

INSTITUTIONS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Findings

- The Chinese Communist Party's efforts to extend control over all sectors of society violate citizens' right to fully participate in public affairs. As the Party's dominance permeates society, the space for institutions of democratic governance diminishes, thereby weakening citizens' ability to hold authorities accountable for human rights violations such as the mass internment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities.
- The Party used evaluation mechanisms to reinforce its priorities in the academic and business realms. In the academic realm, the Ministry of Education launched a program in which it assigned certain courses a "first rate" designation, giving it the power to withhold or revoke such designation for ideological misalignment. In the business realm, the Party handed down ratings of 33 million companies and directed local governments and agencies to use them as the basis for credit rating. The criteria and methodology used, however, were not disclosed.
- In contrast, the Commission did not observe development of evaluation mechanisms for monitoring government agencies and Party organizations. The Party retained exclusive control over the disciplinary process for Party members and public servants. Moreover, disciplinary measures for actual misconduct and political missteps are carried out by the same state apparatus, which recently detained a prominent businessman for his political speech and a high-ranking official for "not showing respect."
- The PRC Encryption Law took effect this past year. When applied with other regulations and new technologies such as blockchain, the new law potentially allows authorities to access a vast amount of information and directly monitor online activities in real time.
- The Party issued a rule requiring the Party secretary of a village organization to also be the village committee director. Existing law provides, however, that the village committee director must be chosen by an open election. The new rule bypasses the normal legislative procedure and has the effect of augmenting Party control in grassroots-level elections.
- During the coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak, the official response prioritized Party control of society, including social stability and ideological security, over the well-being of the Chinese people. Accordingly, the central government's response team was composed of politicians with backgrounds in public security, social stability maintenance, and propaganda, rather than in public health. Citing the need to monitor people's movements, authorities increased the presence of surveillance cameras by installing them at people's residences, including directly outside the front door and sometimes inside the apartment. To what extent or whether these intrusive measures will eventually be rolled back will depend largely on the degree to which citizens are allowed to engage in public affairs.

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Recommendations

Members of the U.S. Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Support U.S. research programs that document and analyze the Chinese Communist Party's ideological campaigns and its influence over companies, government agencies, legislative and judicial bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- Employ a “whole-of-government” approach to encourage Chinese authorities to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and release individuals detained or imprisoned for exercising their rights to freedom of speech, association, and assembly. These individuals include those mentioned in this report and in the Commission's Political Prisoner Database, such as **Fang Bin, Chen Qiushi, Xu Zhiyong, and Ren Zhiqiang.**
- Call on Chinese officials to stop and reverse Party encroachment on grassroots-level elections. Support joint U.S.-China cooperative programs to develop independent village committee and people's congress election monitoring systems. Encourage central and local Party and government leaders to implement free and fair elections across China. Continue to fund, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of democracy promotion and rule of law programs in China.
- Support organizations working in China that seek to work with local governments and NGOs to improve transparency, especially with regard to efforts to expand and improve China's open government information initiatives. Urge Party officials to further increase the transparency of Party affairs.
- Call on the Chinese government to improve procedures through which citizens may hold their officials accountable outside of the internal Party-led anticorruption campaign. Urge Party and government officials to establish and improve public participation in government affairs. Encourage top-level officials to reform governing institutions to promote an authentic multi-party system with protection for freedom of speech, association, and assembly.

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Introduction

China's one-party authoritarian political system remains out of compliance with the standards defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China has signed and declared an intention to ratify.¹ Xi Jinping, since becoming the Chinese Communist Party's General Secretary in 2012, has amassed personal political power and effectively reversed previous reforms favoring collective leadership.² His efforts culminated in the amendments to the Party's and the country's constitutions in 2017 and 2018, which declare that all aspects of society were subservient to the Party's supreme leadership, with Xi Jinping as the core leader.³ Authorities promoted the official ideology of "Xi Jinping Thought"⁴ on social media, and required Party members, government officials, and students to study it, making the ideology both pervasive and mandatory.⁵ A recent plan further directed local officials to implement the ideology as a moral standard, applicable to citizens' family and professional lives.⁶ In a March 2018 organizational reform, the Party absorbed a number of government functions, notably those involving ethnic minority matters, religious affairs, and mass media.⁷ The Party further extended its disciplinary authority to the entire public sector and simultaneously enhanced its control in other spheres such as universities and businesses.⁸ As the Party's dominance permeated society, the space for institutions of democratic governance diminished, thereby weakening citizens' ability to participate in public affairs and to hold authorities accountable for human rights violations such as the mass internment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities.

