

# *Lessons for Mainland China from Anti-corruption Reform in Hong Kong*

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## *Abstract*

Hong Kong, with its government ranked among the “cleanest” in the world, presents an excellent example of successful anti-corruption reform. Its experience offers four general lessons for ongoing anti-corruption efforts in mainland China. First, by creating a powerful independent anti-corruption agency, the government clearly signalled its commitment to anti-corruption enforcement. Second, the anti-corruption agency achieved major enforcement successes quickly and publicized them widely to consolidate its reputation. Third, it accompanied enforcement with broad public education, reaching out to the community in innovative ways. Fourth, it studied government work procedures and proposed measures to reduce incentives for corruption in institutional design. Flaws in anti-corruption reform in mainland China are illuminated by the contrast with the Hong Kong experience. First, leaders in Beijing have responded to corruption with ambivalent signals, creating two anti-corruption agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and an unclear division of labour. Second, with routine enforcement handicapped by agency design, leaders have launched intensive anti-

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corruption campaigns that denigrate the law at the same time as they emphasize “punishment according to law.” Third, until recently, mainland Chinese efforts have neglected institutional design and corruption prevention. Essentially, they have yet to “tie their hands” to signal to ordinary citizens a credible commitment to anti-corruption reform.