

# Discourse, Politics and Media in Contemporary China

EDITED BY  
QING CAO, HAILONG TIAN AND PAUL CHILTON

DISCOURSE APPROACHES TO  
POLITICS, SOCIETY AND CULTURE 54



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# Discourse, Politics and Media in Contemporary China

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Lancaster University / University of East Anglia / Lancaster University  
r.wodak@lancaster.ac.uk; A.Musolff@uea.ac.uk and j.unger@lancaster.ac.uk

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## **Volume 54**

Discourse, Politics and Media in Contemporary China  
Edited by Qing Cao, Hailong Tian and Paul Chilton

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*Edited by*

Qing Cao

Durham University

Hailong Tian

Tianjin Foreign Studies University

Paul Chilton

Lancaster University

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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# Introduction

## Legitimation, resistance and discursive struggles in contemporary China

Qing Cao

Durham University

*'Without legitimacy, words are invalid; invalid words lead man to nowhere.'*  
(名不正则言不顺，言不顺则事不成。Mingbuzheng zhe yanbushun; yanbushun zhe shibucheng) Confucius (*The Analects*)

*'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statement.*

*'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. Foucault (in Rabinow 1984: 74)*

Two hundred years ago, Napoleon, referring to its potential power, allegedly called China 'the sleeping dragon'. Three and half decades after its economic reform, the 'dragon' is now fully awake. China has been transformed from one of the poorest countries in the late 1970s to the world's second largest economy in 2010. The gravity of power has shifted to an economically and politically more dynamic Asia-Pacific region. Within this region, China is the single most important country and not only provides an engine for economic growth, but represents a challenge to Western assumptions of economic, political and cultural superiority (Jacques 2012; Shambaugh 2013). Within China, however, radical changes have occurred in all aspects of life, in politics, economics, education, social structures, values, traditions and identities. In an authoritarian society, these changes are mediated significantly through the power of language, carefully controlled by various sources of authority (Liu & Tang 1993; Ji 2003; Chilton et al. 2012; Perry 2013). Discourse, as a way of speaking and doing things, has become an indispensable instrument for political elites to manage a fluid, increasingly fragmented, but highly dynamic and yet fragile society (Shirk 2008, 2011). People have become, by and large, dependent upon a heavily regulated use of language for making sense of and interacting with the world they live in, using discursive resources confined to dominant interpretations. However, evolving discursive formulations on crucial socio-political

issues reflect key aspects of the trajectory of change in China, and indicate the future direction of its development.

This volume examines socio-political transformations of contemporary Chinese society through a systematic account, analysis and assessment of its salient discourses and their production, circulation, negotiation, and consequences; all against a backdrop of China's dynamic political, economic and sociocultural processes. The general questions this volume asks are how and to what extent language use contributes to the management of China's transformations and to the formation of new identities; with what consequences; and what it can tell us about the nature, mode, tensions and significance of those transformations in China's pursuit of a viable road to modernity. In conceiving this book, we have tried to include a range of disciplinary perspectives in examining various types of discourses. In particular, we focus on the interrelated domains of politics and media, but more importantly, place a particular emphasis on their increasingly complex interactions. As an authoritarian society, political discourse carries the highest order of importance and, despite the substantial retreat of politics from people's lives in the post-reform era, still has a pervasive impact upon all aspects of society (Renwick & Cao 2003). Yet, due to transformations in a commercialised mass media, the mode and instruments of political communication have been radically altered (Lee 2009; Stockman 2012). The decline of traditional channels of propaganda and the rise of new media have rapidly changed both the landscape of political communication, and the relationships between politics, the mass media and society (Kluver & Powers 1999; Zheng 2007; Yang 2011). This volume attempts to capture key features of these changing relationships and assess their consequences by examining an array of dominant discourses. It includes both the established discourse of 'the intellectual', 'social stability' and 'national revival' as well as emerging themes of 'soft power' and 'world order'. The operative concept of this volume is 'transformation', with its breakneck speed of change coupled with rising socio-political tensions, contradictions and even a sense of national crisis (Davis 2007) – though crisis (危机 *weiji*) in Chinese means both 'danger' (危 *wei*) and 'opportunity' (机 *ji*) and transforming 'danger' into 'opportunity' has long been the delicate statecraft of Chinese ruling elites. The key interest in this volume, however, is how these transformations are managed and what identities are eroded, retained, renegotiated, constructed and reproduced; what discursive strategies are used; and what purposes they serve in the changing dynamics of Chinese society.

In current literature, some scholars emphasise the high-handed dominant power of the political establishment (Zhao 1998, 2000; Pei 2006; McGregor 2012), whilst others highlight the subversive capacity of popular resistance (Gries & Rosen 2004, 2010; Cai 2010). The case studies presented in this volume, however, seek to advance a balanced analysis of the complex, multifarious and constantly

evolving situations and focuses on the processes of mediation, negotiation and adaptation that take place within shifting power relations. As contributors to this volume reveal, an expanding space has emerged in China for a widening range of participants to engage in negotiation with dominant discourses. The volume problematizes the assumption of a monolithic centralised power in China, a power that is either in control of everything, or in an epic binary battle for democracy and political liberalisation. Rather, it explores the diffused political power and diverse producers of discourse, while delineating dominant discursive framings of key socio-political issues, events and developments. By looking at a wider range of social actors and agencies, expanding sites of communication, and new technologies and spaces for discursive engagement, the volume presents a picture of China that shows complexities and contradictions as well as progress and promise. This introductory text has three specific purposes. First, it explains the rationales, objectives and theoretical and methodological positions of the volume. Second, it provides a brief examination of the salient features of the Chinese discursive regime and its systems of power and regulations as a contextual background to the studies presented in the volume. Third, it presents a critical overview of current key developments in the study of shifting relationships between political power and socioeconomic changes in China. Finally, it introduces the structure of the volume and the contents of each chapter.

### 1. Critical discourse analysis and socio-political conditions in China

This volume is a critical study of the profound changes in post-reform China, focusing on formations of evolving identities from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA). It is important to establish from the outset what we mean by CDA and why it is useful for the study of Chinese society. CDA as an established methodological approach to social study (Wodak & Meyer 2009; Fairclough 2010) is, as van Dijk (2001: 96) argues, a specific '*perspective on doing scholarship*'. It focuses primarily on social problems with concerns on the role of discourse and takes a critical standpoint (van Dijk 2001). It is critical, in the sense that the researcher does not take anything for granted, but opens up the complexities and contradictions, as well as interests and power relations that are embedded in texts, talks and related actions. It means the researcher challenges established doctrines, dogmatism and dichotomies, whilst maintaining distance from the data and developing a sense of self-reflection in research (Wodak 2007). The interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature of CDA enables researchers to benefit from theories, categories and methodologies from other disciplines, thus facilitating a multidimensional, multi-perspective account of the intricate, intertwined and dialectical relationships

between discourse structures and social structures. Wodak, using empirical data from Austria, emphasises the importance of interactions between power, ideology and history that function in and through discourse and summarizes four types of 'discursive macro-strategies' in constructing national identity (Wodak et al. 1999); constructive (creating national identities), preservative (reproducing national identities), transformative (changing national identities) and destructive (dismantling identities). This largely discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2009) follows a Foucauldian tradition of discourse inquiry (Foucault 1972, 1984), and is a methodological approach that informs many of the studies in this volume (see the last section in this introduction). This is because our key concerns are strategies, structures and modes of identity construction in a contemporary China that is experiencing volatile though rapid socio-political transformations. Moreover, the volume is interested in how multiple identities are enmeshed inherently with knowledge shaped by particular power structures in Chinese society.

In recent years, scholars have drawn increasingly on discourse analysis in the study of China's fast-changing society. Monographs (Lin & Galikowski 1999; Tian 2009a; Shi-xu 2010; Zheng 2011), new journals,<sup>1</sup> special journal issues (Kuo & Wu 2009; Tian 2009b; Wu & Mao 2011; Chilton, Tian & Wodak 2012), edited volumes (Shi-xu 2007a; Wu 2008; Tian & Cao 2012), conferences, research projects and centres have appeared that are devoted to discourse studies on China and China-Western relations. Though taking different epistemological and ontological positions, they focus broadly on the two interrelated domains of conceptual frames for studying Chinese communication styles<sup>2</sup> and of empirical discourse analysis. In the former, some emphasise indigenous concepts rooted in China's intellectual traditions (e.g. Chen 1994, 2006, 2009; Shi-xu 2008, 2010)<sup>3</sup> while others focus on a hybrid approach combined with Western theories (Wang 2009; Tian 2009a). However, most studies focus on China's specific issues by applying a plethora of discourse analysis methods. Transposed to the Chinese context, discourse analysis as a methodological tool has to be innovative in decoding the indigenous forms of communication, language, history, tradition and complex situational and institutional contexts.

However, the positions, presumptions and perspectives applied to the Chinese situation needs to be considered carefully. Some scholars contend that discourse as conceptualised and understood in Anglo-American intellectual traditions may not be a natural vehicle through which people in other societies experience the world and articulate their feelings and visions (Hall 1992; Said 1993; Shi-xu 2007b, 2009). This adds to the complexities of reading non-Western discourses, and also points to the imperative of understanding discourse as a culturally differentiated, mutually competitive and epistemologically diverse socio-cultural practice. It is in this sense that cultural critics (De Bary & Tu 1998; McQuail 2005; Shi-xu 2009)

argue for a non-universalist, culturally inclusive diversification of discourse in communication across cultures. Others (Zhao 1998, 2000; Pei 2006), however, see China as facing similar problems to other societies in terms of the challenges of a fair distribution of wealth and the protection of citizens' basic rights. As China manages the transformation from orthodox socialism to pragmatic developmentalism, from conservatism to some forms of liberalism and from tradition to modernity, various perspectives have been applied in studying different dimensions of this metamorphosis. Typical of these perspectives is a combined liberal-pluralist and radical-Marxist standpoint (Lee 2000, 2001). The former focuses on a critique of the authoritarian state while the latter concentrates on evaluating the increasingly pervasive power of capital in China. Lee (2001) argues that perspectives and methods are merely tools; it is how one applies them that matters.

The current volume studies discursive structures of a Chinese polity and media embedded in a market economy under an authoritarian one-party system (Gries & Rosen 2010). It approaches the topics under investigation with a largely empirical-based examination of discursive construction of identities rather than proceeding from fixed presumptions. CDA is applied in conjunction with other approaches, mainly as an analytical method. Studies in this volume seek to unravel the '*infinitesimal mechanisms of power*' (Foucault 1972) at play in the use of language that is shaping the construction of key discursive formations and practices, and endeavours to understand its wider roles in mediating socio-political transformations in China. In particular, the volume aims to examine the characteristics of language use in politics (Chilton 2004) and the mass media (Fairclough 1995), together with the key terms, slogans, catchphrases, mantras, and their history, evolution, purposes, recontextualization, and consequences. In this volume, what gives rise to the characteristics of language use and how it is communicated, negotiated and contested through the mass media is conceived as the critical site of discursive struggle in contemporary China. It is critical because the mass media remains the most important domain through which China's socio-political transformation is managed, stability is maintained, identity is constructed and, crucially, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) legitimacy is sustained. However, this is a highly dynamic but volatile process. This volume is thus interested in investigating how *changes in language use* reflect socio-political transformations, focusing on the *productive* function of discourse in both its *conservative* and *transformative dimension* (Fairclough 1989:37–9). Conservative discourse in China is characterised predominantly by the political elites' attempt to maintain continuities with its revolutionary past, and the intellectual elites' efforts to preserve China's cultural heritage. Transformative discourse is driven mostly by the imperative of innovative, imaginative discursive strategies in managing social change through language use. Though contributors to this volume come from different disciplines,

they take a broad discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2009) that integrates knowledge from historical sources and from the social, political and economic background in which the ‘discursive events’ under investigation occur. This volume is interested in exploring the historical dimension of discursive formations and actions by investigating the evolution of various ‘genres’. A shared focus on the historical dimension of discourse allows flexibility in combining with perspectives from various disciplines. Throughout the book, central focus is placed on the interplay between language, discourse and socio-political practices. Before moving to delineating broad features of current Chinese communication, it is useful to examine briefly the unique roles the Chinese language plays in history and society that underpins much of the discursive practices in contemporary China.

## 2. Discursive regime in China: A brief genealogy

As one of the oldest surviving languages, China’s 3000-year-old writing system has been an enduring force in keeping Chinese society and culture intact. In the vast Chinese Empire, people lived thousands of miles apart and spoke hundreds of dialects, but they shared the same set of cultural norms by having access to the same written language (Tu 2010). A small pool of canonical texts like Confucius’s *Analects* (论语 *Lunyu*) that children had to learn to gain literacy encoded Chinese values, assumptions and worldview. Transmitted through the two enduring institutions of *sishu* (私塾 a traditional form of schooling) and *keju* (科举 a state examination system to select bureaucrats across the Chinese empire),<sup>4</sup> these classics contributed to the integration of literacy, values and identity, and even the survival of the Chinese empire until the early 20th century when the imperial order crumbled under external pressures (Tu 1995; Spence 2012). However, this tradition of revering canonical texts and of seeking legitimacy and deriving moral claims and political power from them persists in modern times. The hierarchical structure of the texts, to some extent, mirrors a pyramid-shaped political order. Throughout history, traditional scholarship on textual studies and interpretations of classics within established norms has been integral to the operation of discursive power (Davis 2007). In a Confucian tradition, words are invalid without legitimacy (民不正则言不顺 *Mingbuzheng ze yanbushun*); though paradoxically, legitimacy derives from words these established texts hold as indisputable. Textual authority confers moral power that can be translated into political entitlement and command. Truth is thus largely produced in and through authoritative texts. “‘Truth’ is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements’ (Foucault, in Rabinow 1984: 74).

Inheriting deep-seated discursive structures, socialist China created a new type of linguistic revolution to instigate an ideological transformation with new canons, imageries, vocabulary and meanings in order to engender new beliefs, convictions and worldview (Ji 2003; Lin 2007; Liu 2010). The iconoclastic cultural vandalism on traditions, however, altered the ideologies, tenets, identities and subjectivities, but not politics and poetics of the established discursive regime. Not surprisingly, in reversing Maoist extremities, and to break away from the entrenched communist orthodoxy, Deng Xiaoping drew legitimacy from 'seeking truth from facts' (实事求是 *shi shi qiu shi*). This was a bold nihilistic move that nonetheless retained the political legitimacy of the CCP. Economic success, however, has quickly swept this 'facts-based' pragmatism into a new position of orthodoxy that has legitimised post-Deng reform, leadership and policies. Nevertheless, meanings in political language are understood by the producer and audience alike to be embedded in a parallel though hierarchical structure of power. Chinese is rich in metaphor and allusion; metaphoric references often trigger formulaic memories of the grand narrative of the day (Hodge & Louie 1998; Lu 2004). Though less essentialist and patriarchal in post-reform China, the current political language is nevertheless charged with symbolic signposts of a revolutionary past, a reformed present, and a future of cultural revival. The teleological journey accentuates a new set of priorities, imperatives and values that prioritise growth and stability, harmony and peace and prosperity and rise.

The CCP's politically-dominated discourse has been characterised by three broad features, or 'discursive strategies', that have survived the reform era (Renwick & Cao 1999) These are consensus building (共识 *gongshi*), a drive for unity (团结 *tuanjie*) and a focus on education (教育 *jiaoyu*). As the highest order of priority, consensus refers to the agreement reached among top leaders on long-term strategic objectives with corresponding policy prescriptions. Such consensus is promoted as deriving from a 'scientific understanding' of national conditions, historical legacies and future promise. Constructing political truth as historical truth is central to consensus-building and establishing legitimacy, authority and political power. 'Unity' is organisational-driven and goal-oriented, and aimed at reducing internal frictions and external contestations through discursive closure at a textual level, persuasion at an institutional level and propaganda at the public level. Such exclusionary practice is deemed necessary and legitimate, given the high value placed upon stability and order in a rapidly changing society. It is the first step in mobilising the Party and the public towards the strategic goals of the political elites. 'Education' is the principal mechanism through which the discursive consensus is promoted, transmitted, sustained and reproduced, both within the CCP membership and wider public. A range of institutional instruments are deployed for education, including training courses organised by CCP

Party schools, publicity campaigns through state-run media, and incorporating the consensus into the educational curriculum in schools and universities (Kennedy 2009).

At the content level, political consensus is constructed primarily in the two interrelated domains of historical and theoretical. Creating a coherent linkage between historical mission, political actions and national goals is indispensable to establishing political legitimacy. Using designating and renaming strategies, the political elites have reimagined and redefined historical events as in accord with present imperatives. In a speech to celebrate the CCP's 90th anniversary on 1st July 2011, Hu Jintao (2011) summarised the CCP's three historical achievements of national independence (1921–1949), a socialist system (1949–1976) and a reform and opening-up programme (post-1978). In this speech each classificatory stage is historically positioned by a particular mission; namely a 'new democratic revolution', 'socialist revolution' and 'socialist modernisation'. Thus, by discursive renaming and repositioning, meanings are established as historical truth in relation to the progressive role of the political elites in moving the society forward. Nonetheless, theoretical underpinnings for historical truth are still bolstered by a Marxist dialectical materialism that posits a progressive view of history (Ji 2003). The agent of change is conceptualised as 'material' in the form of productivity (technology) that the post-reform leadership has tried to enhance by unleashing capitalist market forces under the auspices of a socialist state. Despite increasing Confucian political philosophy in Hu-Wen's policies (Cao 2007), the dominant political discourse is nevertheless confined to the 'socialist market economy' or market socialism – a concept being pulled in the different directions of Marxism and capitalism. Thus, intersecting history and politics is the 'scientific truth' of advancing human society, and can be seen as a mixture of Marxist progress and Confucian revival. The discursive regime, undergoing profound changes, has proved resilient and retained much of its structural features and essential functions.

### 3. Changing political communication: from control to negotiation

Foucault (1972) sees discourse as actively constituting and constructing society, rather than passively reflecting what happens in it, and emphasises a form of interdependency within discursive practice as texts draw upon other historical or contemporary texts. Following Foucault, Fairclough (1989: 37–9) underlines the dialectic relationship between discourse and social structures, and views the dynamics of social change as derived from two modes of *reproductive* discourse, the *conservative* and the *transformative*. The former sustains continuities and indicates

stable social structures and power relations; while the latter orients towards change through discursive innovations. The *transformative* reproduction often occurs at a time when a society experiences radical changes, pressing socio-political problems or a crisis. The bewildering rate of transformation in China in recent decades has determined the highly volatile nature of Chinese society and the historical condition of a Party-state managing the world's fastest-growing economy. Inevitably, the 'transformative' mode of discourse is not only pervasive, but vital for sustaining changes and crucial for shaping the future direction favoured by the political elites. It is not enough, however, to point to the 'transformative' mode of discursive change; we must understand how and why those changes have occurred in specific historical, cultural and socio-political conditions.

As an authoritarian society, China is characterized by a largely top-down pattern of political communication. The political elites govern on the one hand with an administrative apparatus with penal power; and on the other, though with increasing difficulties and challenges, with sustained discursive campaigns conditioning the country to uniform thinking, (Renwick & Cao 2003). Many scholars (e.g. Huang 2007; Zhang 2011) observe a growing tendency in the political elites to engage with the public in formulating policies, as society has become diversified, fragmented and decentralised due to the forces set in motion by the reform programme. Despite the potency of a discursive power facilitated by state-controlled instruments of communications, the political elites no longer monopolize the right to speak in the realm of public communication (Zhang and Zheng 2009), but have to grapple with challenges posed by a decentralised media industry (Tong 2010; Shirk 2011; Chin 2012) and a diverse array of voices. A continuing discursive colonization on many fronts is crucial for maintaining control over a fast-changing society. A few developing trends are worth noticing.

First, ideology has become pragmatic, fractured and ineffectual despite the overarching narrative of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Displacing Marxist orthodoxy with developmentalism means that official ideologies are practical, flexible and adaptable. The belief system is driven by the imperatives of maintaining control over the large, fast-changing and complex society and motivated by its instrumental value of legitimising political authority and government policy and cementing a ruptured society (Brown 2012). Ideology as a general set of beliefs is promoted by the political elites to construct fresh socio-political truths. They require a convergence of ideas, if not a consensus, on key issues that China faces today. Constructing political truth is realised largely through specific use of language. Chilton (2004: 199) argues the importance of political language is to indicate to members of a community what is good and evil, just or unjust. It is precisely the sharing of a common view on these basic issues that helps constitute a political community. Unlike Mao's Marxist orthodoxy, post-reform ideologies

are goal-oriented and policy-driven. Examples are, Deng Xiaoping's 'development as priority' (发展是硬道理 *fazhan shi ying daoli*), Jiang Zemin's 'three represents' (三个代表 *sange daibiao*) and Hu Jintao's 'scientific development' (科学发展观 *kexue fazhan guan*). Each addresses specific crucial issues of the day; those of poverty in the late 1970s, co-opting the entrepreneurial class in the 1990s and bridging the rich/poor gap in the 2000s. Though the fifth generation of 'Xi-Li' (The Party's Secretary General Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang) leadership assumed power in early 2013, they have already launched the 'Chinese dream' (中国梦, *zhongguo meng*) slogan, aiming at inspiring new generations of Chinese to realise their full potentials in an increasingly prosperous society (*Zhongxuanbu lilunju*, 2013). These ideologies launch a fresh system of classification that assigns specific values to different social groupings, objects, places and events (Xiao 2012; Ma 2012). The associated taxonomies however are not expected to be immaculate, static or enduring. Discursive clusters comprise a practical but self-contained system of values, slogans, objectives and policy prescriptions. The 1980s 'getting rich is glorious', for instance, contrasts to the 2000s 'harmonious society'. Few question the tension between the two doctrines, not because both are subsumed under the grand socialist narrative ('poverty is not socialism'; 'socialism is harmonious'), but because of the recognisable intent of pragmatic solutions to the socio-political problems.

Second, since the early 2000s, an ideological 'duality' has emerged of an abstract socialist rhetoric and pragmatic *minsheng* (民生 people's livelihood) discourse which has characterised much of the current political language. This duality has arisen out of a widening rich/poor gap, moralistic claims by the political elites and the entrenched practice of power-holders constructing a subjective position for the masses (Pei 2006). The divorce between socialist spirituality and capitalist reality has necessitated an innovative discourse that co-opts the public into an ideological package that allows maximum flexibility in incorporating invariable abstract rhetoric and variable policy prescriptions. Such ideological duality parallels what Hodge and Louie (1998: 48) describe as the P-ideology and the S-ideology. The former refers to the ideology of the powerful; the latter is the ideology of 'solidarity' that the powerful try to secure from the public. Due to the conflicting ends this duality serves, a constant tension occurs between expressing the power of authority and soliciting voluntary compliance (rather than coerced submission). A shift however has recently emerged, and the gravity is tipping increasingly toward the S-ideology as the political elites grapple with a power diffusion that is due to large sections of Chinese society becoming progressively depoliticised amidst economic liberalisation (Lee 2009). Extensive political retreat from ordinary people's lives means that the capacity for political control has largely been constrained (Zheng & Fewsmith 2009); and at the same time official channels of

propaganda have gradually declined. One example of this is the shift of emphasis from the 'Party's character' (党性 *dangxin*) of Chinese journalism to the 'People's character' (人民性 *renminxing*). The former articulates the ideology of the CCP (P-ideology) while the latter reflects the 'interests' of the people (S-ideology).

Moreover, indoctrinating the younger generations is proving to be hard to achieve. Young people grow up in a more relaxed and much wealthier post-reform China and are better educated, better informed and, facilitated by the rapid growth of information and communications technology, more exposed to the wider world. They are attuned to what is happening around them through easy access to new media, rather than to officially-propagated messages of the traditional state channels (Zhang 2011). A recent episode epitomises the change of 'Party vs. people' dynamics in journalistic duality. When an irritated party official criticised a probing journalist '*are you representing the interests of the Party or of the people*', the official was instantly ridiculed in internet chat rooms as a political dinosaur. Recent socio-economic transformations have led to rapidly altered modes of communication. The shifting balance within the P vs. S ideological duality points to the volatility, intricacy, and infinite imperatives for innovative ideological management.

Third, the official discourse continues to produce 'closed texts' as a dominant discursive strategy, transmitted through state communication apparatus like the Xinhua News Agency, *People's Daily* and China Central Television (CCTV). Consisting of editorials, speeches, policy papers and slogans, these texts provide official rationales, positions, guidelines and principles that offer to the public certainties and assurances as well as a closure to ambiguities, debates, contentions or alternatives. The ritualised, rigid and almost fossilized discursive conventions reflect deeper inherent difficulties and complexities and a fear of fundamental institutional changes that may set in motion a chain of transformations beyond the CCP's control (Lu & Chu 2012). Thus, both content and form of discursive norms in official communication constitute part of the *conservative* mode of discourse reproduction. This being a mode maintaining stability and continuity with the past, though such a past is constantly being rewritten. As part of the party-state apparatus to exercise authority, the conservative mode of discourse wields a dominant power through 'phantasmatic representation' (Foucault 1972:68) – an element of symbolisation and of the forbidden. The canonical status of key official texts has become an integral part of the 'procedures' or 'technologies' that constrain what can be said, by whom, when, how and on what occasions. '*Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle; discourse is the power which is to be seized*' (Foucault 1984:110). Implicit in everyday socio-political practice, the discursive power of official texts is distributed and engaged in key domains of public life. However, such power does not work by forcing itself onto its subjects;

rather, paradoxically it progressively incorporates them by allowing a larger space for participation in bottom-up discourse through an emerging pattern of communication by 'public participation'. For example, key state media like the *People's Daily* operate a website where readers can engage in particular issues by contributing to discussions.

On the other hand, a de-centred, spontaneous, heterogeneous, potentially subversive, but rapidly expanding 'open form' discourse has started to proliferate as bottom-up societal voices. Multifarious, diverse, relaxed and individualistic, the societal 'open form' discourse operates to generate diverse views, interpretations, debates, contestations as well as dissent (Shirk 2011). More importantly, this bottom-up discourse complicates, problematizes and interrogates official formulations of key sociocultural, economic, and political issues. As a dynamic discursive force in the participation of public affairs it is constantly pushing boundaries (Yang 2011). It constitutes the *transformative* form of discourse reproduction, bringing about possibilities of change, innovation and promise. Whilst channels for official discourse, though dominant and well-financed, have declined in the post-WTO environment (Xin 2008), thanks to the growth of new media; vehicles for societal voices have expanded exponentially. In the meantime, disengaged from state-sponsored channels of communication, large sections of the population have turned to the internet in search of information. The number of 'netizens' (citizens that sign up onto the Internet) in China reached 564 million by the end of 2012, double the number in the U.S. At the same time mobile internet users grew to 420 million and 74.5% of netizens used mobile phones to access the Internet. In 2011, 367 million users subscribed to a highly diverse range of internet news services. It is the social media however that has enjoyed the fastest growth and 309 million netizens used MicroBlogs in 2012 (ZH WXZ 2013). It has proved to be the freest and most-favoured mode of communication for ordinary people. Web publishing is also booming in China more than anywhere else in the world. There are also currently 200 million 'e-readers' consuming online fictions posted by self-publishing authors, and this has posed a direct challenge to the straightjacketed conventional book business (Beech 2012). Information technology has moved China closer to a level playing field of communication thus empowering bottom-up societal voices.

Finally, in the increased interactions between official and societal discourses, there have arisen new platforms where social groups can legitimately defend their interests in more formal and open negotiation (Hughes 2003; Tai 2006). Consequently, diverse discourses tend to merge into one single complex whose mutual workings are not seen as one dominant voice foisted upon others, but as moving toward a mutually acceptable goal or settlement. A case in point is the 2011 tax reform policy where the official position coalesced gradually with societal voices. The government proposal of a tax-free allowance of 2000 to 3000 Chinese RMB

per month was modified during the consultation period because a poll found only 15% of the public supported it. The majority favoured an over 3000 RMB allowance which the government eventually accepted. This type of public consultation, or ‘advice-seeking’ discourse, has emerged as a mediating mechanism for interested parties, and has enabled an open channel of negotiation with government. The mediating voices of ‘expert advice’, diverse polls and journalistic reports work as active discourse participants to orient policy issues toward a practical and ‘harmonious’ solution. Thus ‘advice-seeking’ functions not only to legitimise marginal discourse, but to enable its voices to become part of a ‘transformative’ discourse. It is in this context that some scholars have started to apply fresh models of analysis to account for new patterns of communication and media in China, such as ‘from control to negotiation’ (Huang 2007) and ‘from propaganda to hegemony’ (Zhang 2011). These models attempt to capture the changing dynamic of the party-state/society relationship (Zheng 2010), a dynamic that is produced by a plethora of factors including new information and communication technology.

#### 4. Structure of the book

This volume consists of two sections and each section examines the distinct domains of politics and mass media in discourse. **Section 1** *Political Discourse* (Chapter 1–4) scrutinizes the discursive framings of key political issues; the ‘mission’ of intellectuals, the imperative of ‘social stability’, the ‘new mode of governance’ and the ‘world order’. The central focus is to delineate discursive apparatuses in the use of political language, the defining of key terms of reference, demarcating/policing boundaries, promoting hegemonic interpretations and restricting vocabulary use in talking about issues with political significance. The primary concern in this section is on how political discourse is constructed in both constructive and preservative ways in the post-reform China to orient transformations as envisaged by the political elites, what national identities are created and preserved and through what discursive strategies. This section investigates how the cultural rejuvenation of the nation is enmeshed with the re-constructed political identities of the CCP.

**Chapter 1** (*Disembodied Words: Jiang Zemin’s Political Discourse on Intellectuals*) probes the specific forms of power embodied in the properties and functions of political language prevalent in the Jiang Zemin’s era (1989–2003) that redefines the notions of culture, history and nation in the post-Tiananmen China. Comparing Jiang’s discourse on intellectuals with Mao’s, Marinelli delineates a distinct pattern of ‘evolution’, ‘involution’ and ‘devolution’ as discursive strategies deployed throughout the 1990s in creating a new political discourse that co-opts intellectuals in a fresh market economy socio-political environment. Marinelli

argues that Jiang's political speeches represent an extreme form of formalized 'involution-devolution' language that presupposes the creation of an effective relationship between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*) via speech (言 *yan*). Applying Chinese epistemological terminologies, Marinelli explains how a dislocation occurred in the 1990s between political speech (言 *yan*) and the symbolic order that represents reality, due largely to an unbridgeable gap between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*). The ultimate aim of Jiang's discourse, the chapter concludes, is to reaffirm the rehabilitation of the intellectuals, as their support for the CCP's policies is essential for the modernization of the country.

**Chapter 2** (*'Stability Overwhelms Everything': A Discourse-Historical Approach to the Stability Discourse since 1989*) continues the decoding of China's political language with a focus on the construction of legitimacy in the post-Tiananmen era. Using a discourse-historical method to examine three events reported in the *People's Daily*; namely, the 1989 'Beijing Spring', the 1999 'anti-Falun Gong' campaign and the 2005 'anti-Japan' demonstrations, Sandby-Thomas explicates 'stability' discourse as an essential framework to legitimise the political elites' policies, and details the pervasive stability rhetoric as 'discursively flexible'. This is in contrast to a Weberian legitimation situated within a strategic-relational approach, in order to conceptualize the role played by legitimating discourse. Assessing the structural features and historical functions of stability discourse, Sandby-Thomas contends that such discourse will, in the long-term, gradually lose its effectiveness in generating legitimacy for the political elites.

**Chapter 3** (*A Decade's Change in China: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of Ten Government Work Reports*) moves the analytical focus to the bureaucratic language of the Chinese government's annual reports to the National People's Congress over a 10-year period (1999–2008). Applying corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis methods, Qian and Tian delineate the trajectory of ideological variations and shifting modes of governance encoded in texts of these government reports. They detail a discursive shift in the institutionalised bureaucratic language from the grand narrative of 'socialist market economy' to specific, high-profile but pressing socioeconomic issues of the early years of the 21st century, thus reflecting the socioeconomic and political changes of both Jiang-Zhu and Hu-Wen administrations.<sup>5</sup> Qian and Tian argue that the shift from ideological rhetoric to a pragmatic *minsheng* (民生) based discourse has had a positive impact in dealing with pressing socioeconomic issues, because changes in real life is linked to, and brought about by, the change in discourse in policy papers – papers that officials at different government levels tend to take seriously. The progressive addition of grassroots concerns to state council reports reflects the imperative of the government to be responsive to socioeconomic problems. Such an evolutionary change in government reports reflects the 'transformative' nature of the current political

discourse that not only shifts policy focus but ‘regenerates’ and ‘reproduces’ the CCP as the only ruling party in the rapidly changing society.

**Chapter 4** (*It’s a Small World after all? Simulating the Future World Order at the Shanghai Expo*) highlights the issue of China’s re-imagined identity, values, future vision but also its role in the international community. The final chapter in this section brings us to the end of the first decade of the 21st century when China became the 2nd largest economy in the world. Thus the chapter considers how the Chinese political elites construct an innovative discourse that enmeshes the past with the present, the domestic with the international, and the cultural with the technological. To investigate these key issues, Schneider uses the official discourse of the high profile 2010 Shanghai World Expo as a case study. Based on interviews and analysis of multimedia data, Schneider explores the World Expo as a discursive site for a grand narrative of a harmonious, hyper-modern world of nation-states – a narrative that reinforces the political ideals that China is promoting domestically as well as internationally. Schneider examines how the World Expo discourse collapses modern Chinese history into 30 years of successful economic reform that promises to rectify past humiliations, and elevate China from the ‘sick man of Asia’ to a major world power. Examining the portrayal of China’s hypermodern, harmonious future, Schneider argues how a green utopian destination is constructed in a linear path of technological improvement and collective struggle, and how familiar, recognizable signs, symbols and emotional messages ultimately legitimize the state’s vision of the Chinese nation through a specific use of language in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo.

