Objective Responsibility vs. Subjective Responsibility: A Critical Reading of the CCP’s Internal Supervision Regulation

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Abstract

This paper extends the ethical responsibility theory to an analysis of the Internal Supervision Regulation (ISR), promulgated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2004. It examines not only the content of the ISR but also the socio-economic and ideological background to see how the document was born under the pressure for strengthening intra-party democracy and combating corruption. The paper probes into the impact and implications of this new move of the CCP towards building a responsible government. It argues that while codes of ethics are needed for the party from an organizational and ideological perspective, the congruence between the two dimensions of responsibility, subjective and objective, merits attention. In implementing the ISR, the CCP faces an even more challenging task: how to understand and reform the unwritten “codes” that govern the daily conduct of its members. Despite external controls, irresponsible and unethical behaviour has, in fact, resulted from a lack of subjective responsibility of public officials.

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