that the current campaign—though exceptional in its intensity—is hardly a departure from China's historical factional politics.

In this final chapter, I reflect on the findings and discuss some of the broader implications of the report.

Discussion

The current anti-corruption campaign has effectively consolidated Xi's power during a period of upheaval in Chinese politics. After the Bo Xilai scandal, wild rumors of a government coup, and an avalanche of embarrassing reports of official corruption, Xi needed to send a strong message to low and high-level cadres alike that he is firmly in control of the party (Miller, 2012; Coonan, 2012; Barboza, 2012). The current campaign—by most measures—has been an effective vehicle to deliver this message. Xi is now experiencing unprecedented levels of public popularity, which is tied to his decision to launch the anti-corruption campaign (Tatlow, 2014).

While Chinese citizens love the campaign, high-level officials in Xi's leadership structure may be far less pleased with the campaign. In fact, there have been unverified reports that there are deep fissures within Xi's leadership structure over the direction and intensity of the campaign (Keck, 2014). This report's findings—that part of campaign may be driven by factional politics—would seem to support these views. Although these views may be correct—it is impossible to know for sure—it is more likely that the leadership is in agreement on the general merits of the anti-corruption campaign and the targeting of specific officials (such as Zhou Yongkang) and factions. There are two reasons why this may be the case. First, it would be difficult for Xi to embark on such an aggressive campaign without the full support—or at least the acquiescence—of party leaders. Without their consent, the campaign would be far too divisive, and undermine the same party that Xi is trying to strengthen by tackling corruption. And, second, top leaders—like Wen Jiabao—want to voice strong support for the campaign lest they find themselves coming under investigation. There is, therefore, very little incentive for high-level leaders to challenge Xi's authority to execute the anti-corruption campaign.

The sheer intensity of the campaign—driven by the aforementioned support Xi is receiving—would suggest that Xi is bent on more than just power consolidation. The reality, however, is that Xi is seriously constrained in how far he can advance the campaign. Although Xi probably maintains a genuine desire to curb China's rampant corruption, he surely realizes that corruption is the “proverbial grease that oils the vast Chinese bureaucracy” (Pei, 2014b). Indeed, like most politicians who came up during the

1990s, Xi likely benefitted from the “bargain” the party struck with elites in post-Tiananmen China (Pei, 2014b). Devoid of any ideological appeal, the party showered elites with lucrative positions and material rewards in exchange for their loyalty to the regime. This form of corruption eventually pervaded Chinese society, with elites “at all levels trading favors to resolve their differences over personnel matters or the distribution of economic spoils” (Pei, 2014b). The campaign—if its intensity is increased—runs the risk of alienating these elites who now constitute the most powerful political force in the country. All the evidence suggests that Xi—at least for right now—is loath to undertake such a serious challenge to China’s stability.

Xi is even reluctant to make small reforms. He has thus far avoided implementing an independent and transparent body to fight corruption; instead, the CDIC uses a secretive, extralegal process called *shuaunggui* to investigate corrupt cadres. In addition, China’s judiciary is highly politicized, which makes guilty verdicts in corruption cases an almost foregone conclusion. Without a more transparent legal system, Chinese and foreign observers will continue to question “whether those targeted by party investigators are the most corrupt, or just the ones unlucky enough to have chosen the wrong side in an unseen factional battle” (Jacobs & Buckley, 2014).

In the end, the prospect of sweeping institutional reforms to China’s anti-corruption system appears to be dim. The greatest prospect of change in the short-term may come from Chinese citizens themselves. While Xi has consistently stymied anti-corruption activists, regular Chinese citizens—through social media—are exposing

corrupt cadres and bringing attention to China's rampant corruption. In the absence of a transparent anti-corruption enforcement system, Chinese citizens will—as has often been the case in China's history—continue to find ways to make their voices heard.

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