Building a Supervision Science:
Bureaucratic Control in China from Mao to Xi

By

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DEDICATION

To my parents, who showed me the path,

and to David, who walked it with me.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how Chinese governments have attempted to build institutions to monitor and control the bureaucracy. While the institutions that are thought to reward Chinese bureaucrats for political performance and the successes of Chinese decentralization have been studied extensively, comparatively little is known about the history and politics of the institutions which punish malfeasance and enforce central dominance of localities. Building on extensive new data about the history and performance of these institutions, this dissertation shows how the repertoire of bureaucratic control was established in the People's Republic of China. The dissertation presents a simple theory of bureaucratic control based on trade-offs between the availability of information and the authority to discipline official deviance. It then uses two case studies to show how these trade-offs have influenced the efficacy of two bureaucratic control strategies: petitioning in the 1980s and central inspection teams in the 2010s. By doing so, the dissertation makes contributions to our understandings of bureaucratic politics, institutions under authoritarian regimes, and the politics of China.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1950, General Zhu De (朱德), then also head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Commission for Discipline and Inspection (CCDI), laid out the tasks for all cadres in the central inspection apparatus: first, gradually and regularly inspect and develop party democracy, using the union of criticism and self-criticism; second, use the union of education and discipline within the party to improve the political and ideological levels of all cadres, including those inside the discipline system; and third, to educate the people and the party by resolving issues in a timely manner and then publishing about them the in party press and regular newspapers (朱 1955).

Zhu De's report otherwise focused on the drastic increases in malfeasance and political dissolution since the establishment of the People's Republic– including more than 8000 cases that the center had handled itself– as well as the shortages in staff and the challenges of conducting discipline work in these conditions. "Make time to publish" must have then seemed like an odd priority. Nonetheless, Zhu De exhorts them to summarize their experiences in writing, exchange that writing, and to study as they work.

Little could he have known, 72 years later China's most recent anti-corruption campaign would enter its 9th year; the first majors in "Discipline Inspection and Supervision" would begin enrolling in Chinese universities (Li 2022), and educational materials would refer to "the science of discipline and supervision work" (姚 2006). Xi Jinping would speak about "putting power in a cage" in some of his first remarks as General Secretary, and as his anti-corruption campaign expanded, theoreticians would elaborate on the "scientific" methods of "checking and supervising power" (制约监督权力) (Xi 2013; 吴, 郭, and 郭 2017).

Across these seventy years, what have Chinese party and state cadres learned about the 'science of supervision'? How have they institutionalized this knowledge, and how has it been reflected in practice?

The answers to these questions are important: until recently, most of the literature on autocracies held that even the most pernicious forms of bureaucratic malfeasance, like corruption, could not be effectively fought without 'nominally-democratic institutions' like legislatures or opposition parties (Yadav and Mukherjee 2016). And corruption is hardly the only thing autocratic leaders care to curb, when policy implementation, adequately calibrated repression, and public goods provision are all necessary to maintain political stability in different circumstances (Hassan 2020). But some autocracies do mange to do these things, including fighting corruption, successfully (Carothers 2022a). How do they do so?

This dissertation explores how autocrats *build institutions* to control their bureaucrats, and how they work. I further ask: what can the successes and failures of bureaucratic control in China teach us about authoritarian regimes?

As was clear to Zhu De already in 1950, the management of even a disciplined corps of revolutionaries is difficult. This was a concern long before the CCP's victory in the Chinese Civil war, as the management of bureaucracy was a core concern for CCP theory and practice since its inception (Ding and Thompson-Brusstar 2021). Social scientists studying China's politics credit doing bureaucratic control right with underpinning everything from tolerating the stress of decentralization (Landry 2008) to China's economic success in the post-Mao period (Ang 2016). Furthermore, finding the correct bureaucrat to match for an assignment (Hassan 2017), balancing loyalty and competence (Egorov and Sonin 2011), and other modes of addressing agency loss during delegation (Bendor and Meirowitz 2004; Gailmard and Patty 2012) are crucial to all states.

Conventional wisdom holds that autocrats, who are concerned both about elite challenges, external threats, and overthrow from below, can use and design institutions to address these problems. Elites can be incorporated into cabinets (Meng 2020), legislatures and regime parties (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007); security apparatuses can be fragmented or

consolidated as responses to elite threats (Greitens 2016); and succession crises can be managed with sufficiently strong norms (Manion 1993; Svolik 2012). Studies of bureaucratic management have focused on the ways that loyalty can be ensured when it is costly, either by shuffling (Hassan 2020), using state positions as rewards for political support (Grindle 2012), or providing bureaucrats with economic incentives to perform (or by tolerating corruption) (Ang 2020).

However, dictators also build institutions *specifically* to monitor and control their bureaucracies. Outside of the study of security apparatuses (Greitens 2016), which monitored bureaucrats as much as they monitored society, studies of these institutions have mostly escaped attention in the new literature on authoritarian institutions. This is an important gap, because these institutions are *common:* across 21 authoritarian regimes studied by the NGO Global Integrity, *all* had a national audit office and a national anti-corruption organ, a national audit office and a national ombudsman, or (most commonly) *all three*.[1] This does not even include state organizations like civil service commissions or public management and budget offices, which also serve bureaucratic monitoring and controlling functions, or powerful non-state and party organs like the CCP Organization Department and Discipline Inspection Commission.

Even when monitoring institutions have received considerable scholarly attention, largely for their role in anti-corruption (Quah 2003), they have largely been treated *separately* from the literature on bureaucratic management, which instead focuses on promotion, shuffling, and the role of personal connections, or factions (Hassan 2017; Jiang 2018; Shih, Adolph, and Liu 2012).

For scholars of Chinese politics, the recent anti-corruption campaign under Xi Jinping has demonstrated the important connection between bureaucratic management and the institutions of bureaucratic control. Recent examples include studies of how decreased expectations of corrupt benefits may affect civil service enrollment (Jiang, Shao, and Zhang 2020) and how local governments may manage bureaucrats differently when filling holes

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[1] Data from the Global Integrity Reports for Algeria, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Russia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Yemen, Zimbabwe for 2006-2012.

left by corruption investigations (Li and Manion 2022; Qian and Tang 2023).

In the larger literature on bureaucratic management, however, much causal power has been attributed to patterns of incentive compatible management and 'meta-institutions' of flexibility in Chinese bureaucratic management as an explanation for regime stability during dramatic social and economic change (Ang 2016; Heilmann and Perry 2011b; Landry, Lü, and Duan 2018). But neither promoting economic high performers nor delegating to them significant authority guards against several other important threats to dictators, including the formation of local opposition groups, erosion of public goods provision, or other forms of agency loss. These require not only monitoring the performance of the state and economy, but also more difficult assessments of adherence to legal or administrative practices important to leadership. The huge literature in Chinese politics on the connection between personal connections, performance, and promotion of local officials also overwhelmingly focuses on the higher levels of the bureaucratic pyramid – local executives – leaving explanations for the performance of regular bureaucrats understudied (Wang 2021).[2] In fact, bureaucratic oversight is important for actors from the 'street level' to the national government, and is not conducted by one institution but as a part of "complex networks of accountability" throughout state and society, including under authoritarianism (Brierley et al. 2023).

In this dissertation, I propose that the development of Chinese state and party supervision can teach us several important things about authoritarian institutions, the management of bureaucrats, and Chinese politics. In particular, the Chinese Communist Party can help us understand how the availability of *information*, the allocation of *authority*, and the institutionalization of *embeddedness* can affect the effectiveness and the political viability of bureaucratic control. Below, I outline how these factors interact, and how they contribute to our understandings of state-building, state capacity, and authoritarianism.

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[2]See e.g. Edin (2003), and Chapter 4 of Ang (2020) for exceptions.

Building Bureaucratic Control

James Madison famously observed that one of the greatest challenges in designing government is that state-builders "must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself" (Madison 2008). This challenge can manifest itself not only (as Madison described) the dominance of one branch over another, but also as the loss of a government's control over its own agents. A central government's ability to implement its decisions depends in large part on the chain of responsibility among state agents. This makes the ability to control agents a crucial component of what social scientists have called "infrastructural power": "the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm" (Mann 1984, 189).

Before Zhu De's tenure and after, Chinese leaders have set out to rein-in the excesses of the state and party by building multiple bureaucracies to monitor and discipline Chinese political actors. This desire to check the performance of bureaucrats is at least as old as modern state-building, and arguably as old as delegated authority.[3] Under autocracy, the problem of bureaucratic control and of creating infrastructural power is profoundly difficult, especially when autocrats limit elections, the freedom of the press, the independence of courts, and other feedback from society more commonly used in hybrid regimes or democracies to adjust policy (Gandhi 2008).

In an autocrat's ideal universe, they would have complete and up-to-date information about the performance and loyalty of all their agents, and would be able to promote, punish, reward or remove them with complete autonomy. Luckily, we do not live in such a universe, and autocrats must compromise, while striving to maintain the maximum "power to decide" (Mann 1984), and the most available information (without which the power to decide would be worth considerably less (Doyon and Keller 2020)). They do this with a wide variety of formal and informal tools: screening and selective recruitment; training and

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[3] Perhaps the most famous Chinese historical example is the long tradition of monitoring and censure of officials by censors (御史) and the institution of the censorate (督察院) under the Ming and Qing dynasties. On the way these institutions worked in the Ming in the light of contemporary political institutions, see Will (2012).

ideological indoctrination; monitoring individual conduct and the outcome of policies; spot-checking with inspections, and so on.

Each of these strategies confronts one of two main problems. First, an *information* problem confronts autocrats and their allies: high quality information about policy problems or the loyalty and competence of government officials is difficult to obtain because of the incentives to distort it– either due to fear and preference falsification (Jiang and Yang 2016) or due to the incentive to ingratiate oneself to leadership and cover up mistakes (Shih 2008; Yang, Xu, and Tao 2014). Second, autocrats confront an *authority* problem in institutional design: creating institutions to evaluate and monitor bureaucrats may only create more bureaucrats to monitor – watchmen who require watching.[4] Furthermore, some authority allocations create an *embeddedness* problem: when supervision itself must be delegated due to capacity, geography, or other constraining factors, supervisors can become close with their communities or the very officials they may be intended to monitor, creating the same potential favoritism as 'embedded' local bureaucrats (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017).

How do authoritarian regimes, which by construction do not have competitive elections and may restrict other ways of gathering information about government performance, address these problems, and ensure that local governments and bureaucrats follow central directives?

I am far from the first to ask this question: similar dilemmas are found across regime type as well as in a variety of organizations, and are the subject of a rich literature in political economy, bureaucratic politics, and organizational studies, which outlines how supervision is complicated when supervisors themselves are corruptible. Tirole (1986) studies the authority problem and the information problem together as 'collusion,' where parties are able to control the flow of information available to other parties by colluding with one another. Much of the tension in the study of political accountability in general is to get supervision in a 'Goldilocks' spot between too much, which can reduce the use of local information to improve policy (as in Gersen and Stephenson (2014) or Patty and Turner

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[4]The analogous literature in "counterbalancing" against coups is extensive: see De Bruin (2020) for a recent book-length treatment.

(2021)) and too little, which might fail to ensure faithful implementation of policy or prevent malfeasance (Strausz 1997).

Creating robust responses to the authority problem is complex, even in electoral regimes with multiple systems of checks and balances on agent behavior, including *between* agents in a system. Bednar (2008) shows that federal delegation relationships are managed most effectively when these checks are mutually reinforcing and diverse, meaning they are unlikely to jointly fail. While autocrats may be willing to use institutions to credibly commit in some circumstances (Wang 2015), they may ultimately prefer less robust safeguards, trusting to non-institutional sources of authority when they encounter opposition from within the state.

Despite the large literature on managed delegation, our understanding of how the authority and information problems, and of embeddedness when they interact, is still developing. Increasing monitoring capacity and independent authority to sanction bureaucrats is not always "better." Brierley (2020) shows empirically that increased oversight of the bureaucracies by elected politicians may induce *more,* rather than *less,* malfeasance as politicians require bureaucrats help finance their reelection campaigns– oversight itself being a potential source of abuse. Raffler (2022), on the other hand, shows that decreasing the cost of monitoring *can* improve the provision of public goods, but only where the dominant authoritarian party is not in power, because politicians fear repercussions if they investigate dominant party politicians. Because of the dynamics between those who monitor, those who punish, and the monitored, government actors may not respond predictably.

Nor are the effects of information well understood, since more information is not always "better," either. Some recent literature has focused on the 'informational' turn of autocrats, including the ways the internet and high-technology monitoring have changed the way governance takes place in the countries they govern (Beraja et al. 2021; Guriev and Treisman 2019). Sharing an emphasis on the internet and technology, Gueorguiev (2021) argues that some regimes, especially China, have developed a form of "controlled inclusion" that mobilizes societal and other forms of 'bottom-up' feedback complimented by strong

repressive capacity; the ability of the state to include citizens, and provide them information, relies on both responsiveness (to make contribution worthwhile) and the repressive power of the state, to keep demands from cascading. Because he is concerned about a wide variety of political outcomes including the match between popular preferences and policy-making, he focuses exclusively on one source of information (popular feedback), and shows that this feedback did indeed affect the outcomes he studies. However, some results show that this 'controlled inclusion' may have been scaled-back after 2012, as new leadership with less tolerance for even 'controlled' disruption took office (Gallagher 2023).

That leadership may have been right to be skeptical; the tools made available to improve monitoring and feedback via the internet are also available to government actors, and these tools are used to manipulate impressions of their performance to their superiors (Pan and Chen 2018) in addition to the more traditional misreporting and gaming of metrics (Wallace 2023). These underscore the necessary *human* element to gather, process, analyze, and act upon quality information about political performance of bureaucrats.

As Olken and Pande (2012) observes, the provision of *information* to principals does not always translate into accountability. Providing information about the extent of mayoral fiscal malfeasance to voters did not result in electoral sanction in a field experimental setting, despite survey-experimental evidence that voters cared a great deal about corruption (Boas, Hidalgo, and Melo 2019). Furthermore, especially in cases where supervision comes from *within* governments, as in Raffler (2022) (and also the Brazilian auditing agencies studied by Hidalgo, Canello, and Lima-de-Oliveira (2016)), the structure of the organizations and the internal politics of the institutions matters. Perceptions also matter: Martin and Raffler (2021) show that politicians are seen as more responsible for the conduct of bureaucrats when they are *perceived* to be able to control the bureaucracy, even if it is not true.

Finally, when bureaucratic control and information collection are delegated, embeddedness can complicate both.[5] Reforms aimed at improving accountability through increasing

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[5]Kaufman (1986) famously gives the example of the ways different organizational positions shaped the Forest Service and the Park Service in the United States into very different organizations.

monitoring naturally target collusion with particular policy instruments, often by attempting to insulate them from the targets of supervision. This is the case in China, where inspectors are selected from a pool of retired officials who have few or no ties to the local governments they inspect (Yeo 2016). However, removing supervisors from an 'embedded' horizontal position with those they supervise may decrease the amount and quality of the *information* available to supervisors; that is, there may be a trade-off between autonomy (the ability to launch an investigation and issue a sanction) and information (about the presence or extent of malfeasance).

Bureaucratic embeddedness is normally discussed as a feature of bureaucratic actors in the societies they serve, in particular of street-level bureaucrats, and define embeddedness as "the social relationships that influence civil servants' actions," building on Granovetter (1985; Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017). However, from a 'rational-legal' perspective, social and organizational embeddedness is often considered a liability; the more embedded government actors are in their localities, the more vulnerable they are to the very local ties that generate their informational advantage.

Governments may be able, however, to take advantage of the benefits provided by embedded bureaucrats while minimizing the costs it creates, making it an important potential source of effectiveness (Ang 2017; see also the discussion in Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017). Ang (2017) notes the general importance of relationships in the administration of developing countries. Further research especially on the role of connections on improving economic performance (Jiang 2018), managing the 'match' between bureaucrats and communities to improve compliance (Hassan 2017), and on 'pockets of effectiveness' in the bureaucracy (McDonnell 2017) all further underscore the importance of non-Weberian factors like embeddedness in producing bureaucratic effectiveness.

And although authoritarian governance may depend to some extent on the unequal or unfair distribution of government services and resources, this does not inherently mean that autocrats do not monitor or punish subordinates for malfeasance. On the contrary, not only have authoritarian regimes sometimes successfully addressed (for example)

corruption, there is good reason to believe that it is often in their interests to do so (Carothers 2022b; Quah 2003).

In this dissertation, I first show how the "repertoire" of bureaucratic control was developed and institutionalized in China. I document considerable variation in the ways that these different institutions balanced collecting information and allocating authority. Equally important, I show that institutions changed their priorities and approaches dynamically over time as the political environment changes. I then show that despite 70 years of developing a 'supervision science,' CCP leadership in the 1980s and 2010s still encountered significant difficulties overcoming the information and authority problems in bureaucratic control.

Implications of Argument

These findings make contributions along two lines: first to the literature on authoritarian regimes, and second to the study of Chinese politics.

For the study of authoritarian regimes, I aim to bring the understudied institutions of bureaucratic control into the limelight. Although internal security agencies and coup-proofing have seen growing attention in international relations (De Bruin 2020; Greitens 2016), the study of controlling *bureaucrats* has largely been dwarfed by the study of controlling *society*.[6] This may simply reflect the lingering influence of the 'totalitarian model' of dictatorship many have aimed to dispel (Shue 1990), assuming that bureaucrats are held in thrall of autocrats by terror. It may also reflect the more common story by which material rewards allocated via cooptation purchase the loyalty of elites who might otherwise oppose an autocrat (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), assuming that authoritarian bureaucrats benefit from this strategy, and therefore remain largely quiescent.

While both of these mechanisms likely play some role in bureaucratic control under autocracy, they neither exhaust the "universe" of bureaucratic control nor cover the entire bureaucracy; many bureaucrats are *not* rewarded for performance or permitted prebendal

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[6]This latter is closer to what Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent (2022) refer to as 'political control.'

extraction, and most authoritarians eschew permanent political terror due to its social and political costs.[7] Instead, many autocrats develop, staff, and use institutions to monitor, discipline, evaluate, and audit bureaucratic performance specifically. The way bureaucrats are managed therefore cries out for more careful study – and has accordingly grown, with studies across regime type in Kenya, Brazil, Uganda, India, Ghana, and elsewhere (Cardoso et al. 2023; Hassan 2020; Mangla 2022; Raffler 2022; Rasul, Rogger, and Williams 2021), informed by methods from ethnography to network analysis, and with data from contemporary administrative rolls to colonial archives. This dissertation aims to contribute to this literature by expanding our attention to the diverse institutions involved in the management of public officials, especially after the 'behavioral' turn (Bertelli et al. 2022).

In the context of China, I aim to bring the institutions of bureaucratic control out of a narrow focus on anti-corruption and place them in a larger theoretical context: as part of a set of institutions and strategies that are used to manage delegated political decisions and outcomes. As outlined above, the study of placement and promotion of authoritarian political elites has been a close focus of the literature on China for two decades. However, until recently, the role that the monitoring and *removal* of cadres played in this picture had faded into the background except among those studying the political economy of corruption.

In contrast, I make the claim that these institutions have their own politics (internal and external) and deserve our attention as parts of the regime's repertoire of bureaucratic control. Although a truly *complete* picture of all these aspects of bureaucratic control is beyond the reach of this dissertation, placing my results in dialogue with the existing literature on cadre evaluation and promotion is the only way to understand how the CCP has used the bureaucracy to underpin its stability and maintain its rule.

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[7]Although see Strauss (2020) on the importance of terror for consolidating both bureaucratic control and political control in China and Taiwan's early 1950s.

Dissertation Outline

In the next chapter, I briefly outline the history of Chinese bureaucratic control institutions from the founding of the People's Republic to the Xi era. Based on both primary and secondary sources, I showcase the different strategies that the party and state developed to control the bureaucracy, and how its comparative emphases have changed over time. By presenting the history of multiple agencies of bureaucratic control together, I reveal the common threads in how Chinese leaders have tried to balance the theoretical trade-offs outlined above, both between institutions and within them.

In Chapter 3, I turn to the 1950s as a uniquely important period for understanding bureaucratic control in China. I focus on examining how ideas about how state agents should be managed and evaluated changed during the first decade of the People's Republic (1949-1959). Using a rich corpus of internal Chinese government documents, I show how the early state built many supervision models, and how they were adapted as the political environment changed. I find that in addition to developing separate 'models' of bureaucratic control, these models borrowed from one-another over time to adapt to changing political requirements. These findings help us recover the full spectrum of tools, arguments, and institutions developed by the PRC's first generation of 'supervision scientists.'

Chapter 4 and 5 present case studies on the roles of information and authority on the efficacy of bureaucratic control. Chapter 4 examines one method of bureaucratic control expanded by the party-state after the end of the Cultural Revolution – the petition and visits system. This system of bottom-up complaints by regular people helped the regime during a period when the loyalty of many cadres was under question and the economy increasingly difficult to manage. Both Chinese supervisors of that day and contemporary principal-agent theory emphasize the crucial nature of information in managing delegation, but in this chapter I show that information alone is not enough to improve bureaucratic control. Using historical enforcement data from China's late 1980s and the staggered roll-out of reporting centers in prefectural Bureaus of Supervision, I estimate the impact of increased bottom-up information on the enforcement of laws against corruption and

malfeasance. I find that opening a reporting office does not cause more cases to be opened investigating any of the kinds of malfeasance and corruption I examine, casting doubt on the idea that information was a binding constraint on bureaucratic control in this period.

In Chapter 5, I further focus on the interplay between information and authority with a case study of Xi Jinping's first momentous change to the bureaucratic control landscape: the use of central inspection teams to supervise 'leading' cadres. These teams, who are sent to supervise centrally-managed cadres in provincial governments, bring information about official conduct directly to those able to act on it (unlike the petition system examined in Chapter 4). However, they only have a few weeks to conduct these investigations, in contrast to the 'embedded' discipline inspectors who serve at the pleasure of those same provincial governments, but who may have insider information collected over the long term. I find that visits from inspection teams do increase the number of leading cadres investigated, but that this effect is concentrated in the first round of inspections, implying that inspection teams may have a mechanical, as well as informational, disadvantage: the ability to anticipate future inspections means that, at least in the early years of the anti-corruption campaign, provincial leaders were able to conceal evidence of corruption with sufficient warning.

In the conclusion, I bring the findings of the three empirical chapters together and lay out the implications for future work. I describe the cycles of bureaucratic control after the founding of the PRC, reflect further on the implications of my findings, and outline future directions for this work.

Chapter 2: An Abbreviated History of Bureaucratic Control in China

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an abbreviated history of the origins and development of bureaucratic control institutions in the People's Republic of China (PRC).[8] Beyond setting the stage for the chapters that follow, I hope that this abbreviated history is able to underscore that these institutions demonstrate variation across functional areas and across time, and the ways that this variation shows different responses to the information and authority problems of bureaucratic control.[9]

The characters in this story are a mix of institutional and individual actors. Often, I will focus on the challenges faced by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a whole consolidated its rule in what is now the territorial borders of the PRC after 1949. I will also focus on the *ways* the CCP leadership did this. Throughout the dissertation, I refer to these as the "repertoire" of bureaucratic control, following social movement scholars who refer to 'repertoires of contention' (Porta 2022; Tilly 1983).

Because of the ways this repertoire was institutionalized, the history and dissertation focus on a few state and party institutions. These were the newly formed People's Procuratorate (or procuracy), a public prosecutor with several additional supervisory powers; the CCP supervision and discipline apparatus, variously Discipline Inspection Commissions (DICs)

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[8]Parts of this chapter draw significantly from my previous work in Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar (2021) and Thompson-Brusstar (2022).

[9]For the Mao period, I include some (non-exhaustive) timelines at the end of the chapter to aid the reader.

or Supervision Commissions (SC); and the state supervision system, under the Ministry of Supervision (MOS) or its predecessor the People's Supervision Commission.[10]

Confronting Challenges

In the chaotic wake of colonization, revolution, and civil war, imposing central control over the rapidly expanding machinery of the state posed a pressing concern to the Communist Party leadership in the early years of the People's Republic.

Even in October of 1949, when Mao famously declared the people of China had 'stood up' to found the PRC, economic collapse threatened any future for China, not to mention a socialist one. Despite the fact that the CCP had won the civil war, the conquest of new territory like Tibet and the extension of state power deeper than any previous regime meant meeting real resistance – including local rebellions in the periphery (Walder 2015, 50–53), compounded by KMT saboteurs, CIA incursions, the war in Korea, and –as a result– massive de-facto discretion for local cadres, which was often abused (Delury 2022). Resistance to central directives and to CCP rule in general persisted unevenly throughout the Maoist period, from resistance to land reform, resistance to collectivization of agriculture, and to a variety of official abuses in the form of corruption, malfeasance, and policy deviance.

One step on the path to addressing these governance problems was to address problems within the state and party (rather than between the state and society); early PRC leadership in the localities, and even in cities like Shanghai, were often demobilized PLA cadres or other reliable political operatives with sterling political credentials, but whose administrative skills left something to be desired. They often struggled with or were unable to read, were looking for plum posts to relax after achieving victory, and relied on commands rather than on party-prescribed democratic methods to get things done (Strauss 2020). This not only made relationships between leadership and technical staff tense, but it also degraded the quality of governance, created problems with achieving central goals, and

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[10]While the Party Organization Department is also undoubtedly important, its secrecy makes incorporating its study even more difficult than the preceding institutions.

alienated local populations.

Central states' ability to ensure that policies are implemented down to the ground and penetrate society is referred to as infrastructural power (Mann 1984, 2008); in this dissertation, I refer to the ability of states to combat agency loss in delegated or hierarchical relationships as *bureaucratic control*. In a slightly different framework, this can be thought of as the ability to monitor and enforce political decisions in a delegated policy arenas– the subject of an enormous literature in political economy (Gailmard 2014) as discussed in Chapter 1.

Although this dissertation largely approaches the problems of central leaders through the lenses of agency, delegation, and monitoring, these were not necessarily the frames used to understand or approach the issue of bureaucratic control by historical Chinese state-builders. Practically, in the 1950s, identifying problems with the structure of the state as such would have been unacceptable indictments of socialist governance; the unacceptability of crossing this line was never more clear than during the retaliation for just those types of criticisms in the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1956-1957, which followed a brief period of both 'loyal opposition' criticism to improve CCP rule as well calls as for its end (the 'Hundred Flowers Movement'). This doesn't mean, however, that there weren't internal debates about policy – just that they were conducted with reference to the latest red-lines, often set and changed by Mao's latest priorities.[11]

Further, conflicts within the state were sometimes considered reflections of class conflict, so both the *diagnostic* and *corrective* methods to address problems with the execution of policy were correspondingly different. As such, problems were referred to by their particular manifestations ('commandism', 'distancing oneself from the people,' 'formalism') or by generalized euphemisms ('bureacuratism,' 'incorrect work style', 'ideological degeneration,' and so on). This meant that significant conflict took place within the state and party about institutional designs that reflected different priorities, but that they were not elevated to discussions of the correctness of socialism.[12] Doctrinally, corrective

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[11] For an example of how Mao set the terms of conflict between other government stakeholders, even when he was not actively participating in the debate, see Teiwes and Sun (1997).

[12] See, e.g. the highly political debate about scientific management under socialism studied by Beissinger

measures under Chinese socialist doctrine also varied by the nature of the 'contradiction' that produced the issue – contradictions 'among the people' were to be addressed by education, criticism and self-criticism; those 'between the people and enemies' were to be resolved with 'dictatorship.' The way the two kinds of contradiction were defined would prove an important tool for calibrating state behavior over time.

The new Chinese state set out to manage intergovernmental conflict and delegation along several avenues. First and most important was *party hierarchy*: party cadres were responsible above all to their superiors and the party center. This included setting local priorities in alignment with the latest central directions (大方针), as well as conforming to procedural guidance on how to accomplish those tasks, although the latter has historically been more general and more subject to modification to local conditions. The central party maintained this channel of political accountability in three ways: through the institution of the Party Organization Department, which handled the promotion and evaluation of cadres; through the CCP's Central Supervision Commission (中央监察委员会) or the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (中央纪律检查委员会), which handled the punishment of deviant cadres; and through the tactic of mass-mobilization campaigns for policy compliance, which bypassed the machinery of the state and middle ranks of the party entirely– 'using the bottom to squeeze the middle.'[13]

The second avenue of bureaucratic control was *law*. As much due to institutional isomorphism as to intentional design, an important way law operated to enforce central directives and discipline individual functionaries was through the introduction of a public prosecutor (the procuracy or procuratorate [检察院]) that was supposed to supervise some aspects of both policing and the judiciary as well as to exercise *general supervision* (一般监督), monitoring local state officials and policies for malfeasance, corruption, and compliance with central laws, regulations, and directives.[14] The procuracy was also

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(1988).

[13]I am borrowing this concise and evocative expression directly from Mary Gallagher.

[14]Some procuracy-like organs, which evolved in different base areas in different ways, had this power before 1949, especially in the areas closest to the Soviet Union. Its eventual form as enshrined in the temporary regulations of 1952 and eventually the 1954 Organic Law of the People's Procuracy differed significantly from these 'proto-procuracies.'

formally granted the power to initiate and investigate its own cases (in contrast to police-initiated cases) for malfeasance or other crimes committed by those who held public office, and to review various procedural requirements for investigation and arrests by the police and for trials by the People's Courts.

The third avenue for managing the growing cadre of state and party actors was the state supervision system, which brought further Soviet-inflected scientific management and administrative discipline to state organizations and cadres. First set up as the People's Supervision Commission (人民监察委员会), state supervision was expanded considerably with the establishment of the Ministry of Supervision under the State Council in 1954. The Ministry and its extensive system of offices stationed throughout the state bureaucracy briefly supervised the use financial and economic resources and meted out the *administrative* punishments to state officials until its abolition in 1959.

Despite real successes of these avenues during the Mao period, as well as serious commitments of manpower and institutional capital, none of these organizations survived the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in their original forms, and some did not last even that long. The procuracy had its supervision powers gutted after the institution's leadership was targeted during the Anti-Rightist campaign (1956-1957) and was eliminated entirely from 1975 to 1978. The party Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and the party Central Organization Department were both displaced and their leaders purged during the Cultural Revolution; the CCDI was abolished in 1969 but re-founded in 1978, while the central organization department was replaced by a different working group but never formally abolished (Schoenhals 1996). The Ministry of Supervision lasted only until 1959, but was eventually restored after 1986.

In the sections that follow, I briefly outline the histories of three modes of bureaucratic control in context. By doing so, I aim to establish three stylized facts upon which subsequent chapters will build. First, the Chinese party-state, despite considerable challenges both self-inflicted and otherwise, managed to construct an effective administrative apparatus partially with the aid of multiple, overlapping strategies of bureaucratic control. Professionalized bureaucratic control was important even in the

mobilizational period of the Mao era, and drew considerable support from central leadership as well as costly investments in training, staffing, and provisioning during periods of tight state resources.

Second, there exists a fundamental continuity in these approaches before and after the Cultural Revolution. The strategies of governance developed in 1950s (and earlier) serve as the core of the bureaucratic control repertoire in China to this day; even innovations like the Cadre Evaluation System (CES, [干部考核制度,]) were largely described in terms set already by predecessor institutions, and built on previous repertoires of bureaucratic control. Third, the repertoire of bureaucratic control strategies included several distinct archetypes, with varying origins and associated with different institutional responses to the authority, information, and embeddedness problems. Although the archetypes did vary, their use responded to changing political conditions (especially in the Mao period but also during Reform) and bureaucratic supervisors borrowed from other archetypes to try to fit these conditions.

Multiple Models of Supervision

Bureaucratic Control from 1949 - 1954

The legacies and uneven state-building efforts of the Republican government under Chiang Kai-shek, Japanese proxy-rule in the Northeast of China (1932-1935), institutional variation in CCP liberated areas, and Soviet advice provided a diverse set of institutional models and legacies for PRC state-building in the wake of revolution and civil war. This diversity created tremendous variation in the institutional shape and extent of state power in 1949, even across the Communist base areas (Chen 1986; Mattingly 2017). A host of institutional models for ensuring cadre compliance were available and indeed in use across the territory that would become the People's Republic in 1949.

Although there was substantial variety in institutional arrangements on the ground, early PRC policymakers in the Central government had settled on the Soviet-inspired procuratorate as the home of legal supervision by 1949; party discipline systems had been in place since 1923, and the state supervision system was similarly adapted from pre-PRC

institutions, especially those in the Huabei base area (林 and 张 1988).

The design of the procuracy was based on the Soviet experience, in contrast to the design of the courts and public security bureau where the institutional legacy of the Chinese Republican government was more influential (Tiffert 2013). However, unlike in the USSR, the procuracy never became a powerful weapon for controlling local compliance with national law or policies.

The use of procuracy-like institutions for supervision of government organs began with experiments in its use in the Communist base areas during both the civil war against the Nationalists and the war with Japan (Jin 2002). These base areas, spread across China but most famously on the border of Hunan and Jiangxi (the Jiangxi Soviet) and later in Western Shanxi (the Yan'an Liberated Area), were where many of the party's state-building strategies were initially developed (Heilmann and Perry 2011a). Furthermore, it was in these areas that the Chinese Communist Party was forged into a cohesive organisation under Mao's leadership by repeated, violent ideological and discipline campaigns– most famously the Yan'an Rectification Campaign of 1942 (Gao 2019; Walder 2015). The cohesion of the party organisation, coupled with experience in using campaigns to enforce policy compliance that Communists built during war mobilization and in governing the base areas in the 1930s and 1940s, would be a powerful asset for state-building after the defeat of the Nationalists and the establishment of the PRC after 1949.

In the base areas before the revolution, supervisory functions and criminal justice functions were split between the Chinese equivalent of the Soviet Rabkrin (Worker-Peasant Supervisory Councils 工农监察委) and procurators, who were housed inside the court system during the 1930s and 1940s (Ye and Huang 2003, 19; Zeng 1992, 299–301). The exercise of supervision and extent of institutionalization were not consistent across the Chinese territories from 1931 to 1945. Some territories empowered procurators to exercise general supervision even in 1947, perhaps due to their proximity to Soviet-controlled areas (Ye and Huang 2003, 20). While the procuracy was an 'unstable, incomplete, and un-unified' system that underwent repeated cancellations, revisions, and alterations (Zeng 1992, 275), Worker Peasant Supervisory Councils were relatively stable. They focused on

worker-peasant "correspondents" to monitor bureaucrats and the implementation of policy (Jin 2002, 69–71, 124–137). Together, these organs would formed the basis for many approaches used by the Ministry of Supervision (监察部) the party Discipline and Inspection Committees (纪律检查委员会) (Li 2016, 452).

Despite Lenin's argument, at the end of his life, that 'dual' leadership of monitoring organizations was a mistake (Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar 2021), this strategy, by which institutions of bureaucratic control were responsible to both local party leadership *and* the administratively superior bureaucratic control organ, would be the center of much conflict until 1957. For the procuracy, central policymakers advocated the 'vertical' supervision structure, where procuratorates would be responsible only to superior procuratorates in a chain up to the center; others opposed the change in leadership structure (and, in early debates, even the necessity of a procuracy's existence at all) and instead advocated variations on 'dual' subordination that added the oversight of the local party committee at each level, or of the courts (Zeng 1992, 279).

This debate underscores a key trade-off: 'dual supervised' bureaucratic control aimed to ensure that supervisors could not act alone or challenge the leadership of local executive leaders. From the perspective of local party committees, this prevented the abuse of investigatory powers and gave local leaders more autonomy. From the perspective of supervisors, this represented a serious reduction in their ability to discipline local cadres, since local party committees could interfere with their work. Despite its transparently political content, the debates and experimentation with different accountability structures would continue until 1957.

In 1949, procuratorates were set up with 'direct' leadership under the Procuracy system. This pleased Soviet legal advisers who favored this arrangement (Ginsburgs and Stahnke 1968). In practice, however, the procuracy's direct leadership was both a brief and likely inconsequential development: in regulations from 1950, the Communists established the procuracy in localities mostly as an extension of the Public Security Bureau, which housed it and shared leadership with it (Min and Xue 2009, 5). Furthermore, at that time the whole procuracy system was reported to be about one thousand cadres, so it is safe to

assume that its practice of supervising all organs under the state council was not widespread, and its dependence on the Public Security Bureau to function was profound (Min and Xue 2009, 40).