**Section 2 Media Discourse** (Chapter 5–7) examines the mass media as an essential battleground of discursive struggle over meanings, detailing how the dominant, alternative and oppositional voices interact and negotiate with each other, and fight for legitimacy, consensus and support in an increasingly diversified, expanded, but fragmented and commercialised media space. The central focus is placed on the dynamic interactions between the mass media and politics and how this changing relationship has shaped the formation of key discursive framings on crucial issues such as the legitimacy of Chinese journalism, the rewriting of China’s revolutionary history and notions of soft power. The key issues we investigate in this section are the *transformative* nature of discourses created by various groups of producers in the media space. It examines in particular the multiple dimensions of discourses in contemporary Chinese society that are simultaneously constructive (reinviting national identities), preservative (reproducing political and cultural identities), transformative (radically altering identities) and destructive (selectively discarding identities). It is the creativity of discourse at multiple levels that this section tries to unravel and seeks to understand.

**Chapter 5** (*Contesting Journalism Legitimacy: Discourse of Chinese Journalism in the Post-reform Era*) discusses how Chinese journalists defend their legitimacy by an innovative discursive construction of post-reform journalism. Tracing declining party journalism, Tong identifies three types of alternative legitimacy discourse: the 1980s 'liberal discourse', the 1990s 'populist discourse' and the 2000s 'professional discourse'; and argues that despite the ultimate guarantee of their profession by the ruling party, Chinese journalists have successfully created a new basis for their legitimacy by using alternative conventions that position themselves as on the side of the readers/audience. Nevertheless, Tong concludes that despite a sustained journalistic legitimacy, the performance of Chinese journalism is schizophrenic. Journalists on the one hand establish a discourse that centres on the public and favours independence, truth and social responsibility; but on the other hand, they have to reply on the official status of journalism as state apparatus to defend their authority and discursive power.

**Chapter 6** (*China's Road to Revival: 'Writing' the PRC's Struggles for Modernization*) moves the discussion to media framing of modern historiography. Examining the TV documentary series *Road to Revival* and its accompanying multi-media opera, Schneider and Hwang explore the way in which the CCP uses 'soft' regulatory techniques in rewriting its revolutionary past. Investigating *Road to Revival's* multimodal discourse, they trace the refashioning of revolutionary periods in legitimizing the CCP's continued leadership and in framing contemporary political challenges. They consider how the discursive framework is temporally transposed to recent events like the 1998 Yangtze River floods or the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. What is 'revived' in these instances, Schneider and Hwang conclude, is the revolutionary discourse of historiography that the narrative elicits as it helps project a strong, united and centralised authority. Media and political power have thus collapsed into one single discourse through historiography presented as political truth in ways the past, the present and the future are presented as moving in a teleological fashion.

**Chapter 7** (*China's Soft Power: Formulations, Contestations and Communication*) provides a critical appraisal of the media's role in constructing and mediating the discourse of 'soft power'. Examining salient features of official and academic formulations of soft power, Cao focuses on the media as a discursive site where differing views of soft power compete for recognition, legitimacy, consensus and authority. Contextualised in a changing landscape of a mass media spearheaded by the Internet as the primary platform for public debate, Cao details how the prolific use of soft power discourse, motivated by differing rationales, generates consensus, construct solidarities and develop a sense of common purpose. However, the focus in this chapter is also placed on divisions, ruptures, contestations and a sense of anxiety manifested in various formulations of soft power. Cao

concludes that in the diversified media space there has emerged a gradual shift in the media's role from the 'mouthpiece' of the Party to the 'modern bard' of the people. For this reason, as China transforms itself from a revolutionary state to an emerging global power, soft power discourse, informed by wider sociocultural and political forces and processes, has become a significant part of China's identity politics.

In the final chapter, **Chapter 8** (*Issues in Discourse Approach to Social Transformations in China: A Synopsis*), Tian and Chilton discuss issues of discourse analysis as a social research tool in relation to China. Taking into consideration Chinese socio-political situations, they make a range of propositions with regard to the contribution of discourse studies to the understanding of social transformations. In particular they focus on the functionality of discourse, on CDA in its various forms as useful analytical approaches to many key issues, and problematize some of the central notions taken for granted in the West. They propose a range of fresh research issues, including study on marginalised discourses, a focus on human agency and a recontextualization of 'foreign discourses' into 'domestic discourses' in the age of globalization.

## Notes

1. For example, *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Discourse Studies* edited by Shi-xu.
2. For a good overview of development of Chinese communication studies, see Sun (2002).
3. In particular Chapter 3 'Zhongguo fanshi de jichu yu ziyuan' (Foundations and Resources of the Chinese Paradigm) and Chapter 4 'Lilun, fanfa he wenti kuangjia' (Framework of Theories, Methodologies and Problems).
4. *Sishu* (私塾) used Confucian classics as textbooks while *Keju* (科举) tested the knowledge of these classics.
5. Jiang-Zhu stands for Jiang Zemin (the former General Secretary of the Central Committee of CCP) and Zhu Rongji (the former Premier). Hu-Wen stands for Hu Jintao (the former General Secretary of the Central Committee of CCP) and Wen Jiabao (the former Premier).

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PART 1

## Political discourse



## CHAPTER 1

# Disembodied words

## The ritualistic quality of political discourse in the era of Jiang Zemin

Maurizio Marinelli

University of Sussex

This chapter addresses the topic of the political use of formalized language, through the analysis of crucial political documents selected from the numerous speeches that former Chinese Communist Party's Secretary and President of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zemin delivered on the Party's policy towards the intellectuals in the period 1990–1999. The analysis of the specific forms of power embodied in the properties and functions of language practices and discursive formations illuminates various possibilities for normalization and inculcation of formalized language in the understudied decade of the 1990s, when the mantra 'Without stability, nothing can be achieved' became a tautology. The internal constitution of the selected texts is examined with an eye to the dialogic interaction with the production and reception of Mao Zedong's and Deng Xiaoping's political discourses on intellectuals. The analysis of language practices and discursive formations in a comparative perspective sheds light on the respective socio-political and historical contexts. It also reveals the extreme involution-devolution of formalized language in the Jiang Zemin era, when 'preserving stability' was reaffirmed as a crucial concern of the Party leadership with the ultimate aim to preserve its monopoly of power.

**Keywords:** Jiang Zemin; intellectuals; formalized language; *zhengming*; discursive formations; speech; reality

Our civilization is decadent, and our language – so the arguments runs – must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes. Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have

political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influences of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely.  
(Orwell 1946: 252)

## 1. Preface

In the Chinese historical tradition the ‘correctness of language’ (*zhengming* 正名) has always been considered a source of moral authority, official legitimacy and political stability. According to the Confucian doctrine, a precise relationship exists between the intrinsic idea of ‘correctness’ (*zheng* 正) and the art of governing the state (*zheng* 政) (*Analects* 论语 13:3). Political language has therefore been vested with an intrinsic instrumental value: its control represents the most suitable and effective way first to codify, and then widely convey, the orthodox state ideology. In China, word-images have always played a crucial role in the construction of a claimed reality in the socio-political arena.

During the Maoist period, Chinese political discourse was characterized by what Michael Schoenhals (1992) defines as ‘formalized language’. The ‘newspeak’ developed and used by party officials was a restricted code. It consisted of ‘correct’ formulations (*tifa* 提法), and aimed to teach the ‘enlarged masses’ (*dazhong* 大众) how to speak and, ultimately, how to think. As Ludwig Wittgenstein (1961) poignantly argued, words and sentences have the power to limit ‘expression of thoughts,’ because the boundaries of language indicate the boundaries of one’s world. ‘It will therefore only be *in* language that the limit can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense’ (Wittgenstein 1961: pp. 5–6). Robert Jay Lifton has investigated the conformity mechanism generated by a ‘loaded language’. Lifton (1989: p. 429) argued that

‘The language of the totalist environment is characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed.’

He interprets totalist language as a system that is

‘repetitiously centered on all-encompassing jargon, prematurely abstract, highly categorical, relentlessly judging, and to anyone but its most devoted advocate, deadly dull.’<sup>1</sup>

In my work, I consider formalized language as a discourse. In this essay I focus on party policy towards intellectuals, and explore how certain patterns and discursive formations (Foucault 1979: 153; Pêcheux 1981: 15–18, 143–148) are used and

reproduced in documents that defined and presented this policy. I argue that there has been a progressive *involution-devolution* of formalized language from the Maoist period to the post-Mao era. After Mao Zedong's death, under new political leadership, political language has progressively witnessed an inexorable 'hollowing out', that reached its climax with Jiang Zemin's political discourse on intellectuals.<sup>2</sup> This essay addresses the political use of formalized language, through the analysis of crucial political documents selected from numerous speeches that Jiang Zemin delivered on the party's policy towards intellectuals in the period 1990–1999.

The term *involution* literally indicates the action of enfolding or entangling something, and alludes to a change of shape or degree, usually implying a move from higher to lower. The concept of involution is associated with the ideas of elaborateness, intricacy, or abstraction.

The term *devolution* literally means 'to roll downward' or 'to fall'. In the context of social and political sciences, devolution implies transfer of authority or duties to a subordinate or substitute, or a process of passing down power from a central entity to local units, through successive stages. In the context of biological science the term refers to a generally discredited idea that species or attributes may 'degenerate' into more 'primitive' states. I use both senses of the term 'devolution' to investigate the political discourse during the post-Mao era and, more specifically, the politics of language in defining the party's policy towards intellectuals. What has emerged during the last thirty-six years is a progressive struggle for the survival of a certain kind of political language, along with the increasing emergence of subjective forms of expression, while formalized language, especially during the Jiang Zemin's era, has become progressively abstract and disjointed from any 'claimed reality'.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Learning from Yan'an

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy towards intellectuals was initially set by Mao Zedong (1942), with his 'Speeches at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art' (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话 *Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotanhuishang de jianghua*), delivered on 2 May and 23 May 1942.<sup>4</sup> Mao gave the Yan'an speeches in the middle of the 'rectification movement', which engaged the party for three years, from the enlarged meeting of the politburo in September 1941 until 1944. Mao's fundamental goals in Yan'an were to define a common and coherent party policy program and, consequently, make the audience of his speeches to adhere, both ideologically and stylistically, to orthodoxy. Attaining these goals was essential for the unification of the country under the party's rule, and simultaneously affirmed Mao's personal power. Yan'an was the supreme moment in the formation of what

David Apter and Tony Saich (1994:99) described as ‘a self-sufficient world of language, signs, and symbols in which only the initiated can belong’. The ‘initiated’ had to learn, and learn by heart, Mao’s ‘theory and practice’. This consisted not only of new semantic categories, but even more so of discursive formations that embodied a new way of seeing and a new way of thinking, both about the wider world and about China’s self-positioning in that world. Ultimately, Mao’s discourse embodied a whole new system of values and beliefs. Mao exploited the potential expressiveness of the Chinese language, together with powerful metaphors and metonymies, to create what Apter and Saich (1994:99) describe as

‘a code out of elements of a semiology that enables the narrative to endow gesture, acts, dress, dwelling, and above all, language and literacy with the power of signifiers, while the teleology arranges the signifieds within a revolutionary frame.’

Yan’an is the benchmark defining a style that exhibits the way in which grammatical resources built into the Chinese language are used as tools of empowerment. The Yan’an speeches imply a correspondence between the signifiers and the signified, or, in Chinese epistemological terms, a connection between the triad of correct name (名 *ming*), correct speech (言 *yan*), and reality (实 *shi*).<sup>5</sup> Confucius taught that the art of government was based on the precept of giving correct names to things and acting accordingly: ‘If names (名 *ming*) are not correct (正 *zheng*), then speech is not in accordance with the truth of things. If speech (言 *yan*) is not in accordance with the truth of things, then affairs (of the state) cannot be carried on with success’ (Analects 13:3).<sup>6</sup> Confucius argued that a good government is obtained only when all duties, defined by their names, are performed. This is the reason why, when one of his disciples asked: ‘What does it mean to govern?’ Confucius gave an univocally clear answer: ‘To govern means to rectify the names’ (Analects 12:17).

Under Mao, the Confucian theory connecting ‘correct names’ with correct governance was systematically implemented through vertical propaganda. A set of rules and conventions shared by the speaker (Mao) and the listeners defined a logocentric model that represented a claimed reality. These rules were so pervasive that they became encoded in patterns, style, syntagmatic bonds and lexical items typical of formalized language. Speech then followed the expressive devices of regulated discursive formations. It was inculcated from the top-down and carried an intrinsic performative power. The linguistic behaviour and metalinguistic acts of every individual were supposed to accord with what was required of him. New socialist man’s way of seeing and speaking was supposed to meet a criterion of formal correctness. This was based on a claimed ‘harmony’ between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*), and expressed by a codified and correct speech (言 *yan*) that had to be memorised and reproduced.

Thirty-seven years later, on 13 October 1979, in a historical context that had changed completely, Deng Xiaoping delivered a famous speech entitled ‘Greeting words to the fourth congress of Chinese literary and art workers.’<sup>7</sup> This speech was made ten months after the ratification of the program for the ‘four modernizations’ (agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence), which had been launched during the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP (18–22 December 1978). Deng’s speech set the scope of the party’s ‘opening up’ in the cultural sphere. It demonstrated the party’s willingness to rehabilitate intellectuals in order to gain their support for its new policies, while at the same time clearly showing that requests for a so-called ‘fifth modernization’ (democracy) were unacceptable.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, Deng’s political discourse on the party’s policy towards intellectuals had passed a point of no return. On 24 May 1977 Deng Xiaoping argued: ‘We must create within the party an atmosphere of respect for knowledge and respect for talented people (尊重知识, 尊重人才 *zunzhong zhishi, zunzhong rencai*). The erroneous attitude of not respecting intellectuals must be opposed. All work, be it mental or manual, is labor’ (Deng 1983: Vol.II, p. 54). Deng reiterated this view at the opening ceremony of the National Conference on Science, held in Beijing on 18 March 1978. In this speech, he announced that instead of the policy of ‘uniting with, educating and remolding intellectuals,’ Chinese intellectuals had to be considered ‘part of the working class’ (Deng 1983: v.II.105).

In my previous work, I have compared and contrasted Mao Zedong’s and Deng Xiaoping’s political language and the relevant discourses (Marinelli 2009). Concentrating on the stylistic and expressive patterns of their most important speeches, I have shed light on the main features of the form of the ‘Mao Zedong system of thought’ (思想 *sixiang*) and ‘Deng Xiaoping theory’ (理论 *lilun*). By highlighting symmetry and asymmetry, convergence and divergence, I showed a progressive evolutionary-involutionary transition from the Maoist era to the post-Mao period (Marinelli 2009). There was a widening gap between the name (名 *ming*) and reality (实 *shi*), due to the dissolution of any possible connection between the political speech (言 *yan*) and the symbolic order representing reality. Analysis of Jiang Zemin’s political language during the transition from Deng’s leadership to Jiang’s ascent to power, especially with regard to the discourse on intellectuals, demonstrates that this gap became wider and, ultimately, unbridgeable.

### 3. Jiang Zemin’s speeches on intellectuals

It is not easy to identify one single, crucial document that embodies the CCP’s policy towards intellectuals in the post-Deng period. I refer in particular to documents issued under Jiang Zemin, the leader who held the three key posts in the

Chinese political universe: General Secretary of the CCP (1989–2002), President of the People's Republic of China (1993–2003), and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (1989–2004). Analyzing these dates, it is clear that Jiang Zemin's ascent to power began at the time of the Tiananmen crisis. Effectively, the final leadership transition, and the passing of the torch to Hu Jintao, occurred during the Sixteenth National Party Congress (8–15 November 2002). With the incorporation of the 'important thought' (重要思想 *zhuyao sixiang*) of Jiang Zemin's 'three represents' (三个代表 *sange daibiao*) into the Party Constitution in November 2002, and into the State Constitution by the National People's Congress in March 2003, Jiang Zemin secured his place in history.<sup>9</sup> Scholars such as Lam (1999) and Gang and Hu (2003) have analyzed Jiang Zemin's political work and thought, but less attention has been paid to Jiang's language as a discourse. The analysis offered in the following pages concentrates on Jiang's political discourse on intellectuals. The investigation is based on a group of documents collected under the name: *Zhishifenzi yu jingsheng wenming* (知识分子与精神文明 Intellectuals and the spiritual civilization). The documents have been grouped under two categories: 'The great historical mission of the intellectuals' and 'Respect knowledge, respect talented people' (Jiang 1999a: 313–332).

#### 4. The Mission of the intellectuals

Building on Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on the crucial role of intellectuals and the importance of their contribution to the cause of the 'four modernizations', Jiang Zemin speaks of 'the great historical mission of the intellectuals'. As a faithful successor to Deng, Jiang argues that this mission harks back to the beginning of 'new China' on 1 October 1949. But when he analyses the 'key factors' of their contribution he refers only to Deng Xiaoping and obliterates Mao Zedong (Jiang 4 April 1990):

After the foundation of new China, the intellectuals became a part of the working class. They have been dynamic on every battlefield, and have made an enormous contribution to the creation of the socialist material and spiritual civilizations. The construction of modernization is essentially based on economic competition between the countries and nationalities of the world; and modern economic competition essentially consists of both competition in science and technology and the competition of intellects. As comrade Deng Xiaoping has stated, in order to carry out modernization, the key factors (关键 *guanjian*) are science and technology, and the foundation (基础 *jichu*) is education. It does not matter whether we look at the development of science and technology, or the development of education – neither of them can be realized without great

efforts by intellectuals. We must rely wholeheartedly on the working class, including intellectuals, who are a part of the working class. If intellectuals do not participate and we do not bring their activism into full play, it will be impossible to accomplish the construction of socialist modernization.<sup>10</sup>

The name of Mao Zedong has disappeared. This absence is conspicuous in all the speeches by Jiang Zemin on the party's policy towards intellectuals. The only reference is indirect, not to Mao as a political leader, but to 'Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought'. In the speech 'Patriotism and the Mission of Our Nation's Intellectuals', given on 3 May 1990 at the Public Meeting of the Youth of the Capital for the commemoration of the May Fourth Movement, Jiang reiterated the continuity with Deng Xiaoping, expressing his commitment to raising the status of intellectuals. Jiang reinforced the concept that intellectuals are an integral part of the working class, but he also emphasized that:

Among the ranks of the working class, intellectuals represent the part which predominantly engages in mental activities, and they play an irreplaceable function in socialist modernization, bearing a heavy social responsibility (...) if intellectuals do not participate in (socialist) construction and the victory of the reform policy, both become truly impossible (Jiang 3 May 1990).

Jiang continued:

During the experience of the construction of modernization and the reform and open-door program, we have realized very profoundly that, if we make a comparison with any previous historical period, the Chinese people have never done anything like today, in the sense of making such broad and urgent demands of their intellectuals.

In the final part of his speech, Jiang emphasized that intellectuals were expected to 'diligently study' Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought, to strengthen their 'sense of national pride' and, ultimately, 'to adhere to the fundamental line of the party' (Jiang 3 May 1990).

##### 5. "Revitalize China through science and education"

A fundamental asymmetry between Jiang Zemin's discourse on intellectuals, and the discourse that Mao initiated with the Yan'an speeches, is Jiang's continuous and consistent use of the term *zhishifenzi* (知识分子 intellectuals), instead of the previously more common 'wenyi gongzuo' (文艺工作者 artistic and literary workers), which was used to differentiate these from the intellectuals engaged in the scientific-technological field. In Jiang Zemin's speeches the term *zhishifenzi*

seems to have absorbed this dichotomy, but without necessarily eliminating it or bridging the gap.

During the Third National Conference on Science and Technology, held in Beijing from 25–30 May 1995, Jiang Zemin coined the slogan ‘Revitalize China through science and education’ (科教兴国 *kejiao xingguo*). During the first conference of this kind, held in 1956, Mao Zedong had put forward the slogan: ‘Strive to develop science’ (向科学进军 *xiang kexue jinjun*). At the second conference, held in March 1978, Deng Xiaoping had declared that ‘the intellectuals are part of the working class’, while stressing the idea that ‘science and technology are productive forces’ (科学技术是生产力 *kexue jishu shi shengchanli*). At the third conference, when Jiang Zemin coined the slogan ‘Revitalize China through science and education’ (科教兴国 *kejiao xingguo*), he positioned himself in a line of continuity with Deng Xiaoping, in particular. He said (3 May 1990):

The scientists and the technicians are important pioneers of new productive forces, and important propagators of scientific knowledge. They are the backbone of the construction of socialist modernization. To implement the strategy of ‘Revitalizing China through science and education’, talented people are the key factor.

In using the term *zhishifenzi* at a time in which ‘Revitalize China through science and education’ is one of the key slogans, Jiang refers primarily, and often exclusively, to intellectuals engaged in the scientific-technological field. These intellectuals were required to demonstrate their patriotism and support to the party’s policy.

Jiang Zemin’s slogan *kejiao xingguo* implies an inversion between the subject and object, which emphasizes the objective that the country aims to achieve. In other words, science and education must be first revitalized by the country. This indicates the commitment by the government to invest financially in scientific research and improve educational institutions.<sup>11</sup>

In a speech given on 24 April 1992 Jiang Zemin emphasized the importance of ‘revitalizing science and technology’ (振兴科技 *zhengxing keji*). He also uses the expression *keji yishi*, which could be translated as ‘ideology of science’. This speech appears generic and ambiguous. However, Jiang’s speeches demonstrate that the improvement of *keji* is strictly connected to the ostensibly interrelated goals of GDP growth and economic development.<sup>12</sup> Thus science and technology are indirectly presented as one of the fundamental preconditions for social stability, and, by extension, as a contribution to the authority of the CCP and its monopoly on power.

From a linguistic point of view, the agency of the party-state is indicated both by the parallel structure and by continuous use of the all-encompassing plural personal pronoun ‘we’:

Speeding up the training of excellent scientific and technological talents is an extremely urgent strategic task. *We* must bring into full play the important role of existing scientific and technical personnel. *We* must create a social environment which allows every individual to fully display his talents and use every talent to its utmost; unceasingly improving their working and living conditions; and fully stimulating their enthusiasm and creativity. *We* must conscientiously implement the 'Outline for the Reform and Development of Chinese Education'; vigorously develop education in accordance with the tendency of scientific and technological development and the needs of our country's construction of modernization; deepen the reform of the system of organization of education; train and bring up millions of young talents in the scientific and technological sector; and build up great troops of scientists who cut across the twentieth century... *We* must pay high attention to the training of young academic trailblazers and technical foregoers who will cross the twentieth century. *We* must do our best to create the environment and the conditions to let outstanding young scientific and technological talents, especially the most outstanding, come into the open. *We* should appoint them to key positions where they will assume important responsibilities. *We* should make them grow healthy in practice...

In the future *we* should continue to recommend the worthy and the able, beginning with the overall situation of the scientific and technological cause, which is flourishing and prosperous. *We* should push forward in the frontline the outstanding young scientific and technological talents, and support their groundbreaking work. *We* should develop the spirit of discarding old ideas while bringing forth new ones.

There are two traditional rhetorical tropes in this speech: the emphasis on youth that harks back to the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, and the idea of state patronage of intellectual activities that contribute to the success of the nation.

Jiang Zemin's emphasis on a 'great historical mission' for intellectuals (4 April 1990) echoes the classical idea of the historical and political mission of the scholar-officials. However, Jiang's concept reveals a loss of the traditional ethical connotation and privileges the patriotic contribution of the intellectuals to the renaissance of the nation.

According to the Confucian tradition, the scholar-official had the duty to be concerned with public affairs: to paraphrase Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), a prominent statesman and literary figure of the Northern Song dynasty, the scholar-official should 'Be the first person to show concern and the last one to enjoy comforts.'<sup>13</sup> This famous statement is also mentioned by Jiang Zemin (3 May 1990). This is the epitome of the symbolic and emotional capital of the traditional Chinese scholar, whose role is embodied in the syllogism *dushu zuoguan* ('study to become an official'), and indicates a symbiotic relation between intellectual status and its public function.<sup>14</sup> This dyad is defined within a logocentric model of representing a claimed reality,

which requires literati to perform their duty in accordance with the Confucian theory of ‘correct names’ (正名 *zhengming*).<sup>15</sup> This is both the fundamental tenet of successful governance and the fundamental source of political legitimacy.

Zhang Xudong has observed that after the Tiananmen crisis, intellectuals were replaced by a new bureaucratic and technocratic elite, who stood by the government despite its loss of moral authority (Zhang 2001). Jiang Zemin played a key role in this. He saw the scientific elite as a stabilizing force that could help to preempt a legitimacy crisis in the wake of the Tiananmen massacre. This group of scientific intellectuals was the target audience of Jiang Zemin’s speeches.

## 6. The style of political language

Jiang Zemin’s linguistic register is schematic and formulaic. It is a slogan-like, highly generic and vague style. This is very different from Mao’s argumentative style, which was characterized by long paragraphs full of concrete examples, conveying definition and stability (Marinelli 2009). Jiang Zemin’s register is much closer to Deng’s, which it seems to mimic. It is a collection of scattered thoughts that reiterate Deng’s rehabilitation of the intellectuals and their ‘fine traditions’ (优良的传统 *youliangde chuantong*): the tradition of ‘loving their country’, the tradition of ‘uniting with the people’, and the tradition of ‘struggling hard amid difficulties’ (Jiang 4 April 1990).

In the Chinese hierarchy of ‘correctness’ (*zheng*) of political orthodoxy, after Mao Zedong’s *sixiang* (usually translated as ‘thought’ but more appropriately as ‘ideology’), what followed was Deng Xiaoping’s ‘theory’ (理论 *lilun*), and then Jiang Zemin’s *guannian*, which literally means ‘ideas, concepts, viewpoints’ but could also be translated as ‘thoughts’. *Guannian* is a compound word combining ‘observation’ (观 *guan*) and ‘reading aloud’ (念 *nian*). It need not imply an overall systematic vision of Mao-style ‘theory and practice’. It refers rather to a sequence of scattered thoughts, not necessarily organized into an ideological theory. Jiang Zemin’s political discourse appears to ‘mix and match’ sentences and ideas previously elaborated by Deng and, to a lesser extent, by Mao. Jiang assembles these ‘viewpoints’ like a puzzle of words. His speeches reveal the use of language as a discourse much more than a tool of communication, and consist of what appears to be a repetition of the same words and expressions over and over. There is no more correspondence between name (名 *ming*) and reality (实 *shi*), although some of his speeches still reveal a strenuous attempt to maintain the standardized enunciation format (言 *yan*). An example of this technique is the speech that Jiang Zemin gave on 13 May 1999, in which the key words were: ‘maintain stability (坚持稳定 *jianchi wending*)’ and ‘the brutal aggression of the NATO forces led by the US’.<sup>16</sup>

In numerous speeches Jiang Zemin associates intellectuals with ‘socialist spiritual civilization’ (社会主义精神文明 *shehuizhuyi jingsheng wenming*). This concept was introduced by Deng Xiaoping in December 1980, and has been on the CCP agenda since 1982. Broadly speaking, it encompasses both building a material civilization (物质文明 *wuzhi wenming*) and fostering people’s political consciousness, revolutionary ideals, morality and discipline. These were supposed to reflect the demands of the ‘new period’ (新时期 *xin shiqi*), but have communist ideology at their core. Within the framework of ‘Deng Xiaoping theory’, the discourse of ‘spiritual civilization’ is an attempt to formulate a master narrative for a ‘new’ social structure, in line with a ‘new’ vision of the future that aimed to enlist mass support to combat the spread of undirected popular culture. Underlying the search for a modernized culture ‘with Chinese characteristics’ (中国特色 *you zhongguo tese*), the post-Deng era raised broad questions such as: What is the proper course for modern China? And through what combination of Chinese identity and reform can we (the party) best preserve our self-respect? The new culture was meant to be based on economic modernization – and reflect it – but combat (in the eyes of the leadership) the sleaziness and the negative social aspects of commercialism and consumerism. These issues became the object of intellectual critical inquiry and were widely debated in the nineties.<sup>17</sup>

Various attempts to envision a ‘spiritual socialist civilization’ failed to coalesce into visual propaganda that could provide clear instructions for popular performance – a form to which the Chinese people had grown accustomed. Analysis of the visual rhetoric of the political posters and slogans that appeared during a new ‘spiritual civilization’ campaign in 1996–97 demonstrates that visual imagery had fallen into disuse and only words survived, words which were reduced to signifiers totally disembodied from the relevant signifiants. The post-Mao era in general, and the nineties in particular, saw the emergence of an increasing gap between mimicry and reality. As opposed to the simple, single and reasonably predictable propaganda messages of previous decades, visual instructions for behavior became increasingly multi-layered and confusing, containing conflicting attitudinal stimuli and instructions for ‘proper’ behavior. For example, ‘allowing a proportion of people to get rich first’ (让一部分人先富起来 *rang yibufen ren xian fuqilai*), or, in its abbreviated version, the ‘getting rich’ mentality, was first hailed as a glorious undertaking with beneficial and educational effects, but has subsequently been deplored as ‘worship of money’.

The predominance of disembodied words in the political campaign for the promotion of a ‘socialist spiritual civilization’ reveals the disintegration of the claimed relation between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*) via speech (言 *yan*), a correlation which was a major characteristic of political discourse in Mao’s China.

Chinese formalized language in the 1990s – of which Jiang Zemin’s speeches are an outstanding example – is based on metonymic rhetorical tropes, mimicry and simulation, and appears more and more detached from the realities of China. The crucial issue is to evaluate: (a) whether and to what extent the loss of a shared system of reference associated with a claimed reality can be replaced by a mimetic re-presentation of the political realm, and (b) whether the use of language as a discourse is an effective strategy for maintaining the party’s authority.

## 7. The key elements of Jiang’s speeches

In the theory of political communication, ‘mimicry’ and ‘simulation’ are two essential components. Neither is based on real experiences. Simulation is a hypothetical experience based on a model or a theory. It is a means of visualizing the possible consequences of a theory. Simulation has an intrinsic logic which has nothing to do with the logic of facts. Somehow a simulation implies a dialectic of *re*-duplication of reality and, theoretically, should lead to the creation of a symbolic order of correspondence between the reality and its representation, or better its mimetic *re*-presentation. Simulation implies the substitution ‘of the signs of the real for the real itself’, as Jean Baudrillard (1983: 32) argued in his analysis of what he defined as the ‘precession of simulacra’. He came to the conclusion that ‘Simulation is characterized by a *precession of the model*, of all models around the merest fact.... Facts no longer have any trajectory of their own, they arise at the intersection of the models...’

A major characteristic of Jiang Zemin’s discourse is the absolute lack of any possible visual correlates or any direct examples from his own experience, in sharp contrast to Mao’s speeches. There are neither associated images nor indications of ‘good models’ (*haobangyang*) to be emulated. Jiang’s references to the necessity of respecting and protecting the intellectuals remain vague. Even when he says (August 1991): ‘The members of the older generation of scientific and technical personnel have especially become models for the development of a spirit of sacrifice, examples in dedicating themselves to the benefit of the people and the interests of the country’, he doesn’t provide any examples. This development demonstrates the objective side of the dematerialization of the language, revealing an increasing dichotomy between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*). In official documents there is a tendency to avoid comprehensive positive behavioral instructions, even though at a popular level the technique of role-modeling continues.<sup>18</sup> Analysis should probably take into consideration the increasingly heterogeneous character of Chinese society in the nineties – a society in which different social, generational and occupational groups emerged and the so-called ‘masses’ could no longer be treated as an undifferentiated entity.

Another important feature of Jiang Zemin's speeches is that many words belong to the economic or technological vocabulary, even though some military words survive (mainly *duiwu*, meaning 'troops', or *sixiang wuqi*, meaning 'the ideological weapons').<sup>19</sup> There is an overarching emphasis on 'science and technology' (科学技术 *kexue jishu*), which demonstrates that the main interest of the leadership is to secure the support of intellectuals in the scientific-technological field for the economic reform program. Jiang Zemin intended to link *keji* (科技 science and technology – a common abbreviation of 科学技术 *kexue jishu*) with *jiaoyu* (education). He clearly states that 'the key factors are science and technology, the foundation is education' (关键是科技, 基础在教育 *guanjian shi keji, jichu zai jiaoyu*) (Jiang, 4 April 1990). The link between these two 'concepts' and the expected role of intellectuals is indicated in the formulation '*liangge dou libukai zhishifenzide nuli*' (两个都离不开知识分子的努力 the two – science and education – cannot exist without the efforts of intellectuals). This statement implies that intellectuals are expected to 'do their utmost', 'working hard' and 'making great efforts' to enforce these guidelines under the leadership of the CCP.

