

UNDERSTANDING XI JINPING'S GUIDELINES ON THE PARTY'S SELF-REFORM

Zhu Lingjun¹

Received: October 11, 2025

Revised: November 17, 2025

Accepted: December 3, 2025

DOI: 10.56289/ijcsrp.204

INTRODUCTION

General Secretary Xi Jinping's guidelines on the Party's self-reform address three key questions: Why is the Party's self-reform necessary? Why is it achievable? How can it be advanced? It also sets out nine implementation requirements. The guidelines explore why the Party's self-reform is necessary, identifying it as the fundamental task required to ensure that the Party stays true to its original aspiration and founding mission; they explain why the Party's self-reform is achievable, boosting the confidence and resolve of all Party members to embrace self-reform while addressing the unique challenges large political parties encounter; they provide profound perspectives into how the Party can advance self-reform, presenting a promising future filled with vigour and excellent performance on its new journey.

Focusing on the new circumstances and tasks in fully and rigorously exercising internal governance, improving conduct, building integrity, and combating corruption in the new era, Xi Jinping's guidelines on the Party's self-reform explore practical ways for the Party to purify, improve, reform, and excel itself. They provide a second answer to the question of how to escape the historical cycle of rise and fall and the fundamental pathway for the Party to evolve from a large party to a strong party and ensure long-term governance.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping has led the whole Party in ensuring strict internal Party governance in every respect with unprecedented determination and rigor. He has creatively put forward a series of original and landmark new concepts, ideas, and strategies, forming important guidelines on the Party's self-reform, which have guided the century-old CPC in opening up a new realm of self-reform.

At the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), General Secretary Xi Jinping profoundly reviewed the rich practical experiences and significant theoretical achievements of strengthening Party self-governance in every respect in the new era. He elaborated the important guidelines on the Party's self-reform and provided sound answers to a number of key questions, including why the Party's self-reform is necessary, why it is achievable, and how it can be advanced. He also set out implementation requirements for advancing the Party's self-reform, providing fundamental guidance for further advancing full and rigorous internal Party governance, improving conduct, promoting clean governance, combating corruption, and ensuring sound discipline inspection and supervision in the new era and on the new journey.

¹ Party School of the CPC Central Committee, China National Academy of Governance, a high-level think tank.
E-mail: jiakangccps2025@163.com.

The Party's self-reform: Necessity, Achievability, and Approaches

At the third plenary session of the 20th CPC CCDI, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised the significance of full and rigorous internal governance.² Over the first decade of the new era, the Party has deepened its understanding of self-reform, accumulated rich experience, and developed a series of significant theories. To fully understand Xi Jinping's guidelines on the Party's self-reform, it is essential to consider the three key questions it addresses.

First, the guidelines explore why the Party's self-reform is necessary. They identify self-reform as the fundamental task required to ensure that the Party stays true to its original aspiration and founding mission. Armed with Marxism, the Party has remained true to its original aspiration and founding mission of seeking happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation in all its endeavours. Over the past century, the Party has relentlessly pursued these goals while courageously engaging in self-reform. After embarking on a new journey in the new era to build China into a great modern socialist country and achieve the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the Party is confronted with unprecedented challenges and requirements. Factors that compromise the Party's advanced nature and purity are highly perilous and destructive, highlighting the need for thorough self-reform.

Second, the guidelines provide a compelling answer to the question of why the Party's self-reform is achievable. They boost the confidence and resolve of all Party members to embrace self-reform while addressing the unique challenges large political parties encounter. Self-supervision represents a global challenge and is referred to as the Goldbach conjecture of national governance. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core has introduced a series of new measures to exercise strict self-supervision and internal governance, successfully charting a path of breaking free from the historical cycle of rise and fall through the Party's self-reform. Through unremitting efforts, the Party has resolved a series of major internal issues, demonstrating its political character and achieving renewed dynamism.

Finally, the guidelines provide profound perspectives into how the Party can advance self-reform, presenting a promising future filled with vigour and excellent performance on its new journey. Effective governance can only be achieved by understanding the underlying principles and mastering the correct methods. Over the past century, the Party has learned from the experiences of Marxist parties worldwide as well as the major tests (in areas such as governance, reform and opening up, the market economy, and the external environment), and dangers (such as a lack of drive, incompetence, disengagement from the people, inaction, and corruption) it has faced in long-term governance.