By 1951, 'dual' leadership of the procuracy by both superior procuracies and the local party committee began with the introduction of the 'General Regulations Governing the Organisation of People's Procuratorates at Various Levels' (Min and Xue 2009, 45). This change was due to a sense among Chinese policymakers that there was insufficient legal capacity to staff and run it adequately and independently of local party leadership in much of the country. By 1953, only about 70% of prefectural administrative units and fewer than a third of counties had even established a procurator's office (Ye and Huang 2003, 25).

Throughout this early period, the CCP's resources were spread thin between competing priorities to mobilize society and bureaucrats and to institutionalize its governance across the broad territory. In an April 1951 speech, then-secretary of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission Zhu De (朱德) mentioned that only about 1500 cadres served 'full time' on party discipline inspection commissions (in a country with more than 3000 administrative units) (中共中央纪律检查委员会 1955, 21). Although all county (and regimental) party committees and above had established DICs by February 1952, the CDIC still admonished local party committees for not providing enough full time cadres to *lead* discipline and inspection work (i.e. serve as secretary or deputy secretary of the DIC), indicating that local DICs also likely had few full-time staff; to address this problem, they were allowed to merge with People's Supervision Commissions, although it is unknown how many did so (中共中央纪律检查委员会 1955, 33–34). The system quickly grew after 1952, when it had 2800 full-time cadres, to over 7200 full-time cadres by the end of 1954 (林 and 张 1988, 336).

At this time the People's Supervision Commissions were also quite small. The central People's Supervision Commission was statutorily allowed at most 27 people on full-time staff, but developed a comparatively 'even' distribution of cadres throughout the bureaucracy as time moved forward– expanding supervision offices into 7 State Council Ministries in 1951, and to eight provinces and over 300 counties by June 1951 (林 and 张

1988, 321). This expansion is somewhat deceiving however, as it appears that the People's Supervision Commissions largely relied on the staffing allotment of *existing* government organizations to do so (中共中央纪律检查委员会 1955, p286–287), meaning it likely had very few full time cadres. People's Supervision Commissions would attempt to compensate for their trouble staffing full-time organizations, however, by recruiting part-time 'correspondents' from other work units to report on official conduct from below– more than 26,000 of them by April of 1953, and more than 78,000 by May of 1954 (邬 and 荣 2014).

Further, like the procuracy, the state supervision system would experience a variety of different leadership models during this period. After 1950, supervision offices in territorial governments (provinces, prefectures, counties, etc) were led by their territorial government and had their work "guided" (a weaker form of leadership) by the superior supervision office; the offices in finance and economic organs after 1952 were led by both their home organ leadership and by the superior supervision office (林 and 张 1988, 322–323). State supervision workers in the same territorial government but in different offices, therefore, could have completely different leading organs, which led to several changes after 1954.

State supervision system was also a highly *embedded* model of bureaucratic control: focused as it was on expenditures, budgets, and (later) auditing production and goods quality for plan fulfillment, the Ministry of Supervision was authorized to station 'dispatch' offices in a variety of central ministries and localities directly, and local state supervisors were encouraged to attend the leadership work meetings of the organs in which they were embedded (政务院人民监察委员会 1952).

In contrast, party discipline and inspection committees had a crystal clear leadership structure: subordination to the leadership of the party committee. Interestingly, this was somewhat ambiguous in the January 1950 provisions issued by the CDIC, but it took less than *one month* to issue a high-level, special directive to all discipline and inspection commissions clarifying, showing how important the clarity of this relationship was to the center. The directive stated that *not only* were local DICs responsible to their local party committees, but that in the event that the local party committee disagreed with 'work guidance' from the superior DIC, the local party committee was to be given priority (中共

中央纪律检查委员会 1955, 5). This structure would remain almost completely unchanged until the (temporary) abolition of the DIC system during the Cultural Revolution.

In general, the shortage of professionalized cadres (even for party discipline) meant that campaign-based mobilization (both of society and of bureaucrats via the party campaigns) was in tension with the formal institutionalization of bureaucratic control for achieving local compliance in the state and party. Ongoing campaigns aimed to suppress counterrevolutionaries, fight corruption, and to counter rightist thinking. The procuracy, party discipline commissions, and people's supervision commissions (along with the rest of the bureaucracy) played a significant role in channeling these campaigns, especially in the prosecution of counterrevolutionary 'criminals.' Principal among these were the 'Three Anti' and 'Five Anti' mass campaigns against malpractice, waste, and corruption after 1951; these "activist" (积极分子) -led campaigns presented an alternative to professionalized bureaucratic control, simultaneously requiring the bureaucracy to lead and also targeting state actors for denunciation and punishment.

Bureaucratic Control from 1954-1959

The situation began to change after 1954, a landmark year in the legal history of the People's Republic that saw the passage of numerous laws elaborating the powers and structure of state organs and the first PRC Constitution, enervating the state component of China's first five year plan for economic construction. Together with the passage of the constitution, the centrality of the first five year plan and its massive expenditure of materiel and financial resources meant that bureaucratic control experienced an expansion across functional areas. Showing that these tasks were considered together across state organs, Liu Shaoqi wrote to a colleague in April of 1955:[15]

"Our country is so large, and state organs so many–the vast majority of cadres are good, but there is a minority that are bad – that's reality. At the same

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[15]"我们的国家这样大，机关这样多，绝大多数的干部是好的，但也有少数不好，这是事实。同时，好的干部如果没有经常的监督也可能变坏。因此，对一切国家机关工作人员都应实行监督。除了广大人民的监督以外，还必须加强各级监察机关和检察机关，认真实行国家的监督。" 刘少奇选集 (下)[M]. 北京：人民出版社，1985：174, as quoted in 蔡, 赵, and 林 (2018).

time, the good cadres, might go bad if not supervised regularly. For this reason, all the working staff of the state organs should be supervised. Other than the supervision of the great masses, it is also necessary to strengthen the procuracy and supervision organs at every level and resolutely implement state supervision."

Despite this support and three years of growth, things would take a drastic turn against supervision in 1957, when a combination of hostility to expertise, to Soviet influence, and to "cautious" planning led to the decimation of state supervision institutions, especially the procuracy and the Ministry of Supervision.[16] The latter would be abolished and its functions absorbed almost completely by the party supervision commission in 1959; the former abandoned any supervision functions outside the legal system and changed its working practices to comply with a radically different political landscape by mid-1957.

Party Discipline

In November of 1953, Zhu De, then secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, said in his address to the Second National Discipline and Inspection Conference that the first priority of discipline inspection work was to guarantee production and the careful implementation of the planned economy (李 1999, 23). The then-deputy secretary of that body (and Minister of Supervision) Qian Ying (钱瑛), similarly directed party discipline committees to focus on the problem-areas of state finance, transportation and mining cadres as well as those creating problems with agricultural co-operativization and the monopoly purchase of agricultural goods (李 1999). Although party discipline was the institution of bureaucratic control with the longest history of Chinese practice, it was still significantly influenced by Soviet practice. A 90-page booklet for the study of discipline and inspection theory, compiled by the CCDI in October 1955, was still more than 2/3 reprinted Soviet materials, with Lenin and Stalin's theoretical works occupying the lion's share of the space (论党的纪律 1955).

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[16]We describe these factors at considerable length in a comparison with the Soviet procuracy's development in Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar (2021).

These practices were further consolidated by a new institutional framework for party discipline in 1955. The changes were made in partial response to the perceived failure of the party discipline system to stop the Gao-Rao affair.[17] Although by late 1954 the crisis element was over (and Gao Gang dead by suicide), the reorganization would wait until early 1955. Dong Biwu (董必武) replaced Zhu De as secretary of the (now renamed) CCP Central Supervision Commission, which held its first meeting (serving also as the last meeting of the CDIC) in May of that year (李 1999, 39–46).

The new party supervision system had two new features– both of which were described as responses to deficiencies discovered in DIC work after the Gao-Rao incident. First, the supervision commission leadership structure was altered to de-emphasize local leadership and re-emphasize central leadership; second, several jurisdictional and technical definitions were expanded. These aimed to make it more proactive in opening investigations, to build its connection with 'the masses,' to include under its purview all party members rather than only specific cadres, and to include suspected violations of law, policy, moral standing, in addition to 'disciplinary' infractions within its purview (蔡, 赵, and 林 2018). While the alternation to the party supervision system's leadership structure was reversed a year later when the party revised its Charter, the latter changes still carried the party supervision work into new, more flexible and proactive professional territory.

Unlike other actors in the supervision wings of the state, the party supervision institutions gained momentum, rather than losing it, during the anti-Rightist campaign of 1957-1958, using its improved flexibility, more complete staffing, and less suspect political position to discipline local cadres in the campaign's implementation (Li 2018, 13–15). This logic of accumulation is similar to how the Soviet procuracy evaded much of the devastation of Stalin's great purge of the state: by becoming an instrument of its implementation (Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar 2021).

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[17]The affair revolved around Gao Gang (高岗) (then deputy Chairman of the Central People's Government) and Rao Shushi (饶漱石) (then head of the Central Organization Department), both previously leaders of regional governments, who were accused of setting up 'independent kingdoms' to oppose the center and of attempting to 'destroy party unity' by plotting the removal of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai. An extended analysis of this event can be found in Teiwes (1990).

State supervision

1954 was a year of change for the state supervision system. In September, the system was further institutionalized as a State Council ministry. Not all was rosy, as MOS faced serious capacity constraints in the localities, so it chose to close the vast majority of county-level state supervision offices to focus on higher-level actors and planning after 1954 (邬 and 荣 2014, 86). This represented a significant concession to the work of others for bureaucratic control in some parts of the state, and reflected a focus within the new ministry on conserving personnel resources and focusing on the industrial bureaucracy as part of the Five Year Plan.

In June, they had already begun preparations to roll out the most aggressive regime of state bureaucratic control outside of 'general supervision' – the 'Harbin Railroad Audit Office' (哈尔滨铁路稽核室) model of financial supervision, based on its namesake institution which had *independent, top-down* supervisors with real veto power (邬 2015). The Harbin Railroad had been under Chinese control for two years after a period of joint Sino-Soviet governance. It model was different from state supervision practiced elsewhere in several important ways.[18]

The first exceptional feature was tactical; unlike state supervision elsewhere in the state, which mostly conducted investigations after something had gone wrong (*post hoc* oversight [事后监督 or 事后监察]), the Harbin model emphasized several modes of *preemptive* supervision (事前/事先监督, or 平时监察 in earlier materials). This meant requiring organs within the railway to submit budgets for approval, and request permission for transactions they'd like to conduct, and other forms of procedural checks on expenditure and staffing. The second feature was institutional: Harbin audit officers were *independent* of the leadership of supervised organs ("采取独立和垂直的领导关系"), reporting only to superior state supervisors until that line terminated at the head of the Ministry of Railways. The third (and perhaps most important) feature was that Harbin audit officers could take unilateral actions that would stop production. Elsewhere, state supervisors

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[18]Below, I draw on descriptions produced of the new model for cadre education at that time by the state supervision system (哈尔滨铁路稽核局的监察工作 1954).

relied on tools like 'suggestion forms' (建议书), which required responses from the leaders of supervised organs, but didn't require compliance. In contrast, supervisors in the Harbin Railroad Audit Office could unilaterally block any spending they did not approve, giving them actual power to demand practices or spending be changed.

These features differed dramatically from the predominant supervision practices elsewhere in the Chinese state. Consider a comparison with cadre study materials (c. 1953) in a collection by the Supervision office of the Second Ministry of the Machining Industry, a related technical ministry, just before the Harbin audit model began being promoted. In particular, we can look at how cadres were instructed to handle their 'routine' (平时) work, rather than post-hoc (事后) inspections.One reprinted guide by Zhao Shisheng (赵石生) (an investigator in the Central People's Supervision Commission before it became a Ministry) takes as its subject the 'insufficient experience' with 'regular work inspections [平时工作检查]', and makes clear that supervisors in state enterprises and organs faced serious problems (赵 1953).

First, state supervisors faced opposition from inspected organizations, referred to (in candid terms for party study materials) as "the ideological obstacles of inspected cadres and organs [被检查的机关干部对监察工作的思想障碍]." Perhaps logically, the state apparatus was still strapped for cash and personnel, and the regulatory or procedural guidance for many work tasks was scarce and vague. Leading cadres everywhere were likely at least annoyed by attempts at substantive or procedural checks on their activities, which likely included attempts by the new supervision apparatus to curb the alleged explosion of corruption and waste during the Three- and Five-Anti Campaigns in 1951 and 1952.

Second, supervisors struggled to overcome opposition due to their shortage of independent authority. The guide contains exhortation after exhortation not to "give up on principles and accommodate the inspected, or stand aside with hands in pockets, abandoning bold work because of a fear [the supervised] will be upset or not receptive [因怕对方不接受或不满，便放弃原则而迁就被检查者或束手束脚不敢大胆工作]." Instead, they were tasked with the difficult task of *convincing* local leaders and enterprise managers to listen to them. Read against the grain, these instructions suggest that this behavior was at least more

common than central supervisors hoped, and conceivably a significant obstacle to completing state supervision work.

Third, and most importantly, state supervisors were unsure how to prioritize problems or direct their regular inspection work even when they did conduct it. The guide contrasts this insecurity explicitly with post-hoc inspection (事后监察), remarking that "one of the easiest mistakes to make in routine inspection work, [is] to think that because it's not post-hoc, there's no particular target for inspection [做平时工作检查者最易犯的一种毛病，认为平时工作检查不是事故发生后的检查，就没有一定的检查目标]," in turn leading supervisors to never really conduct routine inspections in the first place. The feeling that supervisors were in an untenable position was reinforced by the article criticizing the strategy of not planning any inspections and "inspecting whatever you encounter [遇到什么就检查什么]," both as a practical matter because it fails to develop "the benefits of supervision" and as a political matter, because it spent precious relational capital by aggravating the political opposition of local cadres.

Establishing how dramatic these differences were in practice is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the differences in regulatory environment and study materials to practice state supervision quite differently show how significant a change this would have been to the environment of bureaucratic control in China.

The roll-out of the Harbin model was intended to extend beyond the Ministry of Railroads, where it had been piloted since December of 1953, to the entire finance and industrial bureaucracy. This proceeded more or less according to schedule, seeing considerable emphasis and discussion in high-level reports on State Supervision work throughout 1954, but eventually encountered slowdowns, attributed by both contemporaries and later party historians as due to the lack of capacity for this type of supervision outside the comparatively well-professionalized railroad bureaucracy (哈尔滨铁路稽核局的监察工作 1954; 邬 2015). As 1955 progressed and the 'first little leap' in agricultural production took center stage, the application of the Harbin Railroad Audit Office model was gradually curtailed. In particular, the use of its most powerful supervision tool, "preemptive supervision" (事先监督) was gradually restricted to fewer and fewer use cases (邬 2015,

94–95). This slowdown is hard to pin to a single reason; certainly it was not helped by the Gao-Rao Affair, but also it may have been de-emphasized as the party strengthened its own supervision system after 1955.

The brakes finally kicked in by July of 1956 (only a few months before the party rectification would begin), when Minister of Supervision Qian Ying's report at the Supervision Organ All Cadre Meeting changed from previous wording promoting preemptive supervision and the Harbin model to a new focus on "acknowledging its positive uses and its negative factors." In the state supervision report of December 1956, no language on the Harbin Model would appear at all.

Legal supervision

After the passage of the 1954 constitution and the procuratorial organic law, which specified in firmer detail procuratorial responsibilities and powers, the procuracy also experienced a period of rapid growth, increasingly emerging from the shadows of the Public Security Bureau. It also, for example, had its leadership structure adjusted to be more 'vertical,' and the staffing expanded substantially, including greater use of general supervision (Ginsburgs and Stahnke 1964; Thompson-Brusstar 2022). Advisers from the Soviet Union were pleased by this development, since they argued that 'the procuratorate is able to safeguard uniform revolutionary legality' only when it is independent, as 'even today individual employees of the state apparatus are infected by "localism"' (Ginsburgs and Stahnke 1968, 92).

General supervision and the supervision of other legal organs expanded first in higher capacity and higher-level procuracies, for example those in coastal areas (Zhang 1998, 257). Party media made clear central support for supervision's expansion, arguing that general supervision was a key difference between socialist legal systems and capitalist ones (Shao 1955).

At the same time, however, the procuracy and the political-legal wing of the Communist party disagreed about the procuracy's mission and strategy, especially its perceived failure to be 'in touch with the masses.' Multiple modes of supervision, especially "mass"

supervision, were increasingly emphasized by central leadership during this period (Andreas and Dong 2017b, 210). This was self-sustaining at least partially because 'the masses' were a safe (and malleable) source of epistemic authority or political cover (Thompson-Brusstar 2022). That is, when prioritizing problems that 'came from the masses,' local cadres were safe from accusations of ideological malpractice, and even if there were mistakes, this could be spun as a sign that the masses needed further education than that cadres had made serious ideological or political errors.

To compensate for its shortcomings, the procuracy also expanded its reliance on 'correspondents' (通讯员), as the early state supervision system had to bolster its work despite capacity constraints. These correspondents were often party activists who brought information about violations to the procuracy and spread information back to the masses about recent developments in the legal system. The use of correspondents was intended to help connect the procuratorates to the mass line, put them in closer touch with popular politics, and aid them in performing general supervision. In early 1956, there were almost 4,000 correspondents employed by the procuracy in Guangxi alone (Ou 1996, 149–150), and increased to a total of more than 94,000 across the country by September of that year. The support increased further after the 1956 National Party Congress, which reaffirmed the importance of legal compliance for state actors in its report (Ye and Huang 2003, 28).

Inflection point: 1957

Despite apparent consensus in 1955 on the importance of supervision, the success of formal bureaucratic control apparatuses changed with the political climate, and central initiatives were increasingly implemented either *directly* by mass mobilization in campaigns or by using such campaigns to create compliance in the bureaucracy (Strauss 2006). Furthermore, Mao's particular brand of Stalinist fundamentalism put him at odds with the Soviet Union and Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation, especially after the 'secret speech' in 1956, in which Khrushchev both acknowledged and criticized Stalin's use of mass terror, abuse of power, and policy choices to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union – but also the increasing uprisings in Eastern Europe (Walder 2015, 125–129).

This unstable atmosphere was only exacerbated after a failed attempt at 'open' party rectification during the 'Hundred Flowers' movement in 1956 and 1957, in which a thaw allowing for criticism of the party created a torrent of criticism of the CCP. Facing unexpectedly harsh criticisms of previous policy, corruption, and economic stagnation leveled by students, intellectuals, and regular people, Mao ordered the brutal suppression of criticism with a campaign to rectify 'rightist errors', in which victims were publicly criticized in mass meetings and sent to labor camps for 'reeducation.' This purge particularly devastated the bureaucracy, intelligentsia, and legal institutions (Walder 2015 Ch. 7). As elite and mass politics became increasingly charged and any political risk became increasingly untenable, the Supreme People's Procuratorate issued a directive in September of 1957 to localities instructing them to 'hang up the weapon' of general supervision, leading them to close general supervision offices within the procuracy, sometimes after less than a year of full-time functioning (Zhang 1998, 259). The Harbin Model of state supervision had already been quietly de-emphasized by mid-1955.

By 1958, the tide of mass and elite politics had turned completely against institutionalization and routinized supervision, which became associated with Soviet Revisionism in addition to rightism. An article in a 1958 issue of 'Political Legal Research (政法研究),' China's leading legal journal of the day, criticized those who 'swallow Soviet experience without chewing,' in the process neglecting the Party, connection to mass politics, and China's unique political situation (quoted in in Cohen 1968).

The procuracy was perhaps hardest hit: twenty-two cadres from the Supreme People's Procuratorate were denounced as 'rightists,' struggled against, and sent to labor camps, with special attention to party committee member Li Huizhi (李惠芝), whose alleged rightist crimes were centered precisely around his advocacy for the supervisory role of the procuracy. In the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee, the People's Daily, Wang Guiwu argued that Li's 'ridiculous' emphasis on general supervision was actually turning the powerful weapon of socialist legality 'against the people' (Wang 1958).

A similar fate befell the main advocate for the Harbin Audit model in state supervision and

of 'proactive' (事先) supervision in bureaucratic control, deputy Minister of Supervision Wang Han (王翰), who was purged from the Ministry of Supervision with the particularly dangerous label of having led an "anti-Party faction" in the Ministry of Supervision (and among the highest-level cadres to be purged from the central government) (王翰传编写组 1999, 194–197). Nor did the party discipline apparatus escape unscathed – after rectification, the Center Supervision Commission was reduced in size by half (from 177 cadres to 83 cadres and from 53 support staff to 38 support staff), and the remainder, including Commission members Liu Yanchun (刘宴春) and Su Mingde (苏明德) as well as office director Wu Chengzong (武承宗) were reportedly sent down to the countryside to labor (党的监察工作编写组 1958). Attacks like these demonstrated that after the anti-Rightist campaign, some techniques of bureaucratic control were more dangerous to those who used them than to cadres deviating from political or administrative guidance.

The Great Leap Forward's (1958-1961) consolidation of government institutions and creation of an inescapable 'campaign' atmosphere accelerated what previous party rectification campaigns had already begun. This sea change was evident when legal supervision broadly and general supervision in particular received special repudiation in a long revisionist report in August of 1958 after the fourth National Procuratorial Work Conference. The report argued that the focus of 'rightist' procurators on supervision was the result of incorrect understanding of the character of the procuracy and acknowledged that this 'misunderstanding' had propagated throughout the procuracy (中共最高人民检察院党组 1980). Even after the Great Leap Forward's eventual failure, Mao was only further convinced that excessive 'bureaucratism' and internal enemies were the root of governance problems, leading to yet more mass-based campaigns to enforce ideological and political 'control' (Thornton 2007, 130–134). 1959 would see the elimination of the Ministry of Supervision, and the 1962 conference on state administrative supervision work would complete the task by eliminating all supervision offices previous established throughout the state (Cheng 1998).

Although many local procuracies would close, merge with local public security bureaus, or

otherwise cease to function independently or entirely as early as 1958,[19] by 1966, the Cultural Revolution closed most that remained outside of Beijing. The whole institution of the procuracy was abolished in the 1975 constitution. The Central Party Supervision Commission lasted somewhat longer, but would be closed in two years later, and "replaced" with an organization that responded directly to Cultural Revolution architects— the "case examination group" that would preside over the purges and torture of senior cadres who opposed (or were believed to oppose) the Gang of Four's agenda (Schoenhals 1996).

Bureaucratic Control After Mao

After Mao's death and the end of the Cultural Revolution (CR), several tasks were of pressing importance to central leaders. Among these were restoring 'order'; rebuilding the economy; scapegoating some elites for unpopular policies during the CR; and restoring lost political-administrative elites to rebuild the party state.

Bureaucratic control was a key concern for accomplishing almost all of these goals. During the Cultural Revolution, this task had not been a priority after the civil conflict between factions subsided. Much of the country functioned under direct or indirect military rule for several years after Red Guard factions co-opted or destroyed many of the standing government organizations (Walder 2015), and the military may have replaced bureaucratic control in localities with military discipline, but it was ordered back to the barracks in 1969, leaving several years of vacuum for formal bureaucratic control organs.[20]

Beyond the work of convincing actors both domestic and foreign that a new era had begun through high-profile trials of CR leadership (Cook 2016), the party also embarked on perhaps the largest 'transitional justice' program in history, reviewing and reversing 'erroneous' verdicts on hundreds of thousands of cadres punished during and before the Cultural Revolution (Leese 2015).

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[19]Although this is omitted in many standard histories, the individual institutional histories compiled later make this very clear – see e.g. 中国检察理论研究所 (1995).

[20]Although I am forced by the limits of my expertise, the silence of secondary histories, and the paucity of available primary sources to largely omit the Cultural Revolution here, see both Xu (2018) and Hurst (2018) on the inadequacy of simply treating the CR as a lawless period.

The big picture of bureaucratic control in the Reform period (1978-2012) was the cycle of first *layering* and then *consolidating* institutions of monitoring and supervision. As in the early days of the People's Republic, the late 1970s and early 1980s saw an expansion (or a restoration) of institutions of bureaucratic control. In 1978, the procuracy was formally reestablished; a year later the party discipline system began re-establishment from the top-down. By the early 1980s, the national audit system separated from the Ministry of Finance and was elevated in stature to conduct reviews of revenue and expenditure throughout the state. By 1987, the Ministry of Supervision was even re-founded. While the institutions of bureaucratic control were returning, the repertoire of supervision was different. Institutions across the board remained firmly under the authority of local party committees; 'direct' leadership to the center was unheard of. Although mass campaigns were largely out of favor (Perry 2011),[21] there was an emphasis as the 1980s unfolded on approaches that incorporated bottom-up feedback to improve monitoring, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

The 1980s were a period of comparative political liberalization and experimentation (Gewirtz 2022), and accompanied economic growth "out of the plan" under the leadership of Deng's proteges Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang (Naughton 1995), as well as an explosion of economic corruption (Ang 2020). A relatively permissive attitude towards creative policymaking reflected the rapid change in state structures and party leadership composition during the first half of the 1980s, although concern about the 'spiritual pollution' of Chinese media and political thinking by Deng meant that change had to be managed carefully, heightening the need for well-calibrated bureaucratic control. Hu Yaobang, who had served for a year as the first Central Organization Department head after the Cultural Revolution (from December of 1977 to December of 1978), set the tone for and began much of the work of rehabilitating cadres; equally important, he also began thew work of removing those who had committed 'serious errors' during the Cultural Revolution.

But by the late 1980s, economic overheating (especially inflation), political conflict over the

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[21] Although see White (2006) for the ways birth planning campaigns bucked this trend.

pace of reform, and the concomitant rise in official corruption led to demonstrations, most notably the 1987 and 1989 protest movements, which were also well-represented by conflict within the political elite. Deng Xiaoping ultimately led a conservative reaction to these events, removing first Hu and then Zhao from the position of general secretary for their conciliatory approaches in moments of crisis, and placed fellow-elder Chen Yun (陈云) in charge of the economic readjustment afterwards (Gewirtz 2022).

The end of the most radical period of political reform led to a 'consolidation' in the area of bureaucratic control. This was most obvious in the formal merging of state and party bureaucratic control systems (the Ministry of Supervision and the party discipline inspection commissions) in 1993, although party leadership of state supervision was strong to start, and preparations for this merger begun immediately after the crisis in 1989 (中央纪委 and 国家监委研究室 2019). It did not, however, end the use of 'managed inclusion' of bottom-up feedback as a policy strategy for collecting information to discipline various forms of official malfeasance (Gueorguiev 2021). One such example of these experiments, the opening of petitions and visits offices for the Ministry of Supervision, is the subject of Chapter 4.

A particular problem in bureaucratic control of the 1980s and 1990s was the supervision of 'leadership cadres,' or the 'leadership team' (领导班子), whose positions as both brokers for elite support and 'engineers' of China's new growth engine led them to both increased influence and massive corruption, what Ang (2020) refers to as "corrupt and competent" leadership. Despite a series of reforms to the party-state supervision system and the legal system (specially empowered anti-corruption units inside the procuracy after 1995, new leadership organs on 'party work style' and corruption in the state sector), the central problem remained an old one– central leaders were either unable or unwilling to make bureaucratic control organizations independent of their local party committees, leaving them *embedded* but also subordinate.

This meant in practice that investigations of high-level party committee members, let alone local party secretaries, were possible only in the most egregious circumstances. Although the use of the cadre evaluation system, through which cadres are rated on a series of

indicators used to determine their eligibility for promotion, is widely believed to have been helpful in incentivizing local executives and party secretaries to promote economic growth at some levels of governance (Landry, Lü, and Duan 2018; Whiting 2004) and to implement social controls (Carter, Lee, and Shih 2022), it was not necessarily effective in preventing corruption or checking the growth of factions.[22]

Only incremental reforms were made to address this problem by improving the supervision of higher level cadres, for example claiming increased prerogatives for the center in the selection of provincial DIC leadership in 2006 ("省级纪委书记提名权收归中央有助监督同级党委-搜狐新闻" 2006). These reforms were likely limited due the political difficulties around reforming a key tool for managing central-local relations, including by affecting the ability of patrons to provide goods to their clients in the localities.

A different element of the repertoire that began development in earnest during the Hu Jintao administration (2002-2012) but which became one of the signature tools of Xi Jinping's tenure (2013-), was the increasing use of centrally dispatched work teams to inspect the work of these leading cadres (Carothers and Zhang 2022; Yeo 2016).[23] Especially under Xi, this was part of an overarching transition away from the 'input' institutions that featured mass participation in the governance project and towards a political discipline system that functioned in a top-down manner (Li 2019). The first round of inspections conducted under Xi is the subject of Chapter 5.

Finally, the latest institutional transformation to the bureaucratic control apparatus was the centralization and concentration of authority in the institution of the National Supervision Commission (NSC), which replaced the Ministry of Supervision by constitutional amendment in 2018. Far more than simply a bureaucratic upgrade for the state wing of the party discipline apparatus, the NSC also absorbed anti-corruption powers and personnel from the procuratorate and was accompanied by a raft of legislation that

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[22]Although considered both normatively undesirable and politically dangerous by the party, factional ties may themselves have partially served to make rewards for performance credible (Jiang 2018, 986).

[23]This tactic is not a new element in the repertoire per se, but its active use stands in contrast to the way inspectors were dispatched in the Mao era mostly as a *post hoc* measure after something had already gone wrong. See for example Qian Ying's inspection tours after the Gao-Rao affair or after various famine reports before the Great Leap (钱瑛转编写组 2004, 89–108).

expanded the *de jure* jurisdiction of the NSC considerably beyond previous boundaries, much like the expansion of the party discipline system in 1955. The conclusion considers what this new form means for Chinese politics under a Xi administration that may last for decades to come.

Chronologies
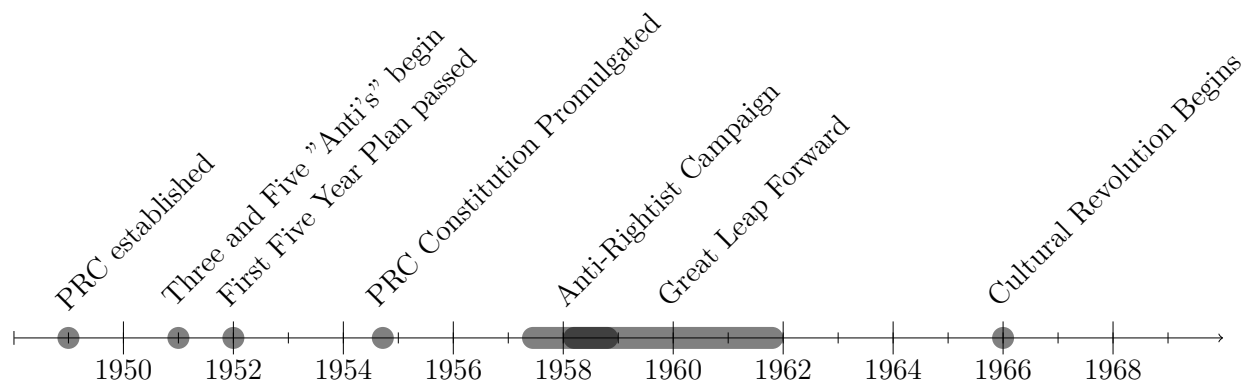
Figure 1: Timeline of Pre-Cultural Revolution Political Events
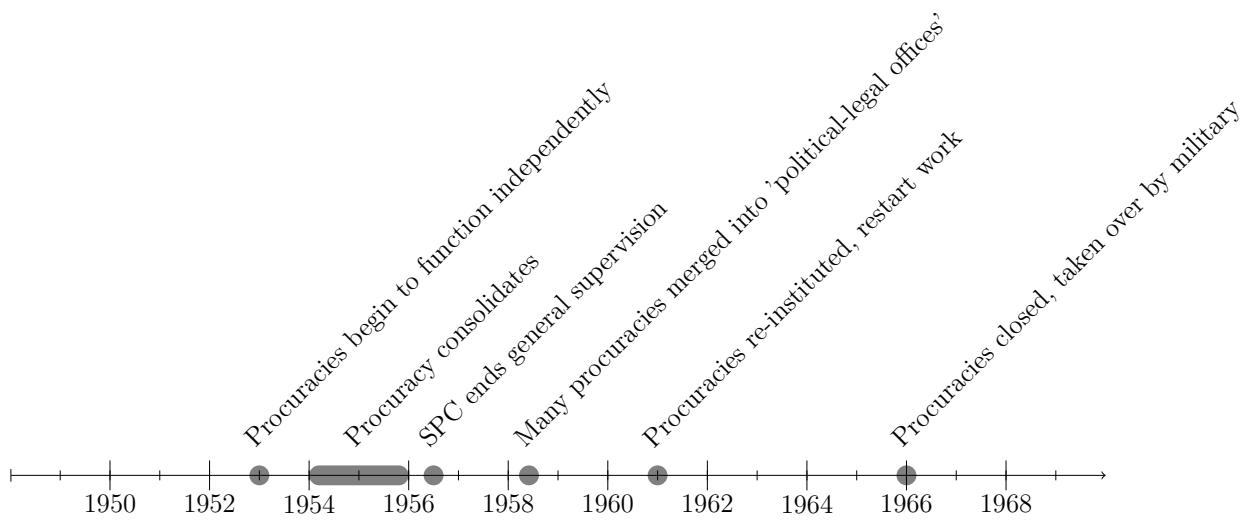
Figure 2: Timeline of Procuracy under Mao
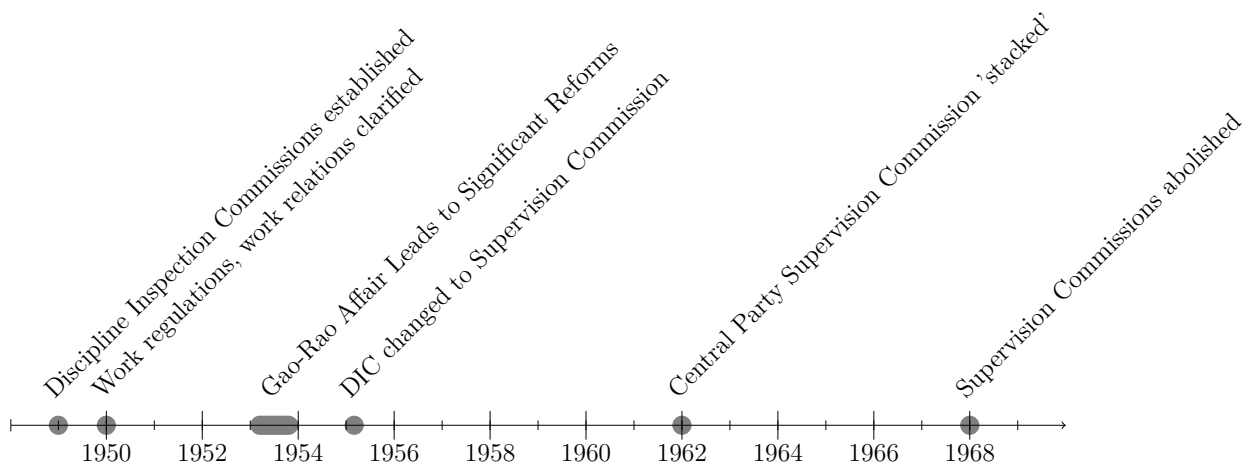
Figure 3: Timeline of Party Discipline Under Mao
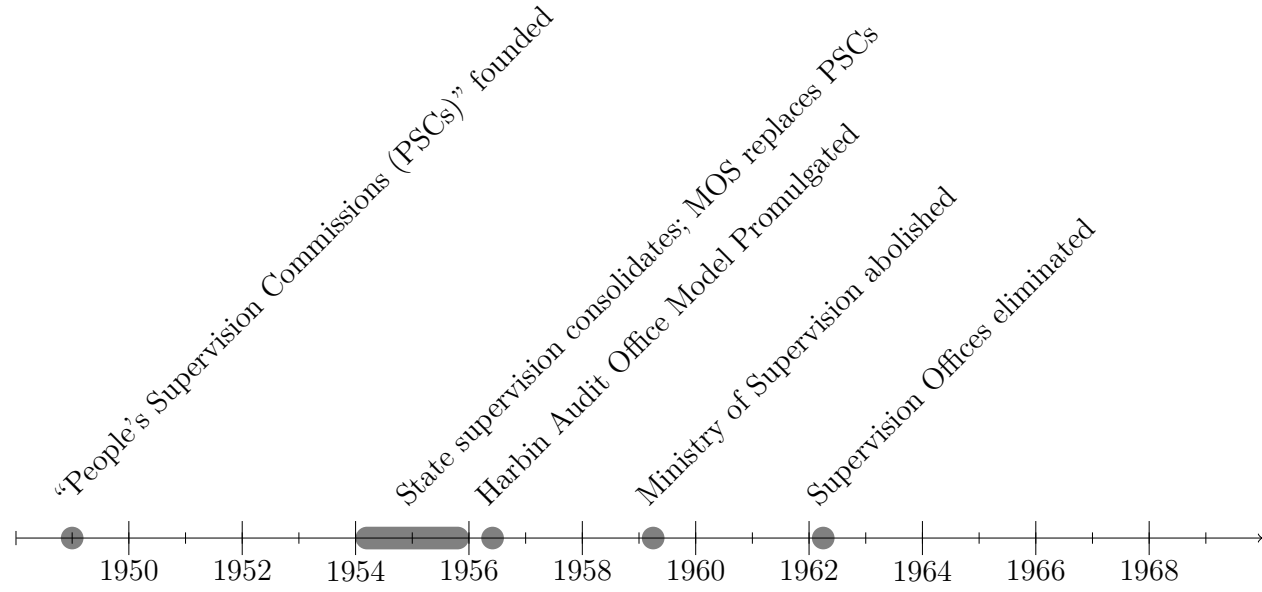
Figure 4: Timeline of State Supervision Under Mao

Chapter 3: Building Bureaucratic Control under Mao

Introduction

Much of the work on state consolidation has focused on the way that new states consolidate their power by extending their reach into society. These broadly follow the approach of Mann (1984) in describing "infrastructural power" as "the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm" (189). These strategies included incorporating or eliminating local elites (Javed 2022), expanding institutions from center to periphery, and expanding the provision of social and political services to enmesh local populations (Albertus, Fenner, and Slater 2018). As documented in a recent review, this work has considerably advanced our understanding of how states entrench themselves in local communities and eliminate challengers (Hassan, Mattingly, and Nugent 2022).