## 8. The discourse on intellectuals under Jiang Zemin

Jiang Zemin often uses the character *zhi* (智 intelligence) from *zhihui* (智慧 meaning 'wisdom'). However, when he refers to intellectuals, he uses the traditional near-homophone *zhi*, from the compound word *zhishi* (知识 meaning 'knowledge'). This is noteworthy because some intellectuals and scholars specializing in 'the question of the intellectuals (知识分子的问题 *zhishifenzi de wenti*)' have emphasized the importance of a new conception of *zhi* (stemming from 智慧 *zhihui*) and coined a new term *zhishifenzi* that replaces the 'old' *zhi* (知 *zhi*) with the 'new' one (智 *zhi*) (Xie 1999:2). This debate relates to an old discussion, which harks back to the May Fourth Movement and the appearance of the 'new intellectual'. Jiang Zemin's use of *zhi* as in 'wisdom' need not demonstrate a willingness to take a position in this debate. Nevertheless, I believe that the appearance of this character in his speeches may indicate the necessity of continuing the discussion about the category of 'intellectual' and the paradigms of intellectual inquiry in China today.

Jiang Zemin's speeches reveal an unresolved legacy of the past. This is another fundamental premise, strictly connected to the party's authority and political legitimacy. Jiang clearly wants to show that his legacy derives from Deng's epochal change in the CCP's policy towards intellectuals, with his formulation, at the second National Conference on Science, that 'the intellectuals are part of the working class' (知识分子是工人阶级的一部分 *zhishifenzi shi gongrenjiejide yibufen*). The attempt to construct a further line of continuity lies in Jiang's attempt to assert that

this is not an innovation of the Deng era, but has been true since 1949.<sup>20</sup> Jiang wants to demonstrate, in this way, the existence of a shared understanding regarding the status of intellectuals between Mao and Deng, which is hard to prove. Jiang tries to present this as one of China's 'fine traditions' – a vague and elusive term. Among Deng's speeches concerning intellectuals, Jiang refers many times to the speech epitomized by the slogan 'zunzhong zhishi, zunzhong rencai' (尊重知识, 尊重人才 Respect knowledge, respect talented people).<sup>21</sup> In these passages of his speeches Jiang uses most of the military wording, while in the speech delivered on 26 May 1995 he seems to contradict himself by discrediting *zhishi* (知识 knowledge) in favor of *rencai* (人才 talented people), while Deng in his slogan puts 'knowledge' before 'talented people'. In that speech Jiang states: 'To implement the strategy: "Revitalize China through science and education", talented people are the key factor (实施科教兴国战略, 关键是人才 *shishi kejiao xingguode zhanlue, guanjian shi rencai*). This expression, when analyzed in the context of the whole speech (Jiang, 26 May 1995), seems to demonstrate that Jiang's real intention is to guarantee the party with the support of 'personnel trained in science and technology (科技人才 *keji rencai*)', who can contribute, with their inventions and scientific work, to the progress of the country and, as a corollary, to the legitimacy of the CCP.<sup>22</sup> Jiang Zemin, in his speeches, does not seem to be particularly interested in the work of writers and artists, and there is no reference to any kind of creativity not linked to the practical possibility of using the outcome as a tool for legitimization of party policy. Jiang's 'thoughts' reveal an extremely functional approach: the scientists' support is the *sine qua non* for strengthening the credibility of the official representation of the achievements of the economic reform program, and therefore to help to maintain the party's authority.

Jiang's speech dated 4 April 1990 clearly reveals his attempt to draw a line of continuity between his ideas and an ill-defined 'tradition'. Jiang's expression '(Chinese) intellectuals have created their own fine traditions' is a typical example of the double-edged sword of 'truth' typical of Chinese political language, and more broadly of political language in general. Perry Link (1999), in his analysis of Chinese language, defines two categories of 'truth', the first one is *zhende zhenli* (真的真理 the real truth) and the other one is *jiade zhenli* (假的真理 the false truth). Link uses these two terms in a thought-provoking article in which he analyzes the question of human rights (人权 *renquan*) in China. He argues that any critique of Chinese records on human rights is presented in formalized language as a way to '*shanghai zhongguo renminde ganqing*' (伤害中国人民的感情), which literally means 'to offend the sentiments of the Chinese people', but according to the criterion of the 'real truth', this expression means (for the Chinese government): 'we reject any attempt of interference'. Using Link's categories, one could argue that Jiang's expression, 'their own' (自己 *ziji*)

is a typical example of ‘false truth’, and the extremely vague expression ‘fine traditions’ refers, in reality, to the guidelines of the general CCP policy based on three key axioms: ‘the tradition of loving their country (爱国主义 *aiguozhuyi*), the tradition of uniting with the people (和人民相结合的传统 *he renmin xiangjie de chuangtong*), and the tradition of struggling hard amid difficulties (艰苦奋斗的传统 *jianku fendoude chuangtong*) (Jiang 4 April 1990).

Continuing with the analysis of this speech, it appears that the intellectuals who have been rehabilitated and are now presented as ‘a part (一部分 *yibufen*)’ of the working class (工人阶级 *gongrenjieji*) are no more required ‘to serve the people’. This would contradict the Maoist criterion which allegedly implied a subordinate relationship of the intellectual to ‘the people’, but in reality to the party. Theoretically, the intellectuals are now presented as being on the same level (相互结合 *xianghu jiehe*), even though they would be obliged to ‘merge with the people’. Could one deduce from this that Maoism is definitely dead? Not exactly, since, for example, the expression used by Jiang Zemin, ‘*jianku fendoude chuangtong* (艰苦奋斗的传统 struggling hard amid difficulties),’ is a typical Maoist slogan, which demonstrates the legacy of the past, to indicate an inclusive attitude towards the intellectuals who are called to support the party’s policies.

Jiang’s speeches on intellectuals all seem to come to the same conclusion: the victory of ‘the construction of socialist modernization’ (社会主义现代化建设 *shehuizhuyi xiandaihua jianshe*) is not even conceivable without the intellectuals’ contribution. In Chinese political language, this conclusion remains vaguely expressed. Judging from the superficial structure it appears to indicate a future direction, while the underlying structure implies that the final question of *how* to use the intellectuals (which harks back to the language problem) has not been solved.

The word ‘modernization’ (现代化 *xiandaihua*) was a keyword at the end of the seventies and remained so during the eighties – the pinnacle of the ‘four modernizations’ (四化 *sihua*) rhetoric. It has now almost disappeared from informal language, though it remains in the formalized language, even though it is often replaced by the catchphrase ‘economic globalization’ (经济全球化 *jingji quanqiu-hua*). The same change is evident in the textbooks university students must read for their courses on ‘social moral education (社会德育 *shehui deyu*)’ (classes once simply called ‘politics (政治 *zhengzhi*)’).

In his speeches, Jiang Zemin often refers to the ‘zeal’ or ‘activism (积极性 *jijixing*)’ of intellectuals, using a term which might sound as if it carried a positive connotation but, in reality, is extremely vague and ambiguous. In the course of interviews that I conducted with intellectuals on the policy of the CCP toward intellectuals (Marinelli 1994), two of the most important words to emerge were ‘creativity’ (创造性 *chuangzaoxing*) and ‘faculty of discrimination and judgment’

(判断力 *panduānli*). Only the first of these two terms appears both in Deng's and in Jiang's speeches (Jiang, 12 September 1997).

Two verbs have become ever more inseparable when referring to intellectuals in the post-Mao era: *luoshi* (落实) and *guanche* (贯彻). Both mean 'carry out' or 'implement', and they have a strong commandatory tone.

While Deng was paramount leader, the oft-used verb *luoshi* referred to the policy of the party towards the intellectuals, so that when referring to the '*zhishifenzi de wenti*' (知识分子的问题), the 'correct' expression was '*luoshi dang dui zhishifenzi de zhengce*' (落实党对知识分子的政策). *Luoshi* has two main functions: as an adjective, it means 'practicable, workable', while as a verb it can mean either 'to fix (or to decide) in advance' or 'to carry out, implement, put into effect'. Of course, in this context, *luoshi* is usually translated as 'carry out', but it could be inferred that the underlying meaning of this expression could be also contain the nuance 'to carry out a policy that is set and fixed in advance'. In Jiang's speeches, he seems to prefer the verb *guanche*, which has the meaning of 'carry out' or 'implement', but has the nuance of something that follows in a continuous line – since it is 'linked together' (连贯 *lianguan*) – and suggests a continuous line from the past to the final aim, along which the action must now be carried through to the end.

## 9. Conclusion

The CCP concern for 'maintaining stability' is profoundly reflected in the formalized political language from Mao Zedong's 1974 emphasis on 'stability and unity' (安定团结 *āndìng tuānjié*) – although 'without giving up the class struggle' – to the most recent paraphrase orchestrated by Hu Jintao with his emphasis on the 'harmonious society' (和谐社会 *héxié shèhuì*).

Deng Xiaoping first coined the slogan 'stability above all' (稳定压倒一切 *wēndìng yādǎo yīqiè*) on 26 February 1989 during his conversation with U.S. President George H. W. Bush, just a few months before the Tiananmen movement and its tragic epilogue. After June 4, 1989, the need for stability became indeed the predominant feature of the CCP priorities. Deng's slogan became the emblematic title *Wending yadao yiqie* (稳定压倒一切) of the *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报) editorial exactly one year after the event (4 June 1990). In September 1997, Jiang Zemin echoed Deng's idea and made it into another form of absolute sine qua non: 'Without stability, nothing can be achieved' (没有稳定, 什么事也干不成 *Meiyou wending, shenmeshi yeganbucheng*). Jiang has become identified with this slogan. Being the first leader unable to claim the revolutionary credentials of his predecessors and the first technocrat to ascend the political pantheon, his primary

responsibility was to safeguard the CCP legacy and institutionalize the reforms promoted by Deng Xiaoping. This was not an easy task. To maintain stability, Jiang Zemin avoided taking sides and rehashed clichés and a slogan-like language in order to preserve the prerogatives of the elite.

This essay demonstrates that Jiang Zemin's speeches represent a new extreme of involution-devolution of formalized language. In Chinese political discourse, intended as a system of representation, formalized language presupposes the creation of an effective or, at least, a claimed relationship between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*) via speech (言 *yan*). The *yan* (言 speech) has been completely suppressed and obscured by Jiang's slogan-like speaking style, which repeats the key concepts of Deng's discourse. The final aim of Jiang's discourse is to reaffirm the rehabilitation of the intellectuals, since their support of the party's policies is essential for the 'modernization' of the country.

The syntagmatic bond between the *ming* (名 name) and the *shi* (实 reality), which characterized Mao Zedong's time (and its simulacra), derived both from an extremely accurate choice of lexical items and their consequent organization in sentence patterns, which were based on a precise rhythm, rhyme scheme, and discursive formations, associated with specific visual imagery. A typical example is the attribution to Mao Zedong of three extremely positive and high-sounding adjectives, 'Great, beloved and wise Chairman Mao' (伟大的、敬爱、英明的毛主席 *weidade, jing'ai, yingmingde Maozhuxi*), which associated the Great Helmsman with the 'morning sun'. This connection between imagery and language has progressively disappeared in the post-Mao era. The Chinese characters used in Jiang Zemin's speeches lack any concrete reference to a claimed reality – the sign has no more association with its referent. Using Chinese epistemological terminology, this reveals that political language in the 1990s reached a point of no-return. The gap between the name (名 *ming*) and the reality (实 *shi*) had become unbridgeable due to the dissolution of any possible connection between political speech (言 *yan*) and the symbolic order representing reality.

## Notes

1. See also Ji Fengyuan (2004)
2. This article can be read as a continuation of my analysis of Mao Zedong's and Deng Xiaoping's discourse on the party's policy towards intellectuals in Marinelli (2009).
3. I use the term 'claimed reality' in a Lacanian sense. The dominant political, cultural and mainstream media network structures reality for us. Therefore, 'claimed reality' refers to reality as people perceive it. It is a 'virtual symbolic order' that Jacques Lacan calls the 'big Other' (Lacan 2001).

4. It is more appropriate to call them 'speeches,' instead of 'talks,' since these documents, even in their final written version, maintain all the typical characteristics of oral speeches.
5. See Analects 13:3. On *zhengming*, see Makeham (1994) and Yang (2007).
6. Translation by Legge (1960).
7. Published in Deng (1983).
8. See Wei (1997) and Seymour (1980).
9. See Zhongyang jiweibangongting and Zhongyang jiweiyanjishi (eds.) (2002), and Fewsmith (2003).
10. The same emphasis on the righteousness of Deng's theory is contained in the speech delivered during the meeting with the representatives of the Second Annual Symposium of Young Academics for the Chinese Scientific Cooperation (Jiang, July 1995).
11. See Jiang (26 May 1995).
12. See Jiang (May 1990).
13. During his lifetime Fan Zhongyan proposed various reforms, always showing deep concern for the development of education to train talented people committed to the solution of the country's problems. The famous statement by Fan is part of the essay 'Remarks of Yueyang Tower' (*Yueyanglouji*) that he had been invited to compose during the fifth year of the reign of Song Emperor Qingli (1045). See also Li and Wang (2002).
14. For more on the intellectual's perfectionism and moralism cp. Gloria Davies (2009) *Worrying about China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
15. See Analects 13:3:1-5.
16. See Jiang (1999b: pp. 1-4).
17. See Davies (2009) and Wang (2003).
18. An example is the 'Top Gun' style fighter pilot Wang Wei, who was eulogized post-mortem as a national hero after he became the victim of a collision with a US navy surveillance aircraft in 2001. See Andrew Brookes (2002) and Lindsey (2001).
19. As in Jiang (August 1991).
20. See Deng's 'Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the National Conference on Science' (Deng 1983: p. 105) and also Jiang (4 April 1990).
21. See Jiang (26 May 1995). On 24 May 1977 Deng Xiaoping said: 'We must create within the party an atmosphere of respect for knowledge and respect for talented people. The erroneous attitude of not respecting intellectuals must be opposed. All work, be it mental or manual, is labour' (Deng 1983: p. 104).
22. Michel De Certeau (1997: p. 87) proposes a significant distinction between 'authority' and 'power'. He argues that 'Whatever is credible has 'authority'; whatever is imposed has power'.

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## ‘Stability overwhelms everything’

### Analysing the legitimating effect of the stability discourse since 1989

Peter Sandby-Thomas

University of Massachusetts

This chapter examines how the Chinese Communist Party has employed the discourse of stability to legitimate its authority since 1989. At the theoretical level, the Weberian understanding of legitimation is situated within the strategic-relational approach in order to better conceptualize the role played by discourse in legitimating regimes. At the methodical level, the stability discourse is analyzed using the discourse-historical method and particular attention is paid to the presentation of actors and the argumentation strategies employed to legitimate and delegitimize these actors. The People’s Daily newspaper is the site of analysis and three exceptional instances are selected for analysis: the 1989 ‘Beijing Spring’; 1999 ‘anti-Falun Gong’ campaign; and the 2005 ‘anti-Japan’ demonstrations. The main finding is that stability is ‘discursively flexible’, with its positive value consistently working to legitimate the Party-State’s authority and the negative value delegitimizing the assigned ‘other’.

**Keywords:** Legitimation; strategic-relational approach; discourse-historical method; critical discourse analysis; media; Chinese Communist Party; *Falun Gong*; Tiananmen Square; Sino-Japanese relations

#### 1. Introduction

Since the launching of the economic reform programme in the late 1970s, China has undergone profound economic and socio-cultural changes. And though there have been significant political changes as well, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has successfully retained its monopoly on the exercise of political authority. Such a scenario did not seem likely when the reforms first began in 1979. At that time, the introduction of market-oriented measures appeared to be a final

attempt by the Party to avoid collapse following the ‘Cultural Revolution’ years. The demonstrations in 1989 appeared to confirm the impending failure of this ‘capitalist turn’; an impression further strengthened by the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union which had experimented with similar economic reforms. As such, the debate within academic circles focused on the question of *when*, not *if*, the CCP would collapse (Goldstein 1994:727). And yet, more than thirty years on, the CCP is still in power and, as Perry points out, “the post-Mao period of PRC history has already lasted longer than the Maoist era that preceded it” (2007:7). As a consequence, this chapter examines how the CCP has managed to defy expectations and remain in power during this transformational period. It will do so by focusing on the legitimation strategies that the Party has employed, paying particular attention to the promulgation of the stability discourse in the state-run media.

The chapter will begin by examining contemporary accounts of the Party’s legitimacy and, in so doing, establish the need for additional explanatory factors, of which the stability discourse is one. Following this, an analytical framework of legitimation will be elaborated that moves beyond the Weberian understanding of the concept to take a fuller account of the role played by discourse. The chapter will then detail how the stability discourse will be analysed. This analysis will concentrate on three specific instances of the discourse: the 1989 ‘Beijing Spring’; the 1999 ‘Anti-*Falun Gong*’ campaign; and the 2005 ‘Anti-Japan’ demonstrations. These events have been selected on the basis that they constituted exceptional instances when the stability discourse was used to legitimate the CCP’s authority. Moreover, in each of these three instances, the challenge to the Party’s power was different and, as such, carrying out an analysis of how the stability discourse was used in each of these instances will lead to a more complete understanding of the discourse’s legitimacy effect.

## 2. The legitimation of the CCP

There is widespread consensus within the academic literature that the legitimating effect of the Party’s communist ideology has declined. As Gries and Rosen make clear, “traditional ideological appeals to implement Marxian-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought and build a socialist China find little resonance among the public” (2004:16). This lack of ‘resonance’ with the Chinese public, or at least some of its members, is attributed to the dissonance between the capitalistic nature of the economic reforms and the communistic language in which they are presented. As a result, many analysts now view the legitimation of the Party’s authority as being solely reliant on the material performance of the economy. As Zheng and Lye make

clear, “[i]t is not far-fetched to argue that the CCP has so far been able to remain at the helm of power due to its success in delivering economic goods, i.e. provide employment and material benefits, to the people” (2005: 193). Indeed, with the exception of the immediate post-Tiananmen retraction, the Chinese economy has continued to grow at a high rate, with GDP averaging 10 per cent over the period from 1990 to 2008 and never falling below 7 per cent in any one year (World Bank 2010).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when viewed from a comparative perspective, China’s economic growth has been the highest of any country in the world during this time (World Bank 2010)<sup>2</sup> and it is now the second-largest economy in the world.

Despite the success of the Chinese economy, however, Zhong points out that, “economic growth in and by itself does not directly contribute to political stability...[i]n fact, it has been argued that economic development and modernization lead to political instability” (1996: 202). This instability occurs when economic growth is not evenly spread, either geographically or amongst different groups in society, as it produces differences in the levels of wealth between members of society. In the case of China, Wang’s research indicates that, by 1994, the government’s economic reforms constituted a “zero-sum game” in which “some segments of society became real losers, losers not only in a relative sense, but also in an absolute sense” (2000: 380). Wang’s claims are supported by, amongst other things, the negative change in China’s Gini coefficient over this period.<sup>3</sup> Designed to measure income inequality, the Gini coefficient for the first year of the reforms in 1980 was calculated at 0.33. This marginally increased to 0.37 in 1992 before breaking through the United Nations designated “warning” level of 0.4 in the past decade and, in 2012, was officially measured by the government at 0.474.<sup>4</sup>

The economic problems in certain sectors and regions during the post-Tiananmen period has prompted some analysts to suggest that the CCP has also used nationalism (as an ideological replacement for communism) to augment its support amongst disaffected members of the population. Typifying this view, Saich contends that “since 1989, the CCP has been fairly successful in manipulating public opinion to instil nationalism as a legitimizing core value” (2004: 308). Although nationalism has always played a role in the Party’s legitimation efforts, particularly at certain points during the People’s Republic of China (PRC), both the emphasis placed on nationalism as well as its content has changed markedly since 1989. In particular, Weatherley (2006: 153–4) identifies a new strain of ‘anti-foreign’ nationalism that emerged in response to the international community’s condemnations of the military suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrations. The propagation of this particular strain of anti-foreign nationalism has opened up the space for the Party leadership to argue that patriotism constitutes the only course for China in resisting the intentions of the “international bourgeois hostile forces” (Zheng 1999: 104–5). Through the use of extensive “patriotic education”

campaigns that have been promulgated across a range of channels including the media, leadership speeches and educational institutions, the Party has promoted political loyalty by linking the concept of the nation (*guo* 国) to that of the state (*zhengfu* 政府) while, at same time, promoting the Party's norms and values by emphasizing the "Chinese characteristics" of the reform programme (Zhao, Suisheng 1998:288–290). However, an unintended effect of this propagation is that it also obligates the CCP to 'protect' the Chinese nation in the name of the people. As such, the legitimating force of nationalism contains within it the 'grammar' to delegitimize the regime (Sidel 1995). Hence, since the 1990s, China has witnessed the emergence of a *popular* nationalism that has sought to contest the government's *official* nationalism.<sup>5</sup> The terrain on which this contestation mostly takes place is the government's foreign policy, with nationalists often criticising the government for not being 'strong' enough. Indeed, for Gries and Rosen, the rise of popular nationalism is such that the Party's "legitimacy now depends on meeting the expectations of nationalists" (2004: 14). While not fully accepting the overdeterminative nature of this proposition, it is clear that the government's use of nationalism can, on occasion, be the subject of resistance and, as such, is more limited in its legitimating force than commonly suggested.

In acknowledging this, the possibility is opened up to interrogate other sources of legitimation that have supplemented the Party's authority in the post-Tiananmen period. In this chapter, I focus on one of these additional sources: the CCP's ideational use of 'stability' (*wending* 稳定). A number of analysts have noted the prominence of 'stability' since 1989. Indeed, Schoenhals comments that this term has been "the CCP catchword of the 1990s" (1999:597), while Wong points out that, in the post-Tiananmen period, "'Stability overrides everything' became the mantra of the state as it went about managing society" (2004:156). In terms of legitimacy, Chen Cheng contends that, "the Chinese regime has been able to bolster its legitimacy by controlling the media and using them to cultivate a general sense of progress while perpetuating official paradigms that emphasize stability and economic development over political change" (2005:4). However, only a handful of scholars have explicitly conceptualized stability as a source of regime legitimation. The first to do so was Shue (2004), who suggests that the CCP no longer derives its legitimacy from its "technical capacity" to deliver economic growth but from its "political capacity" to create a stable environment in which economic development can take place. Moreover, Shue asserts that the Party's legitimacy now rests on successfully fulfilling the transcendental truths of 'Truth, Benevolence and Glory'. While agreeing with Shue on the importance of stability, her account (implicitly) views the CCP as a 'passive' actor whose legitimacy is largely shaped by such 'truths' whereas my research conceptualizes the CCP as an 'active' actor that seeks to shape such 'truths' so as to enhance its legitimacy.

More recently, Weatherley has also identified stability as a source of legitimacy (2006: 149–151). Despite drawing welcome attention to this topic, his brief treatment demonstrates that more research is needed in this area in order to develop a fuller understanding of the role played by stability in legitimating the CCP. This is the aim of the present chapter.

### 3. The concept of legitimation

The main approach towards legitimation, and the one that has been used most frequently in explaining how the CCP has legitimated its authority, is Weber’s ‘modes’ of legitimation.<sup>6</sup> In this, Weber (1964) identifies three modes of legitimation from which regimes derive their authority: legal-rational; charismatic; and traditional. These modes are viewed as ‘ideal types’, although, as Holmes notes, Weber was “fully aware that all three ‘pure’ types overlap both conceptually and in the practice of ‘the real world’” (1993: 14).<sup>7</sup> Despite its utility in describing how a regime maintains its authority, Weber’s concept is necessarily limited in explaining why a regime maintains its authority. This is because it does not allow space for conceptualizing why people believe in the identified modes of legitimation. Rather Weber’s conceptualization suggests that regimes which act in accordance with norms and rules (that it has established) will continue to be legitimate. As such, this conceptualization is overly structuralist and, though the inclusion of the *Lebenswelt* concepts of belief, meaning and intention suggest a role for agency, it is effectively reduced to that of material circumstances (Grafstein 1981: 457).<sup>8</sup> This does not mean, however, that Weber’s concept of legitimation is not useful; more that it is necessary to reconceptualise this concept so as to allow for a fuller explanation of why people believe what they believe. Of particular interest is according the space in which to consider the role played by ideas in explaining why a regime maintains its authority. In order to achieve this, the concept of legitimation will be situated within the strategic-relational approach.

The strategic-relational approach is concerned with explaining social and political change and draws on Bhaskar’s critical realism to develop an understanding of causal mechanisms within the social and political world.<sup>9</sup> The effect of the critical realist ontology is evidenced in the approach’s distinctive understanding of structure and agency. In contending that all action contains at least a residual strategic moment, the strategic-relational approach allows for a conceptual move from the dualism of structure and agency present in Weber’s work to the duality of a *strategically selective context* and *strategic actor*.<sup>10</sup> In this, strategic actors are conceptualized as both conscious and reflexive, in that they are able to monitor both the immediate and longer-term consequences of their actions. They are also

held to be intentional, even if these intentions are not always explicitly articulated, and have a partial knowledge of the context within which their strategies are formulated. Such strategies are defined as “intentional conduct oriented towards the environment in which it is to occur” (Hay 2002: 128) and constitute the means by which actors attempt to realize their intentions. As a consequence, an actor will necessarily make a strategic assessment of the potential courses of actions that best allow these intentions to be achieved. Yet included within this assessment is consideration of the context in which the action will take place. Moreover, this context will be strategically selective, in so far as it will select for certain strategies over others in order to allow “a given set of intentions or preferences” to be realized (2002: 129).

In order to more fully explain why the (majority of) Chinese people could believe in the legitimacy of the CCP and so not attempt to challenge its authority, it is necessary to explicate the process by which these (non-CCP challenging) strategies are formulated. In the strategic-relational approach, the capacity of actors to formulate strategy demonstrates that they must have knowledge of the context in which they are situated. However, on the understanding that actors cannot possess perfect or complete knowledge of their context but rather have only partial and not necessarily correct knowledge at best, it is necessary for actors “to interpret the world in which they find themselves in order to orient themselves strategically towards it” (Hay 2002: 211). And it is through this need to interpret the world that the strategic-relational approach makes space for the ideational, as it mediates between the actor and the context. Furthermore, Hay makes the point that “however accurate or inaccurate, such understandings inform strategy and that strategy in turn yields both intended and, inevitably, unintended consequences” (2002: 212–13). Consequently, in acknowledging that ideas can produce material effects and transform the context, the strategic-relational approach accords the ideational a role independent of material factors in political outcomes.

However, in much the same way that strategy is circumscribed by a strategically selective context, the strategic-relational approach also holds that the ideational is constrained by a context which is *discursively selective*. In essence, the context will select for particular ideas over others. Yet, as with action, the context does not determine which particular ideas an actor chooses to hold. Rather, a reflexive and strategic actor can assess the efficacy of particular ideas that enable him to best realize his intentions. That said, Hay acknowledges “the power of those able to provide cognitive filters, such as policy paradigms, through which actors interpret the strategic environment” (2002: 214).

Situating Weber’s conceptualization of legitimation in the strategic-relational approach allows for the concepts of strategically selective contexts, strategic actors

and discursive selectivity to be incorporated into its schema and, in so doing, extends legitimation beyond the identification of specific modes to interrogate the interaction of strategic actors and a strategically selective context from a spatio-temporal perspective. Of the three central concepts within the strategic-relational approach, discursive selectivity will be the focus of enquiry in this chapter on account of its role in mediating between the structural effects of rules and norms and the notion of belief that informs action. As pointed out above, the concept of discursive selectivity opens up the possibility of interrogating the ‘cognitive filters’ that are used by powerful actors to influence the formation of strategies by other less powerful actors. As such, this chapter holds that the stability discourse constitutes a ‘cognitive filter’ and has been employed by the CCP to strengthen its legitimation in the post-Tiananmen period.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Analyzing stability

In analysing the CCP’s use of the stability discourse to legitimate its authority, this chapter will focus on the media as the site of enquiry. Although there are other discursive sites which may more directly reflect the views of the leadership, for example leaders’ speeches, the media was selected because of the legitimating role that it performs within the Chinese political system, both in reflecting the views of the leadership and disseminating these views to other groups within society. The major media outlets in the People’s Republic of China are Xinhua news agency, the *People’s Daily* newspaper, Central People’s Radio (CPR) and China Central Television (CCTV). Of these, I intend to concentrate on the *People’s Daily* newspaper. While CPR and, especially, CCTV reach a substantially higher number of people and the stories produced by Xinhua are picked up by newspapers across China, and despite the steep decline in the circulation figures for ‘hard copies’ in recent years Shambaugh (2007: 56), the *People’s Daily* is still regarded as ‘China’s official mouthpiece’ because of its position as the ‘organ’ of the CCP Central Committee and its direct link to the Party’s Propaganda Department (Wu 1994: 195). Indeed, in his analysis on the usage of nationalism, Christiansen states that, “[t]he usage in the *People’s Daily* is carefully regulated; internal consistency, style conventions and restrictions on content are closely monitored, so that the *People’s Daily* stands out as the most authoritative general medium in China” (2000: 1). As such, the *People’s Daily* still plays an influential role in ‘setting the tone’ (*ding diaozi* 定调子) of the official discourse.

Within the *People’s Daily*, the analysis will be carried out on editorials (*shelun* 社论) and commentaries (*pinglun* 评论).<sup>12</sup> The reasoning for this decision is two-fold. The first reason is based on the authority of these articles, in that they are

considered to most directly represent the views of the Party leadership. As Wu points out, “[c]ommentaries in the *People’s Daily* do not obtain their authority from their viewpoints, analyses of event, or good writing style, but from their position as a vehicle of command” (1994: 195). This is reflected not only in important editorials and commentaries being carried by other media outlets (Zhao, Yuezhi 1998: 18) but also in forming the basis of cadres’ weekly “political studies” sessions (Wu 1994: 195). In light of this, the editorials and commentaries of *People’s Daily* can be considered to occupy a privileged position in shaping the officially-sanctioned discourse. The second reason for analysing this type of article is because of its style, which, unlike news reports, is more explicitly argumentative in justifying particular viewpoint. As such, this type of article is more useful in understanding how the CCP has employed the stability discourse to legitimate its authority.

The method by which these articles will be analysed is the discourse-historical method. This method was developed by Wodak and the ‘Vienna School’ and is associated with the broader school of critical discourse analysis (CDA). In this, discourse is viewed as a form of social practice that both constitutes and is constituted by other social practices. That said, the distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive is held to be analytical and cannot be demonstrated solely through empirical analysis of texts. Moreover, this view of the ideational-material relationship makes the ontological position of the discourse-historical method consistent with that of the strategic-relational approach. Indeed, the linking of the discourse-historical method with the strategic-relational approach is advocated in Wodak’s ‘theoretical’ concept of context (Meyer 2001: 29).

In terms of analysing texts, the discourse-historical method proposes a four-step approach. Of these four steps, this chapter will, for reasons of space, concentrate only the first two. The first step is to analyze the main themes (or topics) of the selected texts. Indeed, Vaara, Tienari and Laurila agree that a thematic analysis is the “recommended way to start any critically oriented media analysis” (2006: 797). This is because themes structure and stress what is most important in a news text (van Dijk 1985). In this, the headline is of particular significance, for as Fang notes, “[h]eadlines signal a particular perspective or framework for interpreting what to follow...the overall gist or topic of a news article is presented or even summarized in the headline” (2001: 587). Having highlighted the main themes of the selected texts, the second step will analyse the discursive strategies employed in the selected texts. Of particular interest is the use of argumentative strategies, as they are intended to persuade the reader of a particular viewpoint so as to generate consensus (Fowler 1991: 214).<sup>13</sup> Beyond this, attention will be paid to the positive and negative presentation of actors in the texts, in particular the extent to which such presentation is implicit or explicit.

#### 4.1 The 1989 ‘Beijing Spring’<sup>14</sup>

The ‘Beijing Spring’ initially began in 1989 through the act of mourning the former Secretary-General of the CCP, Hu Yaobang, who had died from a heart attack on 15 April. Although it was not clear, at this stage, of the events that were to unfold, Baum (1994: 247) now views Hu’s passing as the ‘catalytic spark’ for a set of tensions that had been in evidence throughout parts of Chinese society since the middle of the 1980s. As such, this initial gathering “quickly went well beyond merely honouring a deceased hero” (Blecher 2003: 100) and, ultimately, culminated in protests that “presented the regime with one of the greatest threats to its power and policies encountered in the forty years since the Communists came to power” (Manion 1990: xxxvi).

The first indication that the mourning for Hu was becoming more political came two days after the announcement of his death, when hundreds of students, as well as teachers, from the University of Political Science and Law laid wreaths at the foot of the Monument to the People’s Heroes in Tiananmen Square. In actions that echoed the commemoration of Zhou Enlai in 1976, the students and teachers shouted slogans such as “long live democracy”, “long love freedom”, “long live the rule of law” and “down with corruption” (Manion 1990: xv).<sup>15</sup> The following day, thousands of students from Beijing University and People’s University gathered in Tiananmen Square to listen to a series of impromptu speeches on political reform, with hundreds of students remaining behind to stage a sit-in in front of the Great Hall of the People (Manion 1990: xv). It was not until 20 April, when approximately 10,000 students massed in front of Xinhuanmen and attempted to gain entrance to the leadership’s residential compound at Zhongnanhai, that there were direct clashes between students and armed military guards (Blecher 2003: 100). The students had a list of five issues that they wished to present to the Party leader concerning a re-evaluation of the 1986 demonstrations and Hu Yaobang’s role in these demonstrations, the financial dealings of the leaders and their relatives, political freedoms as well as funding for tertiary education (Blecher 2003: 100).