These experiences have deepened the Party's understanding of self-reform. Prompt efforts have been made to transform its new understanding into theories and programmes of action. General Secretary Xi Jinping has set out implementation requirements for advancing the Party's self-reform. These include top-level design at the macro level and specific approaches. These requirements set out more rigorous strategies and measures, ensuring that the Party's self-reform is implemented more concretely and thoroughly on every front and in every aspect.

² Advance the Party's self-reform to win the tough and protracted battle against corruption. Xi, J. *People's Daily*, 9 January 2024, p. 1.

An Accurate Understanding of the Implementation Requirements for Advancing the Party's self-reform

Addressing the third plenary session of the 20th CPC CCDI, General Secretary Xi Jinping set out the following nine implementation requirements for advancing the Party's self-reform.

First, the fundamental guarantee is to uphold the centralised, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated, *"The more complex the situation and the more challenging the tasks, the more crucial it is to uphold the Party's overall leadership and the centralised, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee"*.³ To overcome the global challenge of "easier to reform others than oneself" (Xi, 2023a), the key lies in the centralised, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee. This enables the Party to fulfil its core role of exercising overall leadership and coordinating the efforts of all sides and ensures greater unity among all Party members in terms of thinking, political resolve, and action, creating a strong synergy for the Party to uphold truth, correct errors, uncover problems, and remedy failings through its own efforts. To ensure that the Party's self-reform remains on the right track, the efforts to advance it must be planned, directed, and implemented under the centralised, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee.

Second, the fundamental purpose is to guide social transformation. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised, *"Our Party must have the courage to carry out self-reform and become stronger in order to uphold and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era"* (Xi, 2023b). The 20th CPC National Congress made strategic plans for building a modern socialist country in all respects. To make new headway in social transformation under the leadership of the Party, continued efforts are required to advance the Party's self-reform. These efforts must focus on the tasks of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through a Chinese path to modernisation so that the Party's self-reform better navigates its central tasks.

Third, the fundamental guide is Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. This Thought is the Marxism of contemporary China and of the 21st century. It is a guide to action for the entire Party and the Chinese people to strive for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the fundamental guide for the Party's self-reform. Unrelenting efforts are required to understand this Thought and turn it into a powerful force for strengthening ideals, enhancing Party consciousness, guiding practice, and advancing our work to make new historic achievements on the journey ahead. The Party must arm all members with its new theories to enable them to advance the Party's self-reform more resolutely, rationally, and effectively.

Fourth, the strategic goal is to escape the historical cycle of rise and fall. Breaking free from this cycle to achieve long-term governance has been a major question the Party has continuously explored. Through full and rigorous internal governance in the new era, the Party has found a way to avoid this cycle: through self-reform. Practice has shown that carrying out Party development with utmost seriousness and advancing the Party's self-reform in a highly conscious manner with a scientific and systematic approach are significant advantages of the Party and its key to success in steering the trends of the times. In the efforts to advance the Party's self-reform, it is crucial to promptly eliminate the viruses that damage the health of the Party and remove potential dangers that encroach upon its

³ Fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts to set the stage for the 14th Five-Year Plan Period. Xi, J. *People's Daily*, 30 January 2021, p. 1.

governing foundations, thereby continuously consolidating its position as the long-term governing party.

Fifth, the priority is to solve the problems unique to large political parties like the CPC itself. Internal Party governance is essential for national governance, and a thriving Party is essential for building China into a great country. As the world's largest political party, the Party should act in a way commensurate with its status, although it faces various problems that come with size. In his report to the 20th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping stated, "We must always stay alert and determined to tackle the special challenges that a large party like ours faces".⁴ At the second plenary session of the 20th CPC CCDI, he summarised these challenges as the "Six Hows": how to remain true to the Party's original aspiration and founding mission, how to maintain unity in thinking, will, and action, how to maintain strong governance and leadership capacity, how to remain dedicated to work, how to remain alert to internal issues and take prompt remedial measures, and how to maintain a political ecosystem featuring honesty and integrity within the Party. Further self-reform efforts must focus on the "Six Hows." The Party must take a holistic approach to address both symptoms and root causes and make concerted, continued efforts to tackle these special challenges, demonstrating its advantages as a large party.