However, some facets of this crucial mode of state power remain understudied, despite serious attention from state-builders themselves – in particular, the way that new states set out to control *the developing state apparatus itself* – what in Chapters 1 and 2 I have called "bureaucratic control."[24] While with scholarship that focuses on a national 'state capabilities' might focus on levels of resources to direct to controlling society (Soifer 2008), a focus on *bureaucratic control* instead focuses on the ability of the state to ensure that those resources reach their intended targets inside the state, and are directed towards their intended purposes.

Bureaucratic control was an important component of many state-building projects; for

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[24]A similar focus in Hassan (2020) is called 'bureaucratic management'; Landry (2008) refers to a very similar conception as 'political control'.

example, revolutionary regimes in China and the Soviet Union both had good reason to fear the unchecked power of the state and insulation of power from 'the people' (Ding and Thompson-Brusstar 2021). This may reflect a particular high-modern focus on checks and balances on government powers, even under non-democratic regimes, or the growing influence of scientific management in public administration.[25] But it also reflects a pervasive concern of state-builders across regime types: managing the host of problems that can emerge due to the delegation of authority.

In Chapter 1, I suggested that we can best understand these problems by focusing on sources of *information*, the allocation of *authority*, and the way these two are affected when bureaucratic control is *embedded.* In this chapter, I show that even when institutional designs differed (e.g. the procuracy stood alone but state supervisors were largely embedded), they sometimes used the same techniques (e.g. expanding the use of correspondents) as political conditions changed. Institutions also sometimes successfully advocated for increased autonomy, as shown by the example of the Harbin Railroad Audit Office model in Chapter 2.

Understanding the way new regimes build these systems is important. First, these institutions were crucial components of strategies to check the performance of state and party cadres and organizations, and discipline actors that deviated from the priorities of decision-makers. Second, scholars interested in developmental states know that especially in developing countries, these personnel powers directly shaped the development trajectory of states *via* their influence on the allocation of state industrial resources, which cast long shadows into the present day (Haggard 2018; Rauch and Evans 2000). Finally, as mentioned above, students of authoritarian institutions know that the management of 'bureaucrats' constitute a huge component of actual 'politics' when elections are unfree or absent, and when the state controls a large component of the economy.

Regimes that have common revolutionary or geographic origins often develop distinct institutional models for confronting the challenges of building infrastructural power.

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[25]For a useful comparison point on the politics surrounding control, bureaucracy, and the application of scientific management in the Soviet Union, see Beissinger (1988).

Consider for example a sample of three Leninist political regimes: the Soviet Union under the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), China under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and Taiwan under the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Each of these party-states emerged in revolutionary contexts; the latter two absorbed considerable influence, expertise, and aid from the former; and all confronted challenging state-building projects. Despite these commonalities, China's strategies for bureaucratic control diverged sharply from the Nationalists on Taiwan (Strauss 2020), and from the Soviet Union (Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar 2021; Huang 1994).

In both Taiwan and the Soviet Union, regimes diversified strategies of bureaucratic control: Nationalists developed political control in the form of competing secret police organizations (Greitens 2016, chap. 3), but also monitored the political and ideological compliance of bureaucrats through the Examination Yuan's Ministry of Civil Service (考试院铨叙部) and eventually a personnel management office directly under the Executive Yuan (行政院人事行政总处), setting up a direct channel for Chiang Kai-shek (and later Chiang Ching-Kuo) to monitor and approve the appointment of officials. In the Soviet Union, the Worker-Peasant Inspectorate (Rabkrin) and other forms of administrative supervision eventually became the state Control Committee and the procuracy, both of which enjoyed broad mandates for legal and administrative monitoring of the bureaucracy (not to mention the Party Control Committee) (Christian 1982; Hanson and Thompson-Brusstar 2021). While the systems in neither country were necessarily 'sufficient' to prevent governance problems, they present a contrast with China under the CCP, which centralized control considerably.

The People's Republic under the CCP *has* had multiple models and institutions of bureaucratic control exist simultaneously, both more recently (in the 1980s, and to a lesser extent the 1990s) and as part of state construction (the 1950s). However, both periods eventually saw consolidation. Schurmann (1973) argued this was due to the resolution of a tension between "ideology" driven "personal control" and "organization" driven "economic control," in which the former dominated the other as Maoist political context changed and the differences between China and the Soviet Union deepened. In the pages below, I aim

first to characterize these approaches, and test if some implications of this theory hold.

State construction under Mao

Recent studies of revolutionary China emphasize the use of violence to create new identities and eliminate potential challengers in the form of local elites as an especially important influence in Chinese state-building and consolidation (Javed 2022; Strauss 2020).[26] As these studies note, however, even when the mode of revolutionary consolidation is the mass campaign, these campaigns depended profoundly on state and party organizations to collect information, organize authority, disseminate plans, and guide their progress. How, then, did the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party, an organization which grew exponentially in the first years after 1949, maintain a grip over these far-flung organizations expanding into new areas like urban centers or bastions of Nationalist control? Further, how did these approaches balance the problems of information and authority?

Although the Chinese Communist Party had a varied repertoire of governance techniques developed during its governance of base areas, the nature of the challenges it confronted changed dramatically in 1949 and after. As the Party returned to urban areas, attempted to restart the economy, finished its conquest of border areas like Tibet, and mobilized for conflict with the United States in the Korean War, it moved into new political territory, confronted new forms of local resistance, and needed new policy solutions.[27]

As in Chapter 2, this study focuses on three key institutional loci where the newly established regime housed powers to evaluate, supervise, audit, and discipline state and party agents and organizations: the procuracy, the state supervision system, and the party discipline system.[28] By doing so, I build on previous work that, analyzing the regime over time, have emphasized the CCP's monopoly over personnel evaluation and promotion to explain its stability despite political, social, and economic challenges (Landry 2008;

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[26]Thornton (2007) examines these techniques and others across the 1949 divide in China.

[27]One recent treatment of this period by historians dedicated entire sections to the 'urban takeover' and 'occupying the periphery,' as well as to creating a 'culture of accommodation' and revolutionary changes to the family structure (Brown 2010).

[28]China scholars may note that the Communist Party Organization Department is conspicuously missing. I address this in the 'Data' section.

Whiting 2004).[29]

During the Mao era, however, the utility, and even loyalty, of the bureaucratic apparatus (and of the people set with the task of controlling it) were not taken for granted. These institutions changed considerably over time and from one another, despite beginning with mandates similar enough that state and party cadres confused them for one another.[30]

Previous work on the development of control and the politics of bureaucratic management under Mao can be broken roughly into two groups. First, some analyses have focused usefully on the historical development of these institutions and their functions across time, often bridging not just the Mao period but also the reform period. These include studies of the State Supervision system (Sapio 2021), the procuracy (Thompson-Brusstar 2022), and especially the party discipline system (Guo 2014; Li 2016; Young 1984). These works contribute important findings about how these institutions have changed over time. Although they largely avoid explicit comparison across institutional boundaries, when read together, they present an important composite picture of how the political upheavals of the Mao period in China affected the state and party bureaucracy. However, their explicit focus on one institution can conceal the consistency of changes across the bureaucratic control apparatus, or variation in the same.

A second (older) literature does approach with a wider perspective. These far-ranging works attempt to tackle the tensions between mass mobilization and bureaucracy (Harding 1981; Strauss 2020), and the tension between 'control' (which focused on institutions) and 'management' (which focused on individuals) directly (Schurmann 1973). In the broadest possible terms, these works argue that the Chinese Communist Party party was pulled by Mao and other leaders between "democratic," mass-based supervision and professionalized, bureaucratic supervision after 1950, and that the latter yielded to the former.

These treatments do not agree, however, on the primary causal factor driving these

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[29]Although see Wang (2021) for a critical review of this literature that suggests we know less about these systems than we should.

[30]For example, see the "最高人民检察署人民监察委员会法制委员会三者的关系怎样？" (1950), where the central government had to issue a clarifying statement because the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the People's Supervision Commission, and the Legislative Affairs Committee (法制委) were being confused with one another.

concerns: while Schurmann (1973) places primary emphasis on the importance of ideological incorporation, especially in the eventual primacy of controlling the individual actor, Harding (1981) describes the vast organizational changes of the period as attempts to solve persistent and stubborn organizational dilemmas informed by the principal-agent paradigm. In a more recent treatment, Strauss (2020) argues convincingly that bureaucracy and campaigns were not as separable as may have been argued by Harding and Schurmann, as campaigns depended on the state organs to organize, manage, and stage them.

In this chapter, I ask: how did the PRC construct institutions of bureaucratic control in the 1950s? In what ways (if at all) did these institutions differ in their approaches? How did they balance concerns of *information, authority*, and *embeddedness* in similar or different ways? How did they respond to the rapid changes in the politics of the PRC's first 10 years? I leverage new data from *inside* these institutional systems to improve our understanding of how these institutions described their work internally, and how that description changed over the tumultuous decade between 1949 and 1959. From these internal descriptions, I hope to find the common threads that concerned the supervision scientists of China's 1950s.

In brief, I find that these institutions used a wide variety of bureaucratic control strategies. As discussed in Chapter 2, both the procuracy and the state supervision apparatus genuinely pushed boundaries on state authority under Mao, harboring at least some cadres who promoted visions of socialist bureaucratic control that relied on regularized auditing with rules-based compliance and (most dangerously) where professional direction could be weighted over party leadership. Because the institutions I study in this chapter also differed in institutional design, I also assess the extent to which they approached bureaucratic control in distinct ways. I find that bureaucratic control was most similar in its heyday across institutions, but diverged after the shock of persecution during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. I also find that despite their differences, some tactics spread from one institution to another, demonstrating the ways that these institutions learned and innovated in the tight political environment under Mao.

I take a series of computational approaches to understand how these organs discussed the

work of bureaucratic control. Based on a keyword approach, I further find that these attempts to carve out positions for authority only indirectly supervised by the party took a variety of forms. These included common emphases on 'regularized' (平时，经常，事先) tools of supervision and investigation across party and state in the early years, as well as the use (and then abandonment) of grass-roots information-gathering from embedded informants ('correspondents' 通讯员) by both the procuracy and the state supervision system. In this vein, I also find significant *differences* across the institutions and across time, with variation in the emphasis on information gathering from regular cadres, and on the role of the inspector themselves in collecting it.

Second, I turn to an embeddings based approach to examine how the discussions of bureaucratic control may have become more or less similar over time. I show that state supervision and party disciplinary discourse became quite similar across the period before 1957, and especially after the reorganization of the Party supervision system in 1955; both also increased in similarity with the procuracy. Certain elements of the repertoire see growth across institutional boundaries, like regularized inspection, but the growing similarity fragmented after the anti-Rightist campaign, confirming findings elsewhere about this watershed moment in Chinese politics (MacFarquhar 1974).

In the next section, I discuss the data and place them in context. In the section following, I discuss the corpus' characteristics and limitations. I then discuss the methods I use to explore the corpus, and present my findings of how these materials change over time. Before proceeding, however, it is useful to review the institutional bases of bureaucratic control, and why we might expect different institutions to focus on similar or different aspects of the repertoire. I do this by providing three anchoring examples to help demonstrate how and why different models of bureaucratic control differed.

Contextualizing Chinese Supervision: Three Illustrative Examples

In China's Maoist period, the tension between different models of organization was particularly obvious in state supervisory and anti-corruption work. This tension resulted in a wide variety of tactics used by organs with bureaucratic control mandates, some of which

were used across institutions, while others were more particular. Consider three brief examples: 'mass supervision' by volunteer or part-time correspondents, 'legal supervision' by the procuracy, and 'audit supervision' by the Ministry of Supervision.

'Supervision from below' was often exercised in this period via the mobilization of mass movements and within schools, factories, and the localities themselves, predominantly to target "bureaucratism" or other misbehavior by local officials (Andreas and Dong 2017a). Similarly, but less well studied, was the way that the emphasis on incorporating and consulting the masses shaped the institutions of supervision themselves, by encouraging the use of thousands upon thousands of "correspondents" (通讯员) by the Ministry of Supervision (and later, the procuracy) (邬思源 2015).

While the procuracy was designed to supervise the legal system and the discipline system party cadres, the state supervision apparatus was considerably more distributed and embedded, especially after it closed county offices in 1954. Instead, supervision work prioritized expansion into the Chinese industrial and enterprise bureaucracies– by building on Soviet-Chinese hybrid experience in the northeast, it brought significant aspects of both budgetary auditing and quality assurance into its purview.

Legal supervision, on the other hand, found its highest expression in the Mao period in the expansive administrative power of the procuracy to exert "general supervision" (一般监督) over all entities under the state council (exercised mostly after 1956), audit their documents and check regulations for compliance with national regulations and policy. Despite its best efforts, the procuracy's attempt to carry out this mandate made it the perfect target in the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957; the leading proponents of general supervision were purged from the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and local procuracies were instructed to "hang up the weapon of general supervision" by an instruction from the Supreme People's Procuratorate in September of 1957. While the procuracy was not abolished, it was partially eliminated across the country as part of the increasing de-emphasis on its investigatory, supervisory, or other functions, and existed only unevenly even after politics swung towards 'regularization' after the Great Leap (Thompson-Brusstar 2022).

The state supervision system experienced a similar trajectory with what was called the

"Harbin Audit Office" model of supervision. As described in Chapter 2, the model, which was eventually intended for expansion across the state, was based on the experience of Soviet-inspired industrial management in the railroad system. The model emphasized several features: first, it was proactive – conducting 'in advance (事先) inspections; second, it had independent authority; third, it had veto powers; and fourth, it merged 'top down' professional monitoring with 'bottom up' voluntarist monitoring (邬 2015). While it attracted a great deal of positive attention in the press and in the supervision system itself for its track record of preventing waste and "scientific" methods, it encountered serious political opposition and became the target of criticism during the anti-Rightist campaign, with its strongest proponents purged from the Ministry of Supervision and sent to labor camps (王翰传编写组 1999).

To show how these and other changes took place, I turn to the ways these institutions described their own work in internal publication newspapers. In the next section, I describe the dual media environment of the PRC, the publications I was able to assemble, and describe the coverage of the corpus. I then turn to untangling the development of bureaucratic control before 1959.

Empirical Strategy

The Chinese party-state, in the Mao period and today, maintains two simultaneous media ecosystems; one for internal consumption by regime insiders, and a second oriented towards regular people, with journalists sometimes writing on assignment for both audiences (Dimitrov 2017; Grant 1988). These internal media are produced at differing levels, with some restricted to only the most senior leadership, while others are merely restricted to state or party cadres in general.

The source material analyzed here belong to this latter category. *People's Procuracy*, *People's Supervision*, and *The Party's Supervision Work* were produced for circulation down to the county level (i.e. not restricted to higher level cadres) and were produced at the center by 'research and propaganda' (研究办公室 or 宣传办公室) offices of their corresponding central organs (the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of

Supervision, and the Central Commission for Discipline and Inspection, respectively). This level of restriction was calibrated towards their purpose: answering Zhu De's call to publish and share work experiences, and to present a limited forum for debate about appropriate practice to cadres working within these functional systems.

A typical issue of each might contain a lead-article reprinting an important speech, either by a central leader in the respective functional area or someone in an overall position of state leadership, followed by a variety of other content, including bulletins from local governments, specially reported pieces for the publication, newly passed national laws and regulations, and essays on work techniques and recent successes or failures. The majority of reported content was produced and submitted by local cadres themselves, and subsequently edited and compiled by the publication committee.

These communications were a very important channel for cadres to develop their work practices, learn about how others in their functional system handled problems, and be updated on the latest work priorities, regulations, and speeches. In a period as politically tumultuous as the early Mao era, staying up to date with the political line was a serious responsibility of every cadre that required significant investments of time and study. Furthermore, 'professionalization' was not straightforward – given the cyclical hostility towards specialized knowledge and rules-based governance, cadres needed to grasp both the practices to be applied *and* when exceptions should be made. While radio and the mass print media certainly also functioned as important channels for communicating the most top-line priorities, these print communications studied here focused on specific bureaucratic practices, like how to improve the speed and efficacy of arrest approval, and their absence was felt by local bureaucrats, who would sometimes write to the center to complain when they arrived late or incomplete (Thompson-Brusstar 2022).

Data

To assess the way that discussions around supervision work changed over time, I assembled and digitized a corpus of internal-circulation publications for the procuracy (entitled "People's Procuracy (人民检察"), the state supervision system ("People's Supervision (人民

监察)" and "State Supervision Work (国家监察工作)"), and the party discipline system ("Party Supervision Work (党的监察工作)"), from 1950 to 1959.

To extract the text of these publications for analysis, I computationally parsed the document layouts and recognized the text of the raw images to produce the corpus (Shen et al. 2021).[31] In all, the corpus contains more than five thousand pages of internal circulation publications. I assembled these through archival trips to Hong Kong and Taiwan, through academic libraries in the United States, and by collecting original materials from second-hand bookstores in China.[32]

As discussed above, these publications were a key way these institutions set out to professionalize and educate their staff. In terms of coverage, these organizations constitute three of the four most important institutions that handled official and party performance evaluation, punishment for malfeasance, and other functions of bureaucratic control. The fourth (missing) organization is the CCP Organization Department. This, not the discipline system, was the home of dossiers on cadres, their class backgrounds, political status, and is the organ charged with transfers and approvals for promotions and demotions, although the discipline system worked closely with the Organization Department. Unfortunately, information and materials about the internal functioning of the Organization Department are perhaps the most sensitive secrets outside of the national security system in China, which has made collecting the same kind of materials as presented here impossible as of this writing. I aim to include these materials, if possible, in the final published version of this project.

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[31]I discuss this process in the Appendix.

[32]This method of data collection raises several important ethical concerns, despite its common use among historians of China (sometimes referred to as 'garbology' by its practitioners) (Mullaney 2010). While historians, who are often collecting individual case files, have good reason to raise serious questions about informed consent, I am less concerned since my materials rarely name individuals, allaying concerns about privacy, but concerns about access remain. I plan to contribute the corpus of original documents I collected to an academic library upon completion of this dissertation –and my transcripts to several repositories of Maoist political history– so that my results can be replicated and extended and so others may use them for other projects.

Data selection, coverage, and corpus characteristics

For each institution, among the universe of internal-circulation materials about their work, I prioritized the inclusion of *national circulation, internal* publications. By 'national circulation,' I mean that publications were circulated across all regions by the central organization in charge of the functional area – e.g. the Ministry of Supervision. By 'internal,' I mean documents and publications whose contents were not to be released to the general public, and therefore presented the advantages and challenges above. This limited focus allows me to avoid several problems that might otherwise appear in archival research which could threaten the validity of my findings (Lee 2022).

First, it makes the documents I collect more *commensurable*, in the sense that they were produced for similar purposes and for similar audiences. These publications presented similar, but not identical, functions of information dissemination and 'professionalization' for their respective communities. Second, this limitation makes *missingness* easier to understand and address: serial publications were produced semi-regularly and were numbered, so the extent of missingness in my corpus could be assessed during the collection process and efforts made to address it.[33] Other possible bodies of sources, such as classified circulars, compilations, or other more restricted documents are both harder to collect across time and not necessarily mappable in a way where missingness could be assessed, since the collection-producing-process is more obscured. The national circulation of these materials also meant that more of them were produced, and therefore more of them survived and were available for collection.

Third, these publications are *intelligible,* meaning that they do not rely extensively on insider knowledge unavailable to researchers in order to interpret them. National circulation publications were (by-and-large) consumable by cadres in these systems down to the lowest (county) administrative level, and therefore would not assume an unreasonable amount of insider knowledge. This is ideal because the project is interested in discussion of, and changing justifications for, policies and practices as they developed over time. In

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[33]For example, much of my work collecting materials from secondhand bookstores was conducted to back-fill source material missing from reprints or compilations available in academic libraries.

contrast, more highly-classified materials might, for example, make extensive reference to other classified materials that are unavailable, making them difficult to interpret.

Fourth, national circulation publications were published *frequently* compared to local materials, partially due to the concentration of administrative resources in the center. While regional materials are sometimes available, and do provide more granular information, they are rarer, less regular, and only published in some regions. The temporal granularity of national publications is particularly useful because the nature of politics under Mao meant that changes could take place very quickly, and higher-frequency snapshots give us a better picture of evolving practices.

When possible, I have assembled complete runs of these publications across the period from 1950-1959, when the Ministry of Supervision was eliminated. To increase the temporal scope of the corpus, I have also included "study" and "reference" materials (学习资料，参考资料) I collected as part of assembling this collection. In particular, I include compilations of study materials that were the *direct periodical predecessors* to the publications which form the main body of the corpus, but which were sometimes published by regional (rather than central) organs.[34] Like the other publications, these materials were produced for cadres to learn from as they performed new tasks, and as fora for them to write in and discuss their work. Table 1 presents the number of corpus pages by source publication. Altogether, the corpus totals almost exactly 5500 pages of reports, bulletins, articles, interviews, regulations, laws, and reprinted speeches. The temporal distribution of pages in my corpus is displayed in Figure 1.

Audience and Content

The pedagogical mandate of these publications highlights the importance of understanding *for what* and *for whom* these documents were intended, and what questions they can or cannot answer as a result. For example, they are unable to illuminate the back-room dealings, the closed-door meetings, and the politics of the commanding heights that

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[34]E.g. for the procuracy the East China (华东) region published the People's Procuracy Work Study Materials (人民检察工作学习资料).
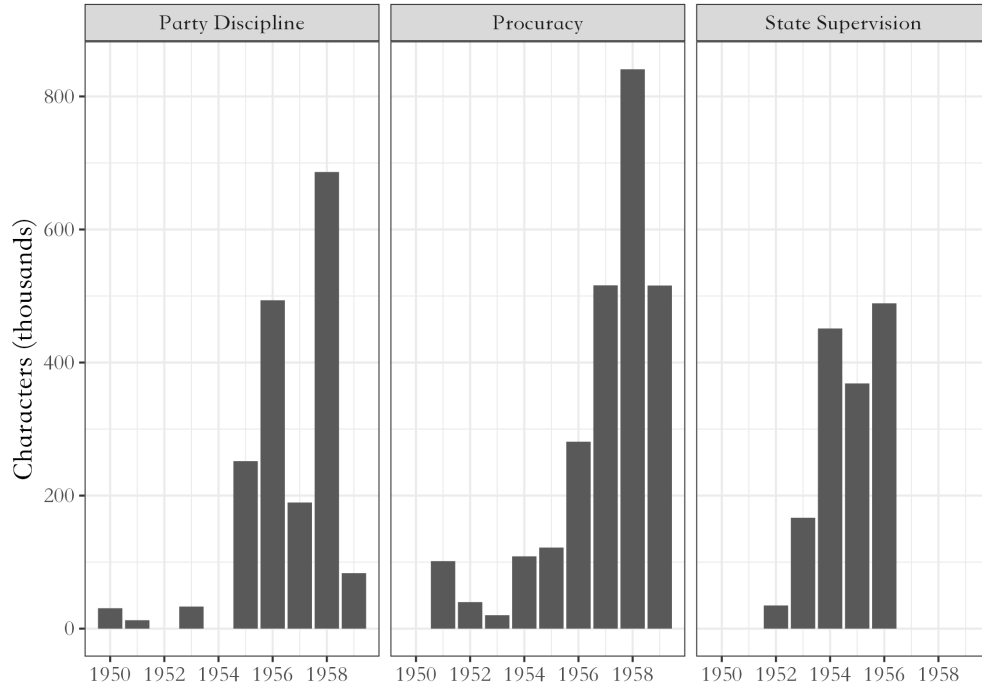
Figure 5: Subcorpus Size Distribution

undeniably shaped the evolution of the policies discussed here. Although the materials are often considerably more candid (and contentious) than public-facing materials, they can only show snapshots of what leadership in these organs considered best practices and urgent topics at the time of their publishing.

In some issues, the lion's share of pages may have been devoted to reprinting recent reports, laws, or regulations. Others, however, were sometimes dedicated to discussions of particular topics, or debates between practitioners across multiple issues. This is the strength of considering them together as a corpus; by tracing the way these concerns changed over time, we can track how the center changed the examples, work style, and tactics it aimed to prioritize across these organs. By reading the sources against the grain, it is even possible to recover some sense of the resistance these priorities encountered in local practice.

The corpus in this chapter uses a mix of manually transcribed (~2000 pages) and automatically recognized text (~3000 pages). I do this to partially address a methodological limitation related to automatically recognized documents: poor layout recognition, meaning that while the *words* on a page may be well-recognized, their *order* may be

captured less well. This presents challenges for the faithful digitization of the material. Mis-recognized layouts can still recognize much of the text on a page, but may place it in the wrong order, which limits the computational tools one can use with confidence.

Because these materials are rare and intended for internal government and party circulation, my corpus has gaps in coverage.[35] I address the accuracy of my recognition strategy, with a comparison to two baselines, in the Appendix.

In particular, as Figure 1 shows, the corpus suffers from serious missingness in the state supervision system after 1956. To address this, I have attempted to compensate by adding information from official historical reportage on the activities of the state supervision system from 1957 to its abolition in April 1959 (Peng 2002). This reportage, from an almanac of state and party supervision history, includes blurbs from articles published in National Supervision Work, case summaries, excerpts from directives from the Ministry of Supervision, and other relevant information. In general, although abbreviated, this mix resembles the publication that is missing. Because it is published reference material, it is likely exposed to historical selection. Although this adds only 75 pages (~151,000 characters) to the corpus, it does expand the coverage, allowing comparisons across the time periods closer to the abolition of the Ministry.

Table 1: Pages in corpus by source and time

Publication	Organization	First Issue	Last Issue	Total Pages
人民检察工作学习资料	Procuracy	1951-07	1953-09	274
检察工作通讯	Procuracy	1954-05	1955-08	133
人民检察参考资料	Procuracy	1954-07	1955-11	249
人民检察	Procuracy	1956-06	1959-12	1518
人民监察	State Supervision	1952-12	1955-10	927

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[35]Furthermore, these historical documents are often in states of disrepair, yellowed with age, or have otherwise been mishandled. As many of these documents were likely discarded as waste paper during the mass-de-accessioning that took place in China's 1980s, this is likely the *reason* they were de-accessioned and available for me or others to find, as archives likely contained duplicates in better condition.

Publication	Organization	First Issue	Last Issue	Total Pages
国家监察工作	State Supervision	1956-01	1956-12	427
中华监察执纪执法大典	State Supervision	1957-01	1959-04	74
纪律检查工作汇编	Party Discipline	1950-08	1953-05	198
党的监察工作	Party Discipline	1955-06	1959-04	1687

Methodology

In this chapter, I take a "computational grounded theory" approach to survey the corpus, aiming to how these models responded as larger political factors (mass campaigns, the first Five Year Plan) changed. 'Computational grounded theory,' is an abductive approach that involves iterative reading and modelling as exploration of the corpus proceeds (Nelson 2020). This approach has been successfully used elsewhere to draw out change over time in large corpora where the interest is primarily in changes to the way key terms are used and defined (Ding and Thompson-Brusstar 2021). Taking an approach that makes room for close reading is important in this case, because although historical accounts of this period often draw extensively from historical laws and regulations, contemporary media accounts, and interviews with emigres, to my knowledge this study is potentially the first to analyze the *language of these internal discussions* directly, including thousands of pages of material that may be introduced to the scholarly record for the first time.

Furthermore, the rapidly changing political environment and the long period of analysis (10 years) mean that there are good reasons to expect that there may be problems interpreting quantitative models alone. Temporal instability could arise, for example, due to changes of the meaning or contextual use of key terms over time, especially in a corpus created by institutions with functional overlap. To this end, and following the iterative process of computational grounded theory, I informed the following quantitative analysis with extensive close reading of materials in the corpus.

Results:

The view from 'above': Computing Changes in Supervision Style

To get a sense of how party discipline, administrative audits, and legal supervision differed, I have taken two approaches below. First, I present an exploratory, 'keyword' informed approach to understanding how the discussion, across the three corpora, varies over time. I then extend this approach and show that not only prevalence but also the contextual use of these terms changes over time and across subcorpora.

In Figure 6, I present a graph over time of keywords related to the work of these organs that capture a range of tactics, audiences, and targets of supervision over the decade. I chose these keywords from a slightly larger list with three concerns in mind: first, that the terms would cover a variety of working terminology shared across the three institutions; second, that the terms would capture changing relationships between state organs and party organs; and third, that terms might address the hypotheses of Schurmann (1973) about a transition from 'economic control,' which focused on organizations as the subject of evaluation and control, to 'political control,' which focused on the individual state or party cadre and his ideology and conduct as the main subject of supervision.[36] I also grouped terms that referred to a common strategy or target of supervision together (e.g. 'Reporting' includes 检举 and 举报).

I group the corpus by the month and year of its publication and its origin institution and then divide a count of each terms by the number of characters in that period for that organ; this creates a roughly comparable estimate of relative term "prevalence" within a specific sub-corpus. This process is not without measurement error; many of the reports, speeches, and regulatory documents published or republished in the corpus are actually dated at other times, sometimes months before the publication date. Instead of representing discourse "as it happened," then, these counts (and the embeddings below)

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[36]The full list of terms I examined, including those not visualized, is 监督 (supervise), 审查 (review), 调查 (investigate, as in person), 检查 (investigate, as of a case), 通讯员 (correspondent), 群众 (masses), 干部 (cadre), 人员 (personnel), 机关组织 and 机构 (organ or organization or structure), 党委 (party committee), 教育 (education), 奖惩 (reward and punish), 领导 (leadership), 指导 (direction, as opposed to leadership), 来信 and 来访 (petitions), 检举 and 举报 (reporting, as in whistleblowing or accusing), 党员 (party member), 事先事前 and 平时 (in-advance and regular, as of routine inspections).

represent information as it was represented to cadres receiving these publications.[37]

The visual patterns in Figure 2 correspond well to the historical presentation in Chapter 2. One place we can see variation is in the way the three institutions treated information; the state supervision system was considerably more likely to mention reporting from below as well as petitions in the pre-1954 period, as well as the proper use and expansion of the correspondent system for monitoring and information collection. This reflects a potentially important way that the state supervision system, dependent on embedded 'supervision offices' that reported to it for much of its bureaucratic control work, addressed its 'authority' deficit, as these embedded offices were often led by the work unit party committee rather than their functional system superiors.

Correspondents– largely volunteers but also paid informants organized into brigades that reported back to state organs on a regular basis– were discussed a great deal by the State Supervision system early in the 1950s. However, despite their role in providing a connection to the all important 'masses,' they were de-emphasized and the rolls mostly purged during the party rectification campaign beginning in 1956 (邬 and 荣 2014). After the anti-Rightist campaign devastated the procuracy and led it to gut its administrative supervision sections, these correspondents were sometimes even directly transferred to the state supervision organs.[38]

We also see discussions of authority fluctuate – e.g. in the 'leadership' panel of Figure 6. The complicated relationship with authority in the state supervision system may be what drives the variance in discussions there – including around the expansion of the Harbin model mentioned above, where direct leadership by the Ministry of Railways Supervision Office was first promoted and then contentious. Leadership is also a consistent topic of discussion across the different institutions around big moments in institutional reforms, particularly the 1954 Constitution that established the Ministry of Supervision and the 1955 reforms to the party discipline system.

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[37]I am, however, currently in the process of dating each component document for comparisons in future versions of this work.

[38]"1958 年上半年，市检察院将人民检察通讯员移交给市监察局，作为监察部门通讯员" 南宁市检察志, p.490.
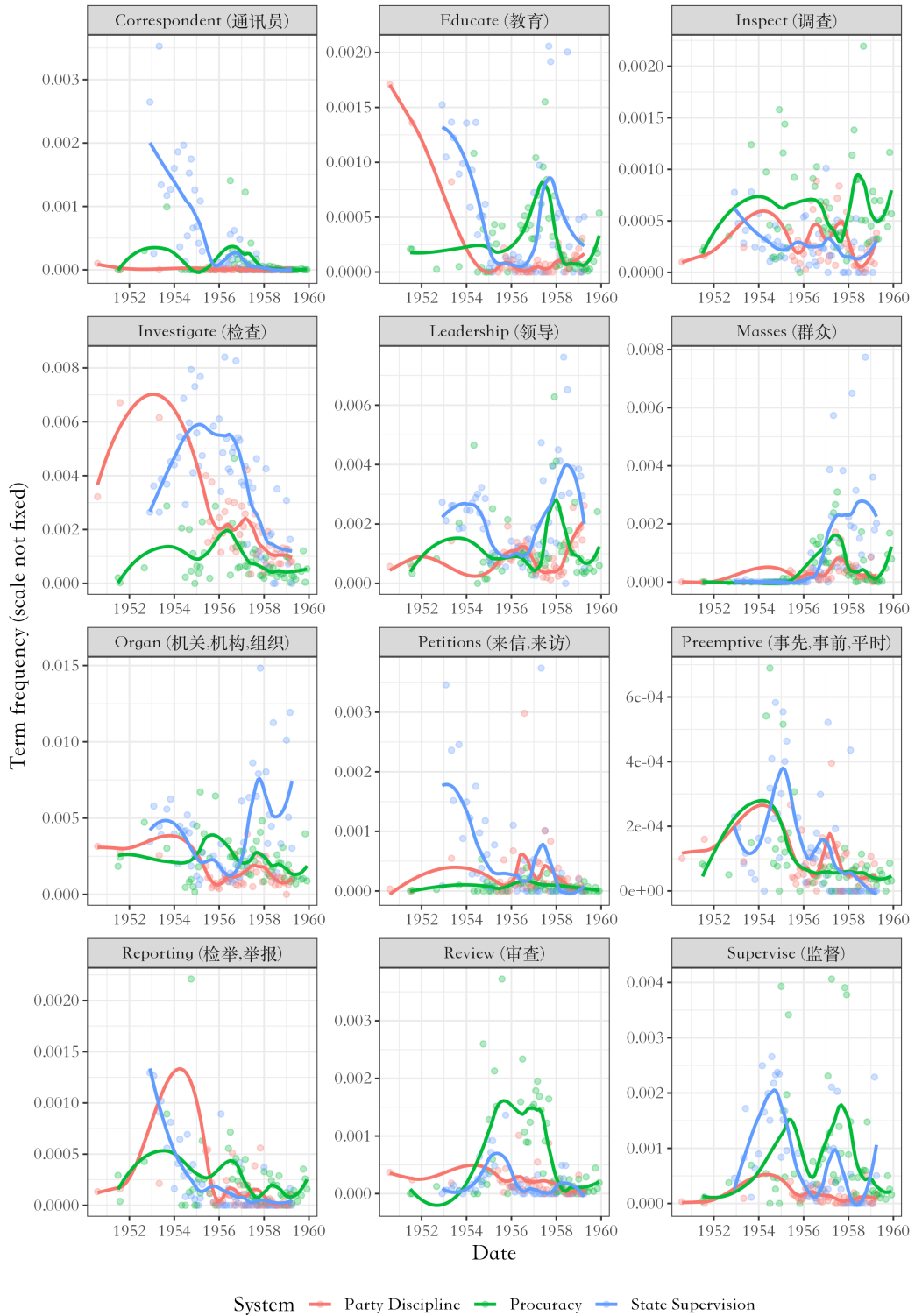
Figure 6: Term Frequencies, by term and system

Similarly, we can see the large increase in discussion of 'review work' by the procuracy during this period. The peaks we see were largely related to arrest requests (批捕) from the Public Security Bureau, which flooded the procuracy after the passage of the 1954 Constitution, putting pressure on both organs to follow the *de jure* procedure. The wave of reviews intensified further as the Campaign to Eradicate Hidden Counterrevolutionaries (sometimes called the 'Sufan (肃反)' campaign) proceeded between 1955 and the end of 1957 (Thompson-Brusstar 2022, 10).