The occasion of Hu Yaobang’s memorial service on 22 April presented another opportunity for these demands to be communicated to the Party leadership. With thousands of mourners congregated in Tiananmen Square, three students knelt on the steps of the Great Hall of the People and requested for their petition to be received by the Premier, Li Peng. However, the petition was not received by Li Peng but, instead, by two members of the funeral committee and Manion notes that the students “considered that response inadequate and even humiliating” (1990: xv). The following day, the students released a seven-point petition (*qitiao* 气体) that added requests for legislation to ensure press freedoms and a full enquiry into the action of the armed military guards outside Xinhuanmen to the five demands

issued on 20 April (Manion 1990: xvi–xvii). This new petition was given added significance by the fact that it was released on the students' behalf by the 'Preparatory Committee for Beijing Autonomous Union of Students'. This committee was comprised of representatives from nineteen Beijing colleges and universities and, in addition to defying a government ban on autonomous organizations, signalled that the demonstrations were growing both in size and organization.

The first official response from the government came on 26 April with the publication of the *People's Daily* editorial entitled "It is Necessary to Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Turmoil" and Blecher (2003:100) contends that it marked a 'turning point' in the direction of the Beijing Spring. The importance of this editorial derived from the fact that it was based on an 'unpublished' speech given by Deng Xiaoping on April 25 and, as such, represented the verdict of China's paramount leader on the student movement. The verdict stated that the student movement constituted "turmoil" and was the work of "an extremely small number of people with ulterior motives" who were attempting "to sow dissension among the people, plunge the whole country into chaos and sabotage the political situation of stability and unity" (Shelun 1989:26 April). This same editorial also stated that the "turmoil" was a "planned conspiracy" whose "essence is to once and for all negate the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system".

For Oksenberg, Sullivan and Lambert, the editorial was "[u]nequivocally tough and...signaled the intent of conservative leaders to crack down" (1990: 191). This intent was signalled through the reference in the editorial to "an extremely small number of people with ulterior motives". Although the identification of these people was unclear, Wang Ruowang notes that this usage was similar in construction to 'a handful of people', which was "consistently used by Mao before he went all-out to attack people" (Wang 1989). Alongside the use of this label, the classification of the student demonstrations as 'turmoil' (*dongluan* 动乱) was politically significant, in that it had been previously used to describe the 'counter-revolutionary' activities of the 'Gang of Four' (*siren bang* 四人帮) during the Cultural Revolution. Not only did this comparison attempt to discredit the aims of the student movement but, for Wang, it was intended "to arouse the people's strong aversion". However, the publication of the strongly-worded 26 April editorial had the opposite effect upon the students and they responded by organizing the largest demonstration in the history of the PRC (Shi 1990: 1197). On 27 April, approximately 100,000 students from 40 universities marched to Tiananmen Square, where they were joined by citizens to make up a demonstration of 500,000 people (Manion 1990: xxv).

The government's response to the demonstration came in the form of a front-page editorial published in the 29 April edition of *People's Daily*. This editorial, entitled "Safeguard the Overall Situation, Safeguard Stability", indicated that the government's strategy had shifted away from the harsh oppositional rhetoric of the

earlier 26 April editorial towards a more conciliatory tone. In addition, it signified the increased prominence that would be given to the discourse of stability in this strategy. As it was, the 29 April editorial constituted the most explicit articulation of the stability discourse during the course of the demonstrations and, in so doing, fixed its meaning for future usage in later media articles. In the editorial, the actual term ‘stability’ (*wending* 稳定) was consistently deployed in a nominalized form and, as a consequence, was presented in a way that did not require its meaning to be made explicit. Indeed, the definition of stability put forward in the editorial stated only that it was achieved through the ‘joint efforts’ of the people under the leadership of the CCP (Shelun 1989: 29 April). This definition was later augmented to specify that only people who abided by laws and regulations contributed to stability while those who did not were guilty of causing instability. In the absence of any additional quantitative measure, the editorial effectively made no distinction between violations of the law when determining instances of instability. As such, the usage of stability was ‘discursively flexible’ and this enabled it to be used both positively to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP and negatively, in the form of instability, to delegitimize the demonstrations.

The positive use of stability in the 29 April editorial began with the headline linking the “safeguarding” of stability to that of the overall situation. This link worked to establish the importance of stability by presenting it in terms of national concern and, in so doing, shifted the focus of stability away from maintaining the power of the CCP and onto the fate of the Chinese nation. In this, it worked to generate consensus over the importance of stability amongst the readership. However, having established the importance of stability, the editorial then used this legitimacy value to bolster the authority of the CCP by linking the existence of China’s stability to the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The positive value of stability was further used to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP leadership with the claims that the economic growth and democratic reforms that had taken place since the Third Plenum in 1978 had only been possible because of stability. As such, these claims simplified causal relationships in order to put forward the notion that stability precedes economic growth and democratic reforms and, in so doing, denied alternative explanations.

The negative value of stability, or instability, was employed both to complement and support the impression of stability’s positive value. As a consequence, instability worked to both delegitimize the demonstrations against the CCP while, at the same time, legitimating the authority of the CCP. In contrast to the presentation of stability, however, the negative value of stability was rarely used explicitly but rather was conveyed through implicatures. van Dijk defines as “inferences based on general and particular political knowledge as well as on the context models” (2005:65) and those featured in the 29 April editorial

could be made on the understanding that it had been published in response to the demonstrations. The use of implicatures were evident in the repeated claims that the positive value of stability promoted economic growth and democratic reforms because they carried the implicit suggestion that without stability, economic growth and democratic reforms would not be possible. However, the editorial's use of implicatures also meant that the demonstrations were not explicitly labelled as responsible for causing instability. Consequently, the 29 April editorial avoided the strategy of explicit negative other-presentation that was employed unsuccessfully in the 26 April editorial. A further effect of using implicatures was that it emphasized only the act of instability while obscuring possible reasons to explain it. The exception to the use of implicatures in the editorial was the open predictions that were made concerning the future for a China without stability. In order to strengthen the validity of these predictions, the editorial used examples of instability from both the Cultural Revolution and the pre-PRC period to suggest that this will be the future for China if the condition of stability was not maintained. However, as with the implicatures, these predictions only worked by focusing on the acts of instability that occurred during these historical periods while leaving the reasons why such instability broke out unstated.

The 29 April editorial may have signalled a change of approach by the Chinese government but it did not, in and of itself, persuade the demonstrators to end their protests.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, after a further five weeks of demonstrations, the Leadership of the CCP took the decision to use military force. On the evening of 3 June, approximately 150,000 to 200,000 troops entered Beijing and successfully, if brutally, suppressed the demonstrations (Baum 1994: 279). In the immediate aftermath of these events, there was limited coverage of the military suppression in the official state-run media. However, on the first anniversary of the suppression, the government provided a clear and explicit statement justifying the decision to take military action in a front-page editorial in *People's Daily*. If the 29 April editorial fixed the meaning of stability for the duration of the demonstrations, the 4 June 1990 editorial has had a similar effect on its usage in the post-Tiananmen period. As (Qiu 2000) makes clear,

“[a]lthough he [Deng] had previously proclaimed that “stability takes precedence over everything”... this warning had little effect until after June 4th. A decade from then, most public security officers and political instructors in Chinese universities are still repeating this ultra-conservative motto when there is anything potentially endangering “stability”. (2000: 257)

The ‘ultra-conservative motto’ that Qiu references was the headline of the 4 June editorial. This headline read “Stability Overwhelms Everything” and articulated the main justification for the decision of the CCP leadership (Shelun 1990: 4 June).

Moreover, this headline was a phrase that had been first used by Deng Xiaoping two months prior to the beginning of the Democracy Movement (*bajiu minyun* 八九民运) and, as such, made use of Deng’s authority to strengthen this justification (He 2001: 471–2). As with the headline of the 29 April 1989 editorial, it worked to persuade the reader of its validity by foregrounding the importance of maintaining stability. This importance was heightened by the use of the term “everything”, which served to leave it unchallenged while the verb “prevail over” carried connotations of force and, in so doing, implicitly expressed the Hobbesian notion that it was legitimate for the state to use violence in order to maintain social stability.

The 4 June editorial did not deny that military force had been used to end the demonstrations in 1989, even if, at the same time, it ‘rhetorically eliminated’ the violence that was caused by these actions (Wodak & van Leeuwen 2002: 365). Rather, it sought to justify the decision by the CCP leadership to use this military force. It attempted to achieve this by using stability, both in negatively portraying the Democracy Movement as causing instability and in positively presenting the ending of this Movement as re-establishing stability.

The editorial’s negative portrayal of the demonstrations was achieved through the label of ‘counter-revolutionary rebellion’ (*fan’geming baoluan* 反革命暴乱). As such, the demonstrations had been reclassified from ‘turmoil’ (*dongluan* 动乱), employed in the 29 April editorial, and, for Nathan, this constituted “an even more severe label...and one that implied (falsely) that the demonstrators were armed and had shed blood” (2003: 8). The use of the term “rebellion” worked to strengthen the Army’s justification for taking action against the demonstrators by presenting it as a necessary response to force, while the label “counter-revolutionary” also carried a negative connotation because the term “revolution” was discursively linked to the founding of the People’s Republic of China and so, by labelling the demonstrations as “counter-revolutionary”, the editorial was claiming that the intention of the demonstrators was to overthrow the Chinese Communist Party. The validity of this intention was strengthened through the linking of the rebellion to a longstanding plot by foreign states to bring about the collapse of the PRC. In this, the 4 June editorial was attempting to equate the overthrow of the Party with the collapse of (the People’s Republic of) China and, in so doing, define instability in terms of the ending of CCP rule. This definition was given greater rhetorical force by imagining a future without CCP rule. In this, the use of the term ‘chaos’ (*luan* 乱) not only provided an additional justification for the use of military force but linked China’s future to the period of upheaval from the previous 150 years and, in so doing, worked to obscure alternative future realities.

This negative use of chaos also worked contrastively to present stability in positive terms, in that the reader was persuaded to make a comparison between the situation in China as it currently existed and one in which there was “chaos”.

This positive presentation of stability was further strengthened by the claim that the political, economic and social achievements that had been made under the leadership of the CCP since the ending of the demonstrations were the direct result of the social stability that had been achieved by use of military force. Consequently, in the same way that editorial negatively linked instability with the overthrow of the CCP, it also worked to positively link stability with the maintenance of CCP rule. In terms of legitimation, this rhetorical strategy was similar to that of the 29 April editorial, in that stability was used to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP while instability was used to delegitimize the demonstrations. However, as with the 29 April editorial, this use of stability was only possible by deployment of its nominalized form, which enabled the definition of stability to be left unstated in the editorial. As a result, stability was discursively flexible but also entirely reliant on rhetoric to enhance the legitimacy of the CCP.

#### 4.2 The 1999 ‘Anti-Falun Gong’ campaign

On 25 April 1999, a demonstration was held by adherents of the spiritual group, *Falun Gong* (法轮功),<sup>17</sup> outside Zhongnanhai. According to the government, this demonstration constituted the “most serious political incident since 1989” (*Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service* 1999), and, following a three-month time lag, resulted in the group being outlawed and the launching of “a well-orchestrated nation-wide crackdown, one that China...[had] not seen since the Tiananmen Incident” (Wong 1999: 8). Indeed, for Perry, the mass campaigns of the 1950s notwithstanding, the one against *Falun Gong* was ‘unprecedented’ as “never before have we witnessed an attack of this kind on but a single target” (2001: 170). Moreover, this ‘target’ had only been founded seven years earlier, and, yet, by the time the campaign was launched, the number of *Falun Gong* adherents numbered in the millions.<sup>18</sup> As Wong points out, “the sudden rise of FLG in the short span of only a few years (as compared to 2000 years of history for Chinese Buddhism and 1700 years for Taoism) is simply an astonishing phenomenon” (1999: 12).

The emergence of *Falun Gong* had occurred at the height of ‘*qigong* fever’ (*qigong re* 气功热) in China.<sup>19</sup> As such, it had been but one of a number of groups offering *qigong*. Moreover, groups such as *Zhong Gong* (中功) and the “New Guo Lin *Qigong*” had been established much earlier than *Falun Gong* and, as a result, were bigger, more organized and had a stronger reputation for healing diseases. What differentiated *Falun Gong* from these groups and thus enabled it to gain such rapid popularity was its belief system.<sup>20</sup> This system linked the practice of *qigong* to that of spiritual salvation and, in so doing, offered a form of *qigong* that went beyond the more traditional healing practices of most *qigong* schools.<sup>21</sup>

However, the group also encountered a number of problems in this period. The most significant of these was with the China *Qigong* Scientific Research Society (CQSRS). This body had been established by the Chinese government in 1986 for the purpose of regulating the *qigong* industry and, as a result, all *qigong* schools were required to register with, and receive accreditation from, the CQSRS. In 1996, the CQSRS took the decision to suspend *Falun Gong* on the grounds that it was ‘advocating superstition’ (Xia & Hua 1999: 8). The withdrawal of this registration now meant that *Falun Gong* was classified as an illegal organization in China and, as such, it was no longer able to exist in an organizational form and exercise functions, such as holding training seminars and convening meetings of practitioners.<sup>22</sup>

Some three years later, it was the intention to regain its legal status that prompted approximately 10,000–15,000 *Falun Gong* adherents to assemble outside the Xinhua entrance to Zhongnanhai on 25 April (Penny 2003: 643). The protest lasted from 4 a.m. until 11 p.m. and consisted of practitioners from six different provinces (Tong 2002: 637). In contrast to more typical political protests in which banners are held aloft and slogans shouted out, reports suggested that the demonstration was calm and peaceable, with the majority of protestors reading *Falun Gong* books and performing its meditative exercises. Moreover, after designated leaders met with the Chinese premier, Zhu Rongji, the protestors agreed to leave the site (Ching 2005: 41). The reaction of CCP leaders to the protest, in public at least, was muted and only one article reporting the demonstration was published, on 27 April, in Xinhua. Moreover, this article focused on the role played by government officials in ‘persuading’ the protestors to end their demonstration while *Falun Gong* was referred to only as a ‘health fitness activity’ (Chen, Chiung Hwang 2005: 22–3).

However, as pointed out at the start of this section, the government eventually responded to this protest some three months later when, on 22 July, it released the resolution by the Ministry of Civil Affairs to outlaw “The Research Society of *Falun Dafa* and the *Falun Gong* organization under its control” (*Renmin ribao* 1999b), a Circular by the CCP Central Committee forbidding its members from practicing *Falun Gong* (*Renmin ribao* 1999a) and a set of regulations from the Ministry of Public Security prohibiting the promotion of *Falun Gong* (*Renmin ribao* 1999c). The main reason put forward by the Chinese government for these actions was that the group constituted an illegal organization. According to the government, *Falun Gong* had violated nine different articles within two Laws and two set of regulations,<sup>23</sup> ranging from not having the required registration to operate as a mass organization to disrupting social order by holding unauthorized assemblies to utilizing superstitions to delude people and cause their death. These violations became key themes in the propaganda campaign justifying the government’s decision to ban the group.

Of these themes, the group's lack of registration and its disruption of public order were emphasised most heavily in the initial stages of the campaign. While the former made use of a legal discourse, the stability discourse was featured heavily in the latter.

The most explicit articulation of the stability discourse was in a *People's Daily* staff commentary that was published on 16 August (Benbao Pinglunyuanyuan 1999). In contrast to the 1989 Beijing Spring, the commentary did not employ the term 'stability' (*wending* 稳定) but the phrase 'stability and unity' (*anding tuanjie* 安定团结).<sup>24</sup> As such, this phrase carried a different connotation because 'unity' operated as a signifier for the maintenance of China's territorial sovereignty.<sup>25</sup> In much the same way that 'stability' implicates the notion of chaos (*luan* 乱), so it is that 'unity' implicates the charge of 'splittism' (*fenlie zhuyi* 分裂主义). This charge draws on the discourse of 'national humiliation' (*guochi* 国耻) that has been promulgated by the CCP since the founding of the PRC in 1949 and which links the decline of China as a 'great power' to its occupation by other nations and its secession of territories including Tibet, Taiwan and Mongolia. Moreover, the restoration of China's territorial integrity and, with it, the ending of the 'century of national humiliation' is one of the foundational claims of the CCP's legitimacy. In light of this, Callahan points out that, "fragmentation constitutes one of the few political crimes left in China; the worst epithet is not *capitalist* or *counterrevolutionary*, but *splittist*" (2004: 209).<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the use of the phrase 'stability and unity' throughout the commentary implicitly accused *Falun Gong* of causing chaos and 'splitting' China and, in so doing, amplified the charges against the group by appealing to the reader's nationalist sentiments. By the same token, it also worked to strengthen the legitimacy of the CCP by placing it, through implicature, in the position of maintaining the nation's stability and territorial sovereignty.

Despite the difference in terminology, the use of 'stability and unity' was similar to that of "stability" during the 'Beijing Spring', in that it was discursively constructed as a positive value while its antonymical equivalents were presented negatively. Furthermore, the positive value of stability was used to legitimate, albeit through implicature, the authority of the CCP while its negative value was used to explicitly delegitimize *Falun Gong*. The positive value of stability and unity was initially constructed through the headline, which linked the maintenance of stability to that of the overall situation. As in the previous articles, this immediately presented stability in terms of national interest and so shifted the focus of maintaining stability away from preserving the power of the CCP and onto the fate of the Chinese nation. Indeed, the link between maintaining stability and preserving the power of the CCP was never explicitly articulated throughout the commentary. Rather, it was implicated in the link between stability and the programme of reform and development and, in light of the challenge posed by *Falun Gong*, could be read as the Party's competing version of the 'higher truth'. This link had also been put forward in the commentary's headline and further strengthened

the positive relationship between stability and the future of the Chinese nation. In argumentative terms, 'stability and unity' was presented as the necessary condition upon which the success of the programme of reform and development depended. In turn, the commentary presented the success of this programme as being the necessary condition upon which China's future as a 'rich and powerful' nation depended. Consequently, 'stability and unity' was being justified in terms of China's future development. Furthermore, despite simplifying causal relationships in order to put forward this proposition, this argument scheme opened up the space for its converse to be put forward i.e. the failure to maintain 'stability and unity' would affect the success of 'reform and opening up' which, in turn, would prevent China from becoming a 'rich and powerful' nation. As such, this converse argument scheme constructed the negative value of instability. And it was into this argument scheme that the 16 August commentary attempted to position *Falun Gong* as the agent responsible for "destroying" stability and, in so doing, legitimate the government's suppression of the group.

However, this positioning of *Falun Gong* rested upon two claims. The first claim was that the group had destroyed 'stability and unity' through the series of demonstrations held between 1996 and 1999, of which the '25 April incident' was the most egregious violation of social order. The second claim against *Falun Gong* built on the first claim by putting forward the proposition that, if left 'unsuppressed', the group would continue to destroy stability and unity and eventually cause China to become either a 'closed' state or a 'westernized' state. With regard to the first claim, it was significant that, in the absence of a formal definition of stability, quantitative or otherwise, put forward by the commentary, the '25 April incident' provided a material referent by which the claim of destroying 'stability and unity' could be assessed. Unlike the events in 1989, the demonstration had lasted only one day, had not required military intervention to bring it to an end, and been featured in only Xinhua report two days after the event. As such, the demonstration on 25 April did not appear to support the claim that *Falun Gong* had destroyed 'stability and unity'. Indeed, this impression was further strengthened by the fact that the CCP waited nearly three months before issuing a formal response to the protest. In contrast, the use of stability in the second claim was more consistent with those analysed during the 1989 'Beijing Spring', in that its emphasis on future consequences provided no material referent. Rather, the second claim privileged the Party-endorsed future reality over competing alternatives and, as such, was entirely reliant on rhetoric.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.3 The 2005 'anti-Japan' demonstrations

During the month of April in 2005, a series of 'anti-Japan' demonstrations took place in a number of cities across China. Although they did not explicitly challenge

the authority of the CCP, as in 1989, nor were they organized by a quasi-spiritual *qigong* group that the CCP leadership perceived to be a threat to its authority, as in 1999, the decision over when to bring them to an end presented the leadership with an indirect challenge. Allowing the demonstrations to continue for too long could run the risk of allowing domestic grievances, of which there were many, to come to the fore, and so turn the protests against the CCP. Then again, attempting to bring demonstrations to an end too soon might cause the protestors to turn on the government for suppressing their 'patriotic actions'. Indeed, there existed historical precedents for both scenarios. As such, Shirk points out that, "[w]henver anti-Japanese emotions boil over into large-scale protests that threaten to spin out of control, it takes a delicate touch to halt the protests without having them turn against the CCP instead" (2007: 144–5). That the CCP leadership demonstrated such a 'delicate touch' was due, in some part at least, to the promulgation of the stability discourse. Consequently, this section will analyse how the discourse of stability was used to legitimate the authority of the CCP and, in so doing, successfully bring the 'anti-Japan' demonstrations to an end.

The immediate cause of the protests was the release of a list of approved school history textbooks by the Japanese Ministry of Education in early April. Concerns over the portrayal of Japan's wartime actions in its school history textbooks had been an ongoing issue since objections were first raised by the Chinese government in 1982; however, for He, the release of this list in 2005, following on, as it did, from a number of other tensions in the Sino-Japanese relationship, was "the straw that broke the camel's back" (2007: 1).<sup>28</sup> Of the eight books that had been approved, it was an updated edition of the textbook published by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (JSHTTR) that caused the most offence. In addition to claiming that Japan's wartime actions had been borne out of the need for 'self-preservation' and that the invasions of China and Korea had liberated the Asian region from 'western domination' (*BBC News* 2005: 16 April), its reference to the events in Nanjing at the end of 1937 as an 'incident' aroused the greatest level of indignation.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that the JSHTTR is used in less than one per cent of schools in Japan (Miyazaki 2005), Barmé makes the point that the repeated approval of such textbooks feeds "into a perception that China's neighbour continues to avoid confronting its – albeit imperial – past...and that it is a nation that is incapable of redressing those wrongs through meaningful, substantive and sustained acts and expressions of official contrition" (2005). Meanwhile, Jin (2006: 38) contends that, for many in China, this lack of contrition for past actions is linked to the present-day issue of regional security, as it demonstrates that Japan has never abandoned its imperialist ambitions and, indeed, that the intention of right-wing groups within the political establishment is to once again remilitarize the country.

The first protests took place on 2 April in the cities of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province in Western China, and Shenzhen, close to the border with Hong Kong in the southern province of Guangdong. In both places, the demonstrators numbered around 10,000 and directed their grievances towards local Japanese supermarkets and department stores (Mooney 2005). Further demonstrations took place in Shenzhen the following day, when approximately 3,000 protestors attacked two Japanese department stores (Mooney 2005). The following weekend, 'anti-Japan' protests were held in the cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou in Guangdong province and the municipalities of Chongqing and Beijing (Bezlova 2005). As with the demonstrations that had taken place in Chongqing and Shenzhen on the previous weekend, businesses that sold Japanese products were subjected to acts of low-level vandalism by the protestors. By the following weekend, a further set of demonstrations took place, most prominently in the cities of Shanghai, Hangzhou, Tianjin and, once again, Shenzhen, while protests in the cities of Guangzhou, Chongqing and Beijing were all blocked by the authorities (*ABC News* 2005). Of these, the demonstration held in Shanghai on 16 April was the largest, with estimations for the number of people taking part ranging from 20,000 up to 100,000.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Shirk also contends that the Shanghai protest was the "most violent" of those that took place in April, with reports of Japanese businesses being attacked and Japanese cars being overturned (*BBC News* 2005: 16 April). As with the demonstration that took place in Beijing on 9 April, protestors converged on the Japanese Consulate, where a variety of objects, including stones and paint, were thrown at the building; however, as with the Beijing protests, riot police prevented protestors from gaining entry to the compound (Farrer 2005).

The government finally decided to bring all demonstrations to an end following the third successive weekend of protests. According to Zhao, the Party leadership was "concerned both about the risk of confrontation with a foreign power and that the public's passions could turn against the government" (2005–2006: 141). Indeed, the make-up of the demonstrations caused concern for the Party leadership. While the first series of protests was largely made up of students, by the third week of demonstrations, people from other sections of society, including workers and businessmen, were taking part. Of further concern were the purported calls circulating on the Internet for larger demonstrations to be held on the upcoming anniversaries of International Labour Day on 1 May and the May Fourth Movement (officially designated 'Youth Day') on 4 May. Given the political symbolism of these anniversaries, particularly the patriotic anti-government association of the May Fourth Movement, the concern was that these demonstrations would be directed against the CCP.

The opening salvo in the government's media campaign to end the demonstrations was the publication of a front-page commentary in *People's Daily* on 17 April

(He 2005). The significance of the signed commentary (*shuming pinglun* 署名评论) by He Zhenhua,<sup>31</sup> entitled “From Building a Harmonious Society See Stability”, was that it marked the first official comment by the government since it had imposed a media blackout on the reporting of the protests.<sup>32</sup> As Shirk makes clear, “[a]fter three weeks of protests, the Communist Party finally sent a clear signal that it was time to stop...when the *People’s Daily* published a front-page official commentary that...urged young people to ‘cherish social stability’” (2007: 143). Indeed, this significance was further reflected in the fact that the commentary was posted on a number of forums and bulletin boards as well as the websites of local governments.<sup>33</sup> The government’s media campaign to bring the demonstrations to an end continued until the end of April and, during this time, stability was a key theme in many of the articles. Of these, the 17 April signed commentary was the most influential, not only because of its explicit treatment of the stability discourse but because it was the first published article to elaborate the relationship between building a socialist harmonious society and stability and, in so doing, fixed its meaning for use throughout the remainder of the media campaign.

The use of “stability” in the 17 April commentary was similar to the articles analysed in previous campaigns, in that it was discursively constructed as a positive value. Moreover, this construction of stability’s positive value opened up the space for the commentary to make the implicit suggestion that a lack of stability would lead to negative consequences. Consequently, the positive and negative use of stability was used to legitimate, albeit through implicature, the authority of the CCP.

This positive value of stability was, once again, initially constructed through the headline, which linked the maintenance of stability to the new concept of building a socialist harmonious society. This rhetorical move immediately worked to present the condition of stability in terms of China’s national interest as well as its future development and, in so doing, shifted the focus of maintaining stability away from the preservation of the CCP’s power and onto the future of the Chinese nation. Indeed, the link between maintaining stability and preserving the power of the CCP was never explicitly articulated throughout the commentary but rather was only implicated through the relationship between stability and the programme of building a socialist harmonious society. Moreover, in this relationship, stability was presented as the necessary condition upon which the building of a socialist harmonious society depended. Although the promulgation of this new concept did put forward a more comprehensive vision of China’s future development than had been the case with the articles analysed in the previous chapters, which only specified the goal of making China ‘a richer and more powerful nation’, substantively, the use of stability paralleled those in the earlier articles, in that the future development of China was held to be contingent on maintaining stability. The argumentation schemes to support this central claim were also substantively

similar to those employed in the earlier articles, with the successes of the reform and opening up period being attributed the condition of stability, the importance of the legal system being emphasized in the maintenance of stability and the responsibility of the people in the ‘safeguarding’ of stability.

The use of these argument schemes also opened up the space for the converse argument to be made through implication. In effect, the commentary argued that the failure of people to observe the law would lead to instability, which would, in turn, negatively affect the progress of modernization construction and, in so doing, prevent the teleological goal of building a socialist harmonious society from being realized. In this, the “anti-Japan” demonstrations were implicated. While not employing the tactic of explicitly labelling these demonstrations as responsible for “destroying” stability, as was the case with *Falun Gong* or the ‘counter-revolutionaries’ in 1989, this use of implicature to suggest the demonstrations would cause instability marked the start of a campaign by the CCP leadership to bring them to an end in order to restore ‘stability’.

## 5. Conclusion

The diachronic analysis of the stability discourse in this chapter indicates that its usage has been relatively consistent during the post-Tiananmen period. In this, stability was consistently presented in a nominalized form that served to ‘mystify’ its definition and thus enabled it to be ‘discursively flexible’. From there, stability was discursively constructed as a positive value that served to legitimate, often indirectly, the authority of the CCP and as a negative value that worked to delegitimize the ‘other’, be that the demonstrators in 1989, *Falun Gong* demonstrators in 1999 or the ‘anti-Japan’ demonstrators in 2005. In this positive and negative construction of stability, the same argumentation strategies were employed. For the positive value of stability, the direct link between maintaining stability and preserving the power of the CCP was obscured in favour of presenting stability as an issue of national interest. This link, which was initially established through the headline, worked to frame each challenge to the government in terms of its future consequences. In this, the space was opened up to put forward the CCP’s vision of the future and, in so doing, close off competing alternatives.

This vision of China’s future was reinforced by the construction of stability’s negative value. As pointed out above, though the identification of the ‘other’ changed in each instance, the argumentation differed only in explicitness. In the cases of the military suppression in 1989 and the “anti-*Falun Gong*” campaign in 1999, the government’s action necessitated the explicit negative presentation of the other while, in the cases of the pre-military suppression period and the ‘anti-Japan’ demonstrations

in 2005, this negative presentation was achieved through implicature. Nevertheless, the arguments were effectively the reverse of those used in the positive construction of stability, in that the intention of the negative other, sometimes in collaboration with foreign states, was to ‘destroy’ China’s stability which would, in turn, lead to the collapse of the CCP and so bring about a future state of ‘chaos’ similar to those experienced during periods of upheaval from China’s modern history.

In terms of legitimation, the CCP’s use of the stability discourse throughout the post-Tiananmen period has relied on ‘consequentialist’ arguments to persuade members of Chinese society to support its authority. In this, China’s undetermined future has been imagined in terms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ consequences and, in so doing, appealed to people’s fear and self-interest. However, using Zhong’s classification of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ legitimation, it is possible to suggest that such arguments constitute a form of ‘negative’ stability on account of the fact that they avoid finding ‘appropriate solutions to solve emerging economic, political and social problems’ (1996: 217–18). Consequently, while the stability discourse may well continue to sustain the regime in the short- to medium-term, it does not appear that it will, in the longer-term, generate legitimacy for the CCP. Indeed, given that the stability discourse has remained largely the same in the pre- and post-Tiananmen periods, it seems possible to contend that its legitimacy effectiveness has been due, in large part, to the political context after 1989 ‘favouring’ this discourse. This, in turn, suggests that the events in 1989 constituted a *strategic moment* in the formation of the stability discourse and, indeed, this chapter argues that the CCP’s hegemonic interpretation of these events, as well as the subsequent collapse of communist regimes, has shaped this favourable political context. Moreover, accepting this view suggests that, at some future point, the political context may no longer favour this discourse and, as such, it will lose its effectiveness in legitimating the CCP’s authority. Indeed, the use of the stability discourse in the ‘anti-*Falun Gong*’ campaign highlighted the limits of this discourse in instances where its rhetorical claims could be measured against a material referent. Moreover, the increasingly numerous demonstrations that have been taking place at the local level across China further expose the limits of this discourse in instances where grievances are specific rather than systemic. That said, it is also possible that another *strategic moment*, similar to that in 1989, could occur which will serve to, once again, strengthen the legitimating effect of stability.

## Notes

1. This figure is based on World Bank’s “world development indicators” for the periods from 1990–2000 (10.6 per cent) and 2000–2008 (10.4 per cent).

2. In the period from 1990–2000, China is ranked first in terms of average GDP growth and seventh in the period from 2000–2008. Of the six more highly-ranked countries in this latter period, only Chad (with 2.2 per cent GDP growth) experienced positive growth between 1990–2000, hence China has the highest economic growth when both periods are taken into account.
3. The Gini coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with ‘0’ representing a society where everyone has exactly the same income and ‘1’ representing a society where one person has all the income and everyone else has none.
4. This official figure was the first to be publicly released by the National Bureau of Statistics in 12 years and showed a slight decline from the 2008 high of .491 (also released at the same time). It should be noted that independent estimates of China’s income inequality generally cite a higher figure, for example in 2010 the Southwest University of Finance and Economics in Chengdu put the country’s Gini coefficient at 0.61. That said, the World Bank has provided lower figures compared to the official figures, for example citing .474 in 2008. For more, see Yao and Wang (2013).
5. For the purposes of this chapter, such contestation is considered only from the perspective of popular nationalism; however, nationalism can be further disaggregated to consider additional dimensions, such as ethnic nationalism and external nationalism. For more on this topic, see Zheng (1999).
6. For examples of this approach being explicitly employed in analyses of the CCP, see Teiwes (1984), Zheng (2003) and Weatherley (2006). Moreover, many more use Weber’s approach implicitly due to the fact that it has become the “standard” approach in analyses of political legitimacy.
7. Moreover, in contemporary applications of Weber’s approach, analysts have sought to employ additional modes of legitimation, such as ideological and ‘eudaemonic’ modes.
8. This characterization of Weber’s work is based on the translated English-language version(s) rather than the German-language original. It has been suggested that the approach’s structuralism is due to the way in which Weber’s work has been translated rather than its original conceptualization. Unfortunately, my German-language skills are not sufficient to enable me to validate such a claim; nevertheless, I am grateful to Professor Flemming Christiansen for highlighting this area of contention.
9. As such, this ontological position holds that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it and that social phenomena be accorded causal powers. However, the realist ontology also attributes causal powers to generative mechanisms that are not directly observable and which researchers may not be able to empirically prove are causally efficacious. Furthermore, realists contend that there can be a difference between appearance and reality, so that though a real world exists, outcomes within it can also be affected by the way in which this world is socially constructed. For further detail, see Bhaskar (1989), Hay (2002), Marsh and Furlong (2002: 30–1) and Jessop (2005).
10. Beginning with structure and agency, agency is initially situated within structure to create a structured context and structure is brought into agency to produce a contextualized actor. This new conceptual pairing is what Jessop terms a “doubled dualism” and represents

the halfway point in moving towards the conceptual duality. To complete the process, the contextualized actor is then reinserted into the structured context and the structured context is brought back into the contextualized actor to leave a strategic actor within a strategically selective context (Hay 2002: 127–8).