Governance Objectives: Moderately Prosperous Society and Modernization of Governance

During the 2020 reporting year, the Party declared success in economic development and poverty alleviation and reaffirmed its commitment to achieving absolute rule. At the Party's Fourth Plenum of the 19th Central Committee held in October 2019, Party leaders affirmed two long-standing governance objectives: one of achieving a moderately prosperous society by 2021 and another of modernizing China's governance system and capacity by 2049, which years mark the centenary anniversaries of the founding of the Party and the country, respectively.⁹

To gauge progress toward a moderately prosperous society, the Chinese government set forth some standards in a 2016 five-year development plan, which included improvement in the standard of living, economic growth, and complete elimination of poverty.¹⁰ While the Chinese government drew the poverty line lower than the World Bank's benchmark,¹¹ several indicators showed that the poverty rate in China generally had declined.¹² Premier Li Keqiang said in May 2020 that China still had 600 million people with an income of 1,000 yuan (approximately US\$140) a month or less.¹³

A bureaucratic evaluation system, however, may limit the extent to which statistical improvement translates to benefits experienced

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by citizens: for example, while government subsidies had a positive impact on impoverished areas, some villagers expressed uncertainty about future funding once the village had risen above the poverty line.¹⁴ Likewise, local officials in some areas resorted to creating fictitious accounts for an app designed to funnel money to impoverished areas because they had to meet quotas for signing up new users.¹⁵ One analyst observed that the countryside could return to poverty without long-term economic reforms in areas such as land use and the pension system.¹⁶ In a speech in March 2020, President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping likewise underscored the economic challenges presented by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, which could negatively affect citizens' income.¹⁷

With respect to the second centenary goal, the Fourth Plenum Decision showed that the Party's formulation of governance modernization was inconsistent with citizens' right to fully participate in public affairs.¹⁸ Without describing the specific steps to modernize governance, the decision stressed that the modernization process must be carried out under the Party's sole leadership and that government officials must be supervised by the Party.¹⁹ Moreover, remarks on democratic development and citizen participation were presented within the framework of a Party-led governance system.²⁰ One scholar observed that the decision pointed in the direction of concentrating power in Xi Jinping, a "Mao-style rule of man rather than modernized institutional rule."²¹

Expanding the Party's Control

Below are some examples of the Party's continued efforts taken toward the goal of obtaining control over all sectors of society.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

This past year, the Party enhanced its control over academic institutions,²² restricted academic freedom,²³ and commissioned academic work to advance its political agenda.²⁴ The Ministry of Education began enforcing a November 2018 administrative rule that provided a mechanism to swiftly penalize higher education teachers for "moral failures,"²⁵ which would include failure to support Party leadership as guided by "Xi Jinping Thought."²⁶ Authorities reportedly used student informants and surveillance cameras to monitor teachers' conduct.²⁷ Professors who were disciplined this past year included **Zheng Wenfeng**, for making a negative comment on China's historical accomplishments,²⁸ and **Li Zhi**, for making an unspecified speech that university authorities deemed politically inappropriate.²⁹ In addition, police raided Professor **Yang Shaozheng's** home in March 2020 and detained him and his family, alleging the need to perform a health inspection during the COVID-19 pandemic.³⁰ Previously, the university where Yang worked suspended and later terminated him for "improperly discussing" the National People's Congress system and for other political speech.³¹

In October 2019, the Ministry of Education issued an implementation opinion for a three-year program by which authorities would designate qualified undergraduate courses as "first rate courses."³² The opinion specified that the Ministry of Education would with-

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hold a “first rate” designation if the coursework presented an unspecified ideological problem.³³ Other regulations likewise required political obedience and indoctrination.³⁴ For example, an education reform opinion published in July 2019 directed educators to counsel youths and children to “listen to the Party and follow the Party.”³⁵ In an August plan to improve educators’ qualifications, the Ministry of Education and three other agencies emphasized the Party’s comprehensive leadership over educators and further proposed to use personal social credit records as a basis for evaluating their moral standing.³⁶