Finally, although on less firm ground in the corpus, the pattern of consistently emphasizing 'education' –either in concert with, or instead of punishment – by the party discipline apparatus before 1954 fits some historical discussion of its ineffectual nature before the elite struggle around the Gao Gang-Rao Shushi purge in 1955 (Li 2016, 452). It also complies with consistent theme in early PRC reports and writings about the shortage of qualified cadres, and on the problems of educating extant cadres.

Equally interesting, the prevalence of 'education' skyrockets during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (late 1957) for both the Procuracy and the Ministry of Supervision, but stays relatively low in the party discipline sub-corpus; this reflects the internal persecution of alleged rightists that took place inside the Procuracy and the Ministry of Supervision (i.e. cadres in serious need of 'education'). In contrast, while the party discipline corpus very much emphasized rectification and anti-Rightist work, where previously cadres being investigated for mistakes would have received 'education,' they were now being 'cleaned out (清除)'.

As a composite picture, we can also observe commonalities that single-institution studies would miss– for example, the way party, procuracy, and state systems of bureaucratic control all largely neglected discussion of the 'masses' until 1956 – although this could have been due to different referents before 1956. Nonetheless, this cuts against expectations that the party discipline apparatus would have discussed the masses (or other terms) more, given the baseline assumption that these would be more prominent in party organs.

Despite this suggestive evidence, term prevalence leaves much to be desired as a measurement strategy. Consider the procuracy's sudden peak in 'supervise' in 1957; this

increase does not reflect increased use of supervision, but the *repudiation* of general supervision during the anti-Rightist campaign. As discussed in Chapter 2, the campaign focused on cadres who prioritized proactive supervision of administrative and legal actors (Thompson-Brusstar 2022), leading to the closing of administrative supervision offices across the country. One approach to addressing this potential measurement deficiency is to explicitly incorporate the context of word use – precisely the method used to estimate word embeddings. It is to this approach I turn in the next section.

Extending the keyword approach using word embeddings

Tracking the use of words (especially 'key formulations' referred to as 'tifa (提法)', although that is not the focus here) has historically been an important technique for studying Chinese politics, as keywords are anchors for signalling priorities and changing emphases by state and party authorities to party members, state employees, and the general public (Schoenhals 1992). However, it's rare to be able to examine the changing context of these terms quantitatively, or the differences in their use across across state organs, as the volume and continuity of text records are often insufficient.

In this section, I show that the embeddings approach does recover context-dependent meaning changes in the corpus. I then show how the relationship between the three sub-corpora changed across the course of the 1950s overall. I document a growing similarity after 1954, although the procuracy stands out as expected. I further show that available evidence suggests that the 1957 anti-Rightist campaign did not produce homogeneity in the institutions of bureaucratic control, but (brief) fragmentation across the institutions of bureaucratic control.

These analyses are based explicitly on the *context* of the examined terms, rather than their prevalence in the corpus. In particular, I adopt the 'a la carte' (ALC) word-embeddings and regression-based approach outlined in Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) and built upon the work of Khodak et al. (2018). This approach, like most word-embedding approaches, uses the context in which a word occurs to estimate vector-representations of them, and aims to understand the differences in the way they are used across subgroups

and over time.

This approach is designed precisely for small corpora like the one under study here, and compromises only slightly on performance. In brief, using ALC embeddings attenuates the possible shortcomings of estimating embeddings on a small corpus by using pre-trained embeddings from elsewhere; pre-trained embeddings for words in the context of a target word are averaged, and then re-weighted by a matrix (estimated separately) that down-weights the contributions of common, uninformative words. This attenuates the problems of embeddings in a small corpus because many occurrences of a target word are necessary to estimate a high-quality embedding – more than would occur in a small corpus. Instead, this approach still estimates new embeddings, using the *context* of target words in the corpus of interest (here, the three sub-corpora), but estimates them as an adjusted average of high-quality word-embeddings obtained from a different corpus.

One decision point in this technique is where to get these larger embeddings: as Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) note, the appropriateness of using an 'off the shelf' large set of embeddings (normally trained on contemporary text) varies depending on the use-case, but they recommend using high-quality embeddings that are easily available and estimated on huge data-sets of contemporary text.

There are good reasons to expect, however, that contemporary Chinese text might not be a good basis for word embeddings. Contemporary Chinese, especially text found on the open internet, is likely to contain our terms of interest in different contexts than in internal circulation documents from China's 1950s. Yang and Roberts (2021) have already shown that positive and negative information manipulation by the Chinese government can drive differences in downstream applications by showing the difference between embeddings fit on the Chinese Baidu Encyclopedia versus those fit on Chinese language Wikipedia. To ensure that I am reweighting my embeddings with the proper context, I estimated my own 'local' set of word embeddings on the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee – the People's Daily (人民日报)— from 1949 to 1959, a corpus consisting of more than 205,000 articles (212,941,083 characters). These embeddings are used to then estimate my own transformation matrix instead of using one fit from

contemporary text. I can then fit ALC embeddings from the procuracy, state supervision, and party discipline corpora and compare them to one another and over time.

In the following sections, I gradually build up intuition about what the embeddings are capturing from the corpus. I find that they map closely the changes across sub-corpora as well as cross time that we would expect from the brief historical treatment presented in Chapter 2.

Embedding Comparisons

To get a sense of how the documents across the corpus differ by origin institution without manually picking terms, we can average document embeddings for each organization and then assemble a set of nearest neighbors from the other terms in the embedding space. The top ten nearest neighbors for the three institutions are displayed in Table 2; the higher the 'similarity,' the closer that word vector is to the average for the whole sub-corpus.

Table 2: Terms most similar to subcorpus averages

Organ	Term	Rank	Similarity
State supervision	Investigate (检查)	1	0.7479100
	Supervise (监察)	2	0.7475952
	Timely (及时)	3	0.6251069
	Supervise and urge (督促)	4	0.6143219
	Supervise (监督)	5	0.6090531
	Department (部门)	6	0.6082969
	Serious (认真)	7	0.6041627
	Handle (处理)	8	0.6037785
	Work (工作)	9	0.5992887
	Responsible (负责)	10	0.5959834
Procuracy	Procuracy (检察)	1	0.8149723
	Case (案件)	2	0.6628017
	People's Court (人民法院)	3	0.6217638

Organ	Term	Rank	Similarity
	Judgment (审判)	4	0.6210816
	Judicial (司法)	5	0.6184101
	Court (法院)	6	0.6099256
	Prosecute (起诉)	7	0.5942407
	Crime (犯罪)	8	0.5748781
	Police (公安)	9	0.5694191
	Handle (处理)	10	0.5628226
Party discipline	Investigate (检查)	1	0.6756967
	Mistake (错误)	2	0.6744259
	Punish (处分)	3	0.6603935
	Within the party (党内)	4	0.6576857
	Supervise (监察)	5	0.6522799
	Handle (处理)	6	0.6435545
	Party Committe (党委)	7	0.6317440
	Party Member (党员)	8	0.6309212
	Self Criticism (检讨)	9	0.6289925
	Criticise (批评)	10	0.6193516

The results in this table are again reassuring; the procuracy's role as part of the criminal and civil legal system in addition to its role in bureaucratic control is particularly clear, as we would expect given the nature of the publications in the corpus. The differences in vocabulary and in techniques for discipline are also clear – "criticism" and "self-criticism" appearing in the party discipline cluster with "errors" (the euphemism for violating party rules), and "handle" (a common word pair with 'problems' and 'cases') appears across subcorpora.

Use Change Across the Corpus

To understand how discussions across the corpus or between different institutional actors changed over time, we can compare how the context in which they were used differed. A particularly useful place to begin is the term 'investigate (检查),' which our figure above showed was used widely across criminal, administrative, and disciplinary work, and occurs 13,160 times in the corpus. We can use the regression framework of Rodriguez, Spirling, and Stewart (2023) to examine questions like "do the three subcorpora use the same word differently?" or "how does the meaning of this word in the whole corpus change over time?" This works essentially by examining the changing similarity of other words with an embedded representation of each term.

In the figure below, I estimate a series of cosine similarities between several hand-picked keywords and 'investigate'; all term embeddings here and below used a 'window' of 6 words on either side to estimate the 'context' in which a word is used; I report the mean of 200 bootstrapped estimates.

```
## 13160 instances of "检查" found.
## total observations included in regression: 13160
## starting bootstrapping
## done with bootstrapping
## starting permutations
## done with permutations
##   coefficient normed.estimate  std.error  lower.ci  upper.ci p.value
## 1       year       0.4851588 0.01009956 0.4685047 0.5021805       0
```

Figure 7 shows two particularly interesting patterns, especially given that it was estimated across the whole corpus of internal publications. First is the growing association of 'investigation' with 'the masses (群众)', reflecting the expected incorporation of the mass-line (群众路线) into the work of each of these organs. This association grows, but levels off towards the last temporal section of the corpus. This is surprising given the historiography of how in-person inspections and communicating with the masses dominated

68
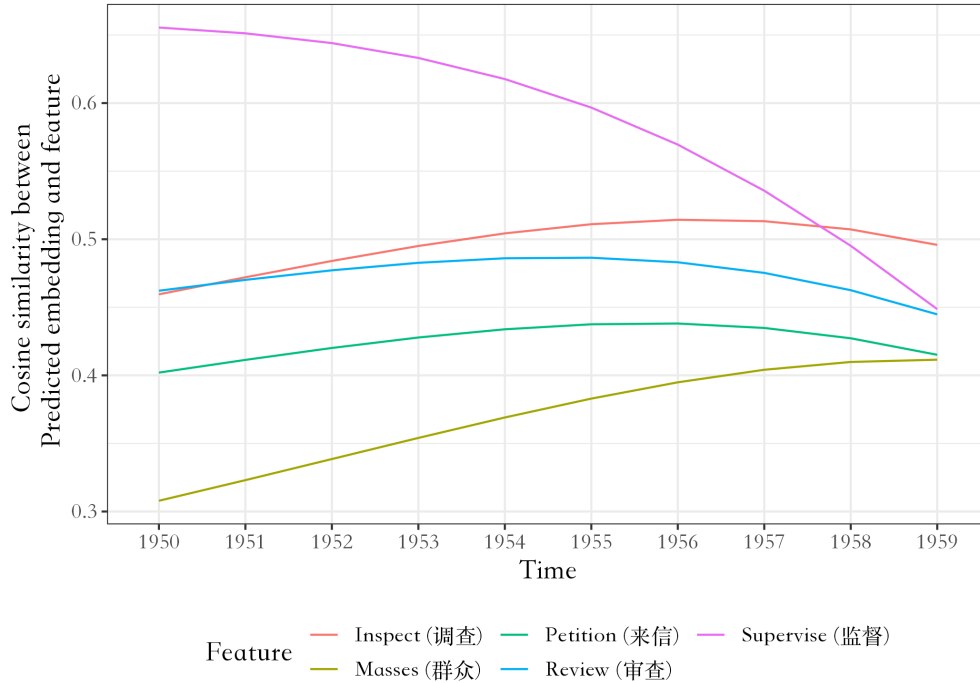
Figure 7: Term Similarity to 'Investigate (检查)': All Subcorpora, 1950-1959

party and state work in this period – but may be a function of changing corpus coverage.

Most striking, however, is the rapid dis-alignment of the term 'supervise' with the term 'investigation' over the course of the period. This is exciting because 'supervision' was (as we saw earlier) in extensive use by the procuracy in the later part of our corpus; however, the embeddings are able to distinguish between the way supervision was mentioned before its repudiation, very much in the context of investigations (cosine similarity near .7), with the context of repeated denunciations of general supervision in 1957, when it was associated with rightists.

```
## 1847 instances of "检查" found.
## total observations included in regression: 1847
## starting bootstrapping
## done with bootstrapping
## starting permutations
## done with permutations
##   coefficient normed.estimate  std.error  lower.ci  upper.ci p.value
```

```
## 1        year            0.6424622 0.02610271 0.5985391 0.6828703        0
```
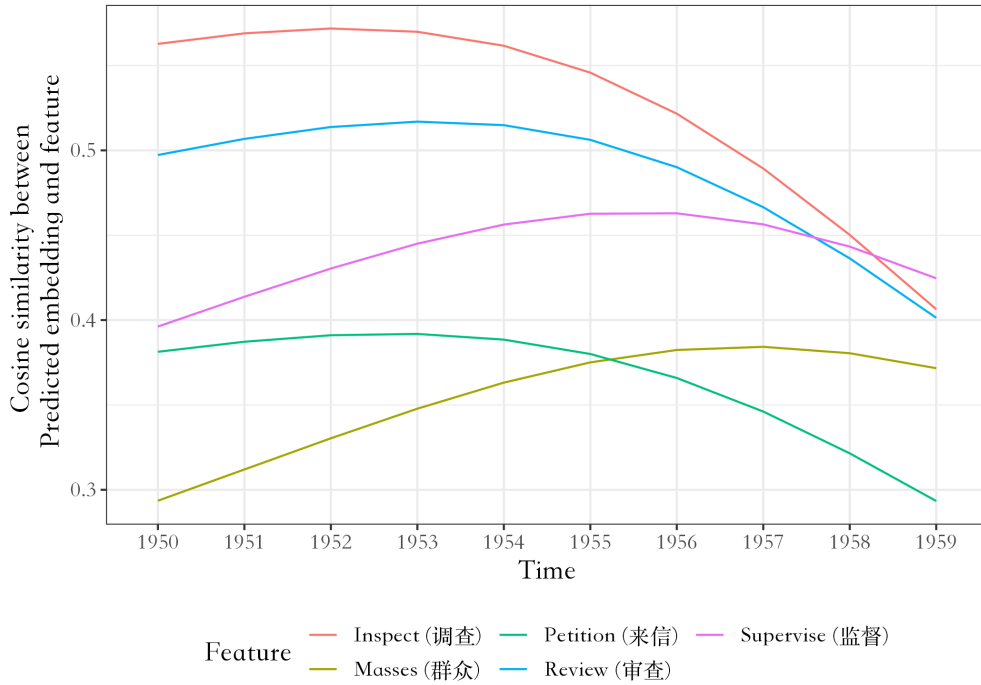

Figure 8: Term Similarity to 'Investigate (检查)': Procuracy subcorpus, 1950 to 1959

We can examine this more closely by estimating the same set of cosine similarities within the procuracy subcorpus alone (Figure 8). What we observe is a moderated, but similar rise, and then fall in the cosine similarity of 'supervision 监督' with inspection. We also see pronounced declines in the cosine similarity between in-person inspection work (调查) and petitions (来信) after the first periods of the corpus. This reflects serious tactical changes to the way procurators conducted their work over time, as handling reporting from below was considered an important institutional heritage of the procuracy from the base-area period.

Assessing convergence of models

One possible explanation for the eventual dominance of the personal, discipline model of management as described in Harding (1981) and Schurmann (1973) would be that it dominated even before the institutional landscape of bureaucratic control consolidated. It is also possible that this dominance could have taken place after the anti-rightist campaign eliminated other alternatives. There is not clear evidence of this in Figure 6, but

inductively selected terms are unlikely to be the best basis for distinguishing between the corpora– indeed, some of them were chosen because of their common use, rather than because of their distinctiveness.

Instead, one way to see if this convergence took place is to examine if language used by the three institutions converged, even before the abandonment of general supervision by the Procuracy in late 1957, or the closure of the state supervision system in 1959.

We can approximate this test quantitatively by subdividing the corpus both by institution and temporally, and then estimating composite average document embeddings for each institution-period. If we compare these to one another and they become more similar across time, this would be evidence consistent with the idea that the rhetoric, at least, was converging across the three organizations.

Because there are three institutions and cosine-similarity is commutative, three estimated quantities can summarize this relationship in each period (i.e. the cosine similarity between the procuracy embedding and the state supervision embedding is the same as the cosine similarity between the state supervision embedding and the procuracy embedding). This approach can also reveal the within-institutional change across time periods. Because of the limited temporal overlap, below I segment the corpus into 10 periods that allow me to use overlap in the corpora, and that roughly balance page counts across sub corpora. After the first (largest) time period, they correspond to between 5 and 13 months.

The cosine similarities of the institution-period corpora are presented in Figure 9. Note that, again due to overlap constraints in the sub-corpora, I *duplicate* the document-period embedding for the party discipline embedding from the first period (1951-1953) into the second and third so that comparisons can be estimated; for periods after 1956, I also use the reportage described above to substitute for missing issues from the state supervision corpus.

Figure 9 reflects several interesting patterns in the sub-corpora. First, there are some continuities: generally, the state supervision system and discipline inspection system are most similar, followed by the state supervision system to the procuracy, and then the party

Figure 9: Average Document Embedding Cosine Similarities, by Institution

discipline system to the procuracy. This again likely reflects the work done by the procuracy outside bureaucratic control, but it is also not completely static over time. With the exception of the second period, the periods of greatest similarity between the procuracy subcorpus and the other institutions of bureaucratic control are the 'height' of the procuracy exercising 'general supervision' – after 1954 and ending in late 1957.

Second, we do see evidence of some convergence between the state supervision and party discipline subcorpora over time – although as mentioned above, there is a large divergence after the anti-Rightist Campaign. This dramatic change in the similarity to the state supervision sub-corpus could be due to the small, unusual nature of the substitute corpus used from 1957 forward for that system, but the party discipline and procuracy sub-corpora also diverge considerably at that point (after 1957-12 to 1958-07), suggesting that the divergence may be driven by significant changes to the party discipline corpus as well.

This is particularly surprising since close reading of the available materials from after this time suggests that the general lines of change were mostly the same after 1957: emphasizing the presumptuous errors of figures who spearheaded independent visions of bureaucratic control, reiterating the leadership of the party committee, and in the particular cases of the procuracy and party discipline, the importance of distinguishing between conflicts 'among the people' (人民内部矛盾) from those between 'us and enemies' (敌我之间的矛盾) (Mao 1957). Although the procuracy mostly abandoned its bureaucratic control functions after the anti-Rightist campaign, it is still a useful comparison point for how the remaining cadres were encouraged to think about and conduct their work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I surveyed the ways that bureaucratic control was established in the first decade of the PRC. Using new data from the internal publications of three state and party organizations charged with various bureaucratic control functions, I constructed a corpus that allows us to examine how the allocation of authority, the collection of information, and more varied over time in the PRC's first decade.

I established that bureaucratic control models differed, sometimes substantially, between

the party discipline system, the state supervision system, and the procuracy, showing that even though their jurisdictions may have overlapped, they were still made homes to different approaches. I also found that some tactics, like the use of correspondents, moved across different institutions.

I have also shown that in the period after 1955 but before the anti-Rightist campaign, there was some convergence in discussions of bureaucratic control, especially between the party discipline system and the state supervision system. This is *a priori* surprising because it was precisely during this period, as described in Chapter 2, that the State Supervision system constructed and promulgated its most controversial supervision strategies on the Harbin Audit Office model. It is possible that closer attention to the ways the party discipline apparatus was conducting cadre supervision during this time, especially after the post-Gao Rao affair institutional adjustments and the (temporary) restructuring of its accountability relationships may have changed the way the Party Central Supervision Commission directed their efforts.

Finally, I show that contrary to the expectation that after a common shock to the bureaucratic control apparatus in the form of the anti-Rightist Campaign, that reactions differed across the three institutions. While it might have been expected that the Ministry of Supervision stood out (as we now know it would be eliminated), it is less clear why the trend of the previous several years would reverse itself. In future work, I hope to unpack the specifics of how these organizations reacted differently.

Chapter 4: Bottom-up Inputs to Bureaucratic Control

Monitoring cadres and malfeasance is a particular problem in fast-growing economies with significantly delegated authority. The problem of managing tense central-local relations is the subject of a large literature in the study of Chinese politics, and the considerable delegation of authority to localities has led to its political system being described as 'de facto federalism' by Montinola, Qian, and Weingast (1995) and credited with an important (but contested) role in its economic rise (Cai and Treisman 2006).[39]

In Chinese politics, to manage central-local relations is to manage bureaucrats. Even at the height of market reforms, the state played a incredibly important role in promoting economic growth, and the substantial variation of these strategies has played a crucial role in the path of Chinese growth both nationally and sub-nationally (Chen 2018). This period saw many reforms to the management of cadres, including the policies to enforce retirement for older cadres and the cadre evaluation system, which aimed to align performance and promotion standards for local executives (Manion 1985, 1993). These set a new backdrop for the repertoire of bureaucratic control developed during the Mao era.

In this chapter, I study one particular intervention in the incorporation of bottom-up information: the increase in petitions and visits – a form of citizen action where regular people bring complaints directly to government offices (sometimes specialized petitions offices) with a problem, complaint, or dispute. I take advantage of the staggered opening of Ministry of Supervision Reporting Offices in prefecture-level cities to identify variation in petitions about official misconduct, and attempt to assess the effect of these petitions on anti-corruption enforcement.

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[39]For a recent review and analysis of the literature on central-local relations in China, see Chung (2016).

In the framework of this dissertation, as I will discuss at greater length below, this was potentially (and was seen at least by some state cadres as) an important form of information for bureaucratic controllers on government policy and cadre performance. In this chapter, however, I find that the opening of a reporting office has no effect on investigations of corruption crimes, even those normally associated with low-level cadres, and some evidence of a *negative* effect. I argue that this is due in part to the lack of connection between increases in information and increased authority for bureaucratic controllers.

Further, the general study of petitioning and government response demonstrates how information and authority can be deeply entangled as context changes: if petitioners were afforded 'perfect' whistle-blower protections, for example, the information they provided might indeed be valuable for cadre management, and regular people might be happy to provide it. But as soon as information is known to be used for evaluating cadres, the strategic cascade changes everything. As 'metric' becomes 'target,' cadres set out to prevent or repress petitioners from filing, and petitioners refrain from petitioning in expectation of repression– even *de jure* protections for Chinese whistle-blowers were not passed by provinces until 1989 at the earliest, and often as late as the mid 1990s (Gueorguiev 2021, 77; Wong and Peng 2015).

In light of this context, the chapter makes two contributions: first, I examine the effect of an informational intervention *before* the widespread penetration of the internet in China. In contrast, much of the literature on "responsive authoritarianism" in China does focus on the role of petitions and other forms of 'bottom-up' incorporation (Heurlin 2016). An entire literature has developed around one form of bottom-up input, "mayor's mailboxes," where Chinese citizens can send messages to the government (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2016; Distelhorst and Fu 2019; Distelhorst and Hou 2014, 2017; Jiang, Meng, and Zhang 2019; Meng, Pan, and Yang 2017; Su and Meng 2016). Most similar to my approach, Gueorguiev (2021) shows that bottom-up reporting on corruption by citizens has a positive effect on the number investigations of cadres from roughly 1995 to 2015[40] by leveraging plausibly

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[40] The analysis does not clearly note which years are included.

exogenous variation in internet use (p. 81-86).

While valuable for understanding a host of important questions about state-society relations in China, nearly all these works focus on the use of the *internet*, making it difficult to know if this 'responsiveness' has earlier roots or was new in the late 2000s and after.[41] I present a much earlier examination of the reform-era petitioning system, and argue that if petitions *did* elicit 'responsiveness' later, this was likely due to some change after the late 1980s.

Second, if my identification strategy holds, I am able to identify a unique source of variation not in *general* bottom-up information, as in other studies that have attempted to count petitions, but in petitions to a *particular* state organization focused on bureaucratic control. This mitigates serious challenges with previous studies of petitioning, as petition data can be reported multiple times across different organs due to transfers, reported at high levels of aggregation, and are not always about bureaucratic conduct or local policy. My research design makes the conclusion that bottom-up information did not improve bureaucratic control in this period even more stark.

Information and Bureaucratic Control in China's 1980s

'Bottom-up' strategies for managing bureaucrats became particularly important starting in the 1980s. As Gallagher (2017) shows in her study of legal mobilization, the Chinese state has historically used 'fire alarms' in the parlance of McCubbins and Schwartz (1984), meaning that it provides a bottom up avenue for feedback on the performance of government actors and policies –without the costly regular monitoring that 'police patrols' might require. While Gallagher (2017) shows the importance of worker mobilization to enforce the Labor Contract Law during the Hu-Wen era (2002-2012), bottom-up contributions were already a crucial part of the Chinese party-states efforts towards bureaucratic control in the early reform era.

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[41]While Chen (2012) presents an excellent historical treatment of petitions in Chapter 2, the main empirical focus of the book is the 1990s. Equally important, the extent to which the 'responsiveness' documented in responses to mayor's mailbox inquiries is more expressive and less substantive is open to debate.

Institutional approaches for collecting information, referred to as 'input institutions' in the Chinese politics literature (following Nathan (2003)), included the legal system (Gallagher 2017), quasi-tolerated protest activities (Lorentzen 2013), and the petitions and visits system (Chen 2016).[42] In general, these institutions are partially considered important because they allow governments (local or central) to gather *information* about the performance or activities of other actors that they would otherwise find difficult to collect, or when regular channels of information are biased or falsified. The fact that they input information to the *government* is a crucial distinction, since independent initiatives for aggregating information about government performance, especially on corruption, were not long tolerated (Ang 2014).

Bottom up information and 'controlled inclusion':

Petitions and visits during this period provide an interesting opportunity to expand our understanding of 'input' institutions by examining their use before petitioning was incorporated into other mechanisms of bureaucratic control, like local cadre evaluations. The folk knowledge in the behavioral sciences is that using a metric as a target affects its value as a metric.[43] Wallace (2023) shows this clearly with the example of GDP growth as a target in the case of China.

As detailed below, however, while local governments were technically obliged to address concerns 'that could be addressed,' petitions were not incorporated into cadre evaluations (an important vector of top-down accountability) formally until the 1990s.[44] This allows us to theoretically attenuate a common linkage between the *provision* of information and an *obligation* to respond to it. By studying petitioning in this period, we can therefore ask if *information* was truly a constraining factor in China's rebuilt bureaucratic control apparatus.

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[42]For a more complete list, see Brown (2021), p. 446. For a critical discussion, see Huirong (2020).

[43]This is sometimes referred to as Goodhart's Law or Campbell's Law, which came first but is less pithily phrased.

[44]For example, they were not incorporated into the Hefei City evaluations until 1999's Hefei City Petition Work Target Management Responsibility Evaluation Methods 《合肥市信访工作目标管理责任制考核办法 (上)》 (合肥市地方志编纂委员会 2012, 582).

Hidden information is a definitional concern for much of the literature on agency problems, and because of its value real organizations often attempt to ensure its unbiased provision by cultivating multiple sources. It also underpins one of the core problems of autocracy the "dictator's dilemma" in which dictators receive unreliable information because of sycophancy, fear, and preference falsification (Wintrobe 2000). But as Gailmard and Patty (2013) show in their model of 'stove-piping,' not all information provision is the same, and connections to the status quo affect the incentive to seek out costly additional information, or even to withhold information altogether. Allowing the input of information from below –and the decision to provide it by regular people– can be strategically fraught, as the extensive literature on whistle-blowing shows (Felli and Hortala-Vallve 2016; Ting 2008).

To the extent that governments are interested in addressing problems, 'bottom-up' information is sometimes thought of as uniquely beneficial, coming as it does from outside the state, and therefore as being free from distortionary incentives. This is certainly the way that reporting offices were portrayed in state media, emphasizing the ease and anonymity of reporting (袁 1988).[45]

But while information might have been appearing through reporting offices and petitions, the incentive structures for *bureaucratic control* were not changing. Both before and after this intervention, prefectural procurators, state supervisors, and discipline inspection commissioners were all responsible to the local party committee. As emphasized above, this organizational context matters for whether information is provided by regular people, let alone utilized. This is not just true in theory; Olken (2007) shows experimentally that involving local communities in the monitoring of government projects had no overall effect on reducing misappropriation of public funds.

This chapter attempts to understand if a different (citizen initiated) form of bottom-up information provision improves bureaucratic control. In the next section, I outline the challenges to understanding this dynamic in China's 1980s.

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[45]Reading against the grain, however, repeated articles emphasizing the rights of petitioners suggests that at least some were ignored and even repressed for petitioning (Anonymous 1988).

Challenges

In the pages that follow, I attempt to assess the effect of expansions to this bottom-up informational intervention. This presents two primary challenges: first, there are several threats to inference, which I expand upon in the Data section. In general, the 1980s saw unprecedented expansion of sources for bottom-up incorporation: local governments opened hotlines, mayors and other local executives held "open office days" for complainants, hired informants among the population, and dialed up 'inspection' tours to detect local problems. In this sense, any attempt to isolate the effect is in danger of being washed out by a cacophony of other interventions by local governments. Second, the political and and economic changes of the 1980s are a profoundly sensitive subject in Chinese politics, subject to extensive censorship, the removal of data, and (equally dangerous) the rosy re-tooling as the decade in which China "took off" (Gewirtz 2022).

These joint challenges mean that even the simplest demographic or economic information is difficult to collect, not to mention information about government malfeasance, the number of public complaints to government offices, or the function of the criminal justice system, which can be difficult to obtain for local governments even in the contemporary period, as the Chinese government shuts of academic access to statistical materials and retroactively censors academic databases (Tiffert 2019).

Previous work

Work on petitions in China provide a variety of insights on the performance of the system at the village level (Chen 2016), as well as on 'collective petitioning' and 'skip-level petitioning,' in which petitioners go to Beijing instead of local governments in search of redress (Li, Liu, and O'Brien 2012). As mentioned above, for the first half of the 1980s, a huge portion of petitions were seeking to overturn historical 'unjust verdicts' passed against cadres from the Mao era, and many of those seeking redress went directly to Beijing, which required the mobilization of thousands of cadres to accompany them back to local governments to resolve (许 1998).

More generally, as mentioned above, the 'input institutions' of Chinese politics have

received significant scholarly attention in the past decade, from local legislatures (Manion 2015) to government transparency initiatives (Stromseth, Malesky, and Gueorguiev 2017). Significant attention within this framework has examined the input of regular people into the political system. From a variety of designs and data sources including both field experiments and observational approaches, these works have asked who responds to feedback from regular people, who gets responses at all, and the quality of those responses, as well as what the messages sent by complainants say (Distelhorst and Fu 2019).

Gueorguiev (2021) attempts the most similar research design to this chapter, attempting to estimate the impact of bottom-up reports of corruption collected from a variety of sources between roughly 1995 and 2015 on the number of investigations provinces conducted of corruption.[46] By using distance from internet provision infrastructure as an instrument for number of bottom-up reports, he finds that increased bottom-up reportage *does* increase the number of investigations. As elaborated further below, however, this leaves several questions about the actual effectiveness of bottom-up reporting unanswered: what level cadres were affected by these bottom-up petitions? Does this relationship hold only for after internet use became more widespread, and after the government encouraged its use? Are reports to the discipline inspection commission, the procuratorate, and the national audit system comparable?

Unfortunately the difficulty of understanding the ways 'reports' from below work are matched by the difficulties of understanding petitions. Counts of petitions, for example, masks heterogeneity in the responsiveness to petitions across different issue areas – something documented in the mayor's mailbox literature– making the impacts of petitioning very difficult to assess. Furthermore, with the exception of some work (Dimitrov 2015; Luehrmann 2003), we know comparatively little about the ways that petitioning worked inside the government, in particular during the early reform period, when it was less institutionalized and also at one of its numerical peaks. In 1984, even as

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[46]He cites the Supreme Procuratorate Yearbook, the Audit Yearbook, and the official reports of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, making it unclear whether the petitions are even necessarily comparable, aggregated as they are from different bureaucratic organs; he also leaves the particular corruption crimes used and the range of years for which his regression is estimated unclear.

petitions were declining from their recent peak in 1979, there were over 2.3 million petitions reported; the number would decrease as the decade went on, but there were still 1.4 million petitions received across levels of government in 1986, and more than 800 thousand in 1989 (Dimitrov 2015, 65).

To try and understand the ways bottom-up information was used for bureaucratic control, especially before the internet changed the landscape considerably, we can place the growth of bottom-up feedback and petitions in context.

Petitions and Visits: Why the 1980s?

Incorporating more of this type of feedback made sense in China's 1980s for several reasons: the first was the useful political history of 'mass-line' motivated monitoring, the 'people's supervision,' and mobilizational policy-making, although the latter became less common in the reform period (Andreas and Dong 2017a).[47] It is of course important to avoid romanticizing this transition, since the masses were sometimes 'educated' or 'managed' when their feedback diverged too sharply from policy priorities.[48] Nonetheless, what Gueorguiev (2021) has recently called 'controlled inclusion' of input from regular people has been incorporated and institutionalized in a variety of ways since the founding of the republic, and the reform period was no exception.

The second reason that early reform made sense as a period for expansion of bottom-up information outlets, as well as the restoration of older tools from the toolkit, was the measured retreat of the state from society. In the *status quo ante*, work units, which were the fundamental site of state interaction with society under communism; work units were how schools, healthcare, housing, jobs, and even food were channeled by the state to society. As reform progressed and the work unit declined in importance, more social life took place outside of the 'vision' of the Chinese state, in private enterprises or in increasingly respected (or benignly ignored) private lives, private media, and so on.

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[47]On the transition away from mass mobilization campaigns, see Perry (2011); on the exceptions to this in the One Child Policy, see White (1990).

[48]For a particularly stark example, consider the education by work teams during land reform when local communities were less than cooperative, as studied by Javed (2022).

Finally, the early 1980s had several particular political problems that required additional information from the grassroots. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, and especially after Deng Xiaoping successfully replaced Hua Guofeng as the paramount leader of Chinese politics, the newly restored leadership set out to remove cadres who had made 'serious errors' during the Cultural Revolution by collaborating with the Gang of Four or otherwise committing 'leftist errors.' This rectification, which was slated to start in the winter of 1983, depended on purging these cadres from leadership down to the grassroots, as leadership feared that fledgling reforms could be smothered by their opposition. At the same time, the party-state was overwhelmed with a flood of petitions from below seeking the reversal of historical injustices all the way back to the early 1950s (许 1998).

This problem of reliability was exacerbated by a demographic problem: many old cadres, who could be considered allies at least to the extent that they opposed the Cultural Revolution faction who purged them, could be relied upon, but even after they had their status restored, they were often too old to manage day to day governance.[49] But promoting younger cadres meant potentially promoting those whose formative political experiences had been as Cultural Revolution activists. The way to thread this needle was through the elimination of the 'three kinds of people (三种人)', which was a main priority of the four year rectification from the end of 1983 until 1987 (中共中央委员会 1984).

This renewed emphasis on bottom-up work for bureaucratic control, and for assessing the effects of rapid policy change, were also part of a different orientation towards politics favored by the 'technocratic' approach favored by the newest Party leadership, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang (Gewirtz 2022, especially Section 3.) This approach meant an interest in governance techniques that pushed the boundaries of the repertoire of bureaucratic control described in other chapters. The increasing emphasis on petition and visits work, in particular, was evident in the media across the entire decade from 1979 to 1989, as shown in Figure 10, with multiple articles about petition work in the People's Daily every month for year after year.