11. Again, it is important to make the point that a “cognitive filter” is not determinative; however, it is possible to assert that the continual promulgation of this discourse has had an effect in the legitimation of the regime in China.

12. Wu (1994: 196–8) classifies both editorials and commentaries as types of ‘commentaries’. Beyond this, there are two different types: commentator’s articles (*pinglunyuanyuan wenzhang* 评论员文章) and signed commentaries (*shuming pinglun* 署名评论). Of these, ‘commentator’s articles’ consist of staff commentaries (*benbao pinglunyuanyuan wenzhang* 本报评论员文章) and special commentator’s articles (*teyue pinglunyuanyuan wenzhang* 特约评论员文章).

13. Indeed, Werlich’s (1982) typology of discourse classifies political discourse as largely argumentative.

14. I employ the term ‘Beijing Spring’ in preference to other, more common terms such as the ‘Democracy Movement’ or the ‘Tiananmen Massacre/Tiananmen Incident’ on the grounds that it more adequately refers to both the demonstrations and the military suppression in 1989. Although ‘Beijing Spring’ was first used in reference to the pro-democracy and human rights movement (also known as the ‘Democracy Wall Movement’) that broke out in Beijing in September 1978, it has also been used by academics, amongst others, to refer to the demonstrations in 1989. One drawback of using this term is that it geographically restricts the demonstrations to Beijing and, thus neglects those which took place in other parts of the country.

15. This is not to suggest that, either in size or political significance, these actions were directly comparable to the ‘April Fifth’ Movement (*siwu yundong* 四五运动) but that, on both occasions, the performance of grievance became a political moment.

16. Of course, it should be remembered that the demonstrators only constituted a very small proportion of the population. As such, the editorial was also using stability to legitimate the Party’s authority amongst the majority who were not demonstrating, for example lower-level Party cadres who played a crucial role in maintaining order in villages and towns across the country.

17. In this chapter, I use the term *Falun Gong* (法伦功) to refer to the group rather than the alternative appellation of *Falun Dafa* (法伦大法). While the latter is preferred by adherents of the group, I have opted for the former as it is predominantly used in the popular media and academic literature.

18. The exact number of *Falun Gong* adherents range from the Chinese government’s estimate of approximately two million to that of one hundred million (70 million in China) given by *Falun Gong* spokespersons. While the government’s figure is widely regarded to be on the low side, the membership figure given by *Falun Gong* seems extremely high, given that it puts its membership above that of the CCP. Furthermore, there is no way to verify the group’s figures, as it had no formal membership application process (Tong 636, 659).

19. Chan (2004: 674) estimates that the number of registered and non-registered groups during this time reached approximately 2,000.

20. Penny’s description of this belief system as “qigong with Buddhist characteristics” (2005:44) neatly, if simplistically, captures the syncretic blending of Daoist and Buddhist elements that are most prominent in the group’s cultivation system. The term *falun* is the standard Chinese translation in religious writings for the Buddhist term *dharmacakra*, which means ‘the Wheel of the Law’ while the term *gong* refers to the Daoist practice of *qigong*. Put together, *Falun Gong* literally means the ‘Practice of the Wheel of the Law’.
21. As to why this belief system was so popular, many scholars point to the negative effects of the economic reforms, such as mass lay-offs, widening income disparity and official corruption and the ‘ideological vacuum’ left by the declining belief in the communist ideology. For more on this, see Xiao (2001).
22. This illegality did not extend, in theory at least, to the individual practice *Falun Gong* or reading Li Hongzhi’s books.
23. For a detailed list of these laws, see *Fazhi ribao* (1999).
24. This phrase can be traced back to a 1974 directive issued by Mao, which was intended to bring an end to the conflicts in Chinese society at that time (He 2001:3).
25. The usage of ‘*wending*’ and ‘*anding*’ can overlap; however, the meaning of ‘*anding*’ is more narrow, in that it refers to the material situation of societal stability – literally meaning ‘fixed peace’ – whereas ‘*wending*’ has a broader meaning and is used in contexts beyond that of societal stability, such as political stability, economic stability and, even, mental stability.
26. This crime is also legally supported by Article 4 of the Constitution, which prohibits national minorities from seceding from China.
27. The limits of such reliance on rhetoric became visible when the government changed the emphasis in the ‘Anti-Falun Gong’ campaign away from the threat the group posed to ‘stability and unity’ onto the effects of the meditative practice. In particular, following the passage of legislation by the Standing Committee of National People’s Congress on 30 October 1999, the group was labeled as a “cult organization” (*xiejiao zuzhi* 邪教组织) and, thereafter, the media coverage of the group focused on adherents who had harmed themselves as a result of following the group’s teachings. The effect of this campaign appeared to be more successful, particularly following the self-immolation of five alleged FLG followers in Tiananmen Square on 23 January 2001.
28. Such tensions included Japan’s lobbying for Permanent Membership of the United Nations Security Council and the recent statement by the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee suggesting that, for the first time since the normalization of relations in 1972, Japan would assist the US in defending Taiwan from attack by the PRC. Moreover, these incidents played into the longer-term issues concerning the Second Sino-Japanese War.
29. There is widespread agreement among historians that the Japanese Imperial Army killed hundreds of thousands of people over the course of several weeks. The current Chinese government puts the figure at 300,000 and a museum dedicated to the event has been recently opened in Nanjing.
30. According to Shirk (2007:143), a government spokesman put the number of protesters at 20,000 while a variety of eyewitnesses put the figure at anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000.

31. He Zhenhua is the pen name for a group of commentators and is a homonym that literally means 'how China can be revitalized'. My gratitude to Professor Zheng Yongnian for this information.
32. The commentary also marked the formal introduction of the Party's then-latest ideological innovation, 'building a socialist harmonious society'.
33. Checking the popular Sino-Japanese board in the "Strong Country Forum" (*qiangguo luntan*) during this period (<http://bbs.people.com.cn/boardList.do?action=postList&boardId=13>), the 17 April commentary was posted in full, with the title of the post highlighted in red. Even allowing for the fact that the forum is run by the *People's Daily* group, the 17 April commentary drew a high number of responses, with an even spread between those who expressed agreement with the need for stability and those who rejected such an argument.

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## A decade of change in China

### A corpus-based discourse analysis of ten government work reports

Yufang Qian & Hailong Tian

University of Media and Communications / Tianjin Foreign Studies University

The Government Work Reports (GWRs) of China are important documents conveying the government's voice and publicising the tasks they set for the country, and they attract much attention from diverse sectors of the community. Merging corpus methodology and critical discourse analysis, this study\* focuses on 10 years of GWRs to observe the dialectical relationship between discourse and social change. It shows that the discourses represented in the GWRs result in new concerns, which in turn affect the recipients of the discourse and their actions and create new discourses.

**Keywords:** Social change; government work report; corpus-based discourse analysis

#### 1. Introduction

The Government Work Reports (GWRs) examined in this paper are reports that are delivered annually by the Chinese State Premier at the National People's Congress (NPC). They are also heard by the Political Consultative Conference (PCC). As an official document, the GWR has a special generic structure which consists of:

1. a review of the work of the past year, reporting general achievements of the economy, social undertakings and the fulfillment of economic targets of the past year;
2. a summary of the major tasks of the coming year, including a summary of the government's work plan and its social and economic targets and a detailed report of how the government will put the plans into action;

3. Government plans for internal reform and self-improvement, including a detailed statement of the measures the government will take to reform the government's functions, build socialist democracy and reform the administrative and political system;
4. other matters that usually include policies regarding diplomatic and international affairs;
5. the first year of a 'Five-Year-Plan', a national plan for the social and economic development of the next five years, a review of the past five years and a rough plan of the next five years are also included in the report.

The Government Work Reports are important documents for conveying the government's voice and publicising the tasks it sets for the country. We may index changes in focus of the government by examining a series of these reports. The GWRs, delivered in the form of institutional discourse, reveal the sort of determination one can expect from the government. The speakers' power and authority are easily identified, both linguistically in, for example, the frequent use of imperatives (sentences where the subject is omitted or implied), and ideologically in the firm, authoritative tone that imposes responsibility for putting all the plans into action. We are, therefore, justified in predicting from these texts the effect the GWRs are likely to have on the development of the Chinese society.

In this study, accordingly, we examine the ten GWRs which were delivered from 1999 to 2008. The reason for this selection of data is that this decade covers two offices of government, namely, Zhu Rongji's office from 1999 to 2003 and Wen Jiabao's from 2004 to 2008; the discourses of this period may contain significant indices of change in discourse. We are interested in linguistic construction and the reflection of the social changes and transformation of this decade in China as it is evident in the ten GWRs.

The research methodology used in this study is a merging of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The ten GWRs (1999–2008)<sup>1</sup> were collected, out of which two sub corpora, Zhu's GWRs and Wen's GWRs, were created. A one million-word balanced corpus of written Mandarin created by McEnery and Xiao (2004), known as the Lancaster Corpus of Mandarin Chinese (LCMC), was used as a reference corpus (See Table 1). The corpus software used in this study is WordSmith Tools Version 4 (Scott 2004). We apply some corpus techniques, for example, checking for frequency, clusters, keywords, concordance and collocation to examine the topics or issues discussed in the two offices' GWRs. This linguistic examination of the GWRs is related to the social changes happening in China. In this respect, we draw on the theory of discourse developed in CDA and investigate how the GWRs as a discourse type functions in the social changes, for example, as an ideological force that facilitates the change.

**Table 1.** Corpora used in this study

Corpus	Data covered	Size/tokens
Zhu's GWRs	1999–2003	42,516
Wen's GWRs	2004–2008	50,461

## 2. Corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis

The combination of corpus techniques with CDA is valuable, adding quantitative balance to the more qualitative discourse analysis. Corpus techniques and CDA methods are able to complement each other in that CDA can make good use of the systematic and significant language patterns obtained in corpus linguistics for its analysis of the linguistic traces of particular discourses.

The discourse analytical approach adopted in this study is based on Fairclough's (1995) critical approach to discourse analysis. Fairclough's critical approach to discourse analysis includes linguistic description of the language text, interpretation of the relationship between the (productive and interpretative) discursive process and the text, and explanation of the relationship between the discursive process and the social processes.

Our analysis is descriptive, interpretive and explanatory. The two corpora are regarded as texts containing the theme we will target. Corpus-analytical techniques such as frequency lists, keywords, clusters, collocations and concordances will be used to explore repetitions and patterns in the language used in the GWRs. These patterns reveal 'linguistic traces' of discourses around the reports. Such discourses are thus identified, then interpreted and explained by undertaking contextual analysis which goes beyond the texts themselves.

### 2.1 Critical discourse analysis

CDA addresses social issues and aims to bring about social change. CDA claims to achieve its goals by critically analysing discourses, which, according to Wodak and Meyer (2009), are primarily language in use, but this use is essentially entangled with power and ideology. Discourse is then social practice (Fairclough 1992; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999), and CDA is to make explicit the power relations and ideologies hidden in the various discourses, such as racial discourse, media discourse, organisational discourse, political discourse, to name just a few. A growing interest in applied linguistics is the relation between language and ideology, in particular, the role of language in forming and transmitting assumptions about what the world is and should be like, and the role of language in maintaining

(or challenging) existing power relations. In practice, CDA has developed several approaches, such as the dialectical-relational approach (Fairclough 2009), discourse-historical approach (Wodak 2001), and social-cognitive approach. For this study, we adopt Fairclough's approach.

CDA has developed a theory that explains how discourse change brings about change in society. Fairclough (2003, 2006), for example, believes that discourse is socially shaping while it is socially shaped, and that social changes are often initiated with new discourses. He observed the reform phenomenon in Romanian higher education and found that it was the introduction and adoption of a new discourse, the discourse of the European educational system that initiated the change of syllabus and other new practices in Romanian higher education (Fairclough 2006). The shaping function of discourse, however, does not happen by itself. In the Romanian case, for example, the new discourse will not be adopted if the socially and institutionally based agency or agent does not want it. In other words, the external discourse does not just flow into new space; it is, so to speak, carried there by those in power and authority. In Fairclough's words, the external discourses are recontextualised in so far as they are appropriated within successful strategies of internal social agencies and agents within the recontextualising context (*ibid.*).

Fairclough's theory of discourse and social change is significant for investigating the social transformation in China. Just as the recontextualisation of social practices is, in its initial phase, the recontextualisation of a discourse or discourses, which projects or will project imagery of wider social changes, so we believe that the new discourses in the GWRs will set the direction for social change. In so far as such new discourses are appropriated within successful strategies, for example, by social agencies and agents of different levels of government, they may be operationalised, enacted in new ways of acting and interacting, and materialised in the physical world, thus bringing about real change in social life.

## 2.2 Corpus linguistics

To investigate the social change in China over a certain period of time, one requires observation of discourses in large quantity, for which the methods developed in corpus linguistics are helpful. According to Biber et al. (1998: 3), "text corpora provide large databases of naturally-occurring discourse, enabling empirical analyses of the actual patterns of use in a language, and when coupled with (semi-) automatic computational tools, the corpus-based approach enables analyses of a scope not otherwise feasible." Therefore, corpora have a significant potential for discourse analysis as control data (McEnery & Wilson 2001), and by helping researchers identify objectively widespread patterns of naturally occurring

language and rare but telling examples, corpora play an extremely important role in critical social research (Baker & McEnery 2005). Research applying corpora in critical discourse analysis has been done to investigate the discourse on refugees and asylum seekers (Baker & McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008), the representation of Islam in British newspapers (Baker 2010) and the discourses on terrorism in the presses of China and the UK (Qian 2010), and this research has proved fruitful.

A feature of this research is the use of a corpus in conjunction with corpus exploration tools. Corpus tools can manipulate data in a number of ways, making it easier for researchers to identify linguistic patterns. In our study, such analytical techniques as frequency, clusters, keywords, collocation and concordance are applied in various ways to identify frequent and significant language patterns, providing potential for analysis of the linguistic traces of particular discourses.

Frequency lists of keywords in the corpus, for example, identify for further inspection the typical use of lexical patterns, and thus prove to be a good starting point in discourse analysis. In addition, keywords, the distinctively identified words in the corpus, are significant for critical discourse analysis, as they may reveal a preoccupation with certain ways of presenting information. When supplemented by concordance searches, enabling the query words to be closely examined in terms of their context of use and function in furthering particular discourses, the analysis of keywords is more revealing, helping researchers see the overall characterisation of the “aboutness” (or general view) of the corpora, in our case, for example, how the topics are represented as a way of doing politics.

### 3. A corpus-based discourse analysis of GWRs

#### 3.1 Keywords analysis of GWRs

A keyword in corpus linguistics is any word with specific frequency when compared to a reference corpus.<sup>2</sup> Keyword lists tend to reveal three types of word, which in Scott’s (1997) terms are proper nouns, keywords of aboutness and grammatical words. The overall characterisation of the aboutness of the corpora will be undertaken by using a keywords analysis and by exploring the links between keywords. In terms of discourse, this aboutness is global meaning, or in van Dijk’s (2009: 68) terms, “semantic macrostructures”, “topics” or “themes”, which “embody the (subjectively) most important information of a discourse”. Topics are significant in CDA because they are usually controlled by powerful speakers. Moreover, they have an obvious effect on the process of reproduction that underlies social power and dominance, hence the importance of the keywords analysis of the GWRs in general, and Zhu’s and Wen’s in particular.

In order to extract the keywords in each of the GWR from 1999 to 2008, we compared each year's GWR to LCMC, and obtained keywords such as 企业/*enterprise*,<sup>3</sup> 改革/*innovation*, 和/*and*, 建设/*construction*, 经济/*economy*, 加强/*strengthen*, 市场/*market*, 增加/*increase*, 发展/*develop*, 制度/*system*, 提高/*raise*, 教育/*education*, 体制/*institution* and 农村/*the rural area* co-occurring in each of the GWR. We can infer from these keywords that the common concerns in the ten years' GWRs are principally about innovation of enterprise, economy construction, the administration of the market system, education and issues of rural reform.

However, when we compared the two sub-corpora each other, we got two somewhat different keywords lists (See Table 2).

**Table 2.** Key lexical words of Zhu's and Wen's GWRs

Zhu's (1999–2003)	Wen's (2004–2008)
企业/ <i>enterprise</i> , 收/ <i>collect</i> , 长江/ <i>Yangtze River</i> , 调整/ <i>adjust</i> 技术/ <i>technology</i> , 市场经济/ <i>market economy</i> , 进行/ <i>carry out</i> , 科研/ <i>scientific research</i>	节能/ <i>energy conservation</i> , 和谐/ <i>harmony</i> , 安全/ <i>security</i> , 公共/ <i>public</i> , 元/ <i>yuan</i> , 农村/ <i>rural area</i> , 卫生/ <i>health</i> , 上涨/ <i>rise</i> , 补贴/ <i>subsidy</i> , 草案/ <i>draft</i> , 发展观/ <i>concept of development</i> , 十一五/ <i>eleventh Five-year</i> , 推进/ <i>push forward</i> , 文化/ <i>culture</i> , 控制/ <i>control</i> , 非/ <i>non</i> , 节约/ <i>thrif</i> , 安排/ <i>arrange</i> , 社会/ <i>society</i> , 偏/ <i>tend</i> , 调控/ <i>adjust and control</i> , 更加/ <i>more</i> , 农民工/ <i>rural migrant worker</i> , 排/ <i>release</i> , 群众/ <i>the masses</i> , 救助/ <i>support</i> , 价格/ <i>price</i> , 自主/ <i>self</i> , 体系/ <i>system</i> , 制度/ <i>system</i> , 免费/ <i>free of charge</i> , 转型/ <i>transition</i> , 土地/ <i>land</i>

Table 2 shows that there are more keywords in Wen's reports than in Zhu's, indicating that Wen's term of government has more foci of attention (and topics) than Zhu's. In Zhu's term the government shed light on innovation in state-owned enterprises, the construction of protective forest along Yangtze River, the development of a socialist market economy and innovation in scientific research institutes, while in Wen's the government extended its attention to a wider range of social issues, such as energy conservation, the construction of a harmonious society, rural migrant workers, social welfare, and so on. We will discuss this change of focus in Section 4, but first we extend the keyword analysis (and hence the foci) of the GWRs to a concordance analysis in order to observe each keyword in the context of the sentence in which it occurs.

### 3.2 Concordance analysis of the GWRs

The difference as shown in Table 2 can be further examined by observing the concordance lines, that is, the context in which these keywords occur. We will discuss each of the sub-corpora respectively, to see how the topics are dealt with by each term of government.

In order to explore how Zhu's GWRs represent innovation in the state-owned enterprises, we firstly examine the three-word cluster of the most frequent keyword 企业/*enterprise* (see Figure 1) in Zhu's GWRs. Then we carry out further inspection of the concordance lines of the first three most frequent clusters.

A cluster is the context in which a word occurs, as well as sometimes the way in which words occur in idiomatic structures. Figure 1 shows that the most frequent cluster with 企业/*enterprise* is 国有企业改革 *state-owned enterprise innovation* (Line 1: 24 times), followed by 企业下岗职工/*laid-off workers of enterprise* (Line 2: 14 times), 现代企业制度/*modern enterprise system* (Line 3: 14 times), 企业技术改造 *technological reform* (Line 5: 13 times), 企业离退休人员 *retired staff* (Line 9: 7 times), 国有大中型企业 *state-owned large and medium-sized enterprise* (Line 10: 7 times).

No.	Cluster	Frequency
1	国有企业改革	24
2	企业下岗职工	14
3	现代企业制度	14
4	国有企业下岗	13
5	企业技术改造	13
6	下岗职工基本	13
7	建立现代企业	10
8	企业改革和	8
9	企业离退休人员	7
10	国有大中型企业	7

Figure 1. Clusters with 企业/*enterprise* in Zhu's GWRs

This observation of the clusters with 企业/*enterprise* suggests that Zhu's GWRs are most concerned with issues of *reform* (both enterprises and technology), *laid-off workers* and *system*. We will further observe the concordance lines of the three most frequent clusters i.e. 国有企业改革 *state-owned enterprise innovation*, 企业下岗职工/*laid-off workers of enterprise*, 现代企业制度 *modern enterprise system*, to see discursive constructions of these issues in the GWRs.

The concordance lines in Figure 2 show that innovation is constructed as the central part of innovation in the economic system and it is metaphorically

Concordance		
1	还很困难；收入分配关系尚未理顺；	国有企业改革任务还相当繁重；市场经济秩序有
2	强再就业工作和社会保障体系建设	国有企业改革时整个经济体制改革的中心环节，
3	止国有资产流失，发挥了重要作用。	国有企业改革之所以取得重大进展，至关重要的
4	硬，加大工作力度，打了一场深化	国有企业改革的攻坚战。一是加快现代企业制度
5	坚持不懈的努力。（四）坚持推进	国有企业改革，切实加强再就业工作金额社会保
6	积累了经验。实践表明，中央关于	国有企业改革核促进再就业，加强社会保障体系
7	的方针，千方百计促进就业再就业，	国有企业改革要坚持建议增效与促进再就业相
8	系。只有全面贯彻执行，才能保证	国有企业改革目标的实现。（五）坚持全面提高
9	中西部地区的经济技术合作。深化以	国有企业改革为中心的各项改革。近几年，国有
10	轨道前进。经济体制改革进一步深化	国有企业改革继续推进，现代企业制度建设加
11	业改革为中心的各项政策，近几年，	国有企业改革取得了很大进展，但是任务仍然相
12	农村中存在的突出问题，巩固和扩大	国有企业改革成果，在建立现代企业制度、转换
13	推进改革，扩大对外开放。继续深化	国有企业改革，使企业真正成为市场竞争的主
14	经济持续快速发展提供强大的动力。	国有企业改革是深化经济体制改革的中心环节。
15	落实党的十五届四中全会觉得，实现	国有企业改革和脱困三年目标，是大多数国有大

Figure 2. Concordance lines of 国有企业改革/state-owned enterprise innovation in Zhu's GWRs

described as a tenacious battle calling for tedious effort. Moreover, the discourse of innovation is signified by a war metaphor 攻坚战/a tenacious battle (Line 4) and 繁重/tedious effort (Line 1), suggesting the difficult process that innovation faces. The co-occurred words 中心环节/central part (Line 2), 深化/deepen (Lines 4, 9, 10, 13, 14), 巩固和扩大/consolidate and enlarge (Line 12), 推进/push forward (Lines 5, 10), 保证/ensure (Line 8) reflect Zhu's resolute policy in dealing with this issue. The following statements extracted from Zhu's GWRs are cases in point.

Example 1: 国有企业改革是深化经济体制改革的中心环节。贯彻落实党的十五届四中全会决定，实现国有企业改革和脱困三年目标，使大多数国有大中型亏损企业摆脱困境，在大多数国有大中型骨干企业初步建立现代企业制度。这是今年政府工作的重中之重。（GWR 2000）

Translation: The reform of state-owned enterprises occupies the central part in efforts to deepen economic restructuring. The top priority of the government's work this year is to carry out and put into practice the decisions made at the Fourth Plenum of the Fifteenth CPC Central Committee, to realise the three-year target to reform state-owned enterprises and clear up any difficult situations, to enable most of the

loss-making state-owned large and medium sized enterprises get out of difficulties and preliminarily establish a modern enterprise system in most large and medium-sized state-owned key enterprises.

Example 2: 五年来, 我们坚持社会主义市场经济的改革方向, 知难而进, 敢于碰硬, 加大工作力度, 打了一场深化国有企业改革的 **攻坚战** (GWR 2003)

Translation: In the past five years, we fought a tenacious battle to deepen the reform of state-owned enterprises by adhering to the socialist market economy orientation, braving difficulties, overcoming tough obstacles and constantly intensifying our work.

When we make a further inspection of the concordance lines of 下岗职工/*laid-off workers*, we see its co-occurred verb phrases 稳步推进/*steadily push forward* (Line 1), 确保/*ensure* (Line 2,3,4,6), 逐步实现/*gradually realise* (Line 5), 继续做好/*continue to do a good job* (Line 8), 坚持和完善/*adhere to and improve* (Line 7), as indicated in Figure 3.

Concordance		
1	各项社会保障覆盖面。稳步推进国有企业	下岗职工基本生活保障向失业保险并轨,
2	急仍然是落实“两个确保”, 确保国有企业	下岗职工基本生活费 and 离退休人员基本
3	发展、稳定全局的大事。要确保国有企业	下岗职工基本生活费 and 离退休人员基本
4	益。大力实施再就业工程, 确保国有企业	下岗职工基本生活费 and 离退休人员基本
5	。健全失业保险制度, 逐步实现国有企业	下岗职工基本生活保障 and 失业保险并轨,
6	各级财政要调整支出结构, 确保国有企业	下岗职工基本生活费、离退休人员基本养
7	抓紧抓好。当前, 要坚持和完善国有企业	下岗职工基本生活保障、失业保险和城市
8	境和市场条件。第二, 继续做好国有企业	下岗职工基本生活保障 and 再就业工作。这

Figure 3. Concordance lines of 下岗职工/*Laid-off workers* in Zhu's GWRs

The co-occurred words of 下岗职工/*laid-off workers* shown in Figure 3 suggest that the redeployment of the laid-off workers is constructed as the priority and thus needs more attention from the government. The government regards the solution to the redeployment of laid-off workers as a primary measure to ensure the success of innovation in state-owned enterprises. The policy for dealing with the laid-off workers is clearly stated in Zhu's GWRs, as is seen in the following extracts.

Example 3: 继续做好国有企业下岗职工基本生活保障和再就业工作。这是深化企业改革的重要任务，也是保持社会稳定的重要措施。(GWR 1999)

Translation: Continue to guarantee the basic needs of laid off workers from state-owned enterprises and help them find new jobs. This is an important task to deepen the reform of enterprises and an important measure to maintain social stability.

Example 4: 大力促进下岗职工再就业。各地要引导职工转变择业观念，努力开拓就业门路，搞好职业培训，使更多的下岗职工尽早实现再就业。各级政府 and 有关部门要通力合作，加强督促检查，保证各项再就业政策落实到位。(GWR 2000)

Translation: Vigorously promote redeployment of laid-off workers. To guide the workers in changing their careers around the idea of opening up employment opportunities, and improving vocational training, so that more laid-off workers can be re-employed as soon as possible. Government at all levels and relevant departments should work together to strengthen supervision and inspection ensuring that the redeployment policy is effective.

Figure 4 shows the concordance lines of 现代企业制度/modern enterprise system in Zhu's GWRs. The verb 建立/set up (Lines 1, 3, 5, 8, 10) is the most frequent verb co-occurring on the left side of the query word, suggesting that setting up a modern enterprise system in Zhu's agenda during his term of government is an important element.

Concordance		
1	私营等非公有制解决发展。按照 <b>建立</b>	现代企业制度的要求，继续推进国有企业规
2	化国有企业改革的攻坚战。一是 <b>加快</b>	现代企业制度建设。按照“产权清晰、权责明
3	多数国有大中型骨干企业 <b>初步建立</b>	现代企业制度，涌现出一批有实力、有活力
4	一步深化。国有企业改革继续推进，	现代企业制度建设 <b>加快</b> 。国家向重点企业派
5	机制。今年要重点检查上市公司 <b>建立</b>	现代企业制度的情况，找出存在问题，认真
6	须继续下大力气推进。一是 <b>切实加强</b>	现代企业制度建设。继续推行规范化的公司
7	竞争的主体。重点是加快 <b>建立</b> 和 <b>完善</b>	现代企业制度。鼓励国有大中型企业通过规
8	翻一番奠定坚实基础；国有企业 <b>建立</b>	现代企业制度取得 <b>重大进展</b> ，社会保障制度
9	经济体制初步建立。国有大中型企业	现代企业制度的改革取得 <b>重要进展</b> 。大多数
10	多数国有大中型骨干企业 <b>初步建立</b>	现代企业制度。今年是实现这个目标的关键

Figure 4. Concordance lines of 现代企业制度/modern enterprise system in Zhu's GWRs

The other co-occurring verbs 加快/*accelerate* (Lines 2, 4), 完善/*improve* (Line 7) and 切实加强/*firmly strengthen* (Line 6) convey that the setting up of the modern enterprise system has been actively promoted. The right co-occurrence of 取得重要进展/*achieve great progress* (Lines 8, 9) reflects the government's satisfaction and confidence. The adverb 初步/*preliminarily* (Lines 3, 10) indicates that the modern enterprise system is still in its infancy and requires further attention.

**Example 5:** 大多数国有大中型骨干企业初步建立现代企业制度，涌现出一批有实力、有活力和有竞争力的优势企业。国有中小企业进一步放开搞活。垄断行业管理体制改革迈出实质性步伐。城乡集体经济得到新的发展。股份制经济不断扩大。个体、私营等非公有制经济较快发展，在发展经济、增加就业、活跃市场、扩大出口方面发挥了重要作用。(GWR 2003)

**Translation:** Most large and medium-sized key state-owned enterprises have initially established the modern enterprise system, and a number of dynamic and competitive enterprises have come to the fore. Further progress was made in opening up and revitalising small and medium-sized state-owned enterprises. Substantive progress was made in restructuring the management system of monopoly industries. The collective economy in urban and rural areas made new headway. The joint-stock company sector of the economy expanded continuously. Individually-owned businesses, private enterprises and other non-public sectors of the economy developed quite rapidly and played an important role in stimulating economic growth, creating more jobs, invigorating the market and expanding exports.

To sum up, observing the clusters of the most frequently occurring keyword 企业/*enterprise* and their concordance lines in Zhu's GWRs suggests the policy of Zhu's term of government. The reports constructed innovation in state-owned enterprises as the top priority of the government, the hardship of the task as a tenacious battle, and the stage of innovation as infancy, showing the challenges the government faced and the determination and confidence they owned. The keyword analysis of 企业/*enterprise* explores the primary concerns of Zhu's term of government, while the concordance analysis provides evidence suggesting his policy and his way of dealing with the issues.

### 3.3 Concordance analysis of Wen's GWRs

There is a dramatic increase of keywords in Wen's GWRs. Due to limited space, in this section we will examine the concordance lines of the two most frequent keywords, 节能减排/*energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions* (Figure 5) and 和谐/*harmony* (Figure 6).

Concordance lines of 节能减排/*energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions* in Wen's GWRs show that there are more verbs as opposed to nouns co-occurring with them as highlighted in Figure 5. These verbs are 实施/*put into*

Concordance		
1	质量安全工作今年是“十一五“	节能减排约束性目标的关键一年,务必增
2	座位约束性目标。近两年,又提出并 <b>实施</b>	节能减排综合性工作方案,建立节能减排
3	法保障和金额廉租房建设的支付; <b>增强</b>	节能减排和环境保护的支出;解决农村
4	全审计、监察体系、加强执法力度, <b>强化</b>	节能减排工作责任制。十是增强全
5	能源资源节约和环境保护奖惩机制。 <b>执行</b>	节能减排统计监测制度,健全审计、监察
6	耕地 2289 万亩。经过各方面的努力,	节能减排取得积极进展,2007 年单位国
7	“农“、社会保障、医疗卫生、教育、文化、	节能减排和廉租房住房建设等方面的支
8	用资源和治理污染的先进适用技术, <b>实施</b>	节能减排重大技术和示范工程。大力发展
9	并 <b>实施</b> 主体功能区规划和政策,加大	节能减排和环境保护力度,做好产品质量
10	出并实施节能减排综合性工作方案,建立	节能减排指标体系,监测体系、考核体系
11	,以及年耗能万吨标准煤以上重点企业的	节能减排工作。全面实施低效燃煤工业锅
12	制。抓紧 <b>建立</b> 和 <b>完善</b> 科学、完整、统一的	节能减排指标体系,监测体系、考核体系
13	现,国务院以后每年都要向全国人大 <b>报告</b>	节能减排的进展情况,并在“十一五“期末
14	完善节能降耗、污染减排政策,普遍 <b>建立</b>	节能减排目标责任制。积极推进重点行业

Figure 5. Concordance lines of 节能减排/energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions in Wen's GWRs

*practice* (Line 3, 8, 9), *强化/strengthen* (Line 4), *执行/carry out* (Line 5), *报告/report*, (Line 13), *建立/set up* (Line 10, 14), and *推进/push forward*, which suggest actions. With 节能减排/energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions as Goal (recipient of action), the semantics that can be inferred from the concordance are that the environmental protection measures have been put into practice in this period of time. We can see this from the following extract.

Example 6: 今年是完成“十一五“节能减排约束性目标的关键一年,务必增强紧迫感,加大攻坚力度,力求取得更大成效。一是落实电力、钢铁、水泥、煤炭、造纸等行业淘汰落后生产能力计划。建立淘汰落后产能退出机制,完善和落实关闭企业的配套政策措施。同时,按照规划加强这些行业先进生产能力的建设。(GWR 2008)

Translation: This year is a crucial year for reaching the binding target of the “Eleventh Five-Year” plan for energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions. Be sure to enhance the sense of urgency and intensify efforts to tackle difficult problems, and strive to achieve greater successes. First, carry out the plan to eliminate backward production capacity in electricity, iron and steel, cement, coal, paper and other industries; establish the mechanism to eliminate backward production capacity, improve and implement the supporting policies to the closure of enterprises. At the same time, strengthen these sectors through the planned construction of advanced production capacity.