Sixth, the effective approach to strength the Party is reinforcing full and rigorous internal Party governance. This is a natural requirement for comprehensive, systematic, coordinated, and effective internal Party supervision and governance. It is also a major measure adopted at the 20th CPC National Congress to strengthen Party development in the new era. These systems are dynamic, encompassing a wide range of fully functional, well-conceived, and efficient features. To improve these systems, it is essential to ensure total coverage, universal application to all Party members, a complete chain of accountability, and the seamless integration of institutions. This enables the Party to uncover problems and remedy failings through its own efforts, foster innovation, and enhance its overall governance capacity.

Seventh, an important task is to forge a strong organisation and build a competent team. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised, "The Party's strength comes from its organisations. The overall leadership of the Party and all of its work are achieved through its strong organisational system" (Xi, 2019). Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party has introduced and implemented an organisational line for the new era, constantly enhanced the political and organisational functions of Party organisations and made great efforts to improve the organisational system and train Party officials, providing a strong organisational guarantee for the accomplishment of the Party's historic mission in the new era. In the efforts to advance the Party's self-reform, we must improve Party organisations at all levels in all respects.

Eighth, the linchpin is to improve conduct, enforce discipline, and combat corruption. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has waged a battle against corruption on a scale unprecedented in the Party's history. An overwhelming victory has been achieved in the fight against corruption, and this has been consolidated across the board. In the efforts to advance its self-reform, the Party must adhere to rigorous internal self-reform and take strict measures to this end. Coordinated efforts are required to encourage fine conduct, exercise strong discipline, combat corruption, and

⁴ Hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics and strive in unity to build a modern socialist country in all respects—Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Xi, J. *People's Daily*, 17 October 2022, p. 2.

punish those committing wrongdoings to enable progress in the Party's self-reform. The Party will transform and excel itself through discarding the outdated in favour of the new, upholding fundamental principles, and breaking new ground.

Ninth, the integration of Party self-supervision with public oversight is a strong driving force for the Party's self-reform. General Secretary Xi Jinping (Xi, 2023b) stated, "*We must strengthen Party self-supervision and public oversight to advance the Party's self-reform*". In the efforts to advance its self-reform, the Party must integrate intraparty oversight with oversight by state organs, democratic oversight, judicial oversight, public oversight, and oversight through public opinion. In this way, self-discipline and externally imposed discipline complement each other, driving new progress in the Party's self-reform.

Continued and Thorough Efforts to Eliminate the Breeding Grounds and Conditions for Corruption

At the third plenary session of the 20th CPC CCDI, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed the importance of continued and thorough efforts to eliminate the breeding grounds and conditions for corruption in the fight against corruption on the new journey. Overall, the Party must continue to take coordinated steps to ensure that officials do not have the audacity, the opportunity, or the desire to engage in corruption, make systemic efforts to address both symptoms and root causes of corruption, and combat corruption in more areas with greater intensity. The Party must take a wide range of targeted measures to tackle recurrent problems and prevent new ones from spreading, while making consistent and sustained efforts to prevent and combat corruption. This points out the way forward for the tough and protracted battle against corruption.

The Party must strengthen its central, unified leadership in the fight against corruption. To win the tough and protracted battle against corruption, we must uphold the Party's central, unified leadership and strictly implement the system for requesting instructions from and submitting reports to the CPC Central Committee, ensuring the leadership and initiative of the CPC Central Committee in improving conduct, enforcing discipline, and combating corruption. Party committees at all levels must take concrete measures to strengthen their whole-process leadership in the fight against corruption, firmly support the investigation of corruption, and have the courage to tackle tough problems.

Discipline inspection commissions of the Party and supervision commissions of the government at all levels shall be proactive and take effective measures to help Party committees coordinate anti-corruption efforts. With intraparty oversight as the mainstay, we will generate synergy between various forms of oversight and create an integrated system for combating corruption. All responsible departments must coordinate their efforts efficiently and be self-motivated in implementing the decisions and plans of the CPC Central Committee.