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[49]Of course, many also simply did not survive the Cultural Revolution.
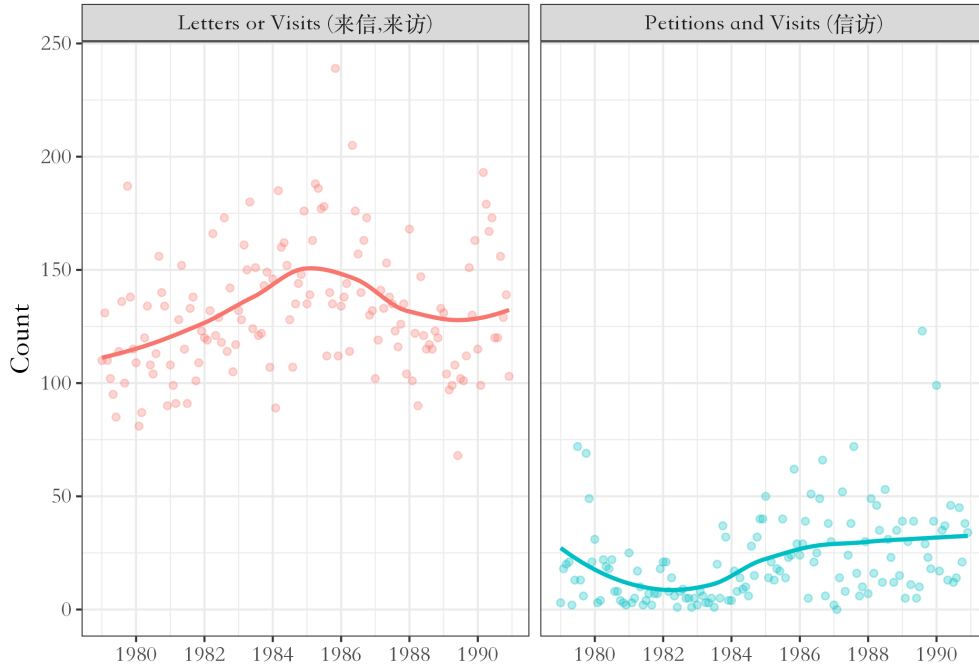
Figure 10: Petition related words in People's Daily, 1979-1990 (by month)

Reporting offices

Again as Figure 1 shows, although the overall numbers were declining, petition and visit work was a consistent feature of the political landscape in China as the 1980s progressed. As it reopened its doors to the public, the state supervision system also opened its doors to petitions and visits via "reporting offices (举报中心/举报站)", which I describe in greater detail below. Using the opening of petitions and visits offices helps ensure we understand the variation in exposure to petitions and visits, and allows us to focus in on one particular kind of input– petitions that are about bureaucratic malfeasance.

As discussed above, petitions and visits primarily constitute an *informational* intervention. During the 1980s they existed in murky regulatory environment, with few standard operating procedures and triggering no automatic reviews of cadre conduct or policy.

There are signs that governments took petitions about cadre misconduct seriously; the Petition Bureau reported in 1986 that more than 80% of illegal or undisciplined conduct cases were initiated by petition complaints, but exactly what this means is hard to tell

without knowing its relationship to several other key quantities. How many petitions were there? How many cadres actually merited punishment? What percentage of those cadres were punished, and how many petitions were there about their conduct? Systematic information on the 'throughput' of petitions from registration to decisions to sanction, is also of course largely unknown. This leaves the effectiveness of 'bottom up' input as a strategy for bureaucratic control an open question, especially in the 1980s.

Design

To assess the way increased information from below affects the efficacy of bureaucratic control, I examine the effect of opening a petition-and-visit reporting office on the number of investigations opened for malfeasance opened by that prefecture's procuratorate. I argue that, using a difference in differences design, we can compare prefectures with established petition and visits offices to those who had not yet opened along the 1987-1989 period.

This approach presents several benefits. First, it identifies an unambiguous source of variation in petitioning behavior: although some state supervision offices were accepting petitions even before opening petitions and visits reporting offices, the official opening of these offices signals the allocation of real staff to this task, and the official receptivity of that office to reporting from local people.[50]

Second, this approach presents an uncommonly clean approach by isolating a closer relationship between petitions and outcome. Unlike petitions to the bureaucracies associated with land registration, water conservancy, the environment, or even to the public prosecutor, which could stem from a variety of issues with policy, implementation, consultation, or illegal behavior, the state supervision apparatus has a comparatively narrow bureaucratic purview: the conduct of state agents. This allows me to map the outcomes (investigations of officials for various forms of malfeasance) relatively closely to the intervention.

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[50]An important limitation might therefore be that this might not only effect the *number* of petitions received, but also the *kind* of petitions received. Citizens might update their expectations about what petitions will be handled, and how, based on the public attitude of different bureaucratic organs. I believe this might 'strengthen' the treatment, in the sense that it makes detecting a positive effect of opening reporting offices more likely, making the negative finding even more puzzling.

Source material

The design also aims to address several data availability concerns that make the study of this period challenging. First, data on the disciplinary outcomes (for party or administrative officials) below the national level are extremely fragmented, and details data are rarely published, even years later. This has led scholars attempting to study to do rely on other sources, like media reports (Cai 2015; Pei 2016). Data that are published contemporaneously are almost always printed only in classified documents.[51] For example, all provincial and prefectural procuratorate yearbooks, which contain annual statistics on criminal investigations, are classified.[52] Equivalent yearbooks for the state supervision apparatus in localities do not exist to my knowledge, and those produced at the national level are produced only every few years, and contain no statistics at all.

I partially address this problem by using historical local gazetteers (地方志), which sometimes published usable data on bureaucratic control during this period. As part of a long tradition, Chinese governments compiled huge volumes of historical and contemporary information on a wide variety of subjects into gazetteers; these resumed publishing after the Cultural Revolution, and often aimed to cover the local history, geography, geology, and politics since imperial times or earlier (Thogersen and Clausen 1992). These constituted, and have continued to constitute, useful sources for students of Chinese politics (Perry 1994, 710), although they have been eclipsed as social scientists have moved towards collecting their own primary data. For our purposes, however, they are likely the only source material available.

Among these gazetteers, I focus on the prefectural level for three reasons: first, prefectures in China occupy a useful intermediate position in China's administrative hierarchy (which proceeds from county to prefecture to province to center). While there might be more information at the provincial level, it would be aggregated across a great deal of inter-prefectural variance, as well as be considerably further 'up' the administrative ladder

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[51]Despite my success in assembling a body of these materials in Chapter 2, this type of document becomes *considerably* more difficult to obtain as its publication becomes more recent.

[52]The Beijing Procuratorate Statistical Yearbooks (北京检察统计年鉴) sometimes held in US academic libraries, which have 'internal materials' on their front cover.

from much of China's administrators, who serve in local governments in 'pyramid' fashion (Ang 2012). Second, and more pragmatically, the larger pool (more than ten times as many prefectures as there are provinces) maximizes the number of possible units to include in the study, hopefully increasing our power to detect an effect (if any). This is nontrivial because there are few studies of this type in the literature, making the magnitude of a 'plausible' treatment effect difficult to know beforehand.

Third, as I will show below, prefectures had considerably higher variance in the time at which they opened reporting offices. As was often the case, the Chinese government announced targets for offices to be open that were gradually rolled out from top to bottom; first provinces, then all cities of "a certain size, administrative status, or level of economic development" by the end of September 1988, and all counties by June of 1989, according to the People's Daily (吴 1988).

If our interest is in the use of bottom-up information, why bother with the opening of reporting offices instead of measuring petitioning directly? As above, for much of the period under study, counts of petitions and visits are difficult to find. When petitions are reported in statistical or historical materials, the reporting is often uninformative; rarely disaggregated to local administrative units or broken down by topical area. In the few cases where petitions are reported and disaggregated by the unit that received them, they are sometimes temporally aggregated (i.e. across the whole 1980s).

Instead, to measure for the efficacy of bureaucratic control, in this chapter I use criminal cases opened by the procuracy for 'economic' or 'malfeasance' crimes, following a large literature in the study of anti-corruption and bureaucratic control in China (Ang 2020; Cai 2015; Wedeman 2005). While these data are still politically sensitive, they are more consistently reported and disaggregated by local government gazetteers, and even contain numbers specific to particular forms of official malfeasance. This is crucial because we should expect that information from petitions might concern some types of criminal behavior but not others. I discuss this at greater length in the empirical strategy section.

Although more fruitful than seeking counts of administrative sanctions directly, this approach produces only partial coverage. In 1985, China had 327 prefecture-level

jurisdictions– 162 prefecture level cities and 165 regions, autonomous regions, or other same-level jurisdictions ("中华人民共和国行政区划（1985 年）" 2007). As of this writing, I was able to locate gazettes in foreign and domestic libraries and databases for only about two thirds of these jurisdictions, the vast majority of which were prefectural level cities, meaning that the experience of other areas of China is likely underrepresented below.

Further, among among those, only 34 contained data that were sufficiently detailed to use *and* which overlapped with the opening of state supervision reporting offices.[53] I digitized and manually harmonized these data for use in the sections below. I address the problem of generalization and selection in the Analysis Section, and again in the Appendix. I further collected information on the state of local political economies and demographics from the Chinese Prefecture-Level City Statistics Yearbooks (中国城市统计年鉴) for the relevant years via the statistical contractor EPS.

Rolling out reporting offices

I collected the dates on which petition and reporting offices were opened from the China Supervision Yearbook (1987-1991), as well as the dates on which their local branches of state supervision authority were opened (中华人民共和国监察部 1993). I successfully matched 316 prefectural state supervision reporting offices to their 1987 locations; the remainder were missing from the yearbook.

There is significant heterogeneity in the timing prefectures opened up reporting offices. It's unclear what led to this heterogeneity, except that some localities may have been more resourced or simply prioritized this task differently than others. Another, perhaps complimentary explanation is that the deadline communicated by the center for prefectures and cities were vague, in contrast to provinces and counties, which both had clear deadlines. Prefectures that were "of a certain level of development" or "near the East coast" leaves some interpretive room that prefectures could use to delay until preparations were complete. It's also the case that some earlier prefectures could have been part of pilot

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[53]To be included, I required that the prefecture reported disaggregated criminal case data including 1989, since no prefectures opened reporting offices before 1988.
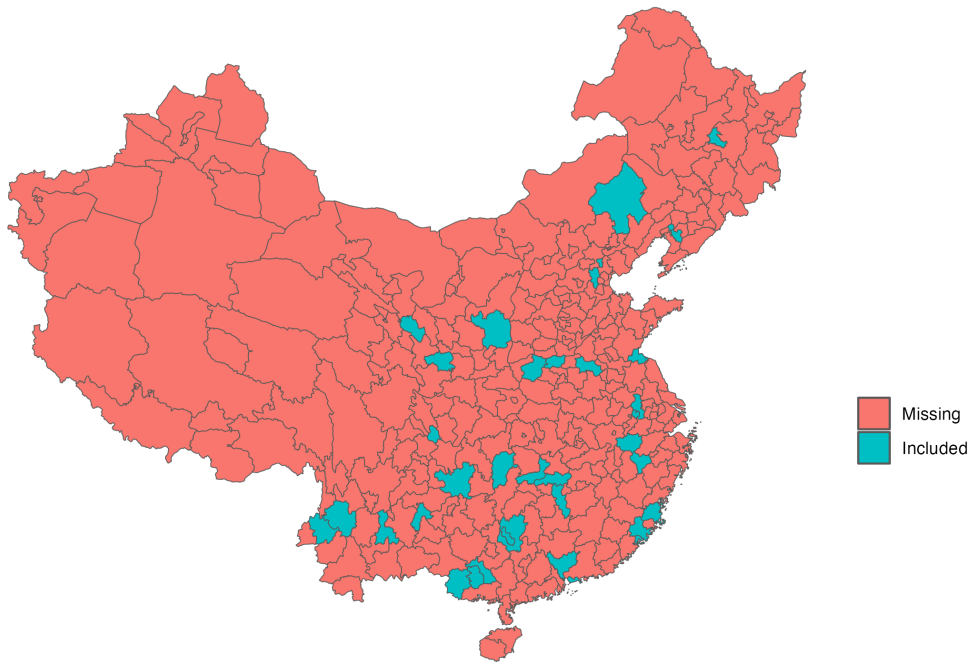
Figure 11: Locations of Included Prefectures
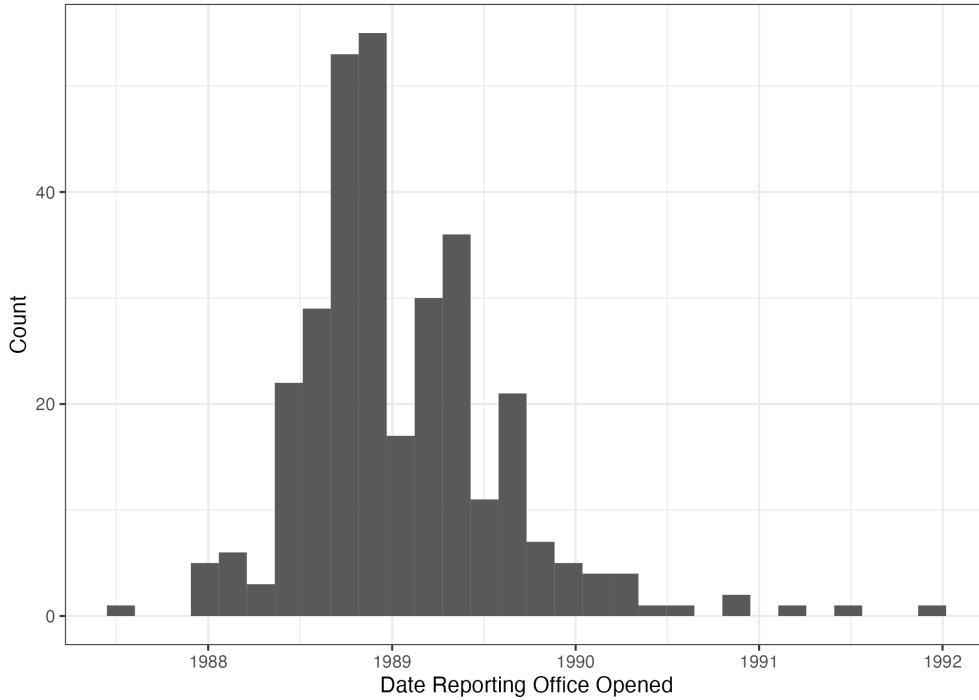
Figure 12: Rollout of Prefectural Reporting Offices

programs; information about the earliest stages of this policy are scant, but this would have fit with the experimental policy style of this period (Heilmann 2009).

Hypotheses:

As discussed above, petitions-and-visits during the 1980s seen by local governments as an important source of 'precious feedback (宝贵反馈)' and 'information from the masses (群众送上门的信息)' years before the reporting offices of the Ministry of Supervision opened its doors (戴 1985; 赵 1985), but were not incorporated into a form of more serious 'bottom-up' accountability until years later. In the meantime, did the increase in information they provided increase the enforcement of anti-corruption rules?

By focusing on this informational channel and a simple model of enforcement, we can form a few expectations.

One simple model of enforcement is that it is produced by two factors: the base rate of malfeasance and the effort of enforcers. When enforcers exert more effort, they observe more of the malfeasance and are able to act on it through administrative or criminal

sanction. Complicating this model slightly, we can imagine that increasing the information available to enforcers reduces the amount of effort that they need to allocate to information gathering, leaving them either to reduce their overall effort, or to allocate energy to other tasks, like producing cases for prosecution.

We could therefore expect that increasing information might not lead to any change at all in enforcement when effort is sufficiently costly, when base rates are sufficiently low, or when enforcers are not rewarded for increasing the aggregate level of enforcement. While these situations are of course theoretically possible, they do not match the case of 1980s China. The central government was desperate to cool the overheated economy (which was widely blamed on local governments handling of investment and of the economy) and Chinese citizens were increasingly irate about the level of corruption.[54] Increasing enforcement was likely in the interests of officials involved with bureaucratic control.

Since there is more than one type of cadre malfeasance, we might expect that increased information from everyday people provides clues about some but not others. In the context of China's 1980s, two possibilities stand out: first, following the typology of Ang (2020), increased information from below might lead to more investigations of crimes involving 'low level exchange,' like bribery, since these would be experienced by everyday people. They might also reveal straightforward cases of malfeasance, like 'serious responsibility cases' to the government, which include situations like work accidents or worker injuries due to official negligence. In contrast, it should be less likely to increase the enforcement of cases like 'grand theft' type crimes (e.g. embezzlement [贪污]), because they involve higher-level officials and are less likely to be observed by the majority of citizens.

We can state these expectations more explicitly in the form of Hypotheses 1a-c:

H_{1a}: Prefectures with open petition and visit reporting offices will open more bribery cases than those prefectures that have not.

H_{1b}: Prefectures with open petition and visit reporting offices will open more 'serious responsibility cases' than those prefectures that have not.

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[54]Further, these were the focus of the revived Ministry of Supervision, which focused on FDI and economic issues as its main discussion point after its refounding. See e.g. 尉 (n.d.)

H_{1c} Prefectures with open petition and visit reporting offices will open the same number of embezzlement cases as those prefectures that have not.

Furthermore, if petitions increased the availability of information to the state, but did *not* fundamentally alter the relations of intragovernmental authority (and may have risked repression), we should expect that increased information would affect different kinds of investigations differently. Gueorguiev (2021) and Lorentzen (2013) both argue that the threat of repression can serve a 'screening' function for bottom-up inputs to policy-making, ensuring that only grievances of significant magnitude are voiced in equilibrium. However, this screening also has heterogeneous effects across types of input. If petitioners weigh the likelihood of punishment against the possible risks of petitioning, then may be very unlikely to report the *most* serious crimes or the *highest* level officials.

As mentioned above, local procuratorates and state supervision organs are led by the territorial party committees, which play significant formal and informal roles in their work, from appointments to operations funding. This makes them largely politically beholden to local leadership, and by implication less likely to investigate 'higher level cases' without significant risk. Since this relationship did not change in the late 1980s, we should expect that the number of investigations of higher-level officials and larger cases is *unresponsive* to the provision of bottom-up information; even if procurators knew about the problem, they'd be unlikely to do anything about it.

We can attempt to test this indirectly. In reporting crime data, Chinese procuracies often include the number of officials of a certain rank that were involved. During the late 1980s, cases involving state cadres above a certain rank were referred to as 'important' or 'key' (要案); cases that involved more than a certain amount of money or assets were referred to as 'large cases' (大案). Unfortunately, these categories are *very* seldom reported separately. Instead of throwing away data, I follow this practice of combining these case types together (even when reported separately) in the analysis that follows.

Given that petitions did not alter the fundamental authority relationships between procuracies, state supervision organs, and the local party committee, we can formulate hypothesis 2:

- H_2: The opening of petition and visit reporting offices will *not* cause more large and key case investigations to be opened.

This is not to say that there was not an emphasis on the investigation and prosecution of large, higher-level cases during the late 1980s, because there was. They were the focus, for example, of an explicit campaign throughout the legal system, including the procuracy in 1986, and resulted in a huge spike in cases nationwide.[55] This largely supports the broader point however: a large, nation-wide campaign, for which local party secretaries had to report progress, was necessary to increase case numbers of this type; the numbers plunged in 1987, suggesting that priorities were redirected elsewhere.

Analysis

In this section, following the general approach for staggered roll-out difference-in-differences designs, I estimate a series of models testing the effect of opening a reporting office on each of our four outcomes.[56] I briefly summarize these in Table 1:

Table 3: Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Expected Effect
1a:	Reporting Office	Bribery Investigations	+
1b:	Reporting Office	Responsibility Case Investigations	+
1c:	Reporting Office	Embezzlement Investigations	None
2:	Reporting Office	Large and Key Case Investigatoins	None

In computing these results, I make several difficult concessions to data quality that attenuate our ability to interpret the results. First, because of the uneven reporting of crime data across different localities, each of the regressions I estimate includes a *different,*

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[55]Two excellent treatments of the 'strike hard' campaign against criminals, led by the Public Security Bureau in 1983 and after, consider Tanner (2000) and Tanner (2001).

[56]In the Appendix, I present both treatment-path plots for each regression, which show the average level of the outcome across different groups in the data-set, and panel plots, which show missingness across the units and across time.

Table 4: Model Results

	Bribery Cases	Embezzlement Cases	Large + Key Cases	Responsibility Cases
treated	−17.526*	−9.000	−9.422	1.929
	(7.816)	(7.680)	(8.789)	(2.263)
Num.Obs.	159	153	92	109
R2	0.666	0.814	0.811	0.717
R2 Adj.	0.585	0.770	0.755	0.636
Std.Errors	by: locality	by: locality	by: locality	by: locality
FE: locality	X	X	X	X
FE: year	X	X	X	X

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

but overlapping set of localities. Second, because there are indications that the parallel trends assumption may be violated for some outcomes, I estimate both time-unit fixed effects models and also use the Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) estimator, which allows parallel trends to hold conditional on covariates; I present these graphically alongside the estimates from the TWFE estimates in Figure 13. These covariates are not available for all the prefectures in my data, creating further (likely non-random) attrition, but the estimates are substantively the same.

Interpretation

The estimated models are presented in Table 4; Figure 13 presents a coefficient plot for the four outcomes.[57] As they show, I find little support for the idea that increasing bottom-up information in the form of reporting increased the enforcement of anti-corruption rules. I am unable to reject the null hypothesis of no effect for an effect on the number of responsibility cases (H1b), and the estimated effect of opening a reporting office on bribery investigations is in the opposite direction predicted by an informational constraint theory (H1a). While hypothesis 1c (embezzlement investigations) and hypothesis 2 (large and key cases) both predicted null effects, the uncertainty in the estimated effects is considerable, and therefore should be interpreted cautiously.

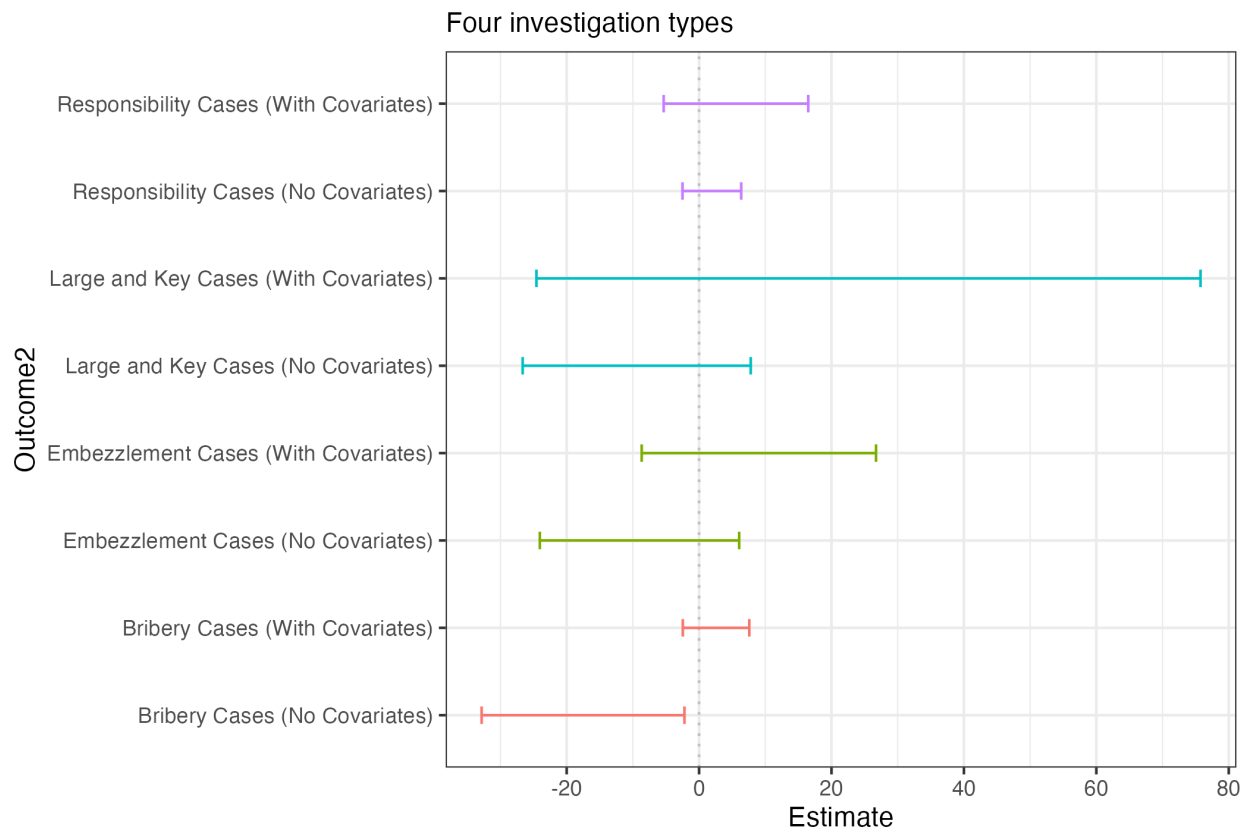[57]I present event studies in the Appendix.

Figure 13: Estimated Effect of Opening Reporting Office: Four investigation types

What can we conclude from these findings?

Several explanations could make sense of these findings.

First, it could be that expanding petitions work by opening reporting offices had no effect, and that the negative estimate for the model of bribery investigations is a statistical artifact. As the chapter documents, data quality and availability were also a concern. Neither of these need imply that necessarily that reporting offices had no informational value to state supervision officials; it may simply have provided an institutional channel for petitions and visits that were already being forwarded to the state supervision already, changing neither the number or the type of the petitions. This could, in principle, be examined with petitions data for the state supervision system, in the style of a 'manipulation check,' to see if they received more petitions after opening reporting offices. Unfortunately I was unable to collect this data, so I am unable to eliminate this possibility definitively.

Also possible (but equally difficult to show empirically) the general "negative" trend in the estimates for economic crimes could be an impact of state supervisors *pre-empting* criminal cases, or where administrative punishments or party punishments substitute for criminal punishment. While this could be due to the increase in bottom-up information, it could equally be due to the expansion of tools available to punish malfeasant cadres, or for other reasons.[58] I consider these with the very limited available data in the Appendix.

However, in context, it is most likely that these findings fit into a larger body of findings on the failings of the petition and visits system.[59] In statistics reported by Cai and Chen (2022) from Jilin Province in 2008 and 2010, less than five percent of petitions had their grievances resolved (p. 13). Work on in-person petitions suggests that the state is considerably less likely to resolve disputes associated with popular contention of any sort (including in-person petitioning), instead repressing disputants, stalling them, or buying them off (Lee and Zhang 2013). Unlike 1950s correspondents, who opted into the state

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[58]I am grateful to David Thompson-Brusstar for pointing this out to me.

[59]On the failures of the petition institutions across time, see especially Yu Jianrong's many articles, e.g. 于 (2015).

system of reporting and whose partnership with the state offered them some protection, petitioners received neither. And as mentioned above, while Gueorguiev (2021) may have found that increased reportage from below increased the number of investigations for corruption in the provinces, this may have relied considerably on the expansion of *internet* reporting, which was both less visible and less costly to ignore than in-person visits from the genuinely aggrieved.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I aimed to isolate one possible constraint on the performance of bureaucratic control in China by looking at an institutional change that aimed to improve the state's access to information about malfeasance. I take advantage of staggered timing of opening "reporting offices" for state supervision to estimate the effect of increased information on anti-corruption cases from the mid 1980s until 1990. Based on the theory that alleviating this information constraint might affect some crimes but not others, I hypothesized that the number of large and key economic crime investigations would not increase, but that investigations of bribery and negligence would increase.

I find evidence inconsistent with relief of an information constraint in bureaucratic control at this time. Opening a reporting office may have decreased the number of bribery investigations opened by procurators (the opposite of the expected direction), and in all other cases I was unable to reject the null hypothesis of no effect. Although I did find null effects where expected (for embezzlement and large-key crimes), they were not precise.

When placed in the larger context, these reporting offices provide an excellent example of the failure of information as a standalone intervention. First, information may be necessary to enact good policy or take informed political action, but it is not sufficient – as shown in the failures of many 'community-driven' development approaches that incorporated "participation" of local communities to provide information, but whose success tended to depend on the support of existing local elites (Mansuri and Rao 2004). When local power structures are not set up to use it, even perfect information is not necessarily sufficient the right policy.

Second, contrary to presentations that point to the unique value of 'bottom-up' information as uniquely unbiased, the petitions and reporting system stand out as a clear counterexample; when authority is delegated, some actors in the bureaucratic ecosystem prefer other actors remain uninformed; this creates the dynamics that produced the repression of in-person petitioners documented in other studies above. I find null effects on increased information on the investigations of the most prominent officials in local jurisdictions, consistent with the idea that in the absence of protections, incentives for whistle-blowers are fraught, and collusion with local authorities may dominate action (Felli and Hortala-Vallve 2016).

The failures of this and other anti-corruption interventions, both before and after the protest waves of 1989, would eventually give way to a series of changes to the bureaucratic control landscape. It is to these that Chapter 5 now turns.

Chapter 5: Trading Information for Authority with Inspection Teams

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I argued that many of the challenges that confront those setting out to control a bureaucracy can be clarified by examining the way the availability of information and the allocation of authority interact. In this chapter, I examine a change in emphasis from 'embedded' party supervision to an enhanced 'top down' accountability mechanism in China. In 2013, as part of his signature anti-corruption campaign, Xi Jinping radically scaled up the use of empowered Chinese Communist Party (CCP) central inspection teams for the supervision of cadres in high-level leadership positions. This anti-corruption campaign is of unprecedented scale, resulting in the disciplining of more than 4 million cadres since 2012, and the arrest of hundreds of high level officials, including previously untouchable figures like retired members of the Politburo or military generals (He and Bai 2022). The campaign has reshaped the elite politics of the regime, and helped Xi consolidate his power base, by eliminating rivals and creating openings to catapult his own supporters into senior positions (Wu 2022).

The empowerment of the central inspection teams, and their deployment across the country, was an important part of bringing this campaign to the highest levels of government. Central inspection teams are led by cadres from a pool of retired senior officials with no ties to the local government or work unit they inspect, which are dispatched under the authority of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (Carothers and Zhang 2022).

Chapter 4 examined an intervention improving information while leaving the allocation of authority untouched. This chapter examines the extent to which monitoring with increased *autonomy* improves on the monitoring at baseline produced by 'horizontal' monitoring. Using data from the Chinese Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), I examine the effect of inspection by a central inspection team on discipline investigations for leading cadres in China's provincial governments. Further, it examines the potential pitfalls of the inspection strategy. By announcing that the inspections would achieve complete coverage and sampling largely without replacement, the Chinese government effectively gives some provincial governments warning that they are likely to be next.

My analyses at the aggregate and individual levels find that visits from central inspection teams have positive, statistically significant effect on discipline investigations of leading cadres in provincial governments. However, evidence at the individual-level provides some evidence that these results may depend on context, due to change in the underlying population of cadres used to estimate the effects. I further assess the evidence that inspections by inspection teams change elite behavior by examining the government work reports delivered by provincial governors in 2014, expecting that if inspections changed elite behavior or orientations towards Xi or the central government, then the content of their rhetoric would also change. I compare the reports of governors whose provinces were just inspected to those who have not yet been inspected, and find no significant differences in content. I finally place the results in context by considering why the central government may proceed with costly inspection schemes if they are only marginally effective at their most important task. I argue that inspection teams as an institution may usefully compartmentalize information about malfeasance, reducing its harm to regime reputation.

The chapter proceeds as follows: in the next section, I connect theory about political accountability to the fight against corruption in China and present my hypotheses. I then present my empirical strategy, and examine whether inspections by teams dispatched by the center result in more investigations of provincial leaders by the central disciplinary organs. I then examine the robustness of these findings by examining a 'most difficult' case by testing if visits by central inspection teams result in more investigations of the most

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consequential members of local leadership – the members of the provincial party standing committee. I find a positive but small effect of inspection, and heterogeneity in the effects largely follows the direction expected in the theory. I consider alternative explanations for these effects in the penultimate section, seeking evidence that inspections changed the way local leaders positioned themselves rhetorically or managed the local economy, and finding none. I then discusses the results and conclude.

Watching the Watchman and Bureaucratic Control

Furthermore, although there is active research on the roles political connections play in the implementation of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, it is also important to take the campaign seriously as anti- corruption (Lorentzen and Lu 2018; Manion 2016).

Chinese Anticorruption as a Case

The Chinese case allows us to bring further evidence to consequential questions about how increased autonomy and information does (or does not) improve the efficacy of bureaucratic control.

In Chinese work units whose personnel are managed by the central government (like provincial governments), the ultimate powers to sanction, investigate, and remove them lie with the center, in particular the Central Organization Department. However, the most *proximate* disciplinary authority is and has been the provincial discipline inspection commissions, which depend on local leadership for resources.[60] The *first* listed responsibility of local discipline inspection commissions is the supervision of the local leadership,[61] but their dependence on local leadership presents obvious problems given the frameworks above, as has been noted extensively elsewhere.[62] In theory, regulations permit local commissions to escalate cases to the next level (in this case, to the Central Commission) when they discover malfeasance from local leadership, but the rate at which this happens is unknown. Their dependence for resources, though, makes them structurally

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[60]This is still largely true, although the dependence has been lessened considerably since 2013.

[61]See the Chinese Communist Party Internal Supervision Regulations, 26.

[62]For book length treatments, see e.g. Manion (2004); Sun (2004);Wedeman (2012);Ang (2020)
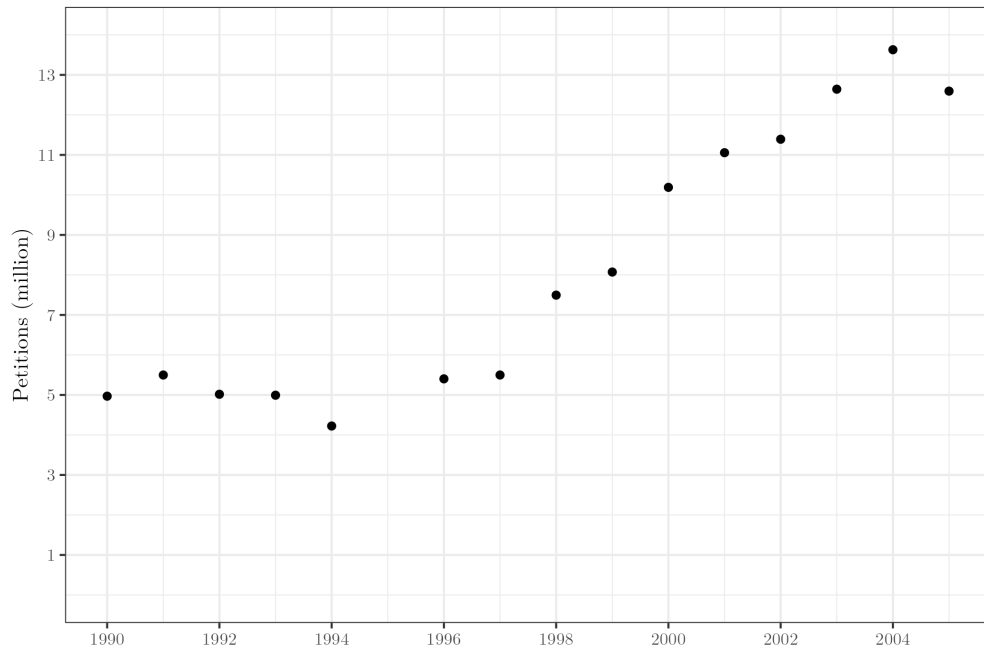
vulnerable to potential 'collusion.'

Previous work has argued that the limited autonomy of local disciplinary actors in China leads to sub-optimal outcomes (Gong 2008; Manion 2004). Under Xi, although the National Supervision Commission constitutes a huge expansion and central consolidation of resources and authority, only a few substantive revisions have been made, for example, to the promotion or selection of monitoring authorities have been changed, and they remain subject to party committee authority (Xiao 2013). Most importantly, recent evidence from participant-observation of prefecture-level discipline inspection commissions suggests that although activity has increased in these organs, the increase is driven by campaign activity and not formal institutional reforms (Li and Deng 2016).

Instead, inspection teams are now an almost ubiquitous feature of anti-corruption enforcement, dispatched also by provinces and prefectures to investigate territorial governments or work units subordinate to them (Commission 2021; He 2022). What is unique about this type of supervision strategy is that it collects information and its authority relationship is direct: central government inspection teams take their information directly back to those with the power to act on it, who then makes suggestions not just about anti corruption but also about work style and other governance matters (Carothers and Zhang 2022).