In this report verbs like *enhance*, *intensify*, *strive*, *strengthen*, *carry out*, *establish*, *improve and implement* are chosen to express the determination of the government to take action to reach the target for energy conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions.

As for the concordance lines of 和谐/*harmony*, we observe that this keyword goes together with nouns (such as *equality*, *unity*, *mutual assistance*, *justice*, *peace*, *security*), to form a compound word (e.g. harmonious society or social harmony), suggesting not an action (as in the case of the concordance of 节能减排/*energy*

Concordance		
1	改革开放、保障和改善民生，促进社会	和谐，付出了巨大的努力，做了大量工
2	主义经济建设、政治建设、文化建设与	和谐社会建设，为“十一五”开好局、起
3	道路，坚持改革开放，坚持科学发展、	和谐发展、和平发展，才能最终实现现
4	主权、安全、领土完整和促进社会主义	和谐社会，认真贯彻党的十六大以来各
5	国家主权、安全、领土完整和促进社会	和谐稳定作出了重大贡献。坚持
6	放为动力推进各项工作，构建社会主义	和谐社会，推动社会主义物质文明、政
7	改革，加快构筑落实科学发展观和建设	和谐社会的体制保障。全面提高对外开
8	实现经济社会又好又快发展，促进社会	和谐。第三，必须坚持改革开放。
9	友爱、充满活力、安定有序、人与自然	和谐相处的社会主义和谐社会，要广泛
10	定有序、人与自然和谐相处的社会主义	和谐社会，要广泛团结一切可以团结的
11	际两个市场、两种资源。三是着力建设	和谐社会。建设民主法制、公平正义、
12	加强和巩固基层政权，推进和谐社区、	和谐村镇建设。完善社会稳定预警体系
13	界各国人民一道，为建立和平、公正、	和谐的新世界而不懈奋斗！三、关于《
14	区经济发展，巩固和发展平等团结互助	和谐的社会主义民族关系。全面贯彻党

Figure 6. The concordance lines of 和谐/*harmony* in Wen's GWRs

*conservation and reduction of pollutant emissions*), but a state of harmonious culture, harmonious society, harmonious community, harmonious world and harmonious relations between each ethnic group.

The nouns occurring in the concordance lines of harmony, e.g. the construction of harmonious society, and of economy, politics and culture, maintaining social stability, safeguarding sovereignty, security and territorial integrity etc. are evidence of convergence. According to Hall et al. (1978: 223) “Convergence occurs when two or more activities are linked in a process of signification as to implicitly or explicitly draw parallels between them.” Considering this convergence, it is clear that the government regards the construction of the harmonious society to be as important as the concepts mentioned above.

Example 7: 2006 年是实施 “十一五” 规划的第一年，改革发展稳定的任务十分繁重。做好政府工作的基本思路是：以邓小平理论和 “三个代表” 重要思想为指导，认真贯彻党的十六大和十六届三中、四中、五中全会精神，全面落实科学发展观，坚持加快改革开放和自主创新，坚持推进经济结构调整和增长方式转变，坚持把解决涉及人民群众切身利益问题放在突出位置，全面加强社会主义经济建设、政治建设、文化建设与和谐社会建设，为 “十一五” 开好局、起好步。(GWR 2006)

Translation: The tasks related to reform, development and stability for 2006, the first year in the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, are huge. To do the work of the government well and get the Eleventh Five-Year Plan off to a good start, we need to adopt the following basic line of thinking: take Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents as our guide, closely follow the guidelines set out at the Sixteenth CPC National Congress and at the third to fifth plenary sessions of the Sixteenth Central Committee, fully implement a scientific outlook on development, continue to accelerate reform and opening up and stimulate independent innovation, continue to promote economic restructuring and change of the pattern of growth, always put problems affecting the vital interests of the people high on our agenda, intensify all aspects of the effort to build a socialist economy, promote the development of the country politically and culturally, and create a harmonious society.

#### 4. Discourse, engine, and social change

Regarding the dialectical relations between discourse and social changes, Fairclough (2006) uses the metaphorical expression, “engine”, to illustrate the way in which a change in discourse turns into social practice. He points out that “when changes in discourse are ‘operationalised’ in more general social change, discourse so to speak ‘turns into other things’ ... just as designs for a new automobile engine

are internalised and materialised in the engine itself” (Fairclough 2006: 11). Fairclough’s theory applies to the effect of these GWRs on the happenings of the last decade in China. The intentional repetition and choice of words and topics shapes the ideological framework of the recipients of the GWRs (government officials at various levels), who turn what is described by the keywords into real happenings.

From the standpoint of CDA, GWR as discourse is social practice, involving intentional use of language by powerful social agencies and agents, and the frequently and consciously chosen words (verbs and nouns) are the index of the speakers’ primary concerns, which in turn via the institutional discourse become concerns of other social agents. The discourse of setting up a modern enterprise system in Zhu’s GWRs led to great innovation in the state-owned enterprises in China. The key principles of the innovation, “clearly established ownership, well defined power and responsibility, separation of enterprise from administration, and scientific management”, are put into practice by the state-owned enterprises. Conversely, the long-term innovation has brought in new enterprise operational mechanisms, driving forward social change of China.

The practice of the construction of the harmonious society is the product of its discourse representation in Wen’s GWRs. The discursive construction of energy conservation and pollutant emissions reduction has raised high awareness of how to change human behavior and the economic structure in order to deal with global climate change. In short, the production of GWRs and the consequences for social action are as follows: Zhu’s and Wen’s conscious chosen keywords reflect new topics and changes in GWRs, which, as new discourse, bring about social change through their powerful effect on other social agents.

We can further observe the adoption of the term 农民工/*rural migrant worker* (RMW) in the GWRs from 1999 to 2008. The term does not occur in the GWRs of 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, while in 2003, the last year of Zhu’s term of office, it is mentioned once. It then frequently appears in Wen’s GWRs, seven times in 2004’s GWR, once in 2005, 4 times in 2006, 8 times in 2007, and 5 times in 2008. The general dispersion of the term 农民工/*rural migrant worker* in the GWRs from 1999 to 2008 is illustrated in Figure 7.

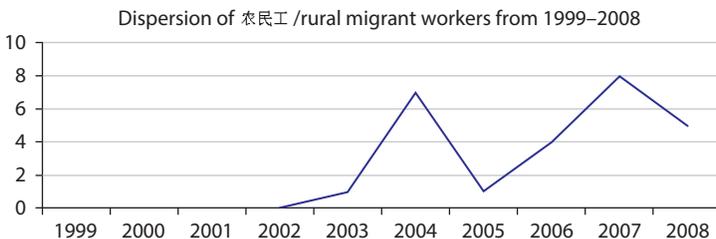


Figure 7. Dispersion of 农民工/*rural migrant worker* in the GWRs from 1999 to 2008

This constant repetition of the term RMW in the GWRs since 2003 has shaped the public attitude towards rural migrant workers and brought about the reconstruction of the social identity of the RMWs. In Zhu's GWRs the issue of the RMW was constructed as a problem, i.e. discrimination and unfair treatment of RMWs. The GWR conveys the voice of the government which tries to find ways to correct such discrimination and unfair treatment, and to protect the legitimate rights and interests of RMWs.

**Example 8:** 六是引导农村劳动力合理有序流动。农村富余劳动力向非农产业和城镇转移，是工业化和现代化的必然趋势。我们坚持实施城镇化战略，积极稳妥地发展小城镇。支持农民进城务工就业，清理和纠正对农民工的歧视性政策和乱收费，保护他们的合法权益，同时加强引导和管理。以城市繁荣带动农村发展，促进城乡协调发展，是新形势下解决“三农”问题的重要途径。（GWR 2003）

Translation: Sixth, we have provided guidance to ensure a proper and orderly movement of agricultural labourers. Surplus agricultural labourers moving to non-agricultural industries and to cities and towns is an inevitable trend in industrialisation and modernisation. In implementing our urbanisation strategy, we have made vigorous yet cautious efforts to develop small cities and towns. We have encouraged farmers to take up temporary or permanent jobs in cities and protected their legitimate rights and interests by rectifying policy discrimination and unauthorised collection of dues from migrant rural workers. At the same time, we have stepped up guidance and management of these matters. Given the new circumstances in the country, sweeping rural development driven by urban prosperity and coordinated development of both urban and rural areas may provide an important way of resolving the problems facing our agriculture, rural areas and farmers.

In the following years, however, problems arose relating to the issue of rural migrant workers, such as back payment, education of their children, housing, endowment insurances, all of which required attention. By frequently articulating this issue in GWRs, Premier Wen consciously brought it to the attention of all officials. For example, in his 2004 GWR, Wen called for effective measures to ensure that the RMWs were paid on time and in full. In the following extract from his 2004 GWR, we can see his concern with this issue and his firm determination to protect the RMWs' rights and interests.

**Example 9:** 切实保障农民工工资按时足额支付。当前要抓紧解决克扣和拖欠农民工工资问题。国务院决定，用三年时间基本解决建设领域拖欠工程款和农民工工资问题。清欠要从政府投资的工程做起，同时督促各类企业加快清欠。对拖欠农民工工资拒不支付的企业和经营者，要坚决依法查处。要建立健全及时支付农民工工资的机制，从源头上防止新的拖欠。各类企业都要按时发放工资，严格执行最低工资制度。要保证机关事业单位工资和离退休费

的按时足额发放，任何地方都不得出现新的拖欠。要严格工资专户管理，财政资金要优先保证发放工资。(GWR 2004)

Translation: Measures must be taken to ensure that migrant rural workers are paid on time and in full. We must pay very close attention to solving the problem of their wages being docked or not paid on time. The State Council has decided to fundamentally resolve the problems of default on construction costs and wage arrears for migrant rural workers in the construction industry within three years. Clearing up such back payments should begin with government-funded projects, but other types of enterprises should also be urged to pay off their arrears as soon as possible. Enterprises and managers that refuse to pay back wages to migrant rural workers must be held accountable in accordance with the law. We need to develop a mechanism to ensure the timely payment of migrant rural workers' wages, thereby eliminating the root cause of wage arrears. All enterprises must pay wages on time and strictly obey the minimum wage regulations. We must ensure that all state organs and institutions pay salaries and retirees' pensions on time and in full. New arrears will not be allowed anywhere. Accounts for paying salaries must be placed under stringent oversight, and budgetary funds should be used to pay wages and salaries first. (GWR 2004)

The change in attitude towards RMWs is only one of many social changes that occurred in the past decade. Others we can name include urbanisation, low-carbonisation, and harmonisation. But our study enables us to see the dialectical relations between discourse and social change. More measures have been put into effect to protect the RMWs' interest since the term first appeared in the GWR. This is the result of social development on the one hand, and the shaping force of discourse on the other. As is found in this study, by intentionally putting new words into the GWRs, the GWR producers show their concern with the issue and create new institutional discourses. By influencing other social agents this in turn brings about changes in the current situation of the rural migrant workers.

## 5. Conclusions

In this study, we first analysed the keywords in the GWRs of the two terms' offices to observe the overall characterisation of the aboutness. Then, we made a further inspection of the wider contexts of language use in GWRs via concordance lines. By this corpus analysis we found that the presupposition of the government's authoritative role can be cued in the institutional discourses of the GWRs. The institutional discourses also show other social agents the government's determination to put all their plans into action.

The two terms of government headed by two distinctive premiers provide significant data for a critical discourse analysis of the GWRs, and make it possible to observe the role of the social agents' manipulation of discourse in the process of social transformation. This repetitively highlighted theme is discussed and justified by the observation of the case of the rural migrant workers. The RMWs are now well-known to enjoy good welfare provision, but what might not be so well known is that the RMWs had suffered discrimination in various ways. It is argued in this chapter that the change in real life was closely related with, and to a great extent brought about by, the change in discourse. As the word is more frequently brought into the GWRs, the design for a new attitude towards the RMWs, facilitated by the officials at different levels, is "internalised" and "materialised" in the generally accepted and really occurring attitude towards the RMWs. We hope this investigation into the dialectical relations between discourse and social change will inspire further scholarly interest in this area of research.

## Notes

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1. [http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/16/content\\_200719.htm](http://www.gov.cn/test/2006-02/16/content_200719.htm) (accessed: 06/09/09).
2. A reference corpus is typically a large corpus which is said to be representative of a particular language variety, e.g. British National Corpus.
3. The format of a Chinese word and its translation is a Chinese character/the italicised English translation, e.g. 中国/*China*, as the corpus of data is originally Chinese.

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## CHAPTER 4

# It's a small world after all?

## Simulating the future world order at the Shanghai Expo\*

Florian Schneider

Leiden University

This chapter asks what visions of the world came together at the Shanghai Expo, how they were formed, and what role the Chinese authorities played in framing the event. Based on qualitative interviews and multi-media data collected at the Expo site in July 2010, the chapter analyzes the Expo site and compares the contents and communication strategies of two key pavilions: the China Pavilion and the US Pavilion. It shows how the institutional constraints at the Expo collapse much of the political discourse into a narrative that to some extent re-enforces the political ideals of the Chinese authorities, but that the various actors nevertheless present different visions of the world's future and of world politics that at times challenge the worldview that the Chinese government is trying to foster.

**Keywords:** Shanghai World Expo; political discourse; China Pavilion; worldview

### 1. Introduction

From May to October 2010, the People's Republic of China (PRC) hosted the World Exhibition in Shanghai. For an estimated 400 billion RMB (Richburg 2010), an equivalent of roughly 44 billion Euros, the authorities remodelled the city's infrastructure and built six new subway lines, a new airport terminal, and an exhibition area along the southern stretch of the Huangpu River that could have ten times accommodated the theme park Disneyland Paris. 189 out of the world's 203 countries, along with 57 international organizations, multinational corporations, and Chinese enterprises, came together on this territory to communicate their interpretations of the Expo theme "Better City, Better Life" (*chengshi – rang shenghuo geng meihao* 城市，让生活更美好) to roughly 73 million visitors (Shiboju 2010). China's official English-language news magazines Beijing Review

and China Today hailed the Shanghai Expo as “the largest ever Expo in history” (Li & Chen 2010: 10–11) and “the biggest extravaganza the world has ever seen” (China Today 2010: 11).

While an event of this scale has major economic implications for the host city, in this case significantly boosting the tourism and construction industries in Shanghai (Sun & Ye 2010), it also serves political functions. On the one hand, it allows the Chinese authorities to celebrate the event as an expression of international recognition for China’s increasingly important role in the world. China Today (2010: 11), for instance, proudly announced that “hosting one of the world’s top events (...) carries a status that honours any country”. In other words, the successful mega-event legitimizes China’s one-party political system, and the development strategy of the fourth leadership generation under Hu Jintao 胡锦涛. On the other hand, much like the Olympic Games of 2008 and the PRC’s 60-year anniversary celebrations in 2009, the Shanghai Expo is in itself a complex act of political communication – one that constructs a specific worldview through a range of discourses. In this case, as the chief director of the opening ceremony Teng Junjie 滕俊杰 explained, the event presented “a new vision of the world from the bottom of the Chinese people’s hearts” (Li & Chen 2010: 12).

In this chapter, I examine what this Chinese vision of the world is, and how it is constructed.<sup>1</sup> The first section analyzes what factors shape discursive statements at the Expo, and which actors are involved in their construction. Next, I explore what discourse the Expo presented through its territory and the various activities that took place there. The third section takes a closer look at the nationalist discourse communicated by the Chinese pavilion and its exhibitions. The final section addresses the question of how other participants position themselves within the Expo discourse, and whether their own presentations challenge or re-enforce the Chinese perspective. I focus my analysis on the US pavilion, i.e. the nation that arguably forms one of the most central reference points in PRC discourses on the Chinese nation today (Breslin & Shen 2010: 8). I conclude with critical remarks on the Chinese grand narrative at the Expo, and a discussion of the extent to which alternative worldviews might be capable of challenging this narrative.

## 2. The Shanghai World Exposition and the study of discourse

Treating a mass-communication event such as the Expo as *discourse*<sup>2</sup> immediately poses three fundamental challenges. Firstly, the Expo deals not with one single topic, but with a range of discourse strands, such as environmental protection, urban development, international relations, and so on. Secondly, it is not created

by one single “author”, but instead by a large number of diverse actors (enterprises, government agencies, media corporations, international organizations, etc.), who at times make opposing claims and arguments. Thirdly, the Expo is both an event as well as a site, and the participants deploy a vast array of communication strategies and media, including architecture, exhibitions, written and spoken announcements, films (2D, 3D, and even 4D), interactive games, and performances. The Expo is, in other words, multifarious, multi-authored, and multimodal. This raises the question whether such an event actually produces a dominant discourse, and if so, what tools we need to apply to study it.

To address these challenges, it is essential to define what the word discourse means in this chapter. Discourse shall here refer to complex communication practices that systematically construct our knowledge of the world. Every time anyone makes a statement, be it verbal or non-verbal, he or she draws from a pool of social conventions and shared meanings in order to “make sense”.<sup>3</sup> The statement will therefore either re-enforce social conventions and collectively accepted beliefs, or it may challenge what the majority of a society considers to be common sense. What is more, a statement may draw from several topics (or “discourse strands”),<sup>4</sup> but it can only do so if the different topics are believed to be related to one another in a meaningful way. For instance, statements based on the idea that environmental problems are related to urban life, and that they pose an international problem, seem coherent because they appeal to collectively accepted knowledge on the individual topics and their relationship. In other words, through discourse, the members of a society perpetually construct conceptions of the world, and these conceptions in turn provide the material from which these actors form more discourse.

If we understand discourse as a form of communication, we can conceptualize it as a continuous flow of messages, each assembled by a sender according to socio-cultural conventions (or *codes*), and then transmitted to a recipient who decodes and interprets the messages. Although the meanings of such messages are tied to their social and historical context, they are by no means arbitrary, and indeed have to be interpreted in similar ways by a broad audience in order to function as *mass-communication*.<sup>5</sup> This makes it possible to analyse media products and cultural expressions in a way that yields valid results: by breaking discourse down into discursive statements, and then systematically analyzing the components that the statements are composed of (verbal, visual, and acoustic signs), as well as the interplay of different statements on different topics, it is possible to reconstruct the beliefs that informed the discourse.<sup>6</sup> It is these methods that enable critical discourse research to shine a spotlight on the power relations that actors re-enforce by establishing certain beliefs rather than others as part of a generally accepted worldview.

### 3. Constructing discourses at the Shanghai Expo

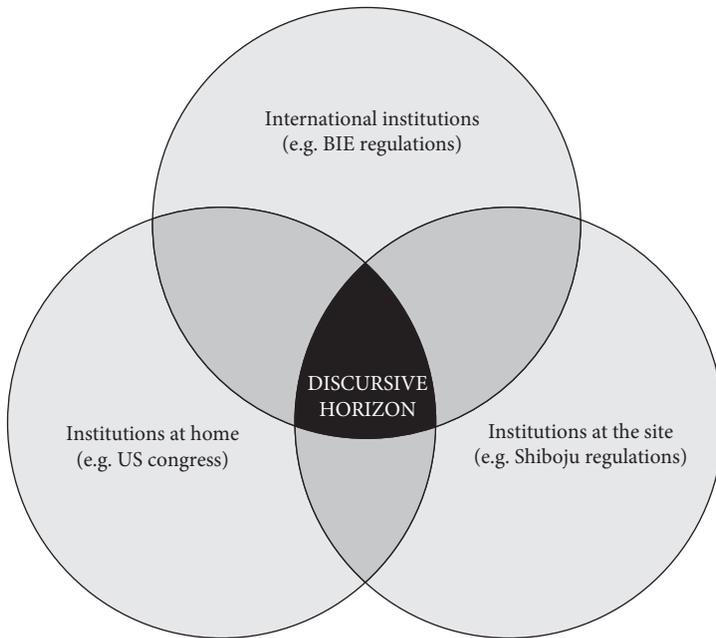
Before turning to the Expo discourses, allow me to provide an overview of the agents that contribute to these discourses, and of the conditions under which these agents perform. The construction of discourse at the Shanghai Expo takes place within overlapping frameworks, and is consequently subject to multiple constraints. Each institutional framework defines what can and cannot be communicated, and the creativity to design discursive statements is consequently limited to the realm where all institutional frameworks overlap (see Figure 1); a space which I will call the *discursive horizon*.

As an illustration, imagine the project director of a national pavilion. The plans and the implementation of her project have to fit three different frameworks. First, they have to conform to international institutions, in this case the general guidelines of the Bureau of International Exhibition (BIE), which has its headquarters in Paris and is represented at the actual event by a steering committee. The BIE aims to “ensure the smooth running of the Expo” (BIE 2010), and effectively regulates the “rules and procedures concerning international exhibitions” (BIE 1928/1988: Protocol §1). This means that the BIE controls, for instance, who is allowed to participate in a World Expo, what qualifies as an acceptable expo theme, and what obligations the host and the participants have (ibid: Conventions).

Second, the pavilion director’s actions are tied to factors in her home country. This means that her project has to adhere to certain budget constraints. To provide an example, the US pavilion was faced with major planning difficulties since American legislation prohibits the use of public funds at world exhibitions (Minter 2010a). In addition, a downturn of the home economy may force substantial budget cuts on the project director, even after the project has been launched – a problem that many national pavilions faced after the 2007 world financial crisis (for instance, the plans for the Polish pavilion had to be fundamentally altered on short notice precisely for this reason; EI 20.07.10a). Finally, the pavilion content has to reflect the overall public relations strategy of the director’s principals, be it specific government agencies or a consortium of private sponsors, while simultaneously being committed to the vision of the designers and artists to whom she delegates the actual creative design processes. This may lead to clashes between the visions of the designers and the intentions of those who commissioned the pavilion, as was the case with the controversial Spanish exhibition designs by Basilio Martín Patino, who referenced the 2004 Madrid train bombing, and by Isabel Coixet, who displayed a disturbingly uncanny oversized animatronic baby (EI 20.07.10b; España Expone 2010). In short, all of these factors provide the institutional framework at home.

Finally, the project director has to adhere to Chinese rules and regulations, which include both national-level legislation and local regulations, as well as

the overall theme that the Chinese organizers have set (in this case: “Better City, Better Life”). The Chinese framework is coordinated and implemented by the Bureau of Shanghai World Expo Coordination (*Shiboju* 世博局), a temporary institution that draws its staff from diverse organizations such as the public security bureau, the fire department, the foreign affairs office, state media workers and Party propaganda experts, as well as university academics (EI 15.07.10).<sup>7</sup> Their interpretations of Chinese regulations, their organizational practices, and their plans for the overall Expo form the third framework that all participants have to adhere to.



**Figure 1.** Institutional constraints and the discursive horizon

#### 4. Miniature geopolitics – Shanghai’s Expo territory

This leads to the question what overall discourse was formed within the discursive horizon of the Shanghai Expo. Walking onto the Expo territory, the visitor is not simply entering a gigantic theme park, but a miniature version of the world. Despite the diverse range of statements that the many national exhibitions make, they are all tied together into a larger discourse on world politics. This is achieved on the one hand through various Expo activities, on the other hand through the layout of the Expo site itself.

The Expo motto “Better City, Better Life” suggests a cosmopolitan concern, and much of the official public relations effort frames the event as a transnational endeavour that places humanity at the centre of its discourse. This is not only apparent from the green Shanghai Expo logo, which represents three people holding hands to form the Chinese character for “world” (*shi* 世), or the blue mascot Haibao, which resembles the Chinese character for “person” (*ren* 人). It is also evident from the organizers’ understanding of the main theme as a variant of the current administration’s goal to create a “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会).<sup>8</sup> An official introduction to the Expo and its theme states that “Better City, Better Life” stands for “harmony between man and nature, between history and future, and between people” in a “harmonious city” (Sun 2009: 12). Statements by the Chinese organizers in the run-up to the event also stressed the transnational elements of the theme – note the use of the words “people” (*renmin* 人民) and “human kind” (*renlei* 人类) in the following excerpt (*ibid.*: 1):

In 2010, the people of the world will gather at the Shanghai Expo, will focus on the expo’s theme “Better City, Better Life”, and will together look at the beautiful future of the “city”. It will be a grand meeting that will explore the beautiful urban life of human kind; it will be a symphony that takes the ideas of “creation and innovation” and “blending” as its main melody; it will become a brilliant dialogue within the progress of human civilization; it will become a great stage for mutual understanding, communication, reunion, and cooperation of all human kind.

2010 年，全世界人民将相聚上海世博会，围绕“城市，让生活更美好”这一世博主题，共同展望“城市”美好的未来。她将是一届探讨人类城市美好生活的盛会；她将是一曲以“创新”和“融合”为主旋律的交响乐；她将成为人类文明进程中的一次精彩对话；她将成为全人类相互之间理解、沟通、欢聚、合作的大舞台。<sup>9</sup>

While this cosmopolitan idea was to some extent reflected in the five themed pavilions<sup>10</sup> and many of the city exhibitions of the urban best practice area, it arguably took the backseat behind a more prominent discourse: that of the nation-state. With 189 national exhibitions, the central discourse was more *inter*-nationalist than cosmopolitan, and the Expo relayed a view of the world in which the central agents were sovereign nations. Many of the cultural activities at the Expo were instances of this discourse. For example, every weekday at the Expo was a national day. Each morning at 10:30, one of the participant nations would be honoured with a flag raising ceremony in front of the Expo Centre, and China’s state media would carry programmes on the respective country. In addition to these rituals, the Expo organizers offered special passports for 30 RMB (see Figure 2). Once equipped with this artificial document, guests could collect visa stamps by visiting the different countries.<sup>11</sup> Essentially this activity invited visitors to experience the

world as a simulation of border-crossings into the territories of foreign nations – a practice that stands in stark contrast to the discourse of a shared planet and a common humanity that the official theme suggests.

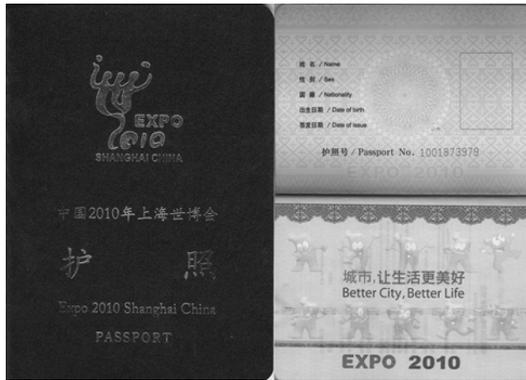


Figure 2. The Expo passport

The notion of the world as an inter-national place is further relayed by the arrangement of the national pavilions within the Expo space. First of all, the Expo to a certain extent attempts to produce a sense of geography. Pavilions are clustered together roughly according to the respective nation-states' location within regions and their actual position to one another. This is evident from the attempt to re-construct miniature continents in the Expo zones A, B, and C, as well as by the proximity of pavilions such as Germany and Poland, Greece and Turkey, or Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Arguably the most prominent example of geopolitics at the Expo is the Chinese national pavilion and its position vis-à-vis the pavilions of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. Looking at the China pavilion from the east, visitors find the “mainland” represented by a massive elevated plateau on their left, with the red PRC pavilion towering over the exhibition buildings of the two special administrative regions. To the right lies the Taiwan pavilion, separated from the mainland by a broad, elevated walk-way that curves along the plateau much like the Taiwan Straits curves along the coast of China. The symbolism of this arrangement prompted one observer to note that the politics of this Expo were “sometimes comically obvious” (Minter 2010b).

Despite these representations of geography, the territory does not recreate an exact world map. At the Expo, the world is warped. This is mainly due to simple organizational reasons, such as the varying budgets of different participants, or the ability of participants to select lots within their respective region on a first-come first-serve basis. The effect is nevertheless peculiar, with Iran and North Korea (i.e. states that the administration of former US-President Bush had referred to as

part of the “axis of evil”) stashed away together in the far south-eastern corner of the territory, Russia situated in the south-west of Europe, or the African continent positioned in the north-west of this simulated world.

What is more, the national participants present themselves in pavilions of varying sizes (cf. Huang & Kuang 2010). This includes the largest lots of 3000–6000 m<sup>2</sup> (for participants who asked to build their own building), medium-sized lots of 500–2000 m<sup>2</sup> (for participants willing to rent and then decorate an exhibition hall), and small exhibition spaces within larger joint halls of ca. 200–325 m<sup>2</sup>. The type of lot reflects what financial resources each participating country was able and willing to invest. Costs of self-built pavilions ranged from roughly 40 to 60 million Euro (EI 14.07.10 & 21.07.10).

What picture of the world do these differences yield? In order to answer this question, it helps to imagine a map of the world in which the actual territory of each nation-state directly correlates to that state’s national pavilion at the Expo. I have calculated these relations, using the lot sizes provided in Huang & Kuang (2010) and extrapolations based on the official Expo map. The result is depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The world according to the Shanghai Expo

Since this cartogram relates pavilion lot size to actual geographic territory, it by default produces an exaggerated effect where nation-states with very large or very small territory are concerned: nation-states such as the USA, Canada, Russia, and Australia appear exponentially smaller, whereas small countries such as the island states of the Caribbean take up correspondingly more space. Nevertheless, the figure reproduces the general impressions a visitor would receive while traveling this miniature world, and two observations are worth noting in this regard: firstly, industrialized countries such as the European members of the OECD,

Japan, and South Korea take up a significant part of the territory, while developing countries in the Americas, Africa, and Asia are marginalized. Secondly, the figure highlights the dominant role of the host.<sup>12</sup> Throughout Expo history, host exhibitions have traditionally played a more central role than other participants – one need only recall the iconographic relevance of the Eifel Tower at the time of the 1889 Paris Exposition (Johnson 2002; Jackson 2008: 46–49). Yet the massive presence of China at this event stands in marked contrast to the self-presentation of recent other host countries.<sup>13</sup> This is also reflected by the comments of the foreign pavilion organizers interviewed for this project, who argued that the Chinese authorities were portraying their nation as the centre of the world through the use of architecture and lot size regulations, and that the degree of hierarchy that this created was a unique case in recent Expo history.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Constructing the Chinese nation at the PRC's pavilion

I have so far argued that the Shanghai Expo conceptualizes the world as a community of nation-states, and that within that community the Chinese nation is located centre-stage. Considering the significance of China's national pavilion in this context, it is necessary to explore more closely what discourse of the Chinese nation the exhibitions within construct, and who they are targeting.

As an architectural statement, the China pavilion edifice and its location on the Expo territory communicated to domestic as much as to foreign audiences: not only did the building become a common icon on posters around Shanghai and the rest of China, it also graced the title pages of Chinese and foreign newspapers throughout the time of the event. For the exhibitions within the building, however, the situation was different: according to official calculations, 95 percent of the Expo visitors were Chinese (Xinhua 2010); the vast majority of these guests had travelled to Shanghai from second- or third-tier cities and rural areas and were believed to belong to the lower middle-class (EI 20.07.10b & 21.07.10). While no exact statistics are available on the visitor demographics of China's national pavilion itself, my own observations during a visit in July suggest that far more than 95 percent of the guests were Chinese.<sup>15</sup> Judging by the exhibition content and the way it was presented, it is likely that the organizers had anticipated this predominantly Chinese audience, and that the central goal of the exhibits was not to showcase China to foreigners but indeed to “show the millions of Chinese that will visit the Expo, just how important and influential their country has become”, as the BBC wrote on the eve of the event (Hogg 2010).

The three exhibition floors of China's national pavilion each deal with the concept of harmony mentioned above.<sup>16</sup> The upper floor, which the visitors pass

through first, is entitled “The Footprints” (*dongfang zuji* 东方足迹) and provides an interpretation of Chinese history. The second floor, “The Dialogue” (*xunmi zhi li* 寻觅之旅), provides a themed ride, which takes the visitor through a surreal landscape of ancient ingenuities in Chinese construction and their modern-day application. This includes bridges, road construction, window and door designs, as well as the so-called *Dougong* 斗拱 bracket system that links together the columns and crossbeams of many pre-modern Chinese buildings. The final floor showcases Chinese approaches to reducing carbon-dioxide emissions, and is entitled “The Vision” (*di tan xingdong* 低碳行动).

The exhibitions and activities on all three of these floors, as well as along the connecting hallways that feature visions of future cities drawn by Chinese children, present a discourse of what the Chinese nation is meant to be today. This is particularly evident from the centre-piece of the exhibition, an eight-minute film that tells the success-story of economic reform in the PRC across three large screens. Throughout the six months of the Expo, the pavilion showed one of two feature films, both on the same general theme: the film “Harmony” (*Hexie* 和谐) by director Zheng Dasheng 郑大圣, and the movie “Process” (*Licheng* 历程) by director Lu Chuan 陆川.<sup>17</sup> My analysis here focuses on the latter.