We must maintain a tough stance on corruption. Continued efforts are required to tackle the seven major types of misconduct: some officials engaged in cronyism and ostracised those outside of their circle; some formed self-serving cliques; some anonymously lodged false accusations and fabricated rumours; some sought to buy popular support and rig elections in their favour; some promised official posts and lavished praise on each other for their promotions; some did things their own way and feigned compliance with policies while acting counter to them; and some got too big for their boots and made presumptuous comments on the decisions of the CPC Central Committee.

The top priority is to crack down on corruption involving collusion between officials and business people, firmly combating profit-seeking capital backed by power and resolutely preventing the political infiltration of any interest group or power group. Anti-corruption efforts must also focus on critical industries and key areas. We must intensify efforts to uproot corruption in sectors with a high concentration of power, funds, and resources and eliminate risks and hidden dangers. These sectors include finance, state-owned enterprises, energy, tobacco, healthcare, infrastructure projects, and bidding processes.

It is essential to address risks and eliminate hidden dangers in these areas. We must also remain alert to signs of corruption and take action against “flies and ants,” or corrupt low-ranking officials. Since the 20th CPC National Congress, the Party has made constant efforts to address misconduct and corruption that directly affect people’s lives in order to give the people a stronger sense of fulfilment and maintain a close bond between the Party and the people. By the end of 2024, China’s supervisory organs had investigated 768,000 cases of misconduct and corruption directly affecting people’s lives, resulting in disciplinary action against 628,000 individuals and the transfer of 20,000 persons to prosecutorial authorities (Liu, 2024).

The Party must further reform to forestall the occurrence and spread of corruption. Corruption must be tackled at the source. This requires a focus on key areas of authority, such as policy formulation, decision-making, and approval and oversight processes. Reforms of systems and mechanisms must be deepened in key areas, including the allocation of public resources, transactions of public assets, and production of public goods.

Efforts should be made to accelerate the establishment of governance mechanisms for emerging fields, improve mechanisms for regulating the distribution and exercise of power, close institutional loopholes, standardise discretion, and reduce opportunities for rent-seeking and rent-setting. An integrated mechanism for corruption prevention and punishment should be created to strengthen the dynamic monitoring of integrity risks and hidden dangers and enable more rapid responses to new and disguised forms of corruption, thus minimising the likelihood of corruption while maximising the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

We must further strengthen anti-corruption regulations and institutions. These regulations and institutions are fundamental to the exercise of full and rigorous internal Party governance and serve as a powerful tool for improving Party conduct, building integrity, and combating corruption. Making integrated efforts to ensure that officials lack the audacity, opportunity, or desire to engage in corruption is a key strategy in the fight against corruption and full and rigorous internal governance in the new era.

Following this strategy, efforts must be made to improve the fundamental regulations and institutions as well as the oversight of leadership teams and their heads. Continued efforts should be made to advance national anti-corruption legislation, including updating the Supervision Law in line with current developments. Further measures should be taken to uphold the sanctity and authority of regulations and institutions, ensuring that everyone is equal before them and that they are enforced without exception, regardless of the individual or specific matter involved. The supervision and inspection of the enforcement of key regulations and institutions should be strengthened to ensure compliance and enforcement without exception.

Heavier punishments must be imposed on bribery. Both bribe-taking and bribe-giving should be investigated. Bribers often use bribery as a means to obtain undue benefits, which not only undermines fair market competition and taints the practices of relevant industries, but also seriously corrupts officials. Bribery must be punished more severely in order to put an end to attempts to corrupt officials, which undermines the political ecosystem. The laws and regulations for punishing bribery must be improved to strengthen the mechanisms for punishing bribers. Those who persistently encourage officials to engage in misconduct and harm the local environment must be strictly investigated and punished. Typical cases should be published to set the record straight and serve as a deterrent to others. Efforts should be intensified to recover undue benefits obtained through bribery.