Although in use before his tenure, under Xi inspection teams represent a significant shift in supervision strategy (Yeo 2016). One of the most distinctive features of governance strategies under pre-Xi governments were the varied experiments with what Gueorguiev (2021) refers to as 'controlled inclusion', where popular participation was actively solicited in various governance processes, including via increased government transparency (Stromseth, Malesky, and Gueorguiev 2017), toleration (or even encouragement) of bottom up mobilization by petitioners (Chen 2012) workers (Gallagher 2017) or protesters (Lorentzen 2013). As discussed in Chapter 3, the petition system, by which regular citizens (individually or collectively) bring complaints about government performance or actors to government offices, saw dramatically increased use during the late 1990s and early 2000s– Figure 14 shows that use of the petition system, encouraged by the state, exploded in the

late 1990s as part of a strategy for disciplining state agents that is wildly different from the current vision in contemporary China (Dimitrov 2015).

Figure 14: 'Bottom up' input to the supervision system

Sourcing information and locating authority in different institutional arrangements obviously has consequences not only for the efficacy of bureaucratic control, but also for state-society relations. The reliance on bottom-up participation during this period may have led to the concurrent rise of 'mass incidents,' and fed back into the rise of the 'stability maintenance' machine led by Chinese policy (Wang 2014), demonstrating the potential complimentarity between social control and controlled inclusion (Gueorguiev 2021). Increases in 'public supervision' by the media or by the people inherently involve the diffusion of information through society. Removing supervision from embeddedness, in society and in the bureaucracy, may help insulate the regime from negative externalities.

Hypotheses

The increased use of central inspection teams provides an opportunity to test three hypotheses: first, that an increase in monitoring improves the detection of malfeasant

behavior over the 'embedded' anti-corruption baseline. Central inspection teams address the 'collusion' issue in several ways designed to *reduce* embeddedness: first, they report directly to the central party; and second, teams and who are headed by retired officials with no connections to the work units they inspect (Yeo 2016). In this way, they attempt to by-pass the informational bottle-neck presented by local party leadership, and second, they reduce the potential for factional or other connections that might expose inspectors to capture or make them more amenable to collusion to deceive the central government.

Second, we can examine if increased autonomy to collect information from 'outside' creates positive informational externalities. Embedded supervisors may have incentives to protect or ignore malfeasance not only of leadership, but also of leadership's friends and allies. Central inspection teams may encounter information about local malfeasance while investigating leadership and pass this on to local supervisors. If this is the case, then fragmentation of personnel control between center and province means we can test whether more *provincially* managed cadres are investigated for malfeasance after *central* inspection teams visit.

The teams also present an opportunity to examine the extent of *strategic response* to monitoring; the central government announced that all centrally-managed work units (including provincial governments) would be inspected, creating dramatic variation in the extent of warning provinces received about the arrival of inspectors. This chapter leverages that variation to examine the extent to which provincial leadership is able to use that warning to hide evidence of corruption. Records can always be destroyed, funds reshuffled, and exchanges put off, especially as potentially malfeasant actors have powerful incentives to gather as much information about possible inspection as possible.

The paper therefore sets out to test three hypotheses:

- H_1: Provinces that have been inspected by central inspection teams announce more investigations of centrally-managed cadres.
- H_2: Provinces that have been inspected by central inspection teams announce more investigations of provincially-managed cadres.
- H_3: These effects decrease in size, and possibly become zero, as the rounds advance

and the targets of inspection have longer to prepare, on average.

Overiview and Empirical Strategy

In this section, I outline the way central inspection teams work under the Xi administration, and my strategy for evaluating their effectiveness.

Although the inspections visited a wide variety of (indeed, *every*) centrally-managed work unit, in this paper I focus specifically on the provincial government inspections. I limit my sample in this way because provincial governments are the only type of work unit present *across* multiple inspection rounds and for which pre-treatment covariates can be used to assess cohort characteristics.[63] Beyond provincial governments, organs supervised by the central government tended to be inspected together in 'clusters,' e.g. financial institutions all in one round, universities in another round, and so on. Inspecting all members of a group in one inspection round means there is no un-inspected subgroup to which they can be compared, so I exclude these work units from the analysis. My dependent variable is investigation announcements of centrally-managed cadres in the provinces from the last month of 2012 until the end of 2015, which I sourced from the website of the national-level anticorruption organ of the Chinese Communist Party, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), and confirmed against the ChinaFile Anticorruption database, a project of the nonprofit Asia Society.[64]

I further use the variation in timing of inspections to investigate if later-investigated provinces are able to *conceal* corruption given their ability to anticipate, albeit imperfectly, the increased probability of inspection observed as rounds of inspection progress. Because of the stated intention to inspect **every** unit supervised by the central government, provincial governments (and other government units under central supervision) are capable of anticipating the increased probability of being inspected as rounds of inspection progress, up to the point where, at a certain point, government units know that they are certain to be inspected in the next round. To accomplish this, I attempt to compare the

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[63]I provide this information in the Appendix.

[64]The latter is available online here.

'effects' of inspection across the different inspection rounds.

Second, I investigate if the arrival of inspection teams results in increased investigations of *provincially managed cadres.* If inspection teams relieve an information constraint, the theory would predict that the arrival of inspection teams, who conduct separate investigations and information gathering from the local DICs, would generate new information or opportunities to hold local cadres accountable for malfeasance by attenuating the authority problem of local DICs.[65] If, in the process of supervising centrally managed cadres, inspection teams discover evidence of provincial government malfeasance, but there are not increases in investigations of provincially managed cadres, we could consider that potentially support for the idea that the autonomy constraint still binds local discipline inspection organs and prevents them from doing their work effectively. Do inspection teams, then, *systematically* create periods of opportunity or information externalities for their local counterparts to increase disciplinary actions against lower-level officials?

In all specifications in this section, I aggregate counts of the dependent variable (case investigation announcements) to the month level.[66] I count units as 'treated' after central inspection teams arrive at the jurisdiction.[67] Standard errors throughout are estimated with the boot-strap procedure and clustered at the province level unless noted otherwise.

Central inspection teams

Central inspection teams are not a new tool, and saw accelerating institutionalization after 2009, when the Central Small Group for Inspection Work was established, but had already been growing in use since the 1990s (Jiang 2012; Yeo 2016). Under Xi, several notable changes have been made to the pre-2013 template: first, the teams were led by current and

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[65]In a significant number (more than 25) of cases, provincial DICs explicitly credit central inspection teams for turning up clues. See e.g. the case of Xiaogan City People's Congress Deputy Director Zhang Tingchen.

[66]This struck me as a reasonable design decision; I have not checked yet if the results are robust to other levels of temporal aggregation, like week or multiple months.

[67]I present results for an alternate coding of treatment timing in the Appendix. In the data, there are many cases where an inspection team arrives in the last week of a month; in these cases, I code that province as treated in the following month, and group the provinces such that provinces are treated in the same month. This never results in a treatment assignment alteration of more than 10 days.

retired cadres from outside those localities or organs, and unlike in previous central inspection teams, teams were not specialized, and inspection team leaders served only in one inspection and then were replaced. Furthermore, they were encouraged to 'dive down one level' and collect information from work units that are administratively inferior to the inspection target itself for more information (Y. Li 2013). Inspection teams also follow the 'three unfixed' policy, meaning that the team dispatched to a locality, the timing, and the type of inspection to be carried out are theoretically secret (Carothers and Zhang 2022; X. Li 2013).

Inspections in general consist of a visiting team auditing paperwork, conducting interviews with cadres, attending routine meetings, and setting up a 'tip line.' The first set of inspection rounds under Xi Jinping began in mid-2013; inspections of provincial governments were distributed across four rounds. A second set of "looking back" inspections of provincial governments took place, without complete coverage, between 2016 and mid-2017, and two more complete coverage rounds have been completed as of this writing. Figure 15 presents the timing of the actual inspections for the inspections under study here: the first round of central inspections in 2013 and 2014. The inspections produce a variety of documentation that is made available through the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) website. The reports produced by inspection teams and handed over to inspected units after they depart, for example, give "feedback" related to improving party construction, tightening party discipline, and compliance with government and party directives. Inspected units then publish a second and final report related to their implementation of the feedback.

To study the performance of inspection teams, I examine their effect on the number of investigation announcements for relevant cadres. Investigations (from the CCDI or the relevant provincial discipline inspection commission) are the most likely direct outcome of clues unearthed by central inspection teams, and are announced continuously by the CCDI and provincial discipline inspection commissions during the period under investigation. As discussed earlier, the main mandate of central inspection teams is to investigate the possible corruption of leadership cadres in the inspected units; these cadres, like all cadres
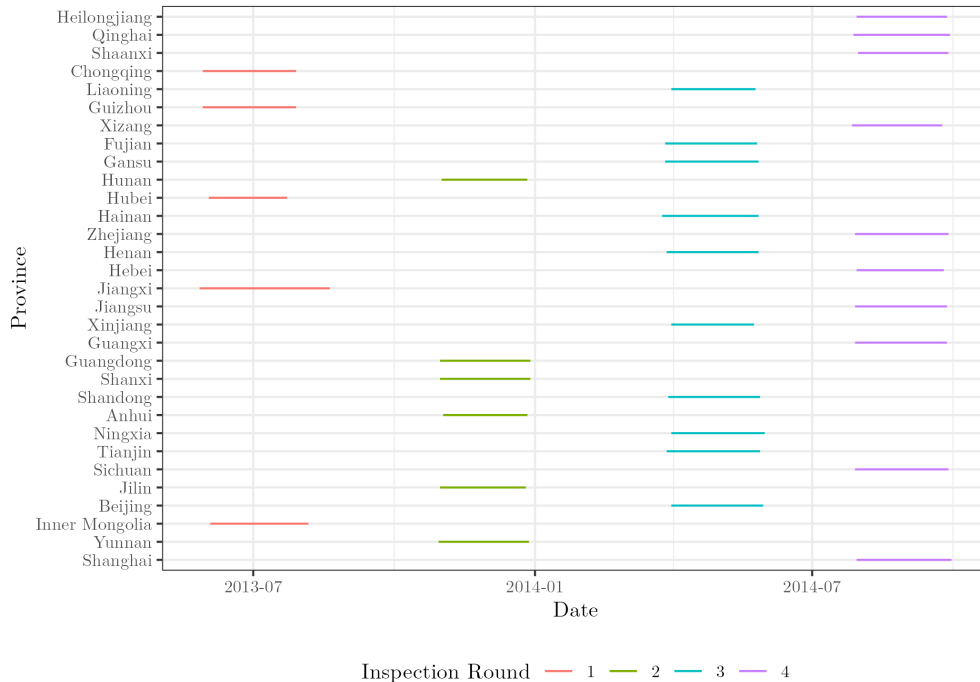
Figure 15: Timing of inspections across the provinces

above a certain bureaucratic rank in China, are managed by the CCP Central Organization department, and are referred to as 'centrally managed cadres' in the Chinese government (and below). Cadres below this bureaucratic rank are managed at the provincial level or below, and are referred to 'provincially managed cadres' in the same manner.

Below I present two descriptive plots of the data, where the dependent variable is counts of investigations per month. Figure 16 simply shows the occurrence of discipline investigations continuously across the period of investigation for centrally managed cadres in those provinces. Figure 17 presents the same period of time, but instead counts the number of investigation announcements for *provincially* managed cadres in those province-months.

These figures underscore two noteworthy features of the inspections and Xi's anti-corruption campaign up to 2016: first, investigations are announced for centrally managed cadres in the provinces quite rarely; there only 60 investigations across the 37 months for 31 provinces in the data set; this is less true in the case of provincially managed cadres. Second, as has been noted elsewhere in studies of the anti-corruption campaign under Xi, the campaign picks up in intensity after mid-2013 (Jiang, Shao, and Zhang 2020).

Figure 16: Central Inspection Teams and Discipline Inspections of Centrally Managed Cadres

Figure 17: Central Inspection Teams and Discipline Inspections of Provincially Managed Cadres

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Identification strategy and Methodology

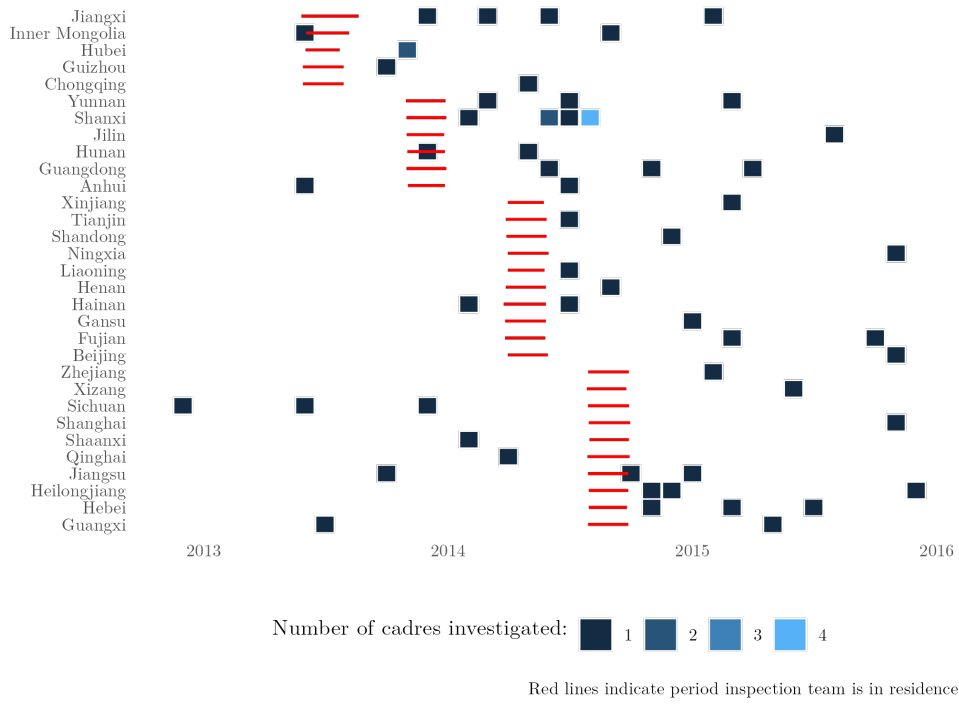My design takes advantage of recent revisions to the Differences-in-Differences (DID) framework under treatment timing that varies across units (Goodman-Bacon 2021). In general, these approaches aim to remedy the issue in previous applied DID research with multiple periods where units that had already been 'treated' were compared to other 'treated' units when attempting to estimate the effect of treatment. I use the estimation procedure designed in Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021), which allows for the estimation not only of an analogue to the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) overall (the estimate of interest in the case of centrally-managed cadres, and in the case of provincially managed cadres), but also to investigate possible *heterogeneity* across the treatments in different rounds. It is this heterogeneity that I aim to use to analyze the extent to which provincial leaders may or may not be able to use advanced warning to conceal corruption.

In particular, Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021) targets a slightly different parameter than conventional DID estimates – the *group-time average treatment effect*:

$$ATT(g,t) = \mathbb{E}[Y_t(g) - Y_t(0)|G_g = 1]$$

where g denotes a particular group, t denotes a time period, and G_g is a variable that takes a value of 1 if a unit is first treated in period g, and is 0 otherwise. The main virtue of this approach is that this family of parameters does not require restrictions on treatment effect heterogeneity, either for groups or at different time periods. These $ATT(g,t)$ estimates can also be aggregated into the overall ATT analogue. The estimates below are calculated with the doubly-robust estimator from Sant'Anna and Zhao (2020), and uncertainty estimates are from bootstrapped standard errors which are automatically adjusted for the multiple hypothesis testing.

The identifying assumptions of this approach are generalized versions of the conventional difference-in-differences design: that the treatment is absorbing, that (conditional) parallel trends holds (based on a control-group/never-treated group or a not-yet-treated group), that the generalized propensity score is bounded away from one for all treatment times and

time periods (overlap), that the observations are drawn randomly from a super-population of interest, and that there is known or no anticipation of treatment. Some of these are more problematic assumptions than others for my application, but I prefer these violations to the assumption, as in the design-based approach of Athey and Imbens (2022), that the treatment is allocated *completely randomly*, but where the other assumptions are less restrictive.

This choice of estimation strategy is substantively important. First, we have clear theoretical reasons to *expect* heterogeneity in the effect of inspection teams on outcomes in the provinces because of anticipation effects– namely, that after the first round, whose leadership might plausibly have been 'surprised,' by the visits, each other province was able to update their beliefs about who would be inspected next. The provinces inspected in the fourth round had almost a year of lead time to prepare for the inspection team.[68] Second, two-way fixed effects estimators are only robust to heterogeneity in the treatment effects outside the 'two period' canonical application of DID (Callaway and Sant'Anna 2021). The approach taken in this chapter provides explicitly for this possibility.

Potential Limitations

One particular challenge in this study is that the temporally 'close' nature of the inspection teams roll-out limits the scope of causal assessment. Because the procedure used in this chapter insists that 'treated' units are only compared to untreated units, the estimation of effect of the first inspection uses data only until the last provinces are inspected, or about 13 months. The period of assessment for the second group of inspected provinces is shorter – only about 9 months. For the third inspection round, only 4 months of data are used, and the only comparison is between those provinces and the 10 remaining provinces, whose post-treatment data are not used at all, because there are no untreated units remaining for comparison. Additionally, the fact that China has only has so many provinces means it may also be an *under-powered* test – I attempt to address this in the

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[68]Importantly, this is not dealt with explicitly in other treatments of Central inspection teams, like Chen and Kung (2019), who only consider provinces 'treated' during the period an inspection team is in residence, and also treat all central inspection teams, from 2012 to 2017, as identical.

following by moving the research design to the individual level.

It is also important to address the possibility of equilibrium effects; here, the theory would be that at the start of the anti-corruption campaign, or as the central inspection teams visited the first province, centrally managed officials altered their propensity for corruption, in a magnitude sufficient to make 'improvements' in the capacity to detect corruption brought about by the central inspection teams. Indeed, a deterrent effect is one of the goals of the anti-corruption campaign (Jiang 2013). However, the results in this chapter suggest that if officials *did* adjust their behavior, they were unable to do so quickly enough or thoroughly enough to render the inspection teams totally unhelpful in increasing investigations. I discuss some reasons this could be in the Conclusion.

Are more centrally-managed cadres investigated after inspection?

I find a positive estimated ATT of inspection teams on investigations centrally managed cadres investigated (H_1). The estimated effect is substantively large (estimates range between .09 and .11 more additional cadres inspected in a province-month).[69]

Furthermore, I find general support for H_3; there is an indication that there is heterogeneity in the ATT across different rounds, but not precisely in the expected direction. The estimated group-ATT is significantly larger for provinces treated in the second round than in the first, in contrast to expectation, but the estimate from the third round is not distinguishable from zero. Figure 18 presents these results graphically, aggregated at the treatment group level. Effects in the initial period are positive and significant, but later periods decrease in estimated magnitude, and the confidence intervals include zero. Note again that the fourth round of inspection does not produce estimates because its data are used only as 'control' units.

These results suggest that the positive results in the overall ATT estimate is primarily driven by investigations in provinces inspected in the second round; in particular, investigations of *four* centrally-managed cadres were announced in Shanxi province

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[69]Here I report my preferred specifications; these results are not robust to some alternative specifications, for example if the treatment is considered to begin after teams depart, rather than when they arrive. I discuss these in the Appendix.

(inspected in round 2) just before the fourth round of inspections began. Removing Shanxi province from the analysis causes the ATT estimate to lose significance, but its relative size remains large, and both the Round 1 ATT estimate and the overall ATT estimate remain positive and separate from zero.

Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT) for Rounds 1, 2 and 3.
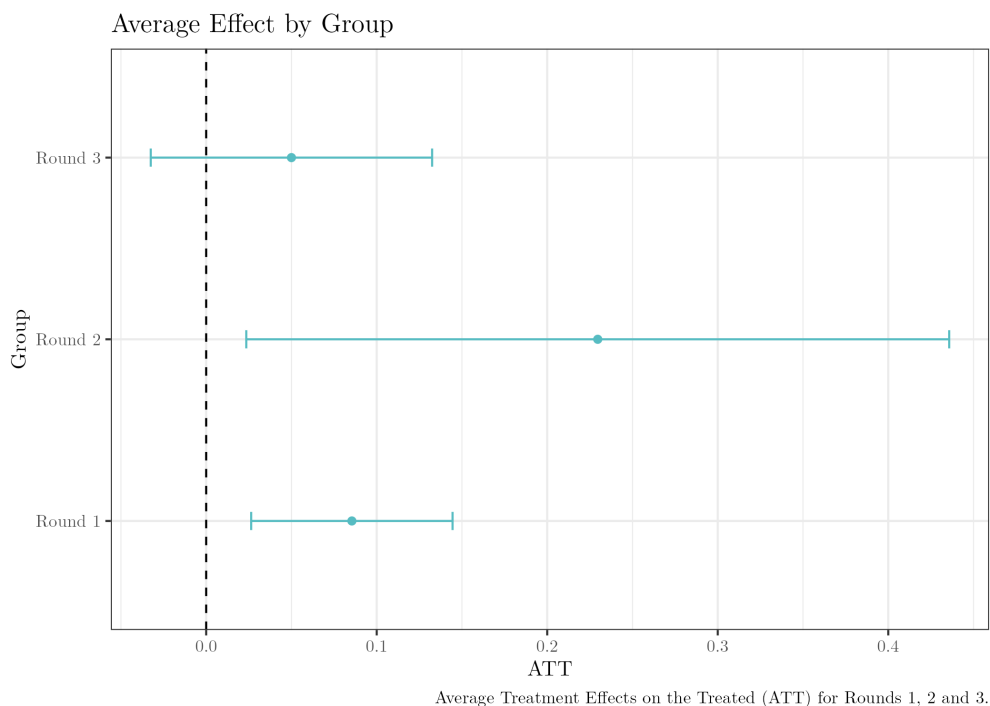
Figure 18: Effects of Inspection Teams on Corruption Investigations, by round: Centrally Managed Cadres

Table 5 presents the results of the round-level inspections (with estimate of overall treatment effect) alongside two other models and the traditional TWFE specification. Model 1 includes only the treatment; Model 2 includes an indicator variable for if Xi Jinping had a work history in that province, adjust for the possibility that parallel trends only holds once conditioning on potential factional ties to Xi; Model 3 includes the Xi work history variable and several pre-treatment covariates: the size of the provincial population (2010), the number of corruption and malfeasance crimes in the province in 2011, and the GDP growth of the province in 2011.[70] None of these additional variables significantly alters the ATT estimates. The DID estimates are estimated using the double-robust approach with bootstrapped standard errors clustered at the province level. The TWFE

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[70]I provide a table of these values by round in the Appendix.

Table 5: Centrally Managed Cadres

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ATT (Average)	0.110	0.112	0.097	
	[0.039, 0.180]	[0.022, 0.203]	[0.018, 0.177]	
ATT Round 1	0.085	0.082	0.055	
	[0.026, 0.144]	[0.017, 0.147]	[0.000, 0.110]	
ATT Round 2	0.230	0.254	0.240	
	[0.024, 0.436]	[−0.006, 0.513]	[−0.037, 0.516]	
ATT Round 3	0.050	0.043	0.033	
	[−0.032, 0.132]	[−0.051, 0.137]	[−0.075, 0.142]	
Inspected (Homog.)				0.104
				[0.051, 0.156]
Observations	620	620	620	1147
Units	31	31	31	31
Time Periods	20	20	20	37
RMSE				0.24
FE: provid				X
FE: t				X

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

specification also finds a statistically significant estimate for a binary treatment indicator, and is similar in magnitude.

Interpretation

These results are consistent with a positive effect of inspection by a central inspection team on the number of centrally managed cadres investigated for corruption in that province; estimates of the overall ATT are positive and the point-wise confidence intervals do not include zero. Furthermore, the results are largely consistent with the expectations that we would observe positive effects in the earlier rounds but estimates closer (or not distinguishable) from zero in the subsequent rounds. I look at other sources of evidence to attempt to determine if this is because of increased warning (and thus successful hiding of corruption) or due to an equilibrium adjustment of behavior in the next section. Below, I turn to the possible informational externalities that might be produced by inspection with increased authority.

Do inspection teams create opportunities for 'embedded' supervisors?

I also aimed to understand if the central inspection teams would alter the conditions for corruption investigation in the province itself, including for *provincially* mandated cadres, despite the fact that these cadres were not the target of the inspections *per se*, nor are they directly managed by the organizational apparatus to which the teams report. Our theoretical expectations were based on the assumption that when investigating, it was likely inspection teams would also uncover evidence of misconduct by provincially-managed cadres.

This is documented in several cases. Descriptively, 14 investigations notifications for provincially-managed cadres in my dataset noted the involvement of, clues from, central inspection teams; six were produced in provinces inspected in round 3, and the remaining 8 cases were from provinces inspected in round 4.

If central inspection teams were systematically sharing this information with local disciplinary organs, *and if local leaders approved of their removal,* we would expect increases in the number of investigations after they depart. The results show no statistically significant overall effect of recent central inspection team presence on the number of provincially managed cadres who are investigated for corruption (no support for H_2). These results are presented in Table 6, and graphically in Figure 19. For provincially managed cadres, none of the estimates (overall or disaggregated by round) are statistically distinguishable from zero.

These results suggest that despite the existence of several discrete cases that credit central inspection teams for clues that resulted in investigations of provincially managed cadres, there was no consistent effect across provinces or by round. Closer investigation of those cases might help establish whether particular inspection teams or particular provinces were more likely to collaborate in this way, but the theory of embeddedness provides a clue: even if central inspection teams *did* provide information on local cadre malfeasance, embedded party discipline cadres may simply have chosen to ignore them to avoid antagonizing their immediate principal.

Average Treatment Effects on the Treated (ATT) for Rounds 1, 2 and 3.
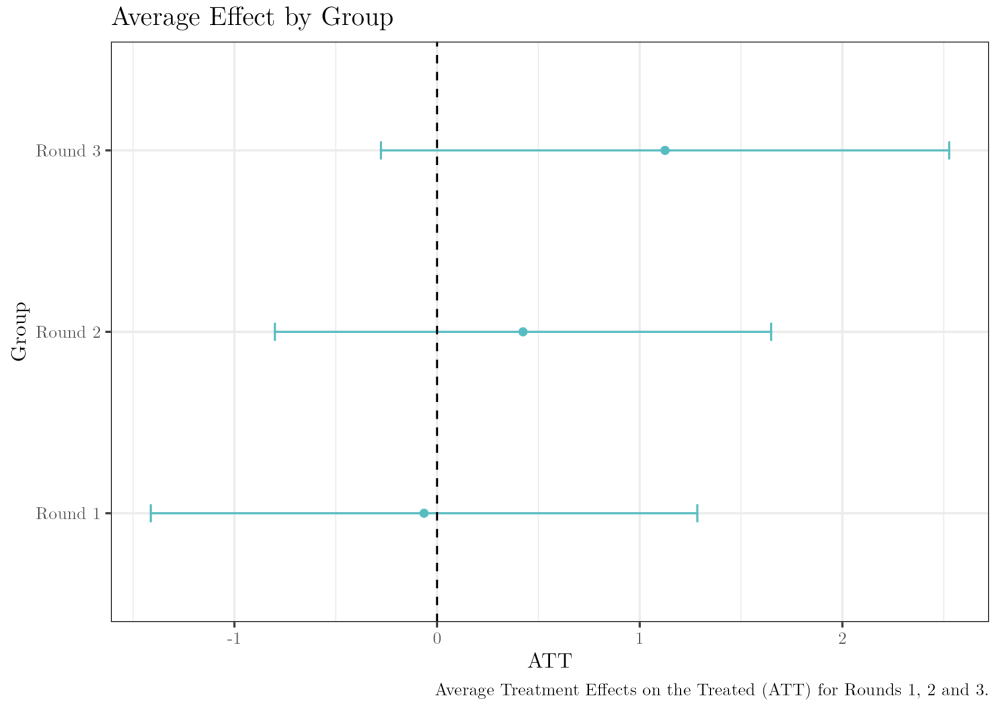
Figure 19: Effects of Inspection Teams on Corruption Investigations, by round: Provincially Managed Cadres

Table 6: Provincially Managed Cadres

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ATT (Average)	0.642	0.747	0.379	
	[−0.092, 1.375]	[−0.018, 1.512]	[−0.551, 1.309]	
ATT Round 1	−0.064	−0.055	−0.311	
	[−1.413, 1.284]	[−1.359, 1.248]	[−1.361, 0.738]	
ATT Round 2	0.424	0.424	−0.050	
	[−0.800, 1.648]	[−0.782, 1.630]	[−1.393, 1.293]	
ATT Round 3	1.125	1.342	0.981	
	[−0.277, 2.527]	[−0.252, 2.936]	[−0.681, 2.643]	
Inspected (Homog.)				0.250
				[−0.252, 0.752]
Observations	620	620	620	1147
Units	31	31	31	31
Time Periods	20	20	20	37
RMSE				1.07
FE: provid				X
FE: t				X

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

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Looking at leadership

Looking at counts of inspections has the virtue of using the entire set of centrally (or provincially) managed cadres in each province as the pool of cadres to potentially be investigated after an inspection team visit. However, the exact number of these cadres, and the extent of the variation in their number across provinces is not known.[71] To address this, we can study smaller populations *known* to be centrally managed in each province (the provincial party standing committee), and construct a similar research design with the benefit that we can also include pre-treatment cadre characteristics.

In this section, I use and extend data from Shih and Lee (2020) on the party standing committee members for each province in China for the study period (2013 to 2015 inclusive). The party standing committee of a province is the smallest and most powerful unit of party leadership in that province, essentially in charge of the day-to-day governance there. Membership on party standing committees always includes the provincial governor and vice governor, but the other members are not fixed – generally they include the head of local military garrisons, the heads of the public security organs, and local legislative leadership, among others (generally between 11 and 13 members per the 2016 'Chinese Communist Party Local Committee Work Regulations').

Adjustments to the research design

Moving to the individual level requires several adjustments. First, provincial party standing committee members do not exhaust the population of centrally managed cadres in the provinces. They are the most difficult test case for inspection team supervision, since they are the most powerful local politicians. All individuals are observed from the period they first serve as a provincial party secretary member until the end of the panel or their arrest, whichever comes first. I group the data monthly as above; the dependent variable is now binary: cadre i is investigated or not investigated in time t.

Second, provincial party standing committee members move between jobs. Some are

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[71]This is due to a lack of transparency in the CCP and more practically to the fact that turnover in bureaucratic positions is not at all uncommon.

'parachuted in' in the middle of appointment terms – others are transferred to other provinces, or retire, or step down off the committee (but retain their state appointments), or (as in this chapter) are sometimes removed from office. This dynamism complicates the notion of a comparison group. Here, I include anyone who becomes a provincial party standing committee member from the time they start as a member of a provincial party standing committee into an unbalanced panel of individuals, and observe them until the end of the panel or their date of investigation, including if they are transferred to a different post. Individuals are considered treated if they are serving on a provincial party standing committee when inspectors arrive, and thereafter until the end of the panel. By this definition, it is possible for some individuals to be treated multiple times – in practice, this takes place twice – I code them as treated after the first inspection team visit.

In my subset of the Shih and Lee data, 14 individuals are investigated during the period of observation, and only 77 individuals out of 417 unique provincial party standing committee members are *never* treated. Of those cadres who are never treated, the overwhelming majority enter in the middle of the panel (14 individuals, 13 months after panel begins) or toward the end of the panel (59 individuals 25 months after). These individuals (especially these latter 59) may constitute a bad comparison group, as they assume leadership after a selection process under Xi as general secretary which may make them less likely to be investigated. I therefore report a specification with these last units excluded; it does not alter my results.

I use the same modified DID estimation procedure for group-time and overall ATT estimation, and the results are presented in Table 7. It contains models with only the treatment (Model 1); a specification that omits the potentially 'bad controls' (Model 2), and a two-way fixed-effects model presented for comparison (Model 3). Figure 20 presents the results from Model 1 in a coefficient plot.

Interpretation

As with the province-level analysis, the individual level DID approach estimates an overall effect that is positive and distinguishable from zero. The round-level aggregated ATT
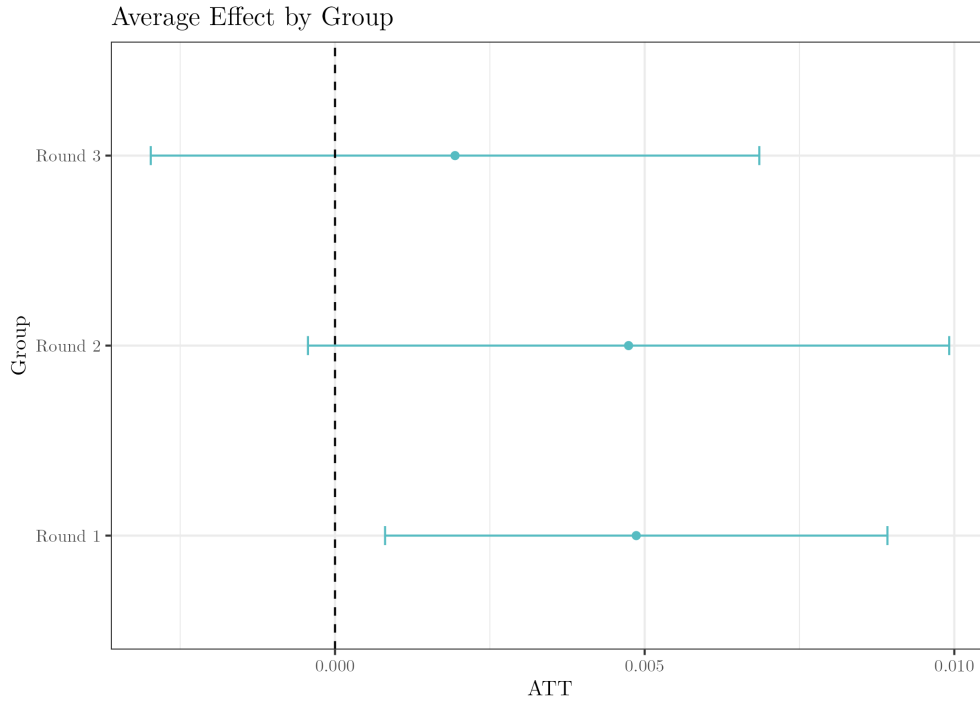
Figure 20: Group Effects: Provincial Party Standing Committee Members

Table 7: Individual level results:

	(1)	(2)	(3)
ATT (Average)	0.0034	0.0034	
	[0.0008, 0.0060]	[0.0008, 0.0060]	
ATT Round 1	0.0049	0.0049	
	[0.0008, 0.0089]	[0.0008, 0.0089]	
ATT Round 2	0.0047	0.0047	
	[−0.0004, 0.0099]	[−0.0004, 0.0099]	
ATT Round 3	0.0019	0.0019	
	[−0.0030, 0.0069]	[−0.0030, 0.0069]	
Treated (Homog.)			0.0021
			[−0.0006, 0.0048]
R2			0.000
R2 Adj.			−0.035
RMSE			0.04
Observations	7311	7311	13978
Units	469	410	469
Time Periods	19	19	36

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

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estimates also conform to the previous analysis; a positive treatment effect in the first round, and then decreasingly large and statistically insignificant effects in the rounds thereafter. This is the finding both when the potentially problematic standing committee members are included, and when they are excluded, although some of these periods have as few as 16 comparison cadres that remain untreated.

Unlike the province level analyses above, however, the two-way fixed effects estimate of inspections on investigations is positive but not distinguishable from zero.[72]

Overall, the results suggest that the effects of inspection teams at the province level are not just increasing the number of centrally managed cadres, but also the number of investigations of members of the front-line of provincial leadership, although the evidence is slightly less strong. A second consistent finding is the decline in the treatment effect estimate in later rounds; the increase in uncertainty is partly mechanical, as the comparison group shrinks as each round of provinces is investigated, but it also could be evidence of the decreasing effectiveness of inspection teams as provincial governments have more warning.[73]

As much as the central government would like to detect corruption, it ultimately wishes to create *compliance.* Are the declining heterogeneous treatment effects in later inspection rounds due simply to provincial leadership changing their behavior, rather than using their warning to conceal evidence of malfeasance? To answer these questions, I now turn to measures of political and economic response to inspection.

What about other measures of leader behavior?

