HUNTING THE CORRUPT “TIGERS” AND “FLIES” IN CHINA:
AN EVALUATION OF XI JINPING’S ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN
(NOVEMBER 2012 TO MARCH 2015)

Jon S.T. Quah*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION ...................................................................... 3

II. ANALYZING CHINA’S SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION PROBLEM .................................................................................. 6
   A. Corruption and the Dynastic Cycle........................................ 6
   B. Corruption and Low Salaries of Officials in Imperial China................................................................. 7
   C. Corruption during the Republican Period (1912-1949)...... 9
   D. Corruption in China after 1949............................................ 11

III. XI JINPING’S CAREER AND RISE TO POLITICAL POWER....................................................................................... 12
   A. Family Background and Education...................................... 12
   B. Administrative and Political Experience ............................. 16
   C. Explaining Xi’s Meteoric Rise to Power ............................. 19

IV. CHINA’S RELIANCE ON MULTIPLE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCIES ..................................................... 23
   A. Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI)..... 24
   B. Supreme People’s Procuratorate (SPP)............................... 26
   C. Ministry of Supervision (MOS).......................................... 27
   D. National Corruption Prevention Bureau (NCPB) ............... 28

* Jon S.T. Quah, Ph.D., is a retired Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore and an anti-corruption consultant based in Singapore. He has published extensively on anti-corruption strategies and civil service reforms in Asian countries. His recent books include Minimizing Corruption in China: Is this an Impossible Dream? (Baltimore, MD: Carey School of Law, University of Maryland, 2013); Curbing Corruption in Asian Countries: An Impossible Dream? Reprint Edition (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013); and Editor of The Role of the Public Bureaucracy in Policy Implementation in Five ASEAN Countries (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming in 2015) and Different Paths to Curbing Corruption: Lessons from Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Singapore (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2013); E-mail: jonstquah@gmail.com and website: http://www.jonstquah.com.
E. Weaknesses of China’s ACAs ............................................... 29

V. XI JINPING’S ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN ............. 33
A. Mass Campaigns in China ............................................... 33
B. The Three Anti and Five Anti Campaigns (1951-1952) .... 35
C. Major Features of Xi’s Anti-Corruption Campaign .......... 40

VI. EVALUATION OF XI JINPING’S ANTI-CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN ......................................................... 55
A. Utility of Mass Campaigns in China .................................. 55
B. Impact of Xi Jinping’s Anti-Corruption Campaign ............ 57
C. Treating Symptoms but not Causes of Corruption .......... 64
   1. Low salaries ............................................................... 65
   2. Red tape ................................................................... 66
   3. Low probability of detection and punishment ............ 68
   4. Decentralization ....................................................... 69
   5. Guanxi and gift-giving ............................................... 72
D. Corruption as a Weapon against Political Opponents ...... 74
   1. CHEN Xitong ............................................................ 75
   2. CHEN Liangyu ........................................................... 77
   3. BO Xilai ................................................................... 78
   4. ZHOU Yongkang ....................................................... 79

VII. CONCLUSION: BUSINESS AS USUAL WHEN THE CAMPAIGN ENDS ............................................. 81
A. No-Win Situation for the CCP ......................................... 81
B. Addressing the Causes of Corruption ............................... 84

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .................................................... 97
GLOSSARY OF SELECTED CHINESE NAMES ...................... 97
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................... 98

“Facts prove that if corruption is allowed to spread, it will eventually lead to the destruction of a party and the fall of a government. . . . Serious violations of Party discipline and state laws that have occurred inside our Party during the past few years are of a vile nature and have produced shockingly harmful political consequences. . . . All violations of Party discipline and state laws must be punished without exception, and we shall not be soft in dealing with them.”

XI Jinping, November 2012