Constant efforts must be made to improve the political ecosystem. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasised, *“Conducting intraparty political activities in earnest and improving the Party’s political ecosystem are integral to the great struggle and the great project. They are important means for the Party to stay committed to its nature and purpose, and important ways for the Party to purify, improve, reform, and excel itself”* (Xi, 2016). Constant efforts must be made to eradicate vice while promoting virtue. We must strictly enforce the Party’s political discipline and rules, carry out intraparty political activities in earnest, and break “hidden rules” while introducing explicit ones. We must crack down on political swindlers and prevent the rules of business dealings from infiltrating the Party. Constant efforts must be made to address misconduct in the selection and appointment of personnel in order to foster healthy working relationships among colleagues and between senior officials and their subordinates, and to develop a clean and sound political ecosystem.

Greater efforts are required to promote a culture of integrity in the new era. Such efforts will encourage political integrity and foster a political ecosystem featuring honesty and integrity. In terms of ideological education, efforts must be made to enhance Party consciousness, improve Party conduct, tighten Party discipline, and carry forward the proud traditions and venerable conduct of the Party. Party members should pursue lofty ideals and regard abuse of power and corruption as a sheer disgrace.

Attention must also be paid to fostering healthy family ties, values and traditions. We must urge leading officials to practice honesty and integrity and lead by example, play an exemplary role as the “key few,” and set strict rules for their relatives and children. In order to foster respect for integrity and resistance to corruption, activities should be conducted among Party members and the public to raise awareness of integrity and role models.

Constant efforts must be made to improve discipline inspection and supervisory organs. As an important force for advancing the Party’s self-reform, these organs shoulder special political responsibilities and an honourable mission. As General Secretary Xi Jinping said, *“Discipline inspection organs are the Party’s ‘disciplinary forces.’ They are responsible for oversight activities that offend others. They must have a high level of consciousness, absolute loyalty to the Party and a strong sense of responsibility”* (Xi, 2023b).

The efforts to further reform systems and develop institutions for discipline inspection and supervision must be based on relevant standards, laws, and procedures. Discipline inspection and supervision organs must uphold principles and show courage, competence, and a strong sense of responsibility. They must take firm actions to improve Party conduct, enforce discipline, and combat corruption to advance full and rigorous internal governance. Efforts must be stepped up to develop a contingent of discipline inspection and supervision officials and make constant efforts to address corruption within these organs. Discipline

inspection and supervision organs must set an example in self-reform and adherence to discipline, thereby earning the trust of the CPC Central Committee and the satisfaction of the people.

CONCLUSION

Xi Jinping's guidelines on the Party's self-reform provide insights into the core logic of how the Party, as a long-term Marxist governing party, purifies, improves, reforms, and excels itself through institutionalised and systematic approaches, thereby maintaining its advanced nature and purity and consolidating its position as a long-term governing party. Self-reform is an unceasing endeavour. A proper understanding of the guidelines is significant not only for Party development, but also for deepening understanding of the principles behind the long-term governance of a Marxist governing party. The guidelines represent China's wisdom and solutions for the governance of political parties worldwide.

REFERENCES

- Institute of Party History and Literature of the CPC Central Committee. (2019). *A Selection of Key Documents Since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: I*. Beijing: Central Party Literature Press.
- Liu, J. (2024). *Report of the National Commission of Supervision on Addressing Misconduct and Corruption Directly Affecting People's Lives at the 13th Session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress on December 22, 2024*. The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China. http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c2/c30834/202412/t20241223_441884.html#:~:text=%E5%85%A8%E5%9B%BD%E7%9B%91%E5%AF%9F%E6%9C%BA%E5%85%B3%E5%85%B1%E6%9F%A5,%E6%B8%85%E9%A3%8E%E6%AD%A3%E6%B0%94%E5%9C%A8%E8%BA%AB%E8%BE%B9%E3%80%82 [Accessed 25th December 2024].
- Party Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee. (2016). *Selected Discourses of Xi Jinping on Full and Rigorous Internal Governance*. Beijing: Central Party Literature Press.
- Xi, J. (2023a). *Selected Readings from the Works of Xi Jinping: Volume I*. Beijing: People's Publishing House.
- Xi, J. (2023b). *Selected Readings from the Works of Xi Jinping: Volume II*. Beijing: People's Publishing House.