An alternative interpretation of the importance of information in the accountability systems under authoritarianism is that, especially at the commanding heights, *having* information does not necessarily mean it needs to be *used* – principals at higher levels of government can induce desired behavioral changes in agents simply by collecting the

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[72]In the Appendix, I also present the results from a simple Cox proportional hazards model, which finds a statistically insignificant treatment effect, including when demographic covariates are included.

[73]I discuss these and other possible interpretations at greater length in the next section.

information, and without incurring the cost of actually acting on it.[74]

Being able to induce behavioral change just by collecting information is consistent not only with standard principal-agent frameworks about the value of information, but also with the notion that (especially in contexts where information about government performance is politicized or scarce), revealing corruption among prominent officials might cause the government to suffer reputational costs.[75]

This is also important to assess because some inspection team roll-outs, e.g. those for reducing pollution, have also failed to produce results, likely because inspection team scrutiny was not sustained enough to create meaningful behavioral change (Kamp 2021). To triangulate the possible influence of inspection teams on other forms of governance behavior, below I conduct two brief extensions: an analysis of provincial economic investment and economic activities, and an exploratory analysis content of provincial government work reports for the first years in the analysis.

First, I turn to data from China's Bureau of Statistics on provincial level economic activity that could change as a result of inspection by an inspection team; real estate activity and lending. In other work on China's anti-corruption campaign, attention from inspection teams was found to affect bureaucratic activity in land management (Wang 2022). In Table 8, I assess two possible indications of change in actual governance in this area at the province-month level. Model 1 assesses the extent to which inspection team visits affected the number of newly-started real-estate projects in a province; Model 2 similarly assesses the effect on overall completed real-estate investment (100 million yuan).

I find no evidence that inspection teams affected new real estate building, or the completion of real estate investment in the periods where I can obtain data.[76] This suggests that provincial level officials involved in pushing land projects or approving them

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[74]I thank Guoer Liu for drawing my attention to this point.

[75]This is exactly what Wang and Dickson (2022) find, although recent evidence suggests that "punishing bad guys" can also be a significant source of regime legitimacy (Tsai 2021), making the effect of anti-corruption on public support difficult to untangle *a priori*.

[76]These data are the most consistently available estimates of economic activity available for most province-months, but are only reported 9 months in the year.

Table 8: Impact of Inspection on Economic Activity: Newly Started Residential Units and Completed Investment in Real Estate

	(1)	(2)
ATT (Average)	165.208	6.521
	[−142.406, 472.822]	[−30.533, 43.575]
ATT Round 1	−219.048	12.698
	[−699.468, 261.373]	[−19.613, 45.008]
ATT Round 2	451.260	−39.927
	[−135.244, 1037.764]	[−85.676, 5.821]
ATT Round 3	185.705	31.301
	[−460.295, 831.706]	[−30.314, 92.916]
Num.Obs.	30	31
Time Periods	17	17

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

may not have reacted the same way that the 'frightened Mandarins' of Wang (2022) did. To take a different tack, I turn to a different source of information about elite reactions to inspection: government work reports.

Government Work Reports as potential indicators of elite alignment

Government work reports have been previously used to identify alignment between leaders at different levels of the Chinese political system by Jiang (2018). I take advantage of the fact that by January 2014, 11 provinces had been inspected (and the first round of inspected provinces had already received the reports from the inspection teams). This means that we can use the content of the reports to assess if provincial leaders (here, provincial governors) produced meaningfully different assessments or coverage of provincial work after inspection by the center. I perform simple keyword searches as well as fitting a series of structural topic models (reported in the Appendix).

A simple but clear way to examine if governors were interested in changing their signals of loyalty with this document would be to see if they mention Xi Jinping or his signature policy ideas more. Another useful check to see if this approach is fruitful might be to check if inspected provinces mention anti-corruption work more than their as-of-yet un-inspected

Table 9: Mean Counts of Key Terms in Government Work Reports

Year	Inspection Status	Xi Jinping	Chinese Dream	Great Revival	Provinces
2013	0	2.39	0.06	0.06	31
2014	0	4.15	0.80	0.25	20
2014	1	4.18	0.73	0.27	11
2015	1	7.00	0.81	0.29	31

counterparts.

In Table 9, I present simple counts of the occurrences signature Xi policies or slogans during these three years: Xi Jinping's name or titles (习近平/总书记/主席), the Chinese Dream (中国梦) and the great rejuvenation (伟大复兴) of the Chinese nation. These counts are divided by the number of provinces in each group (inspected and not-yet inspected) to make the counts more easily comparable.

There are not any consistent differences in the average number of mentions of Xi Jinping or his signature policy initiatives in 2014, the year for which provincial work reports are available in both inspected and uninspected provinces. This does not change if, e.g. provinces are considered 'inspected' only if they have already received the official reports (i.e. only those inspected in round 1 are considered 'inspected'), and the results are the same for several other signature terms. Furthermore, when examined in context, the usage of the terms does not vary meaningfully.[77]

However, increased compliance with central directives or loyalty signaling may not necessarily take this obvious form: it may be the case that provincial elites could signal changes to their work by altering the comparative emphases of various elements of provincial governance.

To evaluate this possibility, I consider the differences in a series of structural topic models to examine if topic prevalence varies across the government work reports between inspected and not-yet-inspected provinces, with annual reports delivered in 2013 and 2014.[78] I find

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[77]Results for context of use and other terms (four comprehensives, two upholds, clean governance, and corruption) return virtually identical results and are available upon request.

[78]I estimate models with number of topics between 15 and 25, which generally results in distinguishable, interpretable topics, following Jiang, Meng, and Zhang (2019) and the procedures recommended for iter-

no evidence that *any* of the topics vary according to inspection status after accounting for provincial and time fixed effects. The exploratory analysis suggests no obvious evidence that inspections led provincial leadership (here, the provincial governor) to systematically alter their work reports to discuss either keywords or topics of significance to Xi Jinping, his overarching policy goals, or anti-corruption. This evidence is not individually dispositive – it's possible, for example, that all provincial leaders were affected simultaneously by the announcement of oncoming inspections shortly after Xi Jinping assumed power, and that this explains the difference. However, together with the other evidence above, it seems more likely that it is a signal that the teams did not work exactly as planned, at least during the period under analysis here.

Overall, the observational evidence on provincial economic governance and on government rhetoric I survey here does not show any change in upward-regarding behavior. If heterogeneity in the effect of inspection team visits was in fact driven by equilibrium adjustment, I argue we should expect to find evidence that they were signalling their loyalty or evidence that they were managing the economic activity in their provinces differently, but we find neither.

Discussion

Central inspection teams are confronted with a difficult problem: supervising senior members of the Chinese Communist Party entails overcoming significant factional and other considerations, even when inspections generate compromising information and are delivered to the central government directly. An extensive literature has documented the role of political connections in promotions in the Chinese bureaucracy (Jia, Kudamatsu, and Seim 2015; Landry, Lü, and Duan 2018), and the increased threats to clients when their patrons fall (Ang 2020; Shih and Lee 2020), suggesting that without opportunities presented by removing patrons, inspections may not be sufficient to make provincial leaders vulnerable to investigation.

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atively evaluating topics in Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley (2019). I report the results of simple TWFE regressions across the three years of 2013, 2014, and 2015 annual work reports on topic prevalence in the Appendix.

In this paper, I find that central inspection teams did lead to increased investigations of centrally-managed cadres (including members of the powerful provincial party standing committees) during the first round of provincial inspections. However, I also find limited evidence that these removals were associated with changes in provincial leader behavior, with no changes to some measures of economic management in the corruption-ridden real-estate industry, and no provincial governors taking the opportunity of their work reports to signal increased loyalty to Xi or his signature programs. Further, I find no evidence that embedded supervisors are more active after central inspection teams visit, despite evidence that at least some central inspection teams found and passed along information on provincially-managed cadre malfeasance.

This creates a mixed overall picture of the effectiveness of these inspection teams. While effective narrowly, they did not resolve the underlying problems with authority and information in provincial bureaucratic control.

One remaining puzzle is the extent to which, in these first years of the anti-corruption campaign, the decrease in effectiveness across inspection rounds was due to successful efforts to hide corruption, or due to genuine changes in the behavior of elites. One reason to expect that hiding evidence is difficult is that inspection teams may be uncovering acts committed long before the campaign began. Guo (2008) finds that the period from commission of a discovered crime to the investigation of a senior official who committed it lengthened on average between 1980 and 2004 to between 5 and 8 years on average, with even shorter cases having a gap between 1 and 3 years. But research in social policy has found that central inspections sped up timelines (albeit without improving the quality of outcomes) (Ma 2021), suggesting that inspections may produce 'short term' signals of results but be ineffective in the long run, especially given the 'campaign' atmosphere of the early anti-corruption push under Xi.

It is possible that the inspection teams, which are uniquely high-profile and transparent in making documents like these available for public consumption, are instead mostly a public-facing measure. The micro-foundations of this strategy have a solid foundation in the literature: Ding and Javed (2021) show experimentally that criminal rulings against

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corrupt cadres that conflict with popular morality are perceived as less reasonable, and Tsai, Trinh, and Liu (2021) show in a series of experiments that hypothetical officials punishing corrupt subordinates are perceived to be more competent at their jobs and more morally aligned with the populace, suggesting that this strategy would be effective (notwithstanding the decrease in trust described by Wang and Dickson (2022)).

The reason we continue to see the 'complete coverage' approach in central inspection teams, then, despite evidence that it may not be the most effecacious, is that high-profile anticorruption constitutes 'performative governance' by an apparatus constrained by elite limits on anticorruption activities; Ding (2020) argues that when public scrutiny of a bureaucratic function is high, but capacity is low, bureaucrats will *perform* competence, using symbols and language to create other impressions of effectiveness like responsiveness and genuine effort. Especially before the formation of the National Supervision Commission in 2018 and the expansion of operational and functional resources that it entailed, it would have been fair to characterize the anti-corruption apparatus as constrained, if not necessarily 'low capacity.' Public scrutiny of corruption was high during the Hu era, if constrained by certain red-lines on reporting and social media conflict. Perhaps the inspection teams were never meant to be effective, and were instead performative. This is difficult to square with the continued expansion and use of inspection teams unless their performative value is large indeed.

Finally, it is possible that inspection teams, as a model, produce non-accountability rewards to the central government, or Xi Jinping personally. Carothers and Zhang (2022) note that the focus of investigation reports written by the inspection teams has shifted since these initial rounds, from anti-corruption as the overwhelming focus to more organizational level and 'work-style' critiques. This is consistent with several explanations, one of which may be that inspection teams were perceived as more useful for this latter purpose.

Conclusion

Corruption has proven a stubborn problem in Chinese political economy, despite a broad repertoire of tools to address corrupt actors in various ways, from various institutions, and

at various levels. Combating it, and resistance in the localities, is an important part of ensuring that the Chinese state is able to enforce policy and achieve its goals (Landry 2008). However, as this dissertation and other work has shown, supervision is vulnerable to a variety of important informal ties: Chu et al. (2020) show that audits in the prefectural hometowns of province-level auditors find 38% less malfeasant funds.

Since Xi's signature anti-corruption campaign was launched, a rich literature has shown substantial effects of the campaign on decisions to enter the civil service (Jiang, Shao, and Zhang 2020) and on public trust in government (Wang and Dickson 2022). This chapter assesses the effect of increasing high-level supervision of leading cadres during the advent of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign *via* inspection team. In doing so, it evaluates an additional strategy to avoid the problems of "horizontal accountability" that has challenged governments around the world for decades (Boas, Hidalgo, and Melo 2019; See e.g. Schedler, Diamond, and Plattner 1999).

The chpater shows that the latest tool of Leninist supervision does raise the likelihood of subsequent investigation from malfeasance, including even provincial elites. However, the operational form of the supervision demonstrates significant shortcomings, as later inspection teams uncover less corruption. Furthermore, recent evidence about the effect of sub-provincial inspections on bureaucratic activity suggests that high-powered inspections may cause bureaucrats to slack because they believe it is safer to do nothing (Wang 2022), raising the possibility that supervision of this type may induce significant distortions, introducing an important trade-off.

What can we say about the value of information and authority in Chinese bureaucratic control? Narrowly effective inspection teams may present non-accountability payoffs to the regime, by minimizing lost reputation or decreasing political disillusionment. Wang and Dickson (2022) show that exposure to corruption investigations decreases regime support. And public participation that does not lead to results can also have negative consequences: Gallagher (2006) shows that experience with the Chinese legal system, leads to 'informed disenchantment,' where litigants become significantly more jaded about the legal system after experiencing it firsthand. Moving away from publicly-engaged supervision tactics to a

strategy that compartmentalizes information at the top of the political hierarchy, therefore, may be worth the lack of efficacy to the Xi administration.

If that is the case, the evidence in this chapter suggests that placing retired leaders from high in the bureaucracy, and breaking away from embedded supervision, may not be enough to substantially crack the anti-corruption problems in China.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I set out to examine how the Chinese Communist Party has set out to control its bureaucracy. I depart from the comparatively well-studied positive inducements used to study institutions built for the particular problems inherent in constructing bureaucratic control.

Theoretically, I build on the rich literature on bureaucratic politics to argue that these institutions confront three problems: an *information* problem about performance due to pervasive incentives to distort it; an *authority* problem where creating monitoring bureaucracies creates opportunities to abuse them; and an *embeddedness* problem, where the closer you situate controllers to their subjects, the more likely they are to be captured and collude, complicating the interaction between information and authority further.

By using the case of China, I show that authoritarian regimes can institutionalize bureaucratic control in several ways simultaneously, creating a broad repertoire of tools with different value profiles to the regime. The choice of which of these tools to use, especially under one-man rule, is likely endogenous to the concerns of autocrats at the top, but I also show that even in a high-capacity authoritarian regime, there is evidence that the problems above continue to bind. While Chinese leaders have previously 'layered' many strategies of bureaucratic control together in attempts to reign in local policy deviance and corruption, both times (in the late 1950s and under Xi Jinping) bureaucratic control has been consolidated and centralized.

In Chapter 3, I show that party discipline was not fated to dominate all other strategies of bureaucratic control in the Chinese state. Using a bevy of new source material, I show that legal and administrative supervision attracted costly and extensive investments by the

Chinese state, and which performed (albeit briefly) significant checks on corruption, policy deviance, waste, exaggerated reporting, and other excesses of the mobilizational Maost state. Further, I show that the Maoist institutions of bureaucratic control, even in the shadow of mass campaigns, laid out much of the repertoire that would be used by the Chinese Communist party for the next 70 years.

I then set out to examine the use of this repertoire in two different eras of Chinese politics. In the 1980s, Chinese society and politics were changing rapidly; market reforms, decentralization, and the political thaw after the Cultural Revolution were also reflected in increasingly diverse methods of bureuacratic control, especially the controlled inclusion of mass feedback in the form of the petition system. In Chapter 4, I aim to determine if, during a period of political and social transformation, the 'information' constraint bound the enforcement of bureaucratic control in China's prefectural cities. By using data on the expansion of the state supervision system's reporting offices for petitioners, I show that at least in the late 1980s, information was unlikely the primary constraint for bureaucratic control. Instead, as many others have shown, it is likely that the problematic allocation of authority constrained the enforcement of deviance, even at the height of political opportunity to punish corruption and malfeasance.

By the time Xi Jinping assumed the role of General Secretary in November of 2012, the problems with previous arrangements for bureaucratic control had been evident for decades: while some corruption smoothed the functioning of markets and allowed for the reallocation of goods during the market transition, other forms of deviance exacerbated inequality, damaged the ability of the government to provide public goods, and created poorly functioning markets preyed on by powerful political factions. Chapter 5 examines the beginning of Xi's signature tool of the anticorruption campaign: highly powered inspection teams dispatched directly by the party center. I show that these teams worked at the beginning, but show evidence that their effectiveness may have declined over time.

Future Directions

Much work remains to bring a complete treatment of bureaucratic control in China into focus. Three are particularly important: the theoretical treatment needs considerable expansion; the evidence available for several components can be strengthened; and the overall project would benefit from comparative context.

First, the theoretical treatment of embeddedness, information, and authority in Chapter 1 is insufficiently broad. Because much of the dissertation is descriptive, I am able to say that certain relationships *matter* but not *how* they work. Chapters 4 and 5 provide us some confidence that the Chinese government's strategies for bureaucratic control struggle because of a particular allocation of authority, but the evidence is mixed. More evidence on embeddedness, in particular, is needed. In the book project, I hope to add an additional case study of "dispatched offices" (派驻机构), which were used both in the 1950s and the reform era to expand available information without compromising on authority relationships (陈宏彩 2016).

Chapter 3 would benefit from an increased attention to potential factors that caused the changes I observe, as well as to documenting them in detail. While I institutional structure (e.g. embedded state supervision and separated procurators) did not prevent some tactics from being used by multiple institutions, it still could be that these structural factors explain more than changing ideas over time. I should also dedicate more attention to leadership connections to different regional governments, to training in the Soviet Union, and to bureaucratic overlap between state and party bureaucratic control institutions, all of which may have influenced the prominence of certain strategies and regulatory goals across time and across institutions.

Second, while I have done my best to write a multi-institutional study of bureaucratic control, the work is incomplete without a treatment of the CCP Organization Bureau. While secretive, doing work on its role in politics is not impossible (Manion 2020). In particular, I plan to incorporate newly collected materials from two sources: "Selected Materials on Organization Work (组织工作文件选编)", a publication published throughout

the 1950s that can compliment my treatment of 1950s bureaucratic control in Chapter 3; and "Organization Bulletin (组工通讯)" from the reform period, which was the internal publication of Organization Departments started by Hu Yaobang to press forward organization department reforms and share work experience, much like the publications studied in Chapter 3 ("《组工通讯》引发的风波" 2015).

Third, in future work, I hope that I can bring the institutions and repertoire of bureaucratic control in China into comparative perspective. Multi-country studies have shown that we learn new things about Chinese politics when we compare it to other authoritarian and developing polities in the region (Looney 2020; Strauss 2020). In particular, I argue implicitly in the dissertation that the historical repertoire of the Chinese government in bureaucratic control is broad but not without limits, and is tied largely to strategies developed already in the 1950s; to show that it is indeed China's *history* that meaningfully constrains its repertoire and not its authoritarianism or its Leninist party structure, I will need a comparison. I have already begun archival work to compare the single-party KMT regime on Taiwan with Chinese political experience, and it is my hope that future versions of this work can include discussion of the Taiwanese apparatuses of bureaucratic control, at least as a foil and potentially as a full case.

What have we learned?

My dissertation makes several contributions to our understandings of Chinese politics and of authoritarian regimes.

First, I bring institutions of 'anti-corruption' into the literature on bureaucratic control. This simple contextual change helps restore the attention to the *multiple* ways bureaucrats face intervention from state agents: not just promotions, but also removal and evaluation and monitoring. This also is important because 'corruption' is a fraught analytical category that may obfuscate as much as it reveals (Ang 2020), and especially under autocracy, it's often impossible to trust or verify the actual facts of any case. Instead, we gain a great deal of theoretical ground by considering the process of monitoring, evaluating, and removing cadres as part of cadre *management,* where we can reckon instead with specific

kinds of proscribed behavior which e.g. do not ignore punishable disciplinary or political offenses, like policy deviance, just because they do not personally enrich individual cadres.

Second, I present a simple framework for understanding how the the Chinese Communist Party tries to overcome a series of organizational challenges outlined in the literature on bureaucratic politics, principal-agent problems, and the delegation literature in social science. Far from creating more "autocracy with adjectives," I think of this as a return to the basics. A more narrow theoretical focus can *improve* our understanding of Chinese politics, even in a time when Chinese politics are changing quickly, by moving our attention away from explaining regime durability to examining how this core aspect of governance is managed.

By focusing on the changes to information, authority, and embeddedness over time, we can begin to classify the larger body of supervision, monitoring, and personnel control approaches taken by the Chinese state and party. This is crucial to placing China's political and economic experience in context, when much of the literature on developmental states depends, for example, on the nature of ties between business and the state (Evans 2012), but the actual *details* of bureaucracy's structure have only recently begun to be mapped carefully (Chen 2018; Samford 2017), and our understanding of the boundaries of bureaucracy and enforcement are still developing (Holland 2016; Rich 2022).

By mapping the Chinese repertoire of bureaucratic control, we take the first step to answering important questions about what strategies of bureaucratic control are particular to some types of regimes (e.g. Leninist, developmental), when they succeed and when they fail. The experience of China's 1950s shows that authoritarian regimes not only learned from one another, but (as has been influentially argued elsewhere), the political context of bureaucracy matters for explaining variation in effectiveness and independence (Carpenter 2001; McDonnell 2017; Strauss 1998).

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Appendix

In this Appendix, I present a variety of robustness checks, as well as methodological elaborations and evaluations. The materials are divided by the Chapter.

Chapter 3 Materials:

Text Extraction:

In this section, I briefly outline the process by which I assembled the corpus I used in Chapter 3. This roughly proceeds along four steps: procurement, preprocessing, layout analysis, and text recognition. I discuss procurement in the body of Chapter 3, so I turn to the second and third steps here.

To extract the text of these publications for analysis, I computationally parsed the document layouts and recognized the text of the raw images to produce the corpus.

Original documents I procured from Chinese secondhand book-stores were scanned on a scanning rig I purchased and assembled to avoid damage to the originals. The 'v' shape of glass and the corresponding 'v' shaped support structure allows materials to be gently pressed against the glass (called a 'platen') from below, flattening the pages and ensuring the scanning surface is always the same distance from the embedded cameras above to ensure the scans are properly focused, and without damaging the spine of bound materials.

I then wrote python program to automatically crop and rotate the pages of these periodicals to ensure that they were pre-processed properly for the recognition stage. I used a mix of manual cropping parameters and simple computer-vision techniques from the computer vision library `cv` to implement this step. For example, I used edge detection algorithms and the Hough transform to detect the skew of scans and correct them programmatically. The pre-processing also automatically picks a threshhold to grey-scale the image, using a 'window' of local pixels to pick a darkness value above which pixels are made white and below which they are made black. This step would be performed by an OCR algorithm, but less predictably and less well.

Figure 21: A Tenrec Builders Book Scanner assembled and used for this research

The penultimate step was layout recognition. The extraction of text from an image relies on several steps, but they can usefully be divided into two components – *layout detection* (detecting *where* there is text) and *text recognition* (puzzling out what the text says and transcribing it). Many of the publications analyzed in this paper used what is commonly referred to in the OCR literature as a 'complex layout,' which means that out-of-the-box OCR tools struggle to determine *where* there is text, and when they do detect text, to order the text correctly.
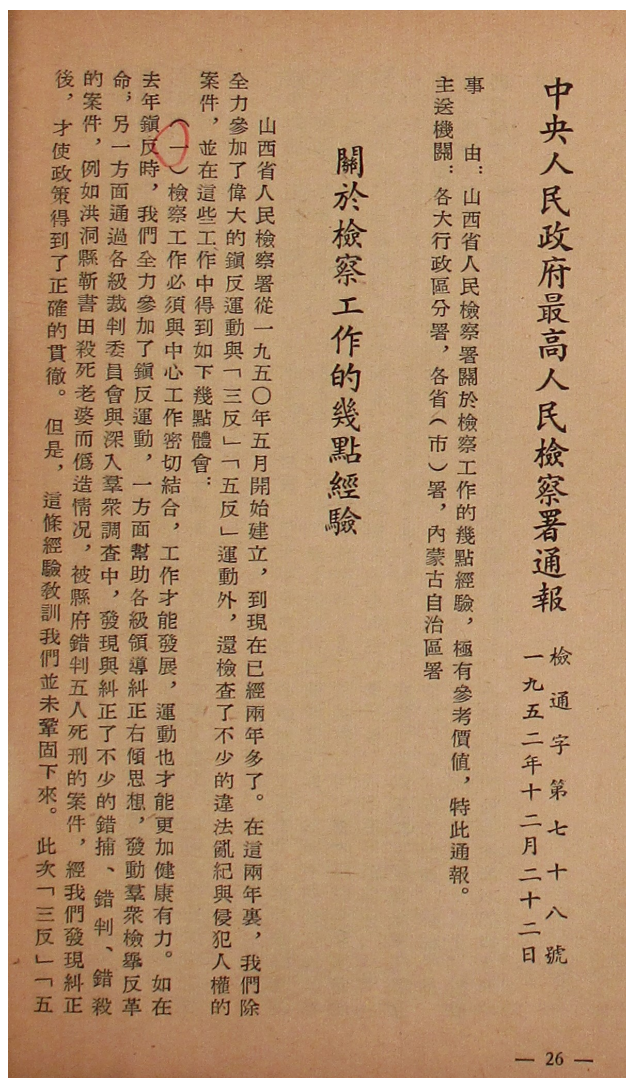
Figure 22: A page difficult text layout

Consider these example pages, which are good examples of some page issues that foil regular layout analysis while staying relatively simple (e.g. they contains no tables, figures, or complicated logotypes or other embellishments). The layout models in regular OCR programs will still struggle with the first page for several reasons, even once the skew has
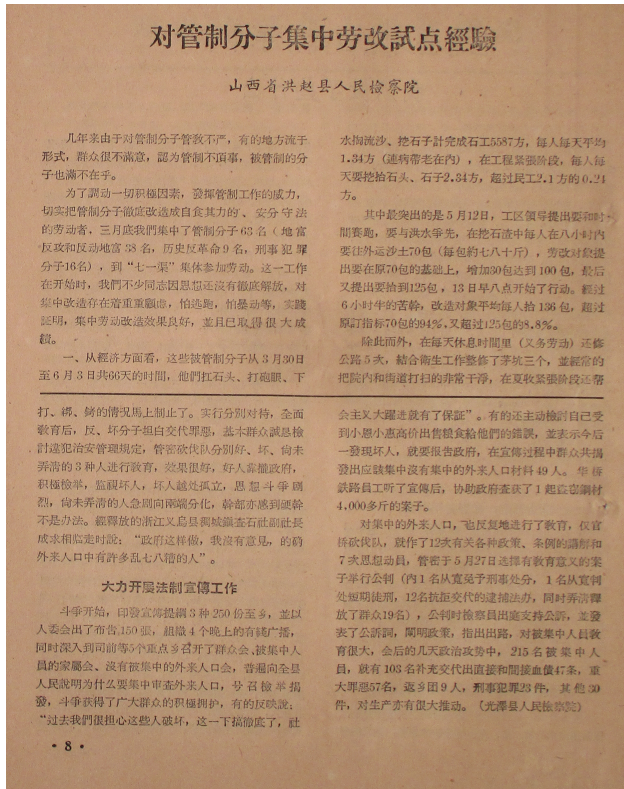
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Figure 23: A page with page division

been addressed: first, thin vertical paragraphs confuse the layout model, and are often skipped. Second, the fact that "documents" begin and end on the same page, with vertical titles, also can be confusing to the layout detection component. Furthermore, the highlighting (in original), lower contrast between the paper and the text, or the presence of marginalia can all also sometimes throw off layout detection. This is not surprising, given that the vast majority of OCR algorithms are designed for, and trained on, a relatively narrow set of document layouts, generally from the internet age and after, with (Western alphabet) books, receipts, and (increasingly) scientific papers composing the lions share of the training data.

More obviously, but also more commonly, layout recognition can be confused by layouts like the second example, in which one article is continued from a previous page and on which another, self-contained article is printed. Only recently have tools for analyzing more complex layouts like newspapers, magazines, or scientific articles become popularly available to researchers on their own, who may instead rely on soup-to-nuts software tools like ABBYY FineReader, Google Vision, and so on to handle OCR. Because these solutions performed poorly, and building on the LayoutParser pipeline (Shen et al. 2021), which in turn was developed based on the Facebook Detectron2 image recognition

algorithm, I trained a custom layout model for my corpus. This involved manually outlining text boxes for over 500 pages in the corpus with annotation software, which produced training data in COCO format for each of the pages. I then fine-tuned a layout model from the LayoutParser model zoo already trained on a publicly available data-set. The output of this layout model was a sequence of image bounding boxes for each page.
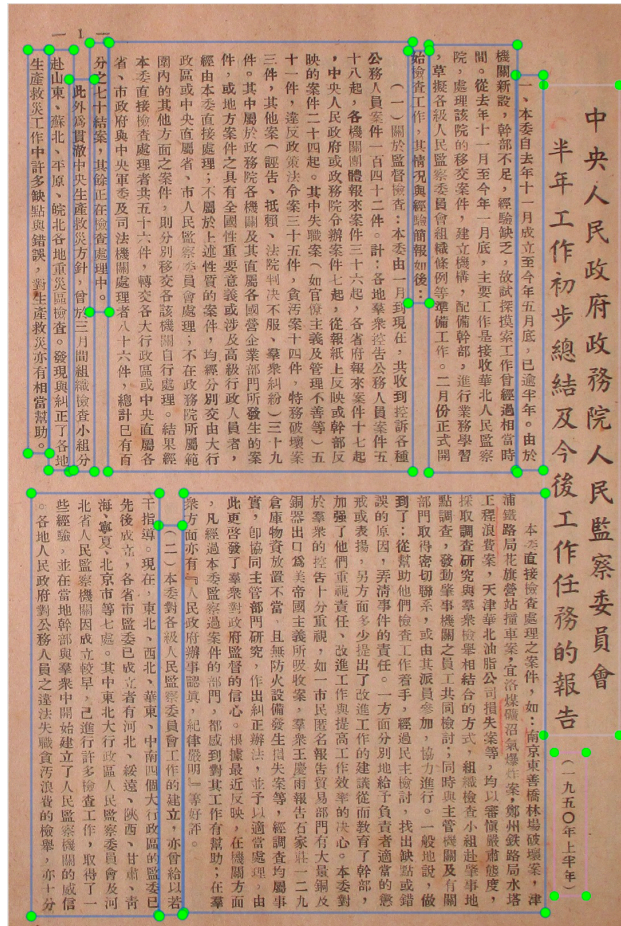

Figure 24: A page with layout annotations

To turn these bounding boxes into text, I passed these regions to the open-source OCR engine `tesseract`; I selected the hyper-parameters for `tesseract` by grid-searching the hyper-parameters and comparing the output to the text of the 2000 pages research assistants and I transcribed manually.

OCR Workflow and Accuracy:

In this section, I briefly present the magnitude of OCR errors between directly calling an optical character recognition algorithm on raw images and after my pre-processing workflow.

For these results, I use the hand-transcribed pages of 17 issues (1191 pages) of People's Supervision as "ground truth," and compare these to the output of `pytesseract`, a `python` binding for the `tesseract` OCR program, called both optimally on the documents I pre-processed, and without pre-processing or optimization on the raw scans.

For my metric of distance, I report generalized Levenshtein distances, which I calculate using the `R` function `adist`. The Levenshtein distance (sometimes referred to as the 'edit distance') is the minimum number of insertions, deletions, and substitutions needed to 'edit' one string to another. Here, in order to make the comparison more fair, I have preemptively removed all white-space from the `tesseract` outputs.
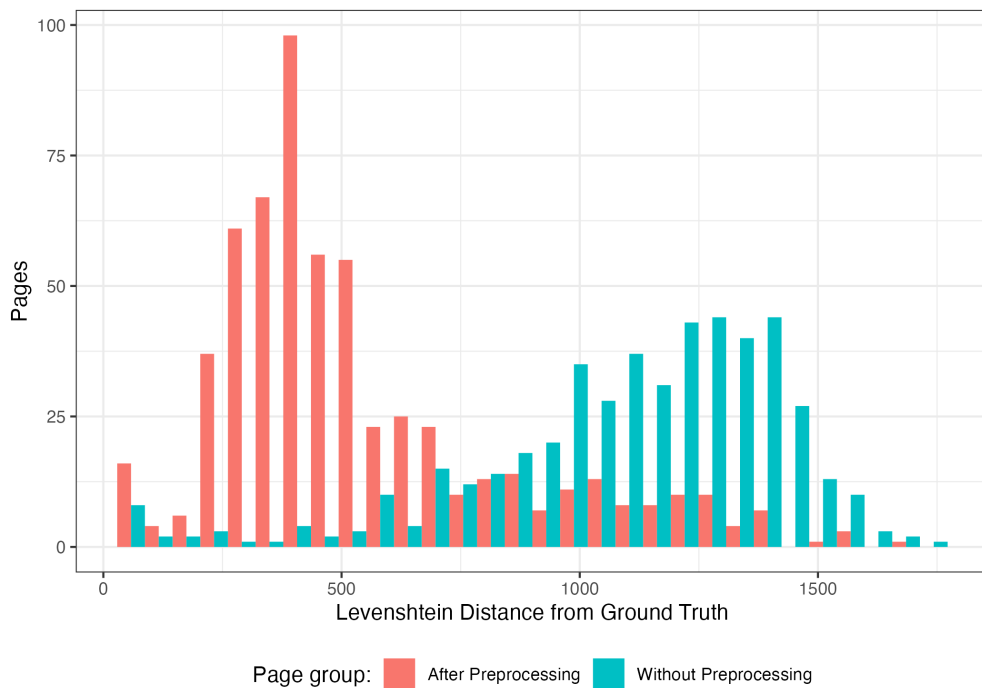

Figure 25: Preprocessing Effect on OCR Quality

Here, I visualize the density of OCR errors; further to the right means that more edits (character-level replacements, deletions, or insertions) were necessary to change the OCR output to match the ground truth. Neither method matches ground truth perfectly; on average, even the optimized workflow is more than 540 edits away from the ground truth (median 444). However, without optimization, performance approaches complete uselessness– on average requiring more than 1100 edits to change the recognized text to match the ground truth (median 1172).

Chapter 4 Materials:

Representativeness of the Prefecture Sample:

In this section, I attempt to characterize the ways in which the prefectures represented in my data may differ from the overall population of prefectures in the People's Republic during the period of analysis. For each prefecture, I use the available demographic and economic statistics from the China City Statistical Yearbook. Data for the 1980s is extremely meager, but we can get a reasonable sense of how the prefectures in my sample differ from the population of prefectural cities on three measures: population size (reported unit is 10,000 people), amount of FDI (in contract numbers and value spent on real projects, in ten thousand USD), and the projected budget revenue (in units of ten thousand yuan). I have collected all of these for all prefectures available for 1986, the year before the Ministry of Supervision was reestablished in prefectures.
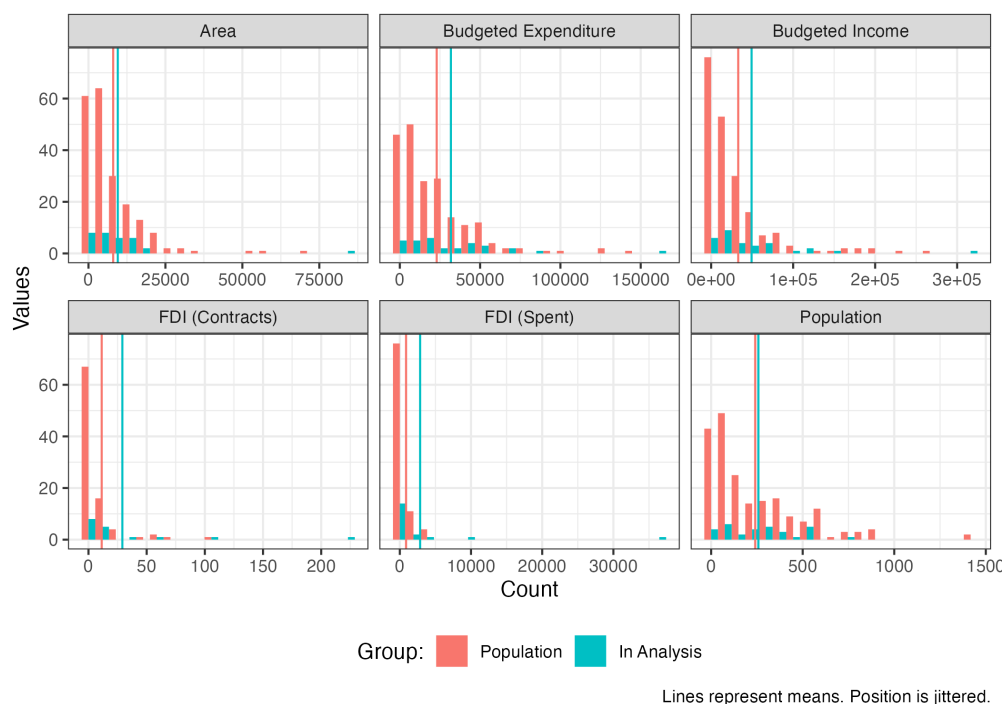

Figure 26: Distribution of Covariates for Population and Included Prefecture Level Cities

In this figure, I show the distributions of several available and potentially relevant prefectural city characteristics for 31 of the 34 prefectures I use in the analysis: the size of the city's budget revenue and expenditure, its physical size and population, and its amounts of foreign direct investment (FDI).

In general, my sample appears to have more FDI, has larger revenue and expenditures by

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Table 10: Prefecture Characteristics: Means and Median Values

Group	Indicator	Mean	Median
Population	Area	8025	4654
	Budgeted Expenditure	22963	15718
	Budgeted Income	33041	15674
	FDI (Contracts)	11	3
	FDI (Spent)	879	102
	Population	241	139
Analysis	Area	9519	6516
	Budgeted Expenditure	31808	20493
	Budgeted Income	49289	25700
	FDI (Contracts)	29	7
	FDI (Spent)	2854	109
	Population	258	235

the prefectural government, and is relatively typical (in the averages) in population and area. The deviance from 'typical' prefecture level cities is largely driven by the inclusion of prefectures that were special economic zones or particularly economically active, especially Shenzhen and Guangzhou; Shenzhen reports spending over 364 million USD of Foreign Direct Investment in 1986; the next closest prefecture is Guangzhou, which spent only 91 million USD; the population median was only 1 million USD (although this statistic is only available for 110 out of 235 prefecture level cities in 1986).

The outsize influence of larger prefectures is the same for budgeted income: the population median for prefectural budgeted income (where available) is roughly 156 million yuan, whereas for those used in the analysis it is 257 million; in the means, this is 330 million versus 492 million yuan, respectively.

Overall, these and other differences suggest that significant caution be used before extrapolating the results from Chapter 4 to the whole population of prefectural cities, let alone all prefectures. In future versions of this project, I hope to expand the sample to improve its representativeness of prefectural cities, and especially of prefectures not classified as cities, although this will be considerably more difficult.

Visual Diagnostics for Regressions: Event Study

In this section, I present the visual diagnostics for the various regressions presented in the main text.

First, I present a visual check on the possible treatment effect heterogeneity over time by

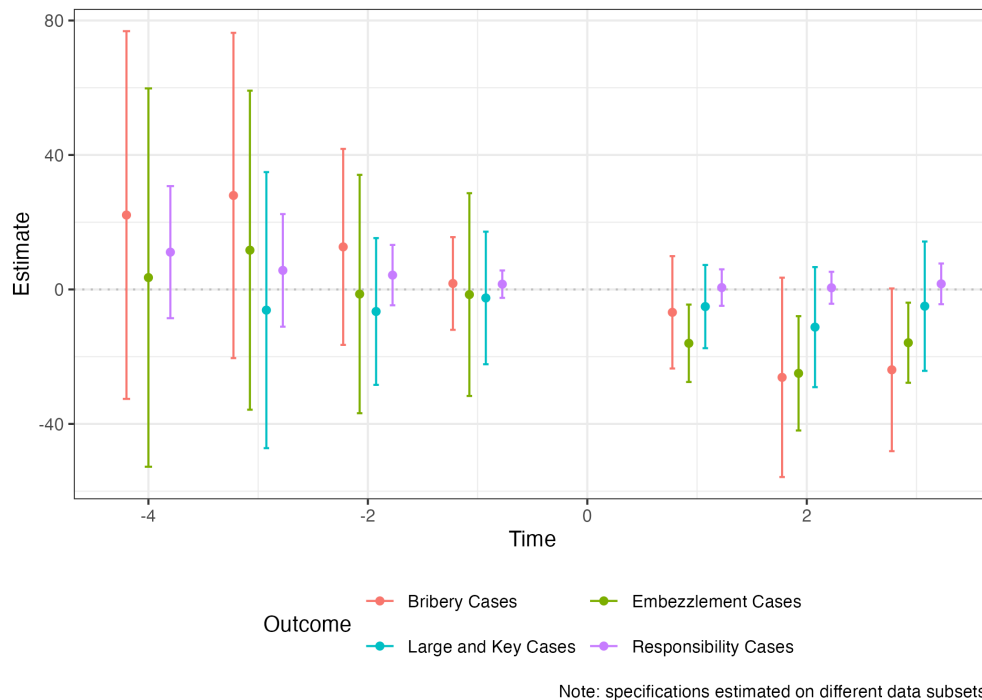estimating an "event study" for each of the four outcomes.

Figure 27: Estimated Heterogeneous Effects of Petitions: Event Study Plot, Fixed Effects Models

This event-study presentation does not suggest that there were statistically significant pretrends for these models, nor does it suggest that there is significant heterogeneity in treatment effects across time, including after treatment.

Visual Diagnostics for Regressions: Panel and Treatment Paths

Below, I also visually represent the missingness and the treatment paths (in averages of the raw outcomes) across the outcomes examined in the Analysis section, as reccomended by Chiu et al. (2023). By doing so, I hope to make several patterns clear, especially the upward general trend in investigations in the lead-up to the June 4th 1989 protests and after. The design relies on the fact that after absorbing 'unit' trends (the locality fixed effects) and the 'time' trends (the 'year' fixed effects) that the parallel trends assumption holds. We see several places where this appears to be unlikely in the raw data.
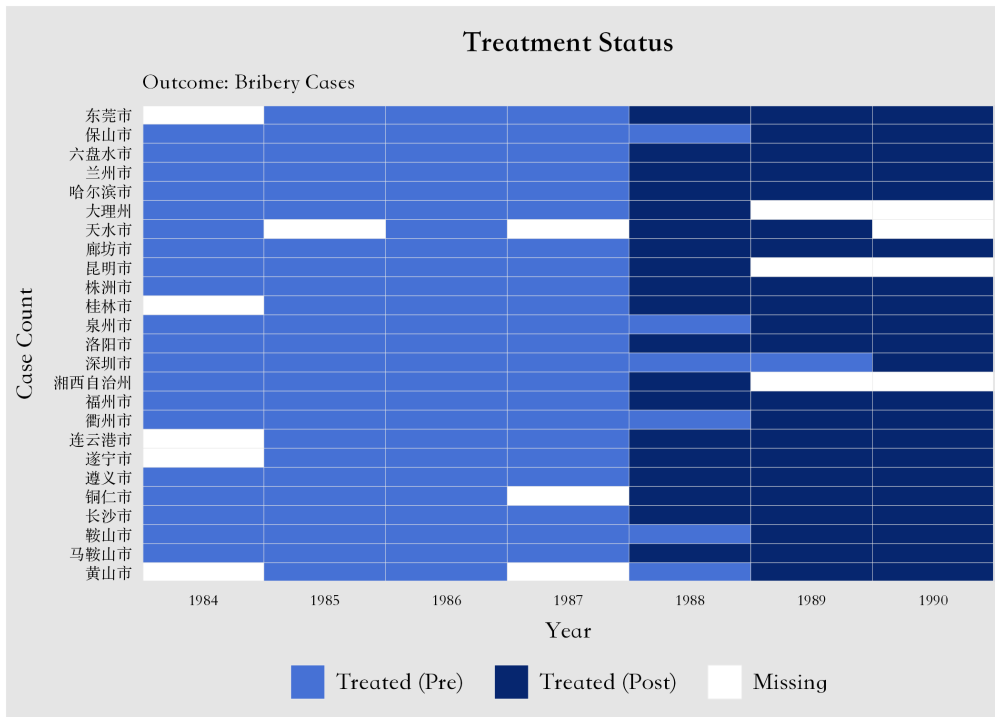
Bribery Cases

Embezzlement Cases
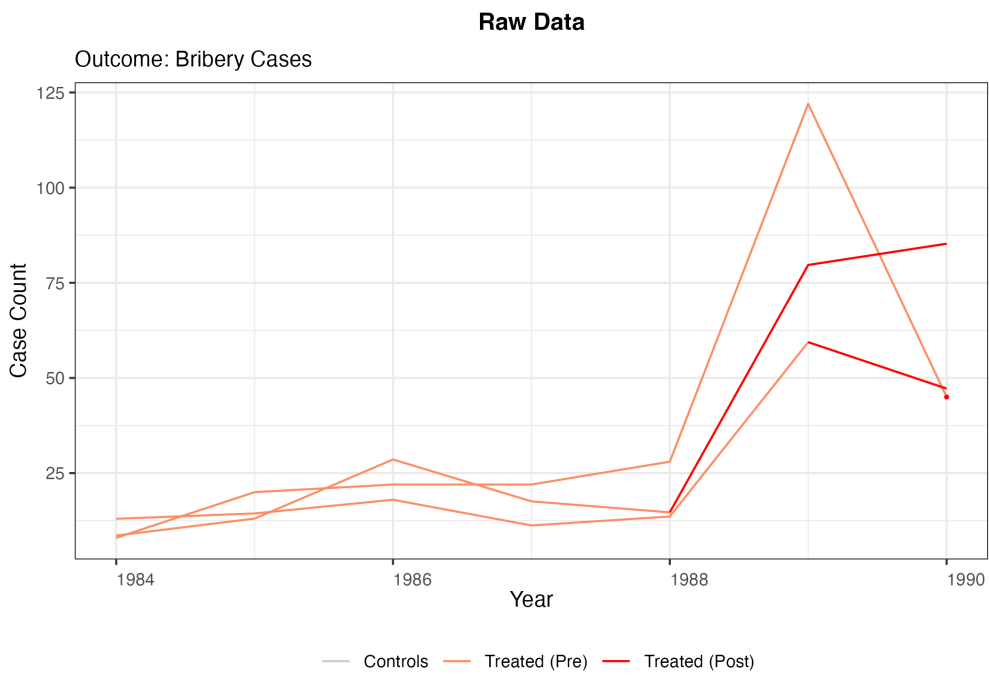
Figure 28: Bribery Panel Plot
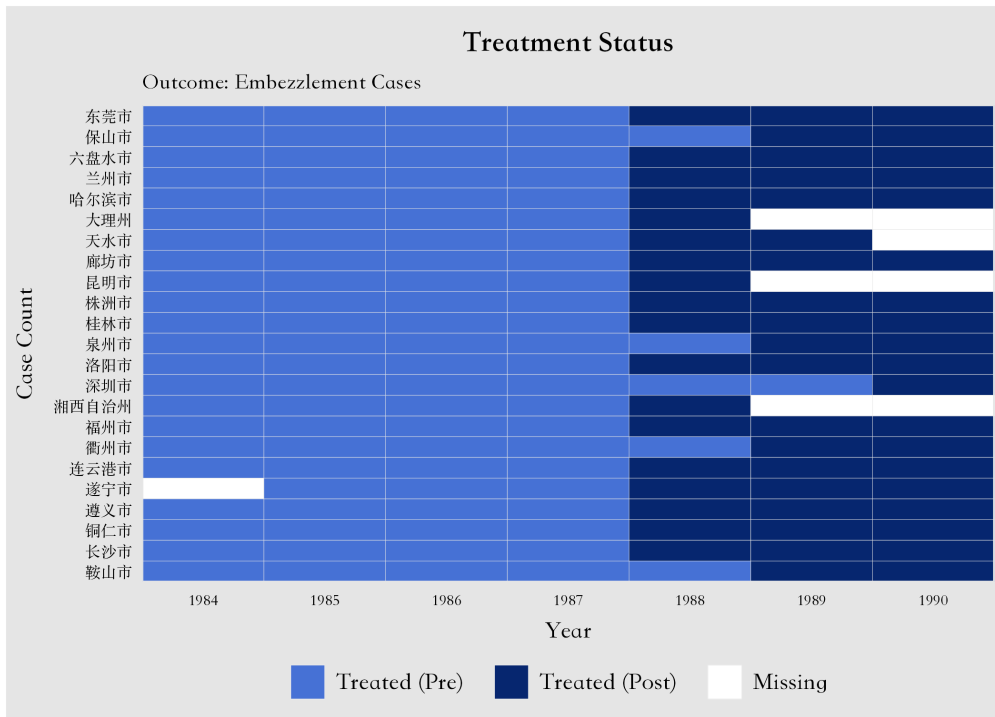

Figure 29: Bribery Treatment Paths
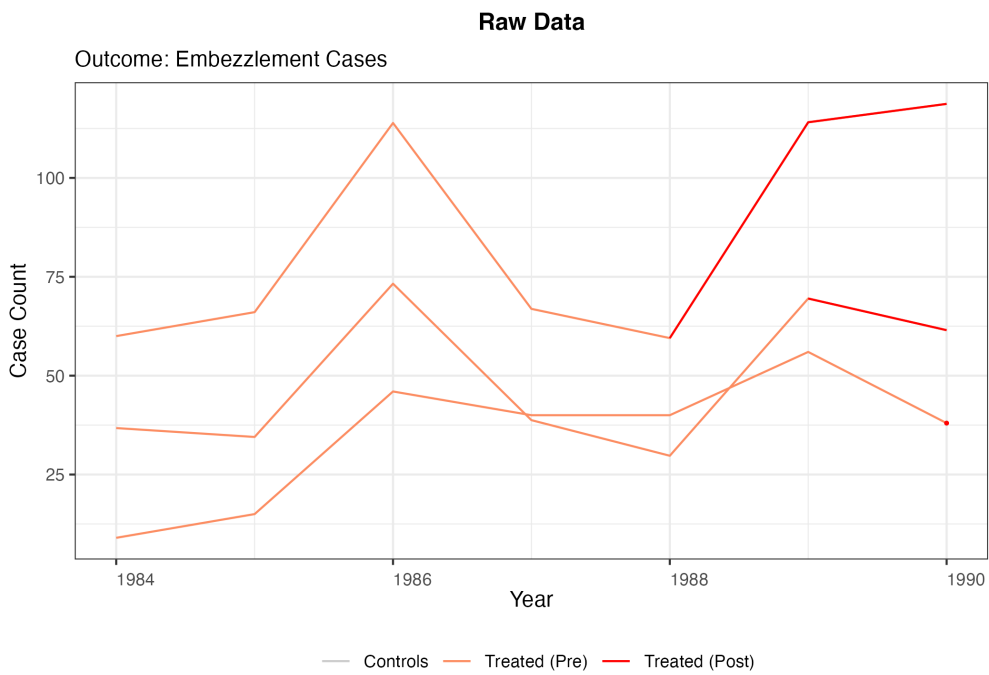
171

Figure 30: Embezzlement Panel Plot

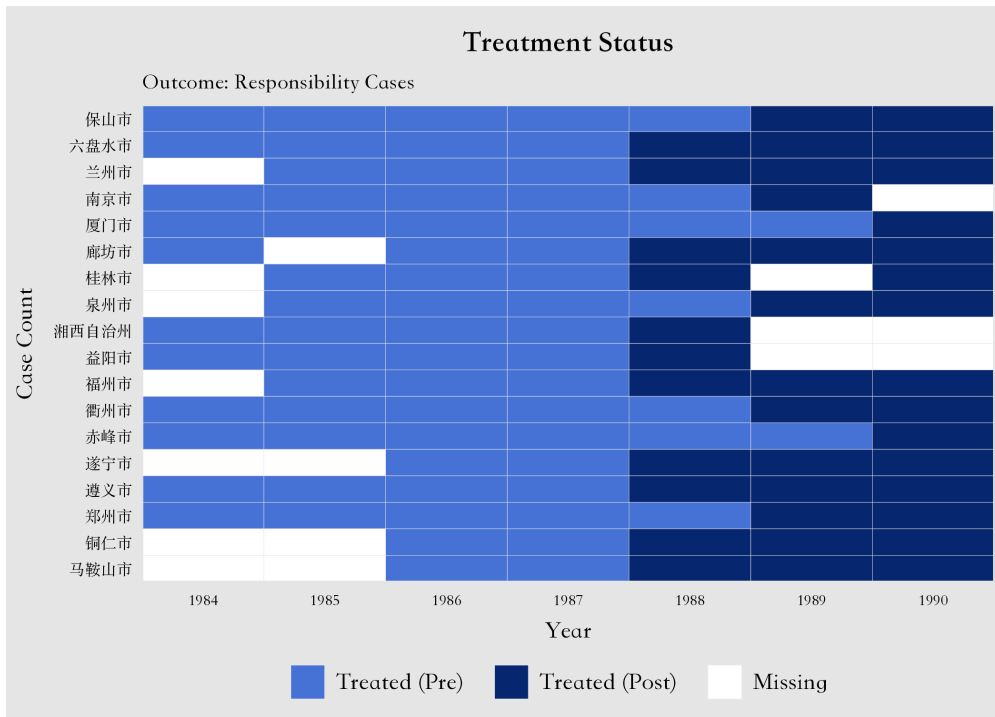Figure 31: Embezzlement Treatment Paths

Figure 32: Responsibility Cases Panel Plot

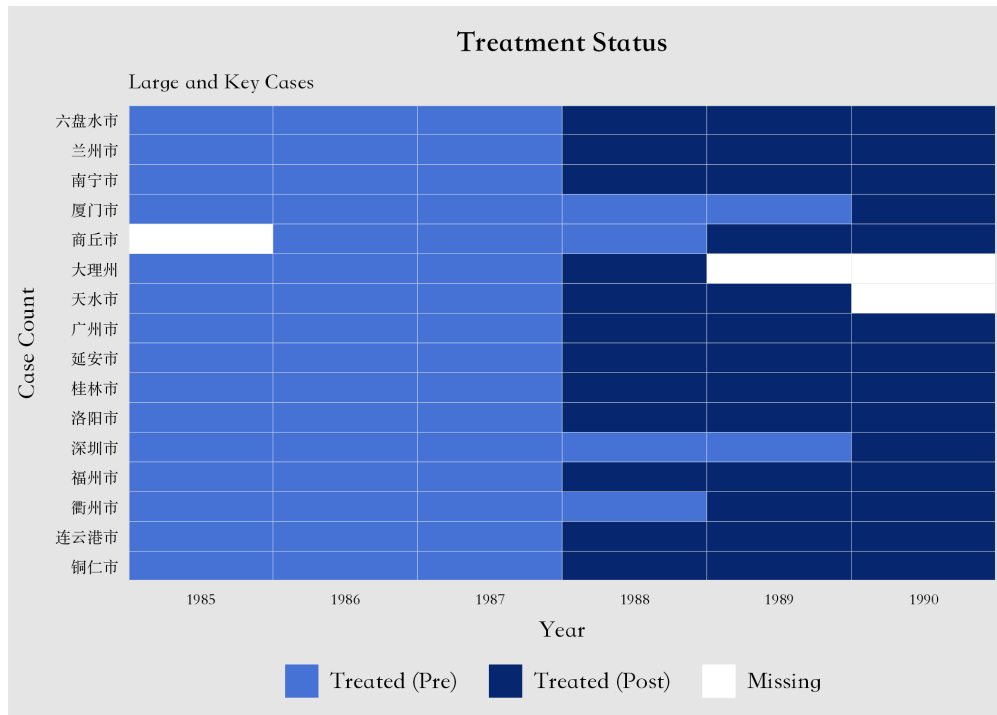Figure 33: Responsibility Cases Treatment Paths

Responsibility Cases

Figure 34: Large and Key Cases Panel Plot

Large and Key Cases

Substituting Away from Criminal Sanctions

In this section, I do my best to address the possibility that the null findings on the effect of opening a reporting office on criminal investigations for a variety of malfeasance crimes. In the body of the text, I outline that this could potentially be due to a substitution or preemption effect, where administrative sanctions or party punishments are meted out to cadres instead of criminal sanctions because there *are* more reports, but they identify malfeasance before it escalates to criminal levels.

To draw this out briefly, bottom-up information might have allowed state supervisors to propagate information about misconduct to local officials in position to act on it. These officials might have then taken corrective administrative sanctions or party corrections, before the misconduct escalated to the level of serious appropriate for a criminal investigation (many forms of malfeasance at this time had statutory thresholds below which criminal prosecution was not recommended).[79]

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[79] I am grateful to David Thompson-Brusstar for pointing this out to me.
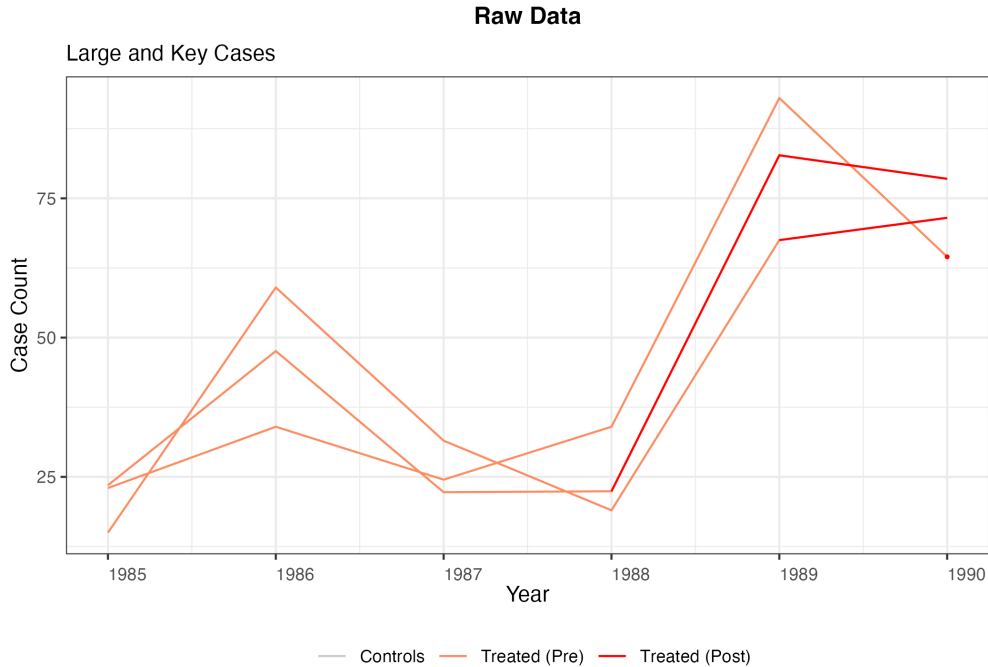
Raw Data

Large and Key Cases

Figure 35: Large and Key Cases Treatment Paths

If this 'preemption' hypothesis is true, we should expect that, after localities open reporting offices, their numbers of administrative and party sanctions might go *up* even as the number of cases they refer to legal authorities goes *down*, even if the number of petitions and underlying level of malfeasance stayed the same.

While data on these outcomes is also quite scarce, I was able to locate the relevant quantities for *five* prefectures out of the hundreds I collected: Jiaozuo City in Henan Province, Hefei City in Anhui, Ankang prefecture in Shaanxi, Yueyang City in Hunan province, and Leshan City in Sichaun province. In particular, I located data from prefectural party discipline and inspection commissions (DICs), which were separate from state supervisors at this time, but to whom petition information would have been sent if party members were implicated by information given to state supervisors.

These discipline inspection commissions in these prefectures report two quantities in which we are interested: the number of administrative sanctions transferred from the DICs to the legal system, and the number they reccommended for administrative sanctions. We can see if these numbers change by examining two years of data: 1987, when none of the prefectures had opened a reporting office and 1988, when only Yueyang had opened a reporting office (by 1989 all had opened a reporting office).
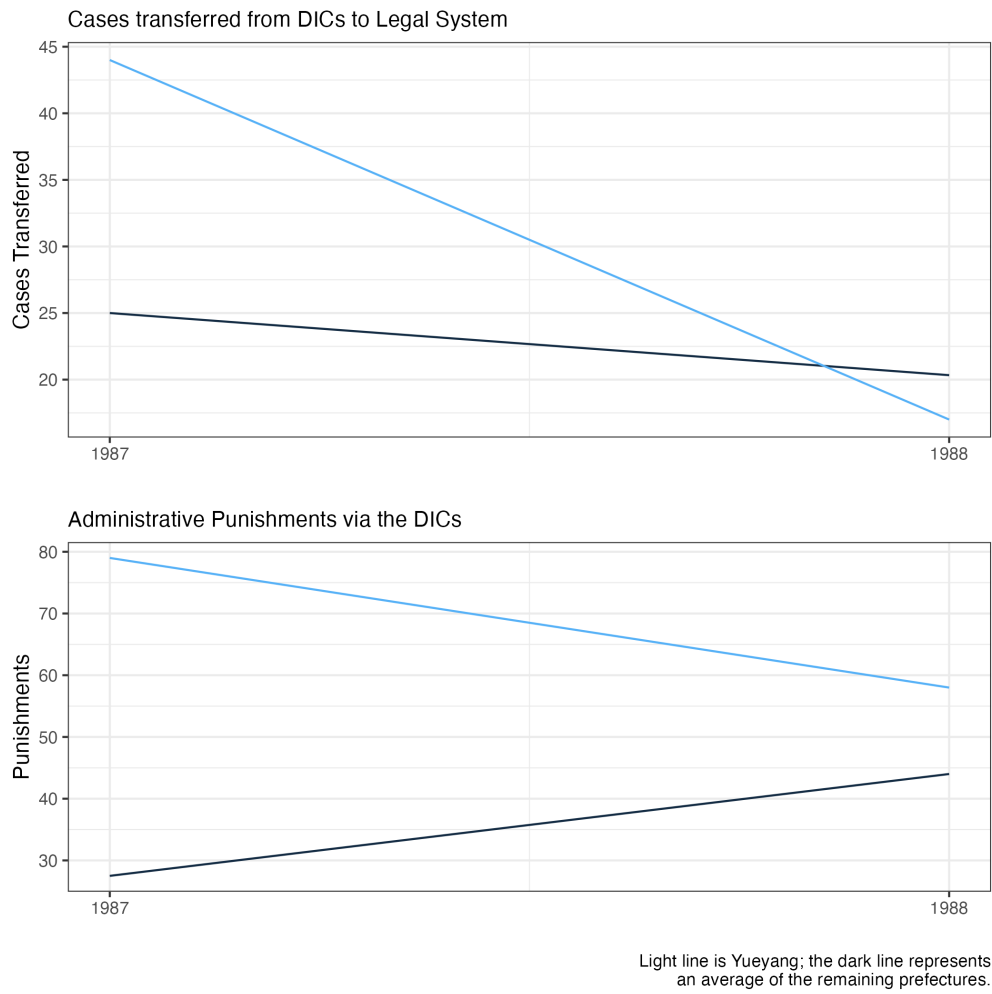
Figure 36: Yueyang Comparison

In this figure, using what little data are available, it does appear that Yueyang transferred fewer cases to the legal system in 1988 than the average of other prefectures. If, as in a difference-in-difference design, we used that average to impute the counter-factual path that Yueyang would have followed, had it not opened a reporting office, then this 'effect' would be particularly large. We see the pattern similarly in the number of administrative sanctions. Ultimately, however, the limited nature of the data make any conclusions speculative.

Chapter 5 Materials:

Balance of Provinces Across Rounds

In the following Table, I present information that can be used to assess the heterogeneity of the provinces across inspection rounds. It is important to note that heterogeneity across rounds is not a threat to inference in the DID framework, which requires instead that the *trends* in treated and control units are parallel; however, it is nonetheless useful to understand the variation across the provinces. Population is given in 10,000 people; GDP growth in percent year over year; Economy size in ten million yuan; corruption cases sum the corruption and malfeasance crimes in that province. All measures are for 2011 except population, which is from the 2010 census.

We can see if the averages of several values differ across rounds to see if there are obvious differences in these values across rounds.

Round	Average Pop.	Average GDP growth	Average GDP size	Average Corruption Cases
1	3805.2	14.40	12281.63	991.200
2	5648.5	12.80	19813.33	1488.333
3	3656.9	12.04	15589.43	1073.500
4	4390.0	11.92	18525.87	1307.200

Across the provincial-level information collected, there is little evidence that there is a systematic difference between the first round of inspected provinces and the others, except potentially that provinces with faster-growing GDP (in 2011) were slightly more likely to be targeted. I present the full data collected below in Table 11.

Alternate Specifications for Main Regressions

Alternative Treatment Timing   In this section, I report the results of the main regressions with treatment as taking place in the time that teams *leave* the provinces, rather than upon the *arrival* of the teams, as in the main text. Table 6 reports these results.

Model 1 reports the estimate for inspection teams; Model 2 includes an indicator variable for provinces where Xi Jinping served; and Model 3 further adds controls for the total number of corruption and malfeasance cases in 2011, the size of provincial population in 2010, and the GDP growth in 2011 (over 2010). The results are substantially different when treatment timing is coded as the teams leave rather than when they arrive. First, the point-wise confidence band of the overall effect now includes zero. Second, the heterogeneous ATT estimates are different; although the estimates are positive and of

Table 11: Balance Data

Province	Population	GDP Growth	Economy Size	Cases	Region	Round
Beijing	1962	8.1	16251.93	398	North	3
Tianjin	1299	16.4	11307.28	312	North	3
Hebei	7194	11.3	24515.76	2624	North	4
Shanxi	3574	13.0	11237.55	1220	North	2
Inner Mongolia	2472	14.3	14359.88	615	North	1
Liaoning	4375	12.2	22226.70	1615	Northeast	3
Jilin	2747	13.8	10568.83	1786	Northeast	2
Heilongjiang	3833	12.3	12582.00	1171	Northeast	4
Shanghai	2303	8.2	19195.69	336	East	4
Jiangsu	7869	11.0	49110.27	3523	East	4
Zhejiang	5447	9.0	32318.85	1287	East	4
Anhui	5957	13.5	15300.65	1287	East	2
Fujian	3693	12.3	17560.18	1052	East	3
Jiangxi	4462	12.5	11702.82	936	East	1
Shandong	9588	10.9	45361.85	2884	East	3
Henan	9405	11.9	26931.03	2839	Central	3
Hubei	5728	13.8	19632.26	1525	Central	1
Hunan	6570	12.8	19669.56	1429	Central	2
Guangdong	10441	10.0	53210.28	1721	Central	2
Guangxi	4610	12.3	11720.87	1068	Central	4
Hainan	869	12.0	2522.66	211	Central	3
Chongqing	2885	16.4	10011.37	951	Southwest	1
Sichuan	8045	15.0	21026.68	1438	Southwest	4
Guizhou	3479	15.0	5701.84	929	Southwest	1
Yunnan	4602	13.7	8893.12	1487	Southwest	2
Xizang	301	12.7	605.83	34	Southwest	4
Shaanxi	3735	13.9	12512.30	1438	Northwest	4
Gansu	2560	12.5	5020.37	678	Northwest	3
Qinghai	563	13.5	1670.44	153	Northwest	4
Ningxia	633	12.1	2102.21	196	Northwest	3
Xinjiang	2185	12.0	6610.05	550	Northwest	3

Table 12: Centrally Managed Cadres, Alternate Treatment Timing

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
ATT (Average)	0.122	0.135	0.181	
	[−0.020, 0.263]	[−0.017, 0.286]	[0.044, 0.319]	
ATT Round 1	0.155	0.175	0.100	
	[−0.024, 0.335]	[−0.032, 0.382]	[−0.024, 0.223]	
ATT Round 2	0.130	0.158	0.385	
	[−0.363, 0.622]	[−0.305, 0.622]	[−0.136, 0.906]	
ATT Round 3	0.100	0.100	0.100	
	[0.020, 0.180]	[0.013, 0.187]	[0.004, 0.196]	
Inspected (Homog.)				0.144
				[0.038, 0.250]
Num.Obs.	31	31	31	1147
RMSE				0.24
FE: provid				X
FE: t				X

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

decreasing magnitude, as the theory predicted, only the third round is distinguishable from zero, and only barely so. The results are therefore very sensitive to the time when treatments are coded. The TWFE, on the other hand, remains positive and the 95% confidence intervals do not include 0.

I believe that these results present only a modest challenge to the validity of the findings in the main text; although the *provinces* are not informed about the results of the ongoing investigation conducted by the teams, there is no reason to expect that the *party center* is not being updated during months-long period that inspection teams investigate the work unit.

Alternative Individual Level Models

Cox Proportional Hazard model One alternative to the DID approach used in the main text is the Cox proportional hazard model – here, we make the assumptions that the effect of inspection by inspection team is constant on the hazard function over time, and that it is not heterogeneous across rounds. The Cox model has the advantage that it makes no assumption about the shape of the underlying hazard function for investigation by the CCDI, which does change across time as the anti-corruption campaign unfolds. Table 7 presents the coefficient estimates of the model, including a model with demographic

Table 13: Individual Level Results

	Cox Model	With Covariates
Inspected	1.429	1.418
	[−0.160, 3.018]	[−0.177, 3.013]
Birth year		0.012
		[−0.096, 0.119]
Princeling		−14.798
		[−7529.716, 7500.121]
Gender		0.043
		[−1.412, 1.499]
Num.Obs.	859	856
AIC	259.6	265.1
BIC	264.4	284.1
RMSE	0.16	0.16

Ninety-five percent confidence intervals in brackets.

covariates.

The results, contrary to the TWFE models in the main text, indicate a positive but statistically insignificant estimate on the coefficient for treatment. This contributes to the overall conclusion that the first results on centrally managed cadres are not robust to alternative specifications.

Text Models for Effects of Inspection Teams

In this section, I provide graphical evidence that recent inspection by a central inspection team does not influence the content of province level work reports. No topic prevalence displays a difference based on inspection status.

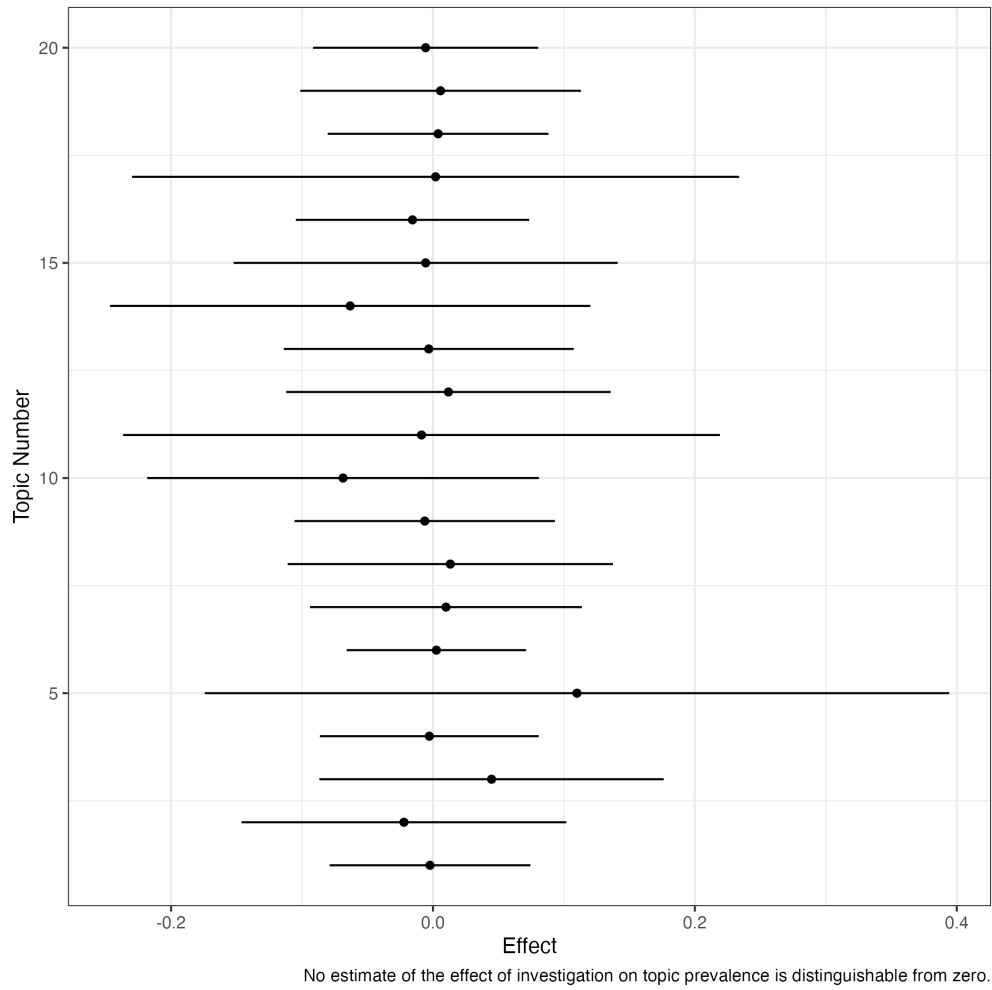No estimate of the effect of investigation on topic prevalence is distinguishable from zero.

Figure 37: Estimated Effect of Inspection on Topic Prevalence in Work Reports