“Process”, which officially carries the English title “The Road to our Beautiful Life”, tells its epic story about Chinese urbanity by using state-of-the-art technology. This includes digital color manipulation that recreates the visual aesthetics of dye transfer, which are characteristic of the Mao-era’s social-realist propaganda (cf. Landsberger 2010). It also includes slow-motion effects such as the “time-slicing” technique made popular by the Matrix movies, and split-screen editing that places related elements of the movie across the various screen. The theatre dome functions as an additional projection screen. The music score is monumental, as is the film’s subject: sometime during the late 1970s, a young Chinese man bids his father goodbye as he leaves his rural home for the city. Together with other fellow rural comrades he helps construct a stylized version of Beijing’s cityscape, along with the iconic yet anachronistic Bird’s Nest stadium constructed for the 2008 Olympics. During this endeavor, he meets his future wife, and the two gaze from the top of the Bird’s Nest across a prosperous urban China. The two protagonists have a son, who grows up in their new home of Shanghai to witness the economic rise of his motherland throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The break-neck growth of urban China is only halted by a major catastrophe: the Sichuan earthquake of 2008. The son joins the disaster relief, and in the fields of rubble rescues the woman who will become his own future wife. After the two marry and have a child, the aged great-grandfather from the opening scene visits his family. Mesmerized by the nation’s progress, he proudly holds his great-grandson as the four generations of his family come together in Shanghai. The film concludes with

images of the hypermodern metropolis, which morph into a utopian skyline, situated among jungles and waterfalls. As the camera flies through this digital scene, a caption appears, informing the viewer:

In the future, we will return to the green, we will return to nature. Our life in the city will become even more glorious.

未来，我们会回到绿色，回到自然。我们的城市生活会更美好。

Four aspects of this multi-media extravaganza are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, the feature film is designed to elicit a strong emotional response (see also the chapter “China’s Road to Revival” in this volume on the use of pathos in Chinese propaganda discourse). The film functions at an almost entirely non-verbal level, and does not confront the viewer with plot, character development, or attempts to relay a rational argument. Instead, the visitor is immersed in a (semi)-surround media environment, bombarded with visual-acoustic signals, and exposed in short order to a host of emotionally charged signs, often from opposite ends of the emotional spectrum: sadness vs. joy (a son leaving his father, a man meeting his true love, people separated by a catastrophe, people re-united, etc.); stimulation vs. tranquility (men working on loud construction sites, images of people diving through calm blue water); anxiety vs. enthusiasm (images of night-time struggle juxtaposed with images of people gazing into a bright sun-rise), and so on.<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, the eight-minute film seemingly tells a story of urban development, but actually constructs a specific discourse on modernity by tying together several ideas: (1) that time moves forward in a linear way, (2) that forward movement is tantamount to progress, and (3) that progress is a national achievement. The linearity of time is presented in three sequences that depict how time “flies by”. In each case, the central screen shows one of the characters moving forward, accompanied by a musical crescendo: the grandson running down a street in Shanghai, the same boy passing through a revolving door and emerging a grown man, and the aged great-grandfather riding a bus through Shanghai (see Figure 4).

These scenes are framed by images on the other two screens that show a quick succession of events or impressions from the respective era, and the passing years are superimposed on the screen (1978–1988 and 1990–2005 for the boy, 1980–2010 for the old man – note that 1989, the year of the Tiananmen protests, is deleted from the time-line). This includes images of industrial work (men constructing buildings, women working in factories, trains travelling forward) as well as excerpts from the central news broadcast *Xinwen Lianbo* 新闻联播 on major Chinese achievements. In the last of these sequences, as the old man travels through modern-day Shanghai, captions list important newsbytes from the past 30 years, such as “grand celebration of the PRC’s 40-year anniversary”, “27-year-old



Figure 4. The passage of time in the film *Process*

Chinese athlete Xu Haifeng wins gold medal”, “On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong returns [to China]”, “Beijing holds the 29th Olympic Games”, “our nation opens the first highway ocean bridge”, and so on. The use of nationally broadcasted news footage and phrases like “our nation” (*woguo* 我国) create a sense of shared experience, or what Anderson (2006) has called “imagined community”. It links progress directly to this community, and the fact that the film ends with a utopian vision of a hypermodern China gives this grand narrative of the nation a teleological dimension.

Thirdly, the film creates a version of modern Chinese history in which the past sixty years are essentially collapsed into thirty.<sup>19</sup> The PRC is defined through events occurring after 1978. Not only is this the year in which the young boy begins running forward through time, the final wide-screen images of hypermodern China are also superimposed with the following message: “30 years China, 30,000 new cities, 300 million new urban citizens”. The three decades of Mao’s China are only hinted at in the early sequences, which contain symbols (such as the rising sun), attires (PLA army coats), haircuts (pig-tails), gestures (poised figures gazing into the distance), and color palettes that were popular in the propaganda of that era. Yet these symbols are never explicit connection to Mao or to the events of that time, and only imply the founding of the PRC, the Great Leap, or the Cultural Revolution. One could argue that the revolutionary iconography is indeed deployed only because it is recognizable to Chinese audiences, and because the use of such imagery creates a sense of nostalgia, but not as actual signification of the first 30 years in PRC history.

Finally, the characters in “Process” are flat and function merely as templates that fit into the grand narrative, rather than individuals that shape it. The faces,

expressions, attires, and stylized settings suggest that the characters are not distinct persons, but rather stand for the Chinese people in general. They are a visual synecdoche. What is important to note, however, is that these templates only cover a sub-set of Chinese social classes: workers, soldiers, and peasants – i.e. the traditional constituency of the CCP.<sup>20</sup> Intellectuals or entrepreneurs are not represented in this film, and neither are state or Party officials.<sup>21</sup>

This feature film, despite its brevity, is representative of the entire China pavilion exhibition. Throughout the three floors, the overarching discourse is that of the Chinese nation. Not only does the pavilion lack references to the cosmopolitan Expo themes, it even abandons the inter-national discourse created outside of its walls. Instead it weaves together discourse strands on urban life, environmental protection, and historical heritage to construct a sense of community and common purpose. The protagonist in this discourse is the Chinese nation, and its antagonist, paradoxical as it may seem for an environmental exhibition that preaches harmony, is nature itself. Throughout the pavilion, the Chinese nation struggles to tame nature and battle natural disasters such as earthquakes, in the process selectively “using the past to serve the present” (*yi gu wei jin* 以古为今), and steadily moving forward towards a non-distinctive utopian destination. This discourse, as well as the communication strategies with which it is relayed to audiences, stand in stark contrast to the exhibitions in many of the other national pavilions.

## 6. Challenging the official Chinese narrative

As prominent as the Chinese discourse on modernity and the nation are throughout the Shanghai Expo, it is important to acknowledge that almost two hundred other nation-states were constructing their own discourses on these themes, and that many of these exhibits directly challenged the narrative described above. Examples include the Dutch pavilion, which represented urban space as a madhouse of haphazardly juxtaposed buildings (cf. Minter 2010b), or the Spanish pavilion, which pushed the visitor from a violent primordial pre-historic world of meteor showers and storms into a fragmented post-modern present, suggestive of a child ejected from a womb. At this particular pavilion, the staff uniforms served to directly challenge Chinese conventions: the organizers explicitly commissioned the Spanish fashion company Zara to create outfits that would defy the perceived Chinese preferences for hierarchies, military uniforms, and insignia (EI 20.07.10b).

Allow me to provide a closer analysis of one particular exhibit, i.e. the US pavilion, to show in more detail how foreign discourses are constructed in relation to the emerging Chinese narrative.<sup>22</sup> At first glance, the US pavilion deploys many

of the same communication strategies found in the China pavilion. The three-act exhibition consists of two short films, presented in state-of-the-art theatres, as well as an exhibition hall for the various commercial sponsors. The first film is split across three screens, just like the feature at the China pavilion, and the second (entitled “The Garden”) is projected onto five screens and includes live effects (or what is known as 4D, e.g. rain on screen is accompanied by a shower in the movie theatre). Both films are highly emotional, and “The Garden” in particular uses images and sound rather than verbal means to communicate its message. Also, the themes of environmental protection and urban life are tied into the broader discourse of the US nation, much like is the practice at the China pavilion.

Yet beyond these similarities, the US pavilion constructs a very different discourse of the nation. Whereas the China pavilion suggests that a nation is a community based on a shared conception of history and fate, the US pavilion presents the nation as a community of shared values (German: *Wertegemeinschaft*). This is expressed in a speech by secretary-of-state Hillary Clinton at the outset of the first film:

Ni hao! I'm Hillary Clinton, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the American people to the USA pavilion at Expo 2010. As you explore the pavilion, you will see core American values in action: diversity, innovation, and optimism.

In the following eight minutes, the viewer is introduced to these “core American values” in detail. The film consists of sequences that are built around a group of ethnically diverse boys and girls, each explaining their dream of specific activities and technologies that can create a green future. These statements are then juxtaposed with images of the technologies or activities the respective children described (such as wind energy, solar energy, or projects to create affordable homes), along with introductions to real-world applications by the pavilion's commercial sponsors (Habitat for Humanity, PepsiCo, Chevron, etc.), which adds a very strong capitalist dimension to the discourse. All throughout these up-beat sequences, the point is driven home that America stands for endless possibilities, team-work, entrepreneurial drive, and a pluralist society. This presentation is rounded off with a speech by US president Barack Obama, which places the discourse on American values into perspective:

Ni hao! Congratulations to the people of China and Shanghai for hosting this remarkable world expo, which speaks to China's rise as a strong, prosperous, and successful member of the community of nations; a nation that draws on the strength and creativity of its people. Welcome to the USA pavilion, where we are proud to showcase the spirit that has always defined us as Americans; a nation of immigrants from all corners of the world, working together with a

sense of community and common purpose to overcome adversity, and a sense of possibility and optimism that the future is what we make it, that we can build a better life for our children. Of course, these are not simply American qualities, as I said when I visited Shanghai last year. We are bound by our common humanity, and our shared curiosity. This includes the hopes we share with the people of China, and the people around the world, to work together to realize a healthy, sustainable and prosperous future. Thank you for visiting us today, and on behalf of the American people, we look forward to being your partner, and hopefully someday welcoming you and your families to the United States of America.

Two things are noteworthy at this point. Firstly, the “spirit” of America is created around strong notions of individuality and intimacy. In this film, a diverse array of individuals addresses the viewer (often directly), expressing personal wishes and dreams, all framed by the legitimating presidential statement on “our common humanity”. The message, as well as the film techniques with which it is relayed, are fundamentally different from the template community shown in the China pavilion. This impression is re-enforced in the second movie, “The Garden”, which tells the story of a little girl who tries to create a community garden in an urban back-yard, and has to motivate her neighbours to succeed. The characters in this short film are comically different from one another (a hulking bodybuilder, an old immigrant, a Chinese lady, a group of street kids, a black hardware store owner, etc.), and they each contribute by drawing on their personal strengths. Close-up camera angles, a confined *mise-en-scène*, and an acoustic guitar theme song all create a sense of intimacy, which again contrasts with the monumental style of the Chinese film “Process”.

Secondly, the discourse on American values is infused with a universal dimension, e.g. through the use of ethnically diverse characters and references to humanity, and is directly linked to China. Not only do ethnically Chinese Americans feature strongly in the two films, the pavilion entrance hall already frames the subsequent attractions by suggesting a strong Sino-American connection. While waiting to enter the film theatres, the visitors are shown scenes of Americans trying to say a simple greeting in Chinese (*ni hao, huanying guanglin Meiguo guan* 你好, 欢迎光临美国馆). The long series of comical mishaps and ultimately successful pronunciations sets the overall tone of the pavilion by suggesting that Americans will make every effort to befriend Chinese, and that the US generally takes China seriously; a sentiment further strengthened by the Chinese-language greetings of Clinton and Obama, and the president’s acknowledgement of China as “a strong, prosperous, and successful member of the community of nations”. It is within this discourse of a shared humanity that the national values of the US are sold to the dominantly Chinese audience.

## 7. Conclusion: It's a small world after all – but whose world?

The Shanghai Expo presented the world as a place in which sovereign, self-contained nation-states are at the core of political life. As I have argued in this chapter, this discourse was built into the general layout of the Expo territory, the various activities that took place during the six-month event, and the vast majority of national pavilions. Taken together, these elements communicated the idea that the world's problems should be solved inter-nationally, through the actions of international organizations, large capitalist corporations, and, most notably, national governments. Why does a sizeable group of highly diverse actors that come together at a world exhibition to communicate visions of a “Better City, Better Life” construct this particular discourse?

The reason is firstly that this message constitutes the smallest common denominator for the actors, which mainly consist of the same national governments and large corporations who this discourse legitimizes. Secondly, the actors construct this discourse within a *discursive horizon*, i.e. in overlapping institutional frameworks that limit the statements that can conceivably be made. Finally, this discourse provides a convenient way to simplify the highly complex, dynamic problems that the world faces today. It is comforting to imagine that the risks of living in a globalized world are manageable, and that governments and economic elites have everything under control. In this discourse, the capitalist modernity of the Westphalian nation-state system essentially fixes itself. This then is a message that not only appeals to the movers and shakers of the 21st century who promote it, but one that also seems plausible or even common-sensical to the nation-state citizens who have been primed with the symbols of their nationness all their lives (Billig 2009), and who are looking for simple answers to seemingly insurmountable challenges such as global warming, growing income-divides, potentially global pandemics, and new forms of violence and war.<sup>23</sup> As convincing as this message may be, it arguably comes at the expense not only of more critical ways of understanding the world, but also of alternative models to world politics, for instance trans-nationalism, cosmopolitanism, or anarchism.<sup>24</sup>

Within this discourse, the Expo also makes strong statements regarding the central position of the host country in this inter-national society. Through the layout of the Expo's miniature world, as well as through the Chinese exhibitions, the organizers squarely place the PRC at the apex of today's world. The iconic China pavilion provides a narrative that is meant to make sense of this new world order and China's role in it. The messages are carefully tailored to the audience of China's national pavilion, which is almost entirely Chinese: the exhibits and films within the pavilion draw from nostalgic symbols of the Mao era and use these to frame a story that has little to do with Mao. The discourse effectively collapses

modern Chinese history into 30 years of successful economic market reform with Chinese characteristics. This discourse reflects broader social and economic transformations that promise to rectify past humiliations of the Chinese nation at the hands of foreign imperialists and elevate the Chinese nation from a role as the perceived “sick man of Asia” to that of a major force of change in the world (cf. Callahan 2010). At the end of this transition lies China’s hypermodern, harmonious future: a green utopian destination that will be reached as the nation travels along a linear path of technological improvements and collective struggle. The recognizable signs, simple codes, and emotional messages that form this discourse of pride ultimately legitimize the state’s vision of the Chinese nation as a community that shares a common experience of modernity and a common prosperous future under the leadership of the Party.

Yet despite the prominence of this discourse, many participants at the Expo presented worldviews that clashed with the official Chinese narrative. This includes the US discourse on American value, with its emphasis on individuality and enterprise, but also the discourses of, for instance, the Spanish or Dutch pavilions with their subversive critique of Chinese modernity. This contrast between Chinese and foreign discourses highlights not only the diverging discursive positions that exist between various actors when it comes to constructing their inter-national society, but also the degree to which communication processes differ. The public relations strategies at the US, Dutch, or Spanish pavilion, for instance, are informed by the moral paradigm of the enlightenment, by political and economic liberalism, as well as by the insights of post-modern artistic movements: they reflect the general assumption that audiences are emancipated actors who actively participate in communication, that they need to be engaged at an individual level, and that they are capable of critically reviewing and ultimately appreciating diverse, complex, open-ended, and ambiguous multi-media messages.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese public relations strategy, in contrast, is informed by a different idea of communication entirely. It assumes that audiences are easily influenced and need to be carefully guided to clearly defined interpretations. While this view of human nature is not confined to the Chinese context alone,<sup>26</sup> it nevertheless has a long tradition in China, ranging back not only to the CCP’s Yan’an days and the birth of socialist realist thought reform, but also to Confucian didactics of providing models for benevolent behavior (Munro 1969).

The question remains how visitors to the Expo perceive these diverging communication paradigms, and how domineering the main discourse actually is. It is difficult to assess empirically whether the often subtle acts of resistance at certain pavilions register with Expo visitors, and whether they are able to re-shape the seemingly hegemonic discourse presented throughout the event. Future research will need to address such questions of perception if we are to understand the

social and psychological impact of intertwined, inter-cultural discourses.<sup>27</sup> From the perspective of Foucauldian discourse theory, acts of resistance may very well strengthen the dominant discourse.<sup>28</sup> Contributing to a discourse, even if to challenge it, could mean accepting (and by extension: legitimizing) its basic premises (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982:203). Following this logic, other scholars have suggested that resistance to the Expo's discourse may well be futile (Nordin 2012b), or that such resistance only takes place outside of the Expo narrative (Callahan 2012). In this view, the ways in which foreign participants embedded their discourses in the broader frame of the Expo could be interpreted as acts of re-enforcement rather than resistance. When Obama praises China as strong and prosperous, or when the Spanish pavilion designers attest that the wicker used to build the edifice "becomes the thread that links Spain and China" (España Expone 2010), the foreign discourses not only re-enforce the sense that nations are the main actors under heaven (*tianxia* 天下), but may also leave the impression that these actors have come to Shanghai to pay tribute to the new center of the world. This interpretation is made possible because the actors involved found their role in broader discursive practices acceptable and plausible, maybe even natural; this is precisely the power attributed to discourse: to naturalize specific worldviews to such an extent that they re-enforce the institutions that govern societies.

However, Foucault himself was skeptical of the idea that such processes leave no room for resistance. He ultimately argued (1978/1990: 101):

(...) discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

The analysis of foreign pavilions provided in this chapter indeed suggests that the discourse was as "fragmented" and "fragile" as Foucault's work suggests, and that this was the outcome of the complicated ways in which a multitude of actors with diverging interests produced discourse.

## Notes

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1. The analysis presented in this chapter is based on qualitative interviews with Chinese officials and foreign pavilion organizers conducted in July 2010, as well as on multi-media data

collected at the Expo site and official PR material from the pavilions. For ethical reasons, all interviewees will remain anonymous. The expo interviews are referenced here as "EI" plus the date of the conversation.

2. The idea of discourse used in this chapter stands in the tradition of Michel Foucault's later work on discourses of crime and punishment (1978/1995) as well as sexuality (1978/1990). While my analysis does not trace objects of discourse through history in the genealogical fashion that Foucault proposed, it nevertheless shares the same ontological and epistemological premises. For introductions to Foucauldian discourse theory, see Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982) and Howarth (2000).
3. See Sperber's work for an evolutionary psychology explanation of how human communication makes use of relatively stable "basic concepts" (1996:69) as well as collectively accepted knowledge to create the kind of "shared representations" (ibid., 82) that I here refer to as *discourse*.
4. I have adapted this term from the work of the German critical discourse analyst Siegfried Jäger (2004:160–163).
5. The reason why messages are not decoded arbitrarily by recipients is in part because meanings are *sticky* in the sense that they may shift over time, but only gradually and within certain boundaries that are defined by social and psychological factors (cf. Sperber 1996: 106–112). What makes communication *mass*-communication is that in order to reach as large an audience as possible it relays its messages in ways that radically reduce the chance of misinterpretation (Carroll 1998:192–192). This is achieved by layering signs with similar meanings in different modes to create redundancies and guide the recipient to use a specific code in his or her interpretation (cf. Barthes 1977; Eco 1979 explains the relevance of *code* in communication processes).
6. Methodologically, this makes it necessary to go beyond discourse-analytical approaches that focus purely on written or spoken text (for prominent examples, see Fairclough 1995 as well as Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999). Instead, the raw data of images, words, sounds, and communication dynamics should be processed in what I call *multi-media protocols*, which list the various elements and code them for specific discourse strands (cf. Korte 1999 for information on the sub-category of sequence and shot protocols used in the analysis of standard 2D motion pictures). Qualitatively or quantitatively significant patterns and relationships in the data can then be analyzed in detail, summarized for presentation and, where appropriate, represented in graphic form (see Müller 2003 and Kress & van Leeuwen 2001, 2006 for similar methodological approaches to visual analysis; Tufte 1997 and Wood 1992 each provide critical reviews of different ways to visualize data).
7. See also the official webpage of the Shanghai Expo, which lists eight functional departments within the Expo Bureau, "including office, liaison department, PR department, market development department, construction and coordination department, HR plan department, planning accounting department and legal affairs department" (Shiboju 2010).
8. This concept has become central to the current administration's propaganda strategy. For information on its history, and its relevance to mainland Chinese politics, see Barmé (2009:78), Brady (2008:58–60), and Callahan (2008:758).
9. All translations throughout this chapter are the author's, unless stated otherwise.

10. The five themed pavilions were entitled Urbanian Pavilion (*chengshiren guan* 城市人馆), Pavilion of City Being (*chengshi shengming guan* 城市生命馆), Pavilion of Urban Planet (*chengshi diqiu guan* 城市地球馆), Pavilion of Footprints (*chengshi zuji guan* 城市足迹馆), and Pavilion of Future (*chengshi weilai guan* 城市未来馆). Xu (2010) provides detailed information on the exhibitions, and the official expo website offers virtual tours through the five pavilions.
11. While not unique to the Shanghai Expo, several national pavilion organizers I interviewed for this project felt that the passport idea was particularly popular at this event. The stamp-initiative created a flow of visitors who often ignored the actual exhibitions entirely and instead rushed through the pavilions at break-neck speed with the sole purpose of collecting another visa stamp. In some cases this behaviour prompted PR teams to move their stamp operation outside of the actual pavilions in order to avoid stampedes of visa-seekers within the exhibitions (EI 13.07.10). For another analysis of the Shanghai Expo passports, see Nordin (2012a).
12. The lot space for China reflects the official figure of 160,000 m<sup>2</sup> (Xinhua 2008). This includes the actual China pavilion, the park area surrounding it, the Hong Kong and Macao pavilions, as well as the provincial exhibition spaces located in a large hall within the plateau's foundation.
13. Compare the German and Japanese exhibition spaces, respectively, at the previous two World Expositions (floor plans, images, and statistics are available on the official websites: [www.expo2000.de](http://www.expo2000.de) and <http://www.expo2005.or.jp/en/>).
14. It is not my intention to provide a detailed comparison of different World Exhibitions here. For discussions of Expo history, see Gilbert (2009), Jackson (2008), Roche (2000).
15. This may have been due to the enormous difficulties visitors were confronted with when trying to obtain a ticket to the exhibits (cf. Tian & Huang 2010). At the time of my own visit, it entailed cuing at the Expo entrance as early as 5 am. In addition, the number of tickets available to those visitors cuing early was still highly limited; at least one third had been reserved for groups (China Daily 2010) and was likely issued directly to members of state and Party agencies, causing an additional bottle neck at the site.
16. For an official introduction to the exhibits and movie analyzed in this section, see Zhu (2010).
17. At the time of writing, both films were available on Chinese websites such as *youku*, *tudou*, and *sina*.
18. For an introduction to various emotions and their relation to one another, see Neuman et al. (2007).
19. For other examples of the discursive practice to “smooth over” historiographic ruptures, see Barmé (1999: 15), Callahan (2010), as well as Hwang & Schneider (2011).
20. The repeated evocation of model workers, peasants, and soldiers has a long tradition in Chinese communist propaganda (Thøegersen 2008). The most famous of these templates is arguably the model worker Lei Feng 雷锋 (for an evaluation see Zhang 1999).
21. The film “Harmony” in fact features both intellectuals as well as entrepreneurs, and also contains segments that show foreigners or deal with culture (for instance calligraphy and Beijing Opera). Also, this other feature film does not make use of the social-realist iconography

that is so characteristic for “Process”. The two films nevertheless share several commonalities: they both depict history as a series of joyous moments (complete with time-lines), conclude with images of a green utopian landscape, and present similar discourses on progress, community, and common heritage.

22. For more detail on this pavilion and its exhibitions, see the official website [www.usa-pavilion2010.com](http://www.usa-pavilion2010.com). The controversial history of this pavilion is discussed by Minter (2010a).

23. It is beyond this chapter to debate ways to manage the problems that globalization processes have created in the world. For an overview of the general debate, see the contributions in Held & McGrew (2003). Beck (2007) has examined what it means to govern in an age of global risks.

24. For a conceptualization of transnational politics from the perspective of the English School of International Relations, see Buzan (2004). Zürn (1998) provides a continental perspective on the same topic. For a roadmap to a cosmopolitan ethics, see Appiah (2006). Held (2002) offers a summary and critical appraisal of cosmopolitan ideas on world governance. Finally, Noam Chomsky presented a recent anarchist take on world politics during a lecture in Amsterdam (Chomsky 2011).

25. Jenkins (2006, 2008) has explored the ways in which audiences actively engage with diverse media content. Clay Shirky has demonstrated in one of his TED lecture how the US administration under President Obama is adopting a PR strategy that anticipates active, media-savvy audiences (Shirky 2009).

26. This view that human minds are mouldable through media content also informs debates in Europe and the US: cognitive psychologist Pinker (2002) has reviewed such views in Western philosophy, social science, culture, and politics, and has criticized what he calls a misguided “blank slate” conception of the human mind, and Carroll (1998) has similarly questioned such rationale from a mass-communication perspective.

27. See the focus-group research by Stockmann et al. (2010) for avenues that such inquiry could pursue.

28. As Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982:167) write: “...the belief that one is resisting repression, whether by self-knowledge or by speaking the truth, supports domination, for it hides the real working of power”.

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PART 2

## Media discourse



# Discourse of journalism and legitimacy in post-reform China

Jingrong Tong

University of Leicester

This chapter discusses how Chinese journalism defends and maintains its legitimacy through the construction and contestation of discourses of journalism after the 1980s. Three types of journalism discourse have emerged alongside social and ideological shifts in Chinese society since the 1980s reform. Their appearance has accompanied the declining legitimacy of Party journalism. Journalistic discursive practices, such as new genres of reporting and self-reflexive writing about journalism, have been invented and developed by journalistic practitioners and news organisations. Through discursive practices of this kind, discursive statements of journalism have been forged, redefining the practices, roles, and values of Chinese journalism. These new sets of journalism discourse distinguish journalism first from propaganda and later from amateur citizen writing. In doing so, the boundaries of Chinese journalism are constructed and maintained, which are often thought of as important for retaining journalism's legitimacy.

**Keywords:** Chinese journalism; journalism legitimacy; journalism discourse

## 1. Introduction

Journalism's legitimacy was officially granted to Chinese journalism by the China's Communist Party (CCP) due to a once-symbiotic relationship between journalism and the Party. Before the 1980s, Party journalism possessed a dominant position in the media market in China. Chinese journalism worked as a mouthpiece of the Party and was an integral part of China's political administrative system. The ruling Party expected Chinese journalism to bridge the top and the bottom of Chinese society by mediating information between them (de Burgh 2003). Journalists wrote reports in support of the State's policies and decisions, while the latter offered beneficial resources ranging from news sources to financial subsidies

in return for journalism's support (Tong 2011). This partisan nature of journalism drove and allowed it to claim legitimacy from the ruling Party. Journalism thus achieved a legitimate identity as an authoritative producer and sender of information.

This journalism's legitimacy nevertheless has encountered challenges arising from the changing media landscape since the 1980s. First, Party journalism's dominance in the media market has declined in parallel with the increasing importance of non-Party journalism. One consequence of this is the erosion of the normative system of Party journalism that defines what 'good journalism' is. Second, more recently, the rise of 'citizen journalism' has further undermined the legitimacy of Chinese journalists as an authoritative information producer and disseminator. The application of new media technologies, especially the Internet and its Web 2.0 tools, enables ordinary citizens to produce and share information of their own. Such mass self-communication (Castells 2009) democratises communication and decentralises journalists' control over information production and dissemination.

This chapter examines the evolution of journalism discourse in China from a historical and discursive approach. On one hand, it looks into the social and political conditions of sequential historical stages since the 1980s. On the other, this chapter scrutinises a variety of journalism discourses emerging through these stages and the way in which these accounts of journalism have been used as discursive strategies to validate and defend the legitimacy of journalism. This chapter will start with discussions on the importance of discourse and legitimacy for Chinese journalism, offering a conceptual framework for the remainder of this chapter. The next part reviews Chinese journalism's legitimacy in the pre-reform era and then discusses the challenges emerging since the reform and the corresponding responses of Chinese journalism. The final part focuses on addressing the challenges brought by the proliferation of new media technologies to journalistic legitimacy and the discursive strategies Chinese journalism has adopted to deal with the tough situation.

It is argued that the discourse of journalism in China has transformed since the 1980s. Its transformation trajectory matches that of Chinese society. Discursive formations of journalism are evident in the process and contribute to the maintenance of journalism's legitimacy. Discursive formations are a range of discursive statements about the roles, practices and values of journalism (Ekström 2002; Clayman 2002; Fairclough 1989). Different types of media discourse and legitimating resources can generate various discursive statements of journalism. Legitimating resources refer to journalists' claims to truth and knowledge, professional norms such as objectivity, and discursive authority of story-telling. Media discourse includes news reports and commentaries on events, news media's self-reflexive comments on the roles and occupational ideals of journalism, journalistic

practitioners' explanations of specific news reporting and their comments on citizens' participation and story-telling. In this sense, media discourse has potentially become a site where journalism defends its legitimacy both through the formation of journalistic discourses and through competing for the discursive authority of story-telling. Such contestation makes journalism's legitimacy a dynamic process.

## 2. Discourse and legitimacy

Why do discourse and legitimacy matter for Chinese journalism? In part this is because journalism needs legitimacy to justify practice and increase its professional prestige and status in society (Aldridge & Evetts 2003; Beam 1990). Discourse enables journalism to do so.

Legitimacy is the justification of acts of certain organisations, institutions, or individuals in a society and makes these acts acceptable by other members within that society (White 2005). The validity of legitimacy means the high recognition of certain social members. For rulers, legitimacy is a capacity of implementing the will of rulers, making rules and decisions acceptable to the ruled and uniting the ruled (Gilley 2005). Social organisations seek coherence between social values and values embodied in their organisational behaviours in order to obtain legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975). An occupation needs to gain and keep up legitimacy for maintaining its professional status, prestige and boundaries (Johnson 1972; Macdonald 1995).

Legitimacy itself is normative and discursive. It is a dynamic process instead of a static result and thus always needs to be maintained (Clayman 2002). On the other hand, formations of discourse of individuals, institutions, and organisations help them establish up and maintain their legitimacy in that society. Discourse is thought of as an instrument defining what is meaningful (Foucault 1979; Foucault 1980; Gelcich et al. 2005). Meaning is constructed in discourse and by discourse in which social actors construct and contest legitimacy so that they can make sense of themselves and others can make sense of them (Black 2008). There is thus a close link between legitimacy and discourse.

Like any other occupations, journalism needs legitimacy to guarantee an access to power and to achieve the trust of readers (Clayman 2002). Legitimacy of journalism is about the public image of news media and journalism, about the relationship between journalism and news consumers, and about the social status of journalism. There are two main ways for journalism to retain legitimacy. First, journalism gains legitimacy through constructing discourse of professional norms and making it recognized by practitioners and the public (Schudson 1978; Schudson 2001). Journalism practitioners accept professional norms as their occupational identity, influencing the way they do their job and their images presented

to the public, while the public acknowledge them as norms for the legitimate practice of journalism (Elsaka 2005; Beam 1990). Second, legitimacy can be obtained through successfully presenting journalism as a reliable story-teller, which is journalistic authority (Clayman 2002). This is authority to define reality in a way that can be perceived as being true or credible. Both professional norms and journalistic authority in describing and defining reality are discursive formations of journalistic values, which help clarify the boundaries of journalistic practices and strengthen the cultural authority of news media.

The post-reform Chinese society is a contested site in which a wide range of social actors struggle for their own conditions, action justification, legitimate status, and future. To achieve this, beneficial discourse is what these social actors endeavour to construct and control. In the reform era, domestic social conflicts and problems have been exaggerated as economic growth has been made as a top priority over other important issues, such as polity health and social justice (Gilboy & Read 2008). What accompanies Beijing's abandonment of political reform after 1989 is an increase in governance issues surrounding political corruption and scandal. Accordingly, the ruling CCP has been found facing a crisis of legitimacy, and thus strategically constructing a spectrum of discourses to regain its legitimacy, such as a discourse of victimhood, that of pragmatic nationalism, a Confucian discourse, narratives of economic management, and so on (Hsu 2001; Renwick & Cao 1999; Cao 2007). Meanwhile, social organisations and individuals also make an effort to construct and steer certain discourse to cast their influences. For example, environmental NGOs, citizen activists, and media, have strived to establish a legitimate environmental discourse in an attempt to influence the government's policy and decision making (Yang & Calhoun 2007; Yang 2005). Scholars have tried to promote some new discourses in order to legitimate their intellectual views (Sausmikat 2003). Although the Internet has enabled the emergence of 'civic discourse' constructed by the ordinary public, the government has figured out a way to deal with it (MacKinnon 2008). Against this backdrop, Chinese journalism needs to make efforts to protect its legitimate status and to justify its role and practice in post-reform China. It competes with subjects such as governments, critics, and news consumers for the dominant position in information production and dissemination.

### **3. The once-unquestioned legitimacy of Chinese journalism questioned in the post-reform era**

As Communist journalists within China's "Commandist media system" (Lee 2005; Lee 1990), Chinese journalists once had a unique and unquestioned legitimacy (Tong 2006). The integration into the political administrative system facilitated

Chinese journalism to lay claim to exclusive legitimacy of information production and communication. Such a legitimacy was authorised by the ruling political Party of China (Tong 2011). Being integral part of this system not only meant journalistic work was part of Party work but also journalism practitioners were allocated personnel positions within the system. The dependence on the Party benefited and even guaranteed the privileged status of journalism (de Burgh 2003). The prestige and privilege nevertheless was achieved at a price of sacrificing some significant journalistic values such as autonomy. There was a taken-for-granted view that saw the Party's journalists as legitimate and reliable to publish and distribute information and interpret policies. This socio-politically shaped view was embedded in both the self-identity of journalism practitioners and the public eye.