DIRECT AND INDIRECT GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN ENTERPRISES

Official control over the business community increased the risk of businesses being complicit in human rights violations, with reports of technology companies participating in surveillance, silencing dissidents, and enforcing censorship.³⁷ Such control may be in the form of direct involvement; for example, a Party-run news outlet reported that Party branches had been established at 70 percent of the 106,000 foreign companies and 1.585 million private enterprises based on statistics from 2016 and 2018, respectively.³⁸ Under regulations that took effect in December 2019, Party branches established at state-owned enterprises were tasked with political supervision and participating in policy decisions at the board of directors and board of supervisors level.³⁹ In addition, the government in Hangzhou municipality, Zhejiang province, announced in September 2019 that it would begin to station officials at enterprises to act as “government affairs representatives.”⁴⁰ Some observers interpreted this move as increased state supervision and expressed concern that it could facilitate mandatory surrendering of business data.⁴¹

Government control also was exerted through the reward-and-punishment mechanism known as the social credit system. In July 2019, the State Council General Office issued a guiding opinion pushing for the further development of the enterprise social credit system, including a blacklist for coordinated punishment (*shixin lianhe chengjie duixiang mingdan*), which names enterprises that are subject to judicial or administrative enforcement.⁴² Based on the blacklist, government agencies can impose restrictions on commercial activities such as stock issuance, bidding, application for funding, and receiving tax benefits.⁴³

In September 2019, the National Development and Reform Commission announced that it had completed rating 33 million companies and directed local governments and agencies to use the report as the primary component of credit rating information.⁴⁴ The document did not disclose the criteria or methodology that was used in rating the companies, however.⁴⁵ Foreign enterprises would be additionally subject to a planned “unreliable entity list,” which would consider international trade issues such as unilateralism and trade protectionism.⁴⁶ Some observers said the social credit system would subject companies to increased compliance costs and data collection, with one consulting firm warning that Chinese authorities might use data collection “to enforce political orthodoxy.”⁴⁷

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BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY AND ENCRYPTION TECHNOLOGY

Official promotion of blockchain technology, accompanied by a new law governing encryption, could enable Chinese authorities to directly track digital activities in real time.⁴⁸ Blockchain is a recordkeeping system that provides encrypted and auditable transactions traceable to a user,⁴⁹ and it had been used by Chinese citizens to evade censorship since information in a blockchain cannot be deleted.⁵⁰ At an October 2019 Communist Party Central Committee Political Bureau (Politburo) meeting, President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping designated blockchain as a core technology warranting official support.⁵¹ An analyst of a state-sponsored think tank explained that administrative use of blockchain would not be decentralized, but would enhance the government's capacity to exert broad control.⁵² Days after Xi's speech, the National People's Congress Standing Committee passed the PRC Encryption Law, effective January 1, 2020.⁵³ The law recognizes the Party's leadership over encryption matters and authorizes relevant government agencies to conduct inspections, which, in conjunction with the existing information security standards, effectively grants the government access to decryption keys and passwords.⁵⁴ Such measures may infringe on people's privacy rights⁵⁵ and jeopardize the security of personal information and commercial data belonging to U.S. citizens and companies.⁵⁶

TECHNOLOGY-BASED SOCIAL CONTROL

The Chinese government continued to develop a centralized data collection and analysis system used for quantifying risk factors ranging from financial and social responsibility to political reliability.⁵⁷ Different data collection technologies—including biometric data collection, location tracking devices, and surveillance cameras⁵⁸—remained available to authorities, who sometimes used them intrusively or without consent, prompting concerns for privacy and data security.⁵⁹

Collected data have various applications, including “smart policing,” which involves using an algorithm to process data in order to prevent criminal activity.⁶⁰ In one instance, people from Central Asia reported that border officials in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region routinely installed on travelers' smartphones an app that gathered personal data including contacts, communication records, and religious content.⁶¹ While officials stress the need to fight terrorism, authorities grossly conflate the practice of religion and terrorism—using terrorism as a false pretext to suppress religious practice.⁶² [For more information on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, see Section IV—Xinjiang.]

