

The Logic, Obstacles, and Optimization of Simultaneous Investigation and Governance of Corruption and Misconduct from the Perspective of Systemic Governance

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Abstract: As the Party's effort to enforce strict discipline in all respects deepens, the intertwined issues of misconduct and corruption have become highly concealed, systemic, and persistent. Traditional fragmented governance models are no longer adequate to address these complex challenges. From the perspective of systemic governance, this article views the simultaneous investigation and governance of corruption and misconduct (SIGCM) as a dynamic evolutionary system composed of subsystems such as monitoring, investigation, remediation, and feedback. It analyzes the integrated internal logic of structure–process–function. Current practice faces multiple obstacles, including poorly coupled subsystems, delayed negative feedback mechanisms, and rigid system boundaries, which prevent the full release of governance effectiveness. To address these issues, this study proposes reconstructing dataflow-driven coupling interfaces, building agile adaptive institutional iteration mechanisms, expanding open and diverse governance boundaries, and consolidating the core value of Party spirit cultivation and integrity culture. These measures will promote the fundamental evolution of the system from mechanical superposition to organic synergy, ultimately achieving a deeper breakthrough in enforcing discipline, combating corruption, and continuously purifying the political ecosystem.

Key words: Systemic governance; Simultaneous investigation and governance of corruption and misconduct; Anti-corruption governance

Introduction

In the new era, the Party's effort to enforce strict discipline in all respects has achieved historic and ground-breaking successes. However, corruption and its mutated forms have not been eradicated, and the phenomenon of misconduct and corruption becoming intertwined is particularly prominent. Misconduct and corruption do not exist in isolation; they show a highly correlated relationship of mutual exteriorization and common roots (Zhao, 2025). On the one hand, misconduct is the breeding ground and important inducement for corruption; corruption often begins with disciplinary lapses. On the other hand, established corruption will in turn reinforce and solidify misconduct, creating a vicious cycle.

Against this background, the policy of simultaneous investigation and governance of

corruption and misconduct (SIGCM) emerged. It marks that the anti-corruption struggle is moving from specialized corruption governance to whole-process corruption governance (Li, 2025), and has become a major policy for the construction of Party conduct, clean government, and the anti-corruption struggle on the new journey of the new era (Ren, 2025). Through simultaneous investigation, conduct problems and corruption cases are detected and mutually corroborated; through simultaneous governance, common root causes are systematically addressed and repaired. The goal is to break the invisible barriers between misconduct and corruption and eliminate the systemic soil in which they grow.

This article introduces the theoretical perspective of systemic governance, deconstructing SIGCM into a dynamic, open, and complex governance system. It examines the system's composition and functional positioning, its internal logic, the obstacles encountered in practice, and proposes optimization paths to enhance the system's synergy, adaptability, and resilience. The aim is to deepen academic understanding of this policy and provide a more operational framework for its efficient implementation.

I. Structural Coupling and Functional Positioning of SIGCM

To deeply understand SIGCM, one can view it as a human-designed governance system to address specific complex problems. This system is not a simple accumulation of various anti-corruption measures, but an organic whole formed by interdependent and interacting elements coupled according to specific rules and processes. The source of its effectiveness lies precisely in this precise structural coupling and the emergent composite functions.

1.1 System Components and Structural Coupling

The SIGCM governance system is a typical socio-technical system, whose components can be analyzed from three dimensions: actors, rules, and processes.

In the actor dimension, the system brings together multiple actors, forming nodes of the system. The core nodes include discipline inspection and supervision organs performing specialized oversight, judicial organs undertaking judicial adjudication and prosecution, auditing departments for economic supervision, organizational departments responsible for cadre management and supervision, and inspection and patrol agencies as important supplementary forces. In addition, the broader system boundary incorporates social forces such as public supervision and media supervision as interfaces between the system and its external environment. These actors are not isolated but are linked through information transmission, lead transfer, case assistance, and sharing of results.

In the rule dimension, system operation is governed by both formal and informal rules.

Formal rules include the Regulations of the Communist Party of China on Disciplinary Punishments, the Supervision Law of the People's Republic of China, and provisions on bribery and embezzlement in the Criminal Law, which provide the fundamental legal and disciplinary basis for investigation and governance. Informal rules are operational practices and consensuses formed over time that are not yet fully institutionalized, such as the investigative mindset of starting from misconduct to detect corruption and the rectification requirements of simultaneous governance. These flexibly fill the gaps between formal rules and guide daily operations.

In the process dimension, the system appears as a continuous chain from input to output. It begins with the input of various problem leads; then moves to the processing stage, including lead evaluation, preliminary verification, case filing for investigation and review, and adjudication; finally, it produces outputs, such as imposing disciplinary and administrative sanctions, transferring cases for judicial processing, issuing supervisory recommendations, and initiating systematic remediation through education, system improvement, and warning activities.

What makes this system a system is that the elements are not loosely assembled but have deep structural coupling. Although misconduct and corruption appear as individual behaviors, they are embedded in a systemic soil (Shi, 2025). This soil is precisely the dynamic, complex network of relationships formed by the interactions among the above actors, rules, and processes. Any poor connection (coupling failure) at any link will, like a short plank in a bucket, constrain the entire system's effectiveness. Therefore, the current policy's emphasis on achieving power integration, process fit, work integration, and mechanism unification (Liang & Zhang, 2025) essentially aims to continuously optimize and strengthen the structural coupling within the system.

1.2 Core Functions and Value Emergence of the System

The SIGCM system is designed to transcend the limitations of single measures, achieving an emergent effect where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts through organic integration. The system is endowed with the following core functions. First, risk warning and early intervention. Through systematic collection, correlation, and analysis of scattered early signs of the four forms of misconduct, the system can identify high-risk points and individuals that may evolve into corruption, thereby shifting from passive ex-post punishment to active ex-ante prevention and in-process interruption. Second, penetrating investigation and precise targeting. This is the direct manifestation of simultaneous investigation. The system requires breaking the mindset of treating misconduct as merely misconduct and corruption as merely corruption. When investigating misconduct, it is necessary to make a big deal out of small matters and uncover hidden interest exchanges and power abuse; when investigating corruption, it is necessary to go deep in major cases and trace the evolution of disciplinary lapses and management loopholes in

the relevant unit. Third, systematic remediation and ecological purification. This is the deeper goal of simultaneous governance. The system not only pursues punishment of individual offenders but also uses the problems exposed in individual cases to diagnose and repair relevant institutions, mechanisms, culture, and even the local political ecosystem.

The synergistic functioning of these functions ultimately gives rise to the highest value of the system: serving as the key hub for deepening the Party's self-reform and advancing the modernization of state governance. By systematically integrating the relatively scattered forces for rectifying misconduct and punishing corruption, the system promotes the evolution of strict Party discipline toward full-chain force and full-cycle management, thereby producing a more resilient and cleaner political ecosystem and consolidating the Party's long-term governing foundation.

II. Internal Logic of the System: Dual Evolution Based on Structure and Process

SIGCM is not a system conceived out of thin air; its necessity and rationality are rooted in the inherent, objective logic of misconduct and corruption themselves. The system's design essentially reflects a deep insight into and active adaptation to this objective logic, anchoring governance actions to the root causes and key evolutionary nodes of the problems.

2.1 Structural Logic: Common Source of Elements and Positive Feedback Loop

From a static, synchronic structural perspective, misconduct and corruption are not two entirely different types of problems but twin manifestations sharing the same corruption genes. This deep structural homology forms the objective basis for integrated governance.

First, they share the same ideological root. Whether the pursuit of pleasure and luxury (misconduct) or the exchange of power and money (corruption), the common core is the collapse of ideals and convictions and the loss of Party spirit. Misconduct and corruption are rooted in Party spirit; they essentially reflect problems of Party spirit (He & Sun, 2025). Second, they share the same institutional and environmental gaps. Misconduct and corruption thrive in institutional vacuums or weak enforcement areas where supervision is ineffective and constraints are lax. Misconduct and corruption are the long-term result of distorted ideas, cultural alienation, and unbalanced political ecology (Shi, 2025). Such environments provide common soil for both. More dangerously, misconduct and corruption are not merely parallel; they form a vicious positive feedback loop, i.e., a reinforcing loop in systems science (Meadows, 2008/2016). The spread of misconduct continuously erodes institutional authority, distorts organizational culture, and softens supervision rigidity, thereby constantly creating more lenient conditions and lower psychological thresholds for corruption. Conversely, when corruption succeeds without timely punishment, it sends strong negative signals, further solidifying or even beautifying the unwritten rules once seen

as misconduct, making it harder to foster a clean atmosphere, resulting in a Gresham's law where bad drives out good.

Therefore, the governance system must be designed to act simultaneously and bidirectionally on this loop: both curbing the spread of misconduct to compress space for corruption, and destroying the interest base of corruption to deter misconduct. This injects a powerful negative feedback into the system, seeking to break this dangerous reinforcing loop.

2.2 Continuous Spectrum of Behavior and Closed-Loop Requirement of Process Logic

From a dynamic, diachronic process perspective, moving from disciplinary lapses to criminal corruption is not an overnight event but an evolutionary spectrum of behavior with several possibilities yet inherent continuity. The governance system must match this continuity and achieve full-process coverage and closed-loop management.

On the one hand, there is a gradual path of from misconduct to corruption. Misconduct is the breeding ground and important inducement for corruption; corruption often begins with disciplinary lapses (Zhao, 2025). In a state of self-paralysis—no one notices or just this once—individuals gradually break through disciplinary boundaries, eventually sliding into the abyss of crime. That is, gradually breaking through disciplinary boundaries, ultimately leading to rent-seeking and interest transfers.

On the other hand, a backward feedback path of from corruption to investigating misconduct must be established. Serious corruption cases are the fruit of misconduct, but also valuable clue sources and diagnostic reports for retroactively investigating misconduct loopholes and institutional defects. A sound governance system must ensure that the output of its investigation subsystem (case information, exposed problems) automatically and mandatorily becomes the core input of the remediation subsystem (institutional improvement, warning education, ecological purification), forming a complete governance loop from problem discovery and severe punishment to root-cause exploration and rectification, and then to effect evaluation and relapse prevention. The policy's rapid iteration over three stages (Ren, 2025) is a vivid manifestation of this closed-loop logic continuously operating, feeding back, and adjusting in practice, showing the system's dynamic self-correction and self-improvement in response to real-world effects.

III. Real.world Obstacles to the SIGCM System

Although SIGCM constitutes a logically rigorous ideal system in theoretical design and policy intent, its transformation into concrete practice and its embedding into the existing institutional and cultural environment encounter multiple obstacles.

3.1 Poor Subsystem Coupling: Information Barriers and Process Disconnection

The primary obstacle is the weak coupling of the information subsystem with other subsystems, i.e., the widespread phenomenon of information silos. Departments such as discipline inspection and supervision, auditing, personnel, inspection and patrol, letters and visits, as well as public security, taxation, and financial regulation, accumulate vast amounts of data potentially related to misconduct and corruption. However, due to departmental barriers, inconsistent data standards, inadequate sharing mechanisms, security concerns, and other reasons, these data are often scattered and fragmented, making effective aggregation, correlation, and mining difficult. The lack of a unified problem database and risk profiling system (Shi, 2025) means that large amounts of micro-data detailing misconduct cannot be correlated through algorithms to generate early warning signals pointing clearly to specific corruption risks.

Second, there is a process disconnection between the investigation subsystem and the remediation subsystem. Within discipline inspection and supervision organs, functions such as supervision, investigation, case adjudication, and promoting reform through cases belong to different departments, each with its own operational logic and performance priorities. Structural deficiencies in collaborative governance mechanisms (Li, 2024) manifest here as a decoupling of investigation and governance. After a case is closed, related supervisory recommendations may lack sufficient force or focus, or be followed up without rigid constraints and tracking, leading to perfunctory second-half work, creating a breakpoint in the system loop and greatly reducing governance effectiveness.

3.2 Delayed Negative Feedback Mechanism: Insufficient Learning and Slow Adaptation

A related issue is the lag in rule iteration. With the sustained high-pressure anti-corruption stance, new types of corruption and hidden mutations are proliferating (Ji & Zhang, 2025), such as interest transfers through shadow companies or virtual currencies, constantly challenging existing supervision rules, evidence standards, and disciplinary bases. The formal rules—laws, policy interpretations, and case-handling guidelines—are usually revised through rigorous, time-consuming procedures, resulting in governance tools that cannot keep pace with the mutation speed of corruption methods. The proposal to establish a governance evaluation system based on data indicators (Li, 2024) aims to use real-time, quantitative performance monitoring to form more direct and agile feedback signals to drive rapid adjustment of system rules and strategies, but this mechanism remains weak.

3.3 Internal Circulation Dependence and Fictionalized Multi-Stakeholder Participation

Currently, the SIGCM system exhibits a tendency toward inward boundary rigidity, i.e.,

over-reliance on internal oversight forces and working mechanisms within the system, forming a relatively closed internal circulation.

This rigidity first narrows external information input channels. Although theoretically public and media oversight are important, in practice, the endogenous motivation of public oversight has not been effectively incorporated into the system loop (Ji & Zhang, 2025). While online reporting is widespread, issues such as high information verification costs, false accusations, and inadequate two-way feedback mechanisms persist. Second, a multi-stakeholder co-governance pattern has not yet taken shape, lacking an internal-external collaborative work pattern (Liang & Zhang, 2025). System rigidity not only limits the system's information sources and intellectual inputs but may also reduce the social recognition and public sense of gain from governance outcomes, affecting the system's long-term legitimacy and sustainability.

IV. Optimization Paths for the SIGCM System

To overcome these obstacles and unleash the potential effectiveness of the SIGCM system, targeted and systematic optimization is needed.

4.1 Reconstruct Coupling Interfaces Driven by Data Flow to Achieve Precision and Penetration

Data must be regarded as the blood of the system. By building a unified, efficient, and secure data circulation system, the connections among subsystems can be fundamentally reshaped and coupling strength enhanced.

Constructing an intelligent system data middle platform is a key step. This is not just a centralized database, but an intelligent hub with powerful data processing, analysis, and modeling capabilities. Using big data and AI, establish an information platform for real-time assessment of political ecology (Li, 2024), dynamically generating individual integrity profiles and unit political ecology maps. Through correlational analysis, the system automatically identifies abnormal patterns, achieving active problem discovery and dynamic early warning (Shi, 2025), providing solid data support and clear targeting for starting from misconduct to detect corruption.

Implementing full-process data accompaniment and penetrative management is an institutional guarantee. It requires that from the entry of a lead through each stage of evaluation, verification, case filing, investigation, punishment, and rectification, complete and traceable data traces are left in the system. Through technical means, the workflow and data flow of investigation and governance are rigidly bundled, ensuring that the governance loop is visualized and assessable, thereby achieving process fit and mechanism unification.

4.2 Build Agile Negative Feedback and Learning Mechanisms to Enhance System Adaptability

Establish a linkage mechanism of a case think tank and rule laboratory. Set up a specialized

case analysis center using NLP and other technologies to deeply mine historical and new cases, automatically clustering and analyzing the characteristics of new misconduct-corruption methods, high-incidence areas, and evolutionary trends. Standardize and productize the practical wisdom of the system.

Implement data-driven dynamic performance assessment and strategic adjustment. Based on the concept of a data-indicator-based governance evaluation system, establish a scientific set of key performance indicators. These indicators should include not only traditional numbers, such as cases handled and amounts involved, but also deep indicators reflecting system synergy, root-cure capability, and agility, such as the conversion rate of misconduct-corruption clues, adoption and rectification rate of supervisory recommendations, recurrence rate of same-area problems, and response time for rule revision. Through this data-driven managerial negative feedback, a strong impetus for continuously optimizing system operation strategies is formed.

4.3 Expand Open and Diverse System Boundaries to Activate Social Co-governance Energy

Actively break the inward rigidity of system boundaries, building the system into an open platform that gathers wisdom and strength from all sides. Design user-friendly social information input and feedback interfaces. Upgrade the Internet + oversight platform from a simple online reporting box to a platform for social governance participation. By developing structured information submission templates, providing secure and reliable anonymization technology, establishing transparent response time commitments, and exploring appropriate material or spiritual incentives, encourage the public to provide more specific and verifiable problem leads and governance suggestions. At the same time, build an external collaborative network based on compliance and trust. Under strict adherence to laws and privacy protection, actively explore data compliance cooperation mechanisms with financial institutions, large enterprises, e-commerce and sharing economy platforms that hold important behavioral data. Use cutting-edge technologies such as privacy-preserving computation and blockchain to achieve joint computation and warnings based on specific risk models without directly accessing raw data, thereby legally and compliantly extending the system's sensing reach to effectively address covert corruption using new financial instruments and commercial platforms.

4.4 Continuously Consolidate the Core Values of the System

Embed Party spirit cultivation deeply into key process nodes of the system. Go beyond general ideological and political education by making systematic Party spirit analysis and tempering a compulsory procedure before cadre appointment and promotion, a required course before launching major projects, and a must-reflect link after case closure. He and Sun (2025)

emphasize Party spirit cultivation as the fundamental lever; this must be turned, through systemic design, into a binding constraint and routine practice, helping Party officials and cadres reinforce the ideological dam of not wanting to be corrupt.

Use integrity culture to reshape the soft environment of system operation. The system should actively advocate and promote integrity culture, support the creation of high-quality integrity works, and promote integrity education into government agencies, enterprises, schools, communities, and families. By nurturing a strong social atmosphere where integrity is honored and corruption is shameful, we can fundamentally change the distorted ideas and cultural alienation (Shi, 2025) that Shi Pengpeng pointed to, providing strong cultural support for institutional operation and political ecological purification.

Conclusion

SIGCM is a key institutional carrier for the systematic deepening of strict Party discipline in all respects. Its effectiveness is rooted in adapting to the logic of structural homology and process continuity of misconduct and corruption. However, in practice, it faces obstacles such as poor coupling, delayed feedback, and rigid boundaries, risking the system idling or failing. Therefore, deepening governance must resort to systematic engineering: reshape collaborative capacity through data flow, enhance adaptability through agile learning, absorb governance energy through open boundaries, and provide value assurance through robust Party spirit and integrity culture. Looking forward, the system should evolve toward a smart governance organism with self-sensing, self-learning, and self-adapting capabilities. This requires continuous institutional and technological innovation as well as deep social and cultural nourishment, ultimately achieving lasting purification of the political ecosystem.

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