After the reform, however, this unquestionable legitimacy of Chinese journalism was questioned for two main reasons. The first refers to the diversity of social thoughts and journalism appearing in media marketisation. Internationally the Communist ideology was dying and the controversial 'end of history' thesis hailed the triumph of Western liberal democracy (He 2000; Fukuyama 1989). Domestically in China, diverse value systems, such as liberalism<sup>1</sup> and neo-leftism,<sup>2</sup> arose alongside the launch of non-Party news media that created new space for shaping public and intellectual discourses.

In the media reform, though still claiming the ownership of news media, the Party withdrew financial subsidies for news media and required them to be financially self-supported. In the media market, Party media was (and still is) a loser, which relied on offspring commercial news media for survival (Zhao 1998). Since the reform, the previous monopoly of Party journalism in media market has gradually collapsed. Encouraged by the Party, non-Party commercial news media have succeeded in the market. News media of this kind usually are launched and owned by Party organs, but predominantly cover popularly-oriented and profit-driven content. Their pursuit of profits pushes them to meet the needs of the market. Diverse genres of news were available to the public in the time back in the mid-1990s. At the same time, the employment of journalists was no longer tied to the system and journalists started to be hired outside the political administrative system. The shift in media content and recruitment resulted in changes in the norms of journalistic practice, news organisations' requirements on journalists, and reading experience of readers. Non-Party journalism thus developed rapidly parallel to the decline of Party journalism.

After entering the new millennium, these tendencies have been becoming increasingly prominent. With a continuous decline in readership, Party journalism has given away to non-Party journalism in relation to dominance in the media market. Non-Party news has appeared and popularised. The personnel reform in news media has allowed a large number of news practitioners to be employed on contract basis outside the political administrative system. The organisational requirements

and assessment of journalistic practices have been further reformed and changed (Tong 2011). All of these are questioning the normative value system of Party journalism and what 'good journalism' should be and do. Party journalism thus has lost the basis to define the roles, practices, and values of Chinese journalism in general.

The principles of non-Party journalism are different from those of Party journalism. Party journalism requires journalists to speak for the Party and give coverage to Party leaders, while non-Party commercial news media expect journalists to give a voice to ordinary people and pay attention to people's life (Zhao 2000). After having read Party news for decades, Chinese readers quickly turn to soft, people-centred, amusing, and hybrid news reports produced by non-Party journalists. For journalism practitioners, the different expectations reflect diverse values and norms regarding journalism performance and the quality of news. The changing standards of journalistic practices urge journalists to move from being loyal Party servants toward professional journalists (Tong & Sparks 2009). Consequently, the discourse of journalism is no longer monolithic, but diversified among different groups of journalists who have distinct relations to the political administrative system (Lin & Zhao 2008; Zhou 2000).

The second reason for the problematic legitimacy of Party journalism originates from the crisis the ruling Party confronts over the legitimacy of its rule in the economic reform process. The legitimacy of CCP rule itself becomes problematic, inevitably leading to the waning confidence of the public in Party journalism. This worsens the declining legitimacy of Party journalism. The reform has resulted in a rapid economic growth as well as enlarging social inequalities. From the 1990s, Chinese society has become increasingly polarized and social grievances are accumulating, particularly when those lower-class people are excluded from accessing the majority of social sources (Li 1996; Zhang & Kanbur 2010). Social justice is missing as a result of the often flawed and opaque judicial system. Social riots have frequently broken out since the end of 1990s (AgenceFrancePresse 2005). The incomplete social security net has left a feeling of insecurity in Chinese society (Lee et al. 2006). On top of these, government policies, such as those relating to government coercive land expropriation (*zhengfu qiangxing zhengdi*) in rural areas and house demolishing (*chaiqian*) in urban cities, show the intertwined interests of and the clientelist relationship between governments and businesses, which further remove people's trust from governments. Under such circumstances, it is not surprised to see the credibility of Party journalism questioned, not merely because it represents the ruling Party, but because its overwhelmingly positive coverage is absolutely different from what the public see in real life. There is a gap between the representation of reality by Party journalism and the reality the public experience. This gap exacerbates doubts about journalism credibility and thus threatens the legitimacy of Party journalism.

#### 4. Discursive formations and re-constructing journalism's legitimacy

The re-construction of the legitimacy of Chinese journalism has gone through several phases in the post-reform era of 30 years. Journalism's legitimacy in these phases has been featured with various discursive formations of journalistic values. The forming of new discourses of journalism has begun since the 1980s when liberalists advocated the desire for 'journalism reform' and 'journalism freedom' in the liberalism movement that reached a peak around the end of the 1980s (Lin & Zhao 2008; Tong 2006). The failure of 1989 movement nevertheless silenced the cry. After the event, the liberalisation discourse of journalism that advocated journalism freedom was gradually replaced by a populist discourse that was promoted by and became popularised among a large number of non-Party commercial newspapers and TV programmes across China in the 1990s. Such an anti-elitist populist discourse thereafter progressively gave way to a professionalism discourse that promoted the ideas of 'objectivity', 'independence' and 'social responsibility' in the new century. This system of values returns to the traditional intellectualism of intellectuals as well as the elitism of journalism that defines the role of journalists as being torchbearers who pass on knowledge and truth to and enlighten ordinary people.

##### 4.1 Liberalisation discourse in the 1980s

After the Cultural Revolution, with media commercialization and the support of the liberal-minded CCP leaders,<sup>3</sup> Chinese journalism desperately cried for 'journalism reform' in order to achieve 'journalistic freedom', and endeavoured to shake off the control of the government (Zhao 1998). Whether journalism should be guided by 'Party principle' (*dangxing*) or 'People principle' (*renmingxing*) was the core question hotly debated among journalists, intellectuals and politicians (Tong 2006; Zhao 1998). Sticking to 'Party principle' and placing it in a privileged position over 'People principle' is what Party journalism requires journalists to do, while the liberalization discourse of journalism instead gives a priority on 'People principle' that refuses 'Party principle' should go before 'People principle' (Tong 2006).

'Party principle' means the Party has the leadership of journalism and journalism should promote the Party's policies (Ding et al. 1997). This is a function of an 'ideological state apparatus' in the Althusserian terms. The CCP first officially articulated this principle in the reform of the *Liberation Daily* (*jiefang ribao*) in 1942. 'Party principle' thereafter had been the principle guideline for running press and practicing journalism. 'People principle' is another notion that argues newspapers and journalism should reflect the people's opinions, attitudes and lives. The reform of the *People Daily* (*renmin ribao*) in 1956 is regarded as

a milestone for the shift of Party press' attention from only 'Party principle' to both 'Party principle' and 'People principle'. However, at the latter half of 1957, the 'anti-right' movement<sup>4</sup> stopped the new tendency by regarding 'People principle' as a Capitalist concept. 'People principle' was not mentioned until 1979, when the Cultural Revolution just went to an end.

After 1979, the situation radically changed: 'People principle' was put above 'Party principle' in the heated debate among intellectuals and journalists, especially before the occurrence of the 1989 event (Zhao 1998). The liberalisation tendency that favours 'People principle' and 'media freedom' however was stopped immediately when the Party leaders who were sympathetic to the liberal-oriented reform, e.g. Zhao Zhiyang and Hu Yaobang, were defeated in the 1989 turmoil. After quenching the protest, Jiang Zeming and Li Ruihuan stressed that Party press should obey 'Party principle' above all and 'Party principle' is indeed in accordance with 'People principle', which means serving the Party is seen as equivalent to serving the people.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the liberalisation discourse of journalism was suppressed and gone with the wind of conservative thought prevailing in top-down political discourse.

#### 4.2 Populist discourse in the 1990s

The liberalization tendency was soon replaced by a prominent rise of populist discourse of journalism in the 1990s. This discourse certainly fits the politically conservative nature of the post-1989 Chinese society that prioritises economic development but overlooks political reform. This is journalism's instinctive reaction to the collapse of the international Communist Bloc, the failure of domestic political reform and the rise of commercialism. Three contextual features account for the rise of populist rhetoric: (1) a-political tendency prevailing in political and public discourse, (2) officially-encouraged commercialism that prioritises money-making as if money were the sole value and that goes hand in hand with consumerism, as well as (3) an illusion of 'populist politics'<sup>6</sup> that political authorities use to establish a new state-populace relationship that respects the will of the people.

The 1990s has seen the booming of domestic consumption market, the flourishing of advertising, and the proliferation of non-Party news media. Various new forms of news reports that focus on ordinary people and a populist discourse of journalism have been gradually developed (Sun 2008). According to Sun (2008), the populist discourse of journalism differentiates itself from the discourse associated with Party journalism and elitism journalism. The differentiation indicates the changing State-populace relationship. Multiple new genres of news reports, including soft news about ordinary people's stories and experience, service-based news that provides a variety of information, reportage that mixes novel and news,

in-depth reports using literacy writing techniques, and critical reports that target at revealing daily problems that ordinary people are facing, such as the bad quality of products, the wrongdoings of merchandises, and social injustice (Tong 2011). Similarities among these genres of reports include a focus on ordinary people, a sense of humanity, and a rise of human stories, vivid narratives, sensationalism, and visualisation of news.

The changes in news reporting in the 1990s have reconfigured journalism discourse. The story-telling devices, such as textual narratives and rhetorics, of these genres of news reports are thought of as steering away from official dominant Communist discourse and instead inclining to populist discourse. Such populist discourse that is anti-elitism in nature pays attention to the interests and daily lives of ordinary readers. The sympathy reflected in news reports toward lower class and disadvantaged people places journalism on the people's side, which is called as 'literati tradition' in terms of Lin (Lin 2010). Populist discourse legitimates journalism because of the care and respect given to the needs of ordinary people, speaking up for them with an aim of solving their problems. This is a return of "People principle" with a precondition that "Party principle" needs to be respected. Populist discourse integrates the market logic with the humanity and intellectual sense of journalists. This discourse not only reflects in tabloid newspapers such as *Huaxi Metropolis* (*huaxi dushibao*), but also is prominently evidenced in avant-garde news media such as *Southern Weekend* (*nanfang zhoumo*).

There is nevertheless a paradox in this discourse. On one hand, this kind of discourse is an embodiment of a-political tendency that cares more about peoples lives than serious politics such as political reform. This is a result of the post-1989 social psychological trauma and a celebration of the triumph of consumerism in Chinese society. On the other, the links between journalists and ordinary people are fitting the Confucian intellectual tradition of Chinese journalists and a commitment journalists make to the public, which is what Chinese journalists mean by 'social responsibility' (Xie 2008). This is thus echoing the social responsibility of the Confucian intellectual tradition<sup>7</sup> in which intellectuals are expected to express people's joy and sorrow on behalf of people.

### 4.3 Professionalism discourse in the 21st century

Nevertheless, such a populist discourse has increasingly integrated into a new set of professionalism discourse of journalism that advocates the American-style ideals of 'objectivity', 'balance', and 'independence' in the 21st century. The new system of journalism values is established in response to the needs of news media and journalism, dealing with political censorship as well as the development of

professional consciousness of journalism. News media and journalists that breach the bottom line of the Party often receive political punishment. This pushes them to seek for a politically safe way of practicing non-Party journalism. At the same time, Chinese journalists who are increasingly influenced by Western journalism paradigms and journalist role models are developing their consciousness of professionalism in their daily journalistic practices (Yong & Lee 2009; Pan & Chan 2003). Classic concepts of journalism in the American professional journalism model, especially 'objectivity and neutrality', have been adopted by non-Party journalism, especially investigative journalism, to distinguish them from Party journalism as professional journalism. This image of professional journalism allows Chinese journalism a more legitimate status (Zhao 1998; Tong 2011; Tong 2006; Sæther 2008).

What accompanies the appearance of the new set of values is the emergence of investigative journalism in specific news organisations across China. Investigative journalism has started developing in this land and received extensive support from news organisations since the mid-1990s. In the 1990s, investigative journalism embodies itself in the populist discourse of journalism, showing obvious sympathy toward people from social bottom and heavily criticising social injustice. Such compassion and criticism is sensational as well as socially responsible. In the new century, investigative journalism has been institutionalised and is difficult to be completely proscribed even during politically harsh periods of time (Tong & Sparks 2009). Critical investigative reports have expanded the range of the topics to include some fundamental social problems, such as problems with government policies and bureaucratic implementations of these policies. The prominent effects of critical reports, such as those of the report of the Sun Zhigang event,<sup>8</sup> have increased the public's cognition and recognition of the role of journalism. Political authorities however never give up their control over journalism and therefore news organisations making over-brave investigative reports are often punished. Paying too much sympathy to socio-politically disadvantaged people does not help news organisations that encourage investigative journalism to achieve sustainable development (Tong & Sparks 2009). There is thus an urgent need for these news organisations to seek for a solution.

The Sun Zhigang event reporting in 2003 sets up a new paradigm for journalism practitioners. Either its reporters or critics attribute the success of the reporting largely to the objective reporting of the event. Objectivity in the report is believed to allow facts to speak loudly, while no viewpoints and judgements of reporters are presented.<sup>9</sup> This helps the reporters to circumvent the possible immediate punishment from the authority. This is almost the first time that journalists deliberately and clearly state 'objectivity' and 'let facts speak for themselves', which implies that journalists have realised the importance of objectivity.

This statement of objectivity is expressed in media interviews with the reporters and editors of the Sun Zhigang event and their reflexive articles published either on their blogs or in media coverage. A prominent example of this is in an interview with *the people.com.cn*, Zhuang Shenzhi, the then deputy Editor-in-Chief of the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, commented that the Sun Zhigang reports let facts speak for themselves and very objectively and calmly reflected the event *per se* so that the reports were sensational but flawless (free from being punished for the brave reporting). According to him, objectivity ensured the success of this report and suggested a new way of successfully practicing investigative journalism.<sup>10</sup>

Journalistic practitioners and academics started criticising the grassroots populist tendency reflected in the reports by saying that it impaired the objectivity of the reports that journalists should stick to (Xie 2008).<sup>11</sup> Especially some pioneer journalists and news organisations realised the danger of being populist, which is humane but sensational and even 'irrational'. The reflection on populist discourse and the clash between the two types of discourse of journalism were prominently reflected in several heated debates on particular news reports, including a series of reports on the A-Xing incident<sup>12</sup> in the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, in the early 21st century. The reports on the A-Xing event were written from a perspective that justified the brutal killing. Instead of merely presenting the facts about what happened in the event, the reports contextualised the killing and regarded social factors as responsible for the tragedy. This series of reports triggered fierce debates among journalists and critics on whether the judgement made by the journalist in the reports and the sympathy the journalist showed to A-Xing was ethically appropriate.

A new set of professional norms that centres around 'social responsibility', 'objectivity', 'revealing truth', and 'autonomy' is gradually taking a dominant position among these diversified value systems in the 21st century. The new discourse about journalism mixes populist discourse and American journalistic professionalism discourse. It is fed to the public predominantly through the large amount of hybrid media texts that stress objectivity. It is also articulated publicly through news reporting of social-problems-related topics in critical news media such as the *Southern Weekend*, the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, and the *Caijing* magazine. Reports of this kind redefine how journalists should do their job, what journalism should provide its readers with and which role journalism should play in society. This set of news values fits the concurrent social reality in China and people's expectation of the responsibility of journalism. It even echoes the intellectual willingness of Chinese journalists to save the nation and enlighten the people as well as the desire for 'independence' and 'truth' as expressed in liberal journalism appearing more than a hundred years ago in post-feudal China (Tong 2011; Mackinnon 1997).

#### 4.4 Self-promotion of journalism's legitimacy discourse

Discourse of Chinese journalism is thus a set of statements defining journalism values, practices, and social functions, which is constructed in a dynamic rather than a fixed and static process. Apart from news coverage, the construction of new value systems and the achievement of public recognition have benefited from social thoughts such as the liberalism thought in the 1980s. It has also benefited from the self-description and reflexive discourse about journalism constructed by both individual journalists and news organisations. This kind of description and self-reflexive writing about journalism has been made in many occasions including mainstream media coverage, online self-publishing platforms and journalism journals such as the *Southern Media Studies* (Lin 2009). Initiated by both public interest and private desire for profits, news organisations promote journalistic professional norms and an image of public apparatus. For example, a wide range of news organisations explain and claim certain professional norms through launching organisational slogans and publishing statements on the role of journalism in Journalist Festivals in every November (Tong 2006). Such professional norms and discourses can be seen as constructing professional ideals for journalists and make them accept the ideals as their own, which is the identity of news organisations and journalists (Elsaka 2004). News organisations hope their journalists follow the ideals to practice journalism and also hope the public accept them as legitimate in order to polish up their own images in the marketplace.

For journalists, they also frequently describe their work and state their ideals in various platforms, such as accepting peer interviews and self-publishing articles on their blogs, such as Fu Jianfeng's blog and Jian Guangzhou's blog articles<sup>13</sup> after the reporting of Sanlu Scandal. Such descriptions and claims clearly tell the public what role and professional claims journalism has (Lin & Li 2010; Lin 2009). Besides, journalists who have made successful investigations for their reports and who have been punished by the CCP for their brave investigation and publication often are described as heroes and paid respects to and sometimes even given worship (Tong 2011).

#### 5. Further challenges and discursive contests in new media era

The legitimacy of journalism aims at maintaining the journalism's discursive authority in story-telling (Clayman 2002). This type of discursive authority of Chinese journalism is facing a new challenge occurring in the hypermedia (new media) environment in the new century. This challenge is facilitated by the application of new media technologies and by the emergence of amateur citizen reporters.

Chinese journalism is found to use the professionalism discourse outlined above to cope with the situation by differentiating professional journalism from amateur citizen reporting.

China has witnessed a wide spread of new media technologies<sup>14</sup> and a rapid expansion of new media markets that have changed the media environment and cultural conditions of the society. The traits in the structure of the Internet technology, such as decentralisation and interactivity (Flew 2005; Castells 2009), has endowed the computer-literate and able-to-pay public with the opportunity to produce and disseminate information. By using online tools, the once passive audience now can make comments on the happenings in society, produce and reproduce stories of their own and of others.

The 'self-communication' format of citizen participation and amateur storytelling itself has already had an impact on the legitimacy of journalism as authoritative story-teller. Apart from the blurring of boundaries between professional journalists and amateurs, the impacts of self-communication on journalism's legitimacy come from two perspectives. First, user-generated-content (UGC) has become vital to the construction of social discourse that interprets social issues and events and influences their development. UGC has demonstrated itself a strong pushing force for the evolvement of social events in recent years arranging from the Sun Zhigang case and health communication in the SARS epidemic<sup>15</sup> in 2003, to the Xiamen Walking event<sup>16</sup> in 2006, the Guangzhou Walking protest<sup>17</sup> in 2009, to more recent the Li Gang-gate Scandal<sup>18</sup> and the death of Qian Yunhui<sup>19</sup> in 2010. In these events the extensive application of new media technologies influenced the way the events developed and even pushed governments to respond to these events. In this sense, UGC is taking over the pride of being custodians of public interest and social justice away from mainstream journalism.

Secondly, if compared with free publishing on the Internet, traditional journalism is limited by the institutionalised conventions of news production, such as CCP's news censorship on journalism, traditional criteria for news values, and corporate interests of news organisations, as well as, the constraints of sources, such as the failure of getting hold of crucial information and the lack of access to news scenes. In some cases, information has already been distributed over the Internet or through mobile SMS before being covered in mass media and even sets news agenda for mainstream media. The interference of political power in the journalistic practice of mass media or the collaboration between two has led to the distrust of the public in traditional journalism and mass media, as exemplified in the event of Songhuajiang Pollution<sup>20</sup> in 2005 (Hu 2009). When the 'rumours' distributed by UGC turn out to be even more credible than the 'truth' revealed in mass media, UGC will undoubtedly pose challenges to the role of traditional journalism as an authoritative story-teller.

Mainstream journalism endeavours to integrate UGC into its journalistic practice in an attempt to reduce UGC's impact on its discursive authority. Journalism does so by turning UGC into never-ending news sources for its own practice. This practice treats UGC as original material for journalistic practice rather than as independent and credible stories. For example, news outlets, like the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, treat online information and discussions as news resources (Tong & Sparks 2009; Tong 2007; Xin 2010). Professional journalists check the facts presented by UGC and re-produce stories. This is a strategy with which Chinese journalism actively makes good use of its professionalism discourse that claims 'objectivity' and 'accuracy' to construct a discourse about UGC. In such a discourse, UGC is portrayed as unreliable and its credibility needs to be checked by the professional journalistic practices of mainstream news media. In contrast, traditional journalism presents itself as an authoritative story-teller whose practice is guided by professional standards and who has access to authoritative news sources. Stories can only be credible after being checked and gate-kept by traditional journalism and news media. In many cases, such as the case of Nailhouse,<sup>21</sup> the case of Huanan Tiger,<sup>22</sup> the Pengshui Poem case,<sup>23</sup> information originally provided or stories told in the virtual social space on the Internet can only get into the mainstream political discourse and be accepted by the general public as credible, after having been justified by traditional news media (Tong 2011).

UGC's narratives and tones about certain events do not always stay harmonious with those in traditional journalism. In some cases, there are even fierce clashes of different narrations of events respectively given by UGC and journalism. When disputes appear over which narrative—the one offered by traditional journalism or that provided by 'citizen journalism'—is more credible and authoritative, the occupation of journalism as a whole collectively accuses UGC of being unreliable and lacking professional standard. An amalgam, bringing together news media and journalism and including news reports, commentaries, even articles in journalism journals as well as articles on journalists' blogs, criticises UGC as rumours lacking credibility and objectivity. While UGC casts doubts about the credibility of narratives given by journalists, the latter adopt professional norms to refute such criticism and to counter-attack UGC's account of reality as unreliable and biased. This is a discursive contest between 'citizen journalists' and 'professional' journalists.

A prominent case of this is the case of Deng Yujiao where Deng killed a local official who attempted to rape her. In cyberspace discourse surrounding this case, Deng was portrayed and praised as a female martyr who bravely opposed against abuse of power in defending her virginity. Several news media gave extensive coverage to this incident, especially those with national and international influences,

such as the *Southern Metropolis Daily* and the *Southern Weekend*. Though regarded by the reporters and their journalist peers as good reports, news reports<sup>24</sup> covered in these media ignited the anger of Internet users<sup>25</sup> who held different views and severely criticised these reports as unbalanced reporting and accused the journalists as lapdogs of the CCP and even fifty-cent Party (*wumaodang*).<sup>26</sup> Some Internet users even wrote to these news media and required to sack relevant journalists. Under such circumstances, journalism as an authoritative and reliable story-teller was strongly questioned.

As a quick response to the challenges and criticism of Internet users, mainstream journalism technically turned to stressing professionalism norms, especially 'objectivity' and 'social responsibility', and the access to official news sources. In doing so, journalism constructs a discourse that accuses UGC of being unreliable. At this point, 'social responsibility' here is defined as 'legal rationality' (*sifa lixing*) and 'recovering truth' (*huanyuan zhenxiang*). Such a discourse describes UGC as irrational, irresponsible, unreliable and misleading. For example, in the case of Deng Yujiao, after Internet users severely criticised reports, commentaries published by the *Southern Metropolis Daily* and the self-reflective article written by journalists in various media including the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, the *Southern Weekend*, and the *Southern Media Studies* labelled UGC as being irrational and unreliable and meanwhile emphasised journalistic professional norms.

In this case, Internet users have interpreted the event in one way, while mainstream journalists have produced another narrative of the event. When the two accounts appear to be in conflict with each other, journalists and news organisations adopt professional discourse as well as access to 'reliable' news sources to defend their legitimate authority.

## 6. Conclusion

The discourse of journalism is flexible and dynamic. The legitimate status of Chinese journalism was guaranteed by the ruling Party and thus there was a strong and close tie between the legitimacy of Chinese journalism and that of the ruling Party. Some scholars regard it risky to abandon existing conventions as the abandonment threatens the legitimacy of journalism (Matheson 2004; Carey 1999). This chapter, however, argues that in the case of China, when the orthodox Party journalism has lost much of the base of legitimacy in the post-reform era, journalists and news organisations are making efforts to use other conventions to replace the old ones, setting up new journalism discourses, distancing journalism from the ruling Party, differentiating journalism from propaganda, and well positioning journalists in their relation to audience. New

journalism discourses are discursive statements defining the roles and practices of journalism, which are constructed alongside the changes in social contextual conditions.

The discourse of journalism in the post-reform era has shifted from elitist discourse of Party journalists, to liberalisation discourse of journalism that longs for Western media freedom, as a reflection of the liberalization movement prevailing in the 1980s in Chinese society. However, when the liberal political tide in the wider social context failed, the liberalisation discourse of journalism shifted to populist discourse of people's journalists, which met the needs of commercial media for huge revenues and reflected a commercialism trend that supported apolitical consumerism in the 1990s. Such populist discourse meets the needs of both the market and the Party. This discourse enables commercial media to make profits but at the same time creates a 'false consciousness' that encourages the public to pay attention to daily life topics but ignore political reality that set the Party's worries to lose its rule at ease. Afterwards, a professional discourse has emerged as the corollary of the development of professional consciousness. These discourses distinguish the practice of non-Party journalism from that of Party journalism. Added to that is the drawing of a demarcation line between professional journalists and amateur citizens. Especially the professional discourse outlines professional standards for journalism, which highlights a sense of legitimacy and reinforces a professional culture in this field.

If we understand the populist discourse of journalism that appeared in the 1990s as has gained its legitimacy from the differentiation of journalism from propaganda, the professionalism discourse of journalism gives a sense of legitimacy to journalism by promoting professional standards for journalism and distinguishing professional journalism from amateur reporters. In terms of maintaining and defending journalistic legitimacy, therefore, the performance of journalism is schizophrenic. On one hand, journalists and news organisations make an effort to establish a discourse of journalism that shows a close relationship with the public, but on the other hand, they try to distance journalism from the public in order to compete for legitimacy with the public, presenting themselves as authoritative information publishers.

## Notes

1. Liberals aim to limit the power of government through political reform and promote the idea of 'small government big society' (He 2001).
2. Neo-leftism refers to a new ideological tendency in China after the economic reform that opposes against the reform and instead calls for Mao-style modernization (Wang 2003).

3. By liberal-minded leaders, I mean high-ranking liberalist leaders such as Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang who wanted Chinese society to embrace liberalism and political reforms (an account of their thoughts of journalism autonomy and implications for Chinese journalism can be found in Chan & Qiu 2002).
4. 'Anti-right' movement was launched by Mao Zedong in 1957 in order to crack down 'rightist' dissidents within the Party.
5. Jiang Zeming made the statement at the speech of '*Several Problems about the Journalism of the Party*' on November 1989; Li's speech of '*Stick to the Policy of Centering around Positive Reports*' was delivered at the same time.
6. Populist politics are a political style of leaders or authorities who promote a personalised image of caring for the will of the people, which in fact is "an instrument of social control over the masses" (Mosse 1980:160; de la Torre 1997). Studies about Chinese media and society (such as Xu 2001; Lee 2010) have addressed this topic.
7. Confucianism is deeply rooted in Chinese society and has revived in either official discourse or intellectual discourse in recent years (Bell 2010). Chinese journalists are thought to inherit the tradition of Confucian intellectuals (Lee 2000; Zhao 2000).
8. Sun Zhigang, a graduate migrant worker in Guangzhou, was put into custody because he did not carry his temporary residential ID with him and died in the custody. Journalists from the *Southern Metropolis Daily* (*nanfang dushibao*) revealed Sun Zhigang was beaten to death in the custody by the staff members of the custody.
9. This is according to the author's in-depth interviews with the reporters and other journalists about their views of the report. The Interviews were conducted in 2006 and 2007.
10. <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/14677/22114/30468/30470/2182150.html> (accessed on the 31st of March, 2013).
11. For example, in an article 'to examine the professionalism of the *Southern Weekend*: from a perspective of its conflict reporting' (accessed at January 20 2011 at <http://media.people.com.cn/GB/22114/44110/189065/13098765.html>); 'ignoring balance means ignoring social responsibility: some reflections on the A-Xing event reports in some news media' by Liu Chang, in the *China Youth*, July 18, 2005.
12. In this incident, A-Xing, a migrant worker, did not get paid for several months before he was fired by his line manager in a factory in Shenzhen. He wanted his wages back when he left the factory but was refused. He was so angry that he killed his line manager.
13. Fu Jianfeng's article "Let me peel the skin of media" is published on his blog, ([http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_477654540100dtve.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_477654540100dtve.html)). This article was also published by the *Southern Media Studies*; Jian Guangzhou published a series of blog articles surrounding the Sanlu Event on his blogs, (<http://jgzh2000.blog.163.com/> and <http://jianguangzhou.i.sohu.com/>) (all accessed on the 30th of April, 2010).
14. New media technologies mainly refer to the Internet and its web 2.0 tools, and other electronic technologies, such as mobiles.

15. In 2003, the SARS epidemic spread in China. What spread meanwhile were SMS messages distributed via mobiles among citizens. Mobile phones became an alternative medium through which ordinary citizens were informed, distributed, and produced information about SARS (Yu 2004).
16. In 2006, mobile phones and the Internet played an important role in organising Xiamen citizens' protest against the local government's decision on launching the PX chemical project in that city.
17. Similarly, in 2009, Guangzhou residents marched in street to oppose the government proposed garbage burning project in the city. In this event, the protest was organised online.
18. The Internet presented itself as a crucial platform in which the public's anger was ignited when they found a man drove a car and hit two university students (one was dead and one was injured) and ran away. He claimed to be the son of Li Gang who believed to be a local official and implied he would solve the problem by employing political power.
19. Qian Yunhui, a villager who had petitioned for many years for his fellow villagers against the local government's land requisition abuse, was killed by a truck in 2010. The death of Qian was believed by villagers to be murder. This incident was revealed online and soon triggered a wide spread of public angry and popular opinion that requested official investigation into the incident and to punish the killer.
20. In 2005, a chemical factory exploded in the Jilin City. After the explosion, local governments and local media claimed that the Songhuajiang River was not polluted by the explosion. However, local people believed that local governments and local media were lying. Several days later, local governments admitted that the river was polluted.
21. In 2006, Wu Ping and her husband refused to move out of their house as disagreement over the land requisition of the local government. Their house was the only house left in that area as other houses had been pulled down and therefore was called as a 'nailhouse'. The story of nailhouse had been popular on internet forums for a while and suddenly caught the attention of the wider public since Tan Renwei, an investigative journalist from the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, reported on this story in traditional newspaper coverage.
22. In 2007, Zhou Zhenglong, a peasant in the Shanxi Province, claimed to film a picture of Huanan Tiger. As this type of tiger was believed to have been extinct, the picture was thought as an important finding in many ways. Experts assessed the picture and concluded it was a real picture. However, netizens questioned the credibility of the picture. Tan Renwei, an investigative journalist from the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, interviewed and reported on this event in the newspaper, which pushed its development. The picture was found fake and Zhou Zhenglong was instructed by local officials.
23. In 2006, Qin Zhongfei, a local civic official, was accused of and arrested for libelling local governor for distributing several 'poems' he produced via SMS messages. Qin's wife was not able to do anything to save Qi but sought the help of Li Xingchen. Li is a classmate of Qin and a journalist working in a local newspaper. But Li was also unable to do anything except revealing this event on his blog. Qin was released only after mainstream media covered the story (Tong 2011).

24. For example, a report on the case of Deng Yujiao that was covered in the *Southern Metropolis Daily* was regarded by colleagues as objective one but was heavily criticised by netizens.
25. For example, a blogger published an article demanding both the editor-in-chief of the *Southern Metropolis Daily* and the reporter should be sacked, accessed at February 12, 2012, at [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_5b523cc30100dlgh.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5b523cc30100dlgh.html)
26. Fifty-cent Party is a term recently emerging in the public discourse of China. This term refers to those people who are paid by propaganda departments to post Party-friendly comments online in order to correct online public opinion that is believed to avoid the occurrence of dissents, social riots and protests.

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## CHAPTER 6

# *China's Road to Revival*

## “Writing” the PRC's struggles for modernization

Florian Schneider & Yih-Jye Hwang

Leiden University

This chapter analyses how China's propaganda specialists have used popular entertainment to frame China's historiography. By examining two recent propaganda products, the TV documentary *Road to Revival* and the multi-media opera of the same name, we explore how the Party and state deploy a range of visual and verbal tropes to re-write revolutionary history and adapt it to modern 21st-century China. Through a critical decoding of the multi-modal discourse within the two *Road to Revival* media products, we show how revolutionary periods in modern Chinese history are re-worked in order to justify the CCP as China's ruling Party, and how this effort creates a restrictive albeit legitimizing discursive framework within which future Chinese leaders will have to negotiate political action.

**Keywords:** TV documentary; Road to Revival; representing history

### 1. Introduction

Over the past few years, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has increasingly used mass-communication tools to present itself to the world and develop what Joseph Nye (2004) has referred to as “soft power”. As some scholars argue, the Chinese leadership has launched a “charm offensive” to promote its image abroad (Kurlantzick 2007), and has employed a broad range of communication practices in its public relations effort (Brady 2008: 151–170): the Chinese government is actively trying to shape foreign political discourses in its favor, whether by improving its online presence (Zhang 2009), promoting Chinese culture through a network of Confucius Institutes (Barabantseva 2009), or by staging international events such as the Beijing Olympics in 2008 (Cull 2008; Barmