

Navigating Unknown Waters: The Chinese Communist Party's New Presence in the Private Sector

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Abstract

In the wake of the global economic crisis of 2008, the Chinese state has enhanced its systematic efforts to rebuild Communist Party branches in private enterprises. This article examines such efforts with specific reference to the campaign initiated in 2012 in Anhui province, one of the most recent initiatives undertaken by the party-state to infiltrate the country's huge and still-growing private sector. The article examines the emerging and dynamic institutional links between provincial party-state apparatus and local private businesses in Anhui and highlights the four key methods used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to extend its control over the increasingly powerful and influential private sector. These mechanisms are establishing new official institutions to coordinate CCP affairs related to the private sector, "sending down" a group of "party-building instructors," rewarding private business elites with appointments to party positions, and reorienting the work of local party organs to better serve the needs of the private sector. Although this business-oriented party building has indeed made the CCP more relevant to private business development and thus increased its organizational presence, it remains unclear whether these efforts have genuinely strengthened the Communist Party's control of the private sector.

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