The installation of tracking software and surveillance cameras continued an upward trend as authorities tried to control people's movement during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶³ Beginning in February 2020, authorities required citizens to install smartphone apps that run on commercial platforms to evaluate whether their movement would pose a public health risk.⁶⁴ Using color codes to indicate mandatory quarantine, home isolation, or minimal restrictions, the software affected a person's ability to use public transportation and patronize business establishments.⁶⁵ Some citizens

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were concerned that the government granted commercial enterprises access to their private information and that the manner in which information was used and stored lacked transparency.⁶⁶ In some cities, the Chinese government installed surveillance cameras at residents' front doors and in some cases inside their apartments.⁶⁷ An analyst anticipated that the extent to which authorities around the world would roll back surveillance installed during the pandemic would depend on the degree of public oversight.⁶⁸ [For more information on events relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, see Section II—Public Health.]

Collected data also can be used for credit rating in a patchwork of social credit systems that reward or penalize people for their behavior.⁶⁹ Critics said credit rating could become a social control tool since authorities would dictate the rating criteria.⁷⁰ The State Council claimed that credit rating would improve governance and announced in 2014 a plan to finish building the basic components of a centralized national social credit system by 2020.⁷¹ In January 2020, a Party-run media outlet reported that over 60 government agencies had signed cooperation memoranda to improve coordination for imposing some 100 reward-and-punishment measures, covering a wide range of areas such as housekeeping, marriage registration, and charitable donation.⁷²

Credit rating likewise affected citizens' online speech, as provided in the Regulations on Internet Content Environment Management, issued by the Cyberspace Administration and effective March 2020.⁷³ The regulations encourage the production and dissemination of online content that promotes "Xi Jinping Thought" and messages consistent with Party policies, but prohibits content that the Party characterizes as tending to subvert state power, incite ethnic hatred, promote "evil cults," spread rumors, or disrupt social order,⁷⁴ which are offenses authorities have used to suppress protected speech and activities.⁷⁵ The content services platforms bear the burden of ensuring compliance and are subject to administrative penalties for failing to implement a credit rating system or adjust services based on the user's credit rating.⁷⁶

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Party Control Over Village Committee Elections

This past year, the Party Central Committee issued regulations that augmented its control over village committee elections, although it had no statutory authority to do so under the PRC Legislation Law.⁷⁷ The Party issued the Regulations on Village Work of the Chinese Communist Party, effective August 2019.⁷⁸ The regulations provide that “through legal procedures, the Party secretary of a village organization must also act as the village committee director, or [the head of equivalent bodies at the village level].”⁷⁹ A Party-run newspaper published an article to highlight this new requirement, citing the Party Constitution and an earlier joint opinion issued by the Central Committee and the State Council.⁸⁰ However, the article did not cite the law that the new requirement contravened—the PRC Organizational Law of Village Committees.⁸¹ The law provides that “[v]illage committee director, deputy director, and committee members are generated through direct elections by the villagers. No organization or individual may designate, appoint, or replace members of the village committee.”⁸² In reference to this provision, the National People’s Congress in 2000 specifically explained that Party branches, people’s congresses, and governments were without authority to affect the composition of village committees.⁸³

Abuse of Anticorruption Campaign

The Chinese Communist Party continued to use its disciplinary apparatus⁸⁴ to punish officials and people in the public sector for economic malfeasance and political speech under the same label of anticorruption. The official news outlet Xinhua reported that most of the 1.579 million officials disciplined between January and November 2019 were accused of collusion with businesses, embezzlement, or violation of “political discipline,” which encompassed political stance and political speech.⁸⁵ In addition, 20 high-ranking officials were disciplined for “not showing respect” after the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in 2012⁸⁶ (when Xi Jinping became General Secretary).⁸⁷ Examples of individuals being subjected to disciplinary measures for political reasons include the following:

- In March 2020, business tycoon and Party member **Ren Zhiqiang** went missing after he circulated an essay in which he criticized the government’s suppression of information on the COVID–19 outbreak and indirectly criticized Xi Jinping’s one-man rule.⁸⁸ Nearly a month later, the disciplinary organ in Xicheng district, Beijing municipality, confirmed that Ren was being investigated for “serious violations of discipline and law” but did not state the factual basis.⁸⁹ Previously, authorities had disciplined Ren for expressing “inappropriate speech” in 2016 after he criticized Xi Jinping for saying that the press must be subservient to the Party.⁹⁰
- In April, the central disciplinary organ announced that Deputy Minister of Public Security Sun Lijun was under investigation for “serious violations of discipline and law” without stating any other facts.⁹¹ At the same time, the Minister of Public

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Security convened a meeting, saying that Sun disregarded political discipline and did not show respect.⁹²

Governance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In handling the COVID-19 outbreak, the Chinese government maintained a top-down management approach, prioritized political control, suppressed information, and restricted civil society participation. [For more information on events relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, see Section II—Public Health.]

TOP-DOWN MANAGEMENT

While a top-down governance approach was conducive to swift actions such as the quarantine of entire cities and the construction of large capacity modular hospitals, this model also may have prevented local governments from reacting quickly in the early stages of an outbreak, as they must wait for instructions from the top.⁹³ For example, the mayor of Wuhan municipality, Hubei province (which was the epicenter of the outbreak), said in an interview that the release of information about the disease was delayed because the local government had to wait for authorization.⁹⁴ At the same time, the truthfulness of information flowing from the local to the central government was called into question, as illustrated during the visit by Vice Premier Sun Chunlan to Wuhan, where local residents shouted, “This is all fake,” in reference to the food delivery service staged by local officials.⁹⁵

OUTBREAK RESPONSE WORKING GROUP LED BY POLITICIANS

Obedience to the Party continued to take center stage during the outbreak. At a Politburo Standing Committee meeting held on January 25, President and Party General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that it was imperative to strengthen the Party’s centralized control and bolster political alignment.⁹⁶ The committee established a working group to combat the disease.⁹⁷ The group members, while high ranking, were not public health experts; rather, they had backgrounds in public security, social stability maintenance, and propaganda.⁹⁸ A disease control expert with the National Health Commission and the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said that policymakers lacked sufficient scientific knowledge and showed signs of hesitation due to consideration of other factors such as political, economic, and social stability issues.⁹⁹

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY IN APPOINTMENT AND REMOVAL OF OFFICIALS

A number of officials were quickly removed during the outbreak; while the underlying reason was disclosed in some cases, the removal and appointment process was consistently opaque. Whereas a Party-run news outlet detailed the facts leading to the decision to discipline prison officials in Shandong and Hubei province for their negligence in failing to contain the disease,¹⁰⁰ the reason underlying the removal of five high-ranking officials holding municipal- or provincial-level posts in Hubei remained unknown.¹⁰¹ Given that the officials were removed within weeks, it is unclear

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if they were afforded due process.¹⁰² The process by which incoming officials were appointed likewise was opaque.¹⁰³

PERSECUTION OF CITIZENS

Authorities subjected citizens to different types of punishment on account of their reporting or speech about the outbreak. For example, authorities detained citizen journalists **Li Zehua**, **Fang Bin**, and **Chen Qiushi** for reporting on the situation in Wuhan, with Li being released after a month of “quarantine”¹⁰⁴ and the whereabouts of Fang and Chen remaining unknown as of May 1, 2020.¹⁰⁵ Democracy and rights advocate **Xu Zhiyong** and outspoken tycoon **Ren Zhiqiang** disappeared in February and March, respectively, after they made critical comments about Xi Jinping’s handling of the outbreak.¹⁰⁶ In January, police in Wuhan summoned eight people and reprimanded them for “spreading rumors”; among them was Doctor **Li Wenliang**, who had alerted his colleagues to a new kind of respiratory disease and later died of it in February.¹⁰⁷

RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC DONATIONS

Although some civil society activities were permitted, authorities centralized relief efforts and funneled donations through a select few charities, creating a bottleneck effect given the scale of the outbreak.¹⁰⁸ In January, the Wuhan municipal government designated five charities (including the government-backed Wuhan Charity Federation and the Red Cross Society) to receive and distribute both monetary and in-kind donations.¹⁰⁹ Public reporting showed that the Wuhan Charity Federation had remitted a total of 2.7 billion yuan (approximately US\$382 million) to the municipal treasury at the government’s order, a move that some observers said was unlawful since appropriation by the government was not previously announced.¹¹⁰ In addition, the monopoly over the distribution of public donations adversely affected effectiveness and fairness, with the Red Cross Society experiencing a shortage of staff and distributing most resources to the government rather than to hospitals.¹¹¹ Given distrust of the designated charities, some citizens chose to deliver supplies directly to the hospitals, but transparency as to the hospitals’ needs was lacking, and the Red Cross Society reportedly intercepted citizens’ deliveries in an effort to maintain its monopoly.¹¹²

Notes to Section III—Institutions of Democratic Governance

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217A(III) of December 10, 1948; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976; United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter IV, Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, accessed June 7, 2019; State Council Information Office, “Guojia Renquan Xingdong Jihua (2016–2020 nian)” [National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2016–2020)], September 29, 2016, sec. 5. See also Lee Edwards, “Is China Totalitarian?,” *National Interest*, February 24, 2020; James Kynge, “China and Hong Kong: The Ultimate Test of Authoritarian Rule,” *Financial Times*, October 4, 2019.

² Michael Holtz, “Xi for Life? China Turns Its Back on Collective Leadership,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 28, 2018.

³ “Renda bimu: Xi Jinping yanjiang qiangdiao ‘dang lingdao yiqie’” [NPC meeting closes: Xi Jinping speaks and emphasizes “Party leads everything”], *BBC*, March 20, 2018; “Xi Jinping: juesheng quanmian jiancheng xiaokang shehui duoqu xin shidai Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi weida shengli” [Xi Jinping: secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era], *Xinhua*, October 27, 2017; “Duizhao xuexi! Dangzhang zuole na xie xiugai? Zhe pian wenzhang xizhi dao biaodian fuhao” [Learning by comparison! What changes were made to the Party Constitution? This article contains such fine details as punctuation], Communist Party Webpage, accessed May 26, 2020; “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Xianfa Xiuzheng’an” [Amendment to the PRC Constitution], *Xinhua*, March 11, 2018.

⁴ The full translation of the ideology is “Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.” See Chris Buckley, “Xi Jinping Thought Explained: A New Ideology for a New Era,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2018.

⁵ Chris Buckley, “Xi Jinping Thought Explained: A New Ideology for a New Era,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2018; Freedom House, “China Media Bulletin: Social Credit Incentives, Elite Jailings, #MeTooUyghur (No. 133),” February 2019; Liu Qijun, “Quanmian jiaqiang xin shidai daxuesheng de sixiang yinling” [Comprehensively strengthen ideological guidance on university students of the new era], *Guangming Daily*, December 19, 2018; “Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting yinfu ‘Guanyu guanche shishi Gongwuyuan Fa jianshe gao suzhi zhuanyehua gongwuyuan duiwu de yijian’” [Party Central Committee General Office issues “Opinion on thoroughly implementing Public Servant Law and building a high quality team of professional public servants”], *Xinhua*, July 29, 2019.

⁶ Party Central Committee and State Council, “Xin shidai gongmin daode jianshe shishi gangyao” [Outline for implementing the architecture of morality for citizens of a new era], *Xinhua*, October 27, 2019.

⁷ Party Central Committee, “Shenhua dang he guojia jigou gaige fang’an” [Plan to deepen reform on Party and state agencies], *Xinhua*, March 21, 2018. See also Nis Grunberg and Katja Drinhausen, Mercator Institute for China Studies, “The Party Leads on Everything,” September 24, 2019.

⁸ Party Central Committee, “Shenhua dang he guojia jigou gaige fang’an” [Plan to deepen reform on Party and state agencies], *Xinhua*, March 21, 2018; “Shishi dajia tan: Xiugai zhangcheng qu ‘ziyou,’ bai nian Fudan ‘huiyu yidan?’” [Let’s talk news: Amending charter to delete “freedom,” is century-old Fudan “destroyed in one day?”], *Voice of America*, December 19, 2019; Lulu Yilun Chen, “China Boosts Government Presence at Alibaba, Private Giants,” *Bloomberg*, September 22, 2019.

⁹ Willy Lam, “The Central Committee Fourth Plenum Gives Further Powers to the CCP Leadership Core,” *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, November 19, 2019, 6–10; Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, *Guanyu Jianchi he Wanshan Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi Zhidu Tuijin Guojia Zhili Tixi he Zhili Nengli Xiandaihua Ruogan Zhongda Wenti de Jueding* [Decision on Several Important Issues Including Maintaining and Improving Socialist System with Chinese Characteristics and Promoting Modernization of Governance System and Capabilities], issued October 31, 2019, reprinted in *Xinhua*, November 5, 2019; Jiang Zemin, “Quanmian jianshe xiaokang shehui kaichuang Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi shiye xin jumian—zai Zhongguo Gongchandang di shiliu ci Quanguo Daibiao Dahui shang de baogao (jiexuan)” [New situation for comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society and creating socialism with Chinese characteristics—report delivered at the Chinese Communist Party 16th National Congress (selection)], November 8, 2002; “Hu Jintao zai Zhongguo Gongchandang di shiba ci Quanguo Daibiao Dahui shang de baogao” [Report delivered by Hu Jintao at the Chinese Communist Party 18th National Congress], November 8, 2012; Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhangcheng [Chinese Communist Party Constitution], passed September 6, 1982, amended October 24, 2017; Joseph Fewsmith et al., “Party Watch Annual Report 2019: Scrambling to Achieve a Moderately Prosperous Society,” Center for Advanced China Research, December 11, 2019, 1, 2.

¹⁰ National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo guomin jingji he shehui fazhan di shisan ge wunian guihua gangyao” [Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan on the PRC National Economic and Social Development], issued March 17, 2016; “Renmin Ribao zhengban guancha: Quanmian xiaokang yiweizhe shenme” [People’s Daily page summary: What does comprehensive moderately prosperous society mean], *People’s Daily*, October 25, 2019.

¹¹ Xue Yujie, “Can Livestreaming Lift China Out of Poverty by 2020?,” *Sixth Tone*, October 17, 2019; Yang Lichao and Robert Walker, “Anti-poverty Policies and Discourses of Blame in China,” *Made in China Journal* 4, no. 1 (January–March 2019).

¹² Hanjie Wang et al., “Poverty and Subjective Poverty in Rural China,” *Social Indicators Research*, February 25, 2020; World Bank, “China,” accessed May 26, 2020; National Bureau of Statistics, “2019 nianqian san jidu pinkun diqu nongcun jumin shouru qingkuang” [Income status of residents in poor rural areas during the three quarters before 2019], November 11, 2019;

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¹³Li Keqiang zhi Zhongguo 6 yi ren yuer zhi qian yuan” [Li Keqiang said China has 600 million people making 1,000 yuan a month], *Radio France Internationale*, May 29, 2020.

¹⁴He Huifeng, “China’s Subsidies Lifting Rural Villages Out of Poverty, but Is Xi Jinping’s Plan Sustainable?,” *South China Morning Post*, November 3, 2019.

¹⁵Liu Chang, “Can a Chinese App Fix Poverty? Netizens Doubt It,” *Sixth Tone*, December 24, 2019.

¹⁶Elaine Chan, “China’s Countryside ‘Returning to Poverty’ as Lack of Reforms Help Fuel Urban-Rural Divide,” *South China Morning Post*, October 26, 2019.

¹⁷Xi Jinping: Zai juezhan juesheng tuopin gongjian zuotanhui shang de jianghua” [Xi Jinping: Speech at forum on decisive battle and decisive victory on attack of poverty alleviation], *Xinhua*, March 6, 2020.

¹⁸Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 217A (III) of December 10, 1948, art. 21; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of December 16, 1966, entry into force March 23, 1976, art. 25.

¹⁹National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo guomin jingji he shehui fazhan di shisan ge wunian guihua gangyao” [Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan on the PRC National Economic and Social Development], issued March 17, 2016.

²⁰Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, *Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu Jianchi he Wanshan Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi Zhidu Tuijin Guojia Zhili Tixi he Zhili Nengli Xiandaihua Ruogan Zhongda Wenti de Jueding* [Decision on Several Important Issues Including Maintaining and Improving Socialist System with Chinese Characteristics and Promoting Modernization of Governance System and Capabilities], issued October 31, 2019, reprinted in *Xinhua*, November 5, 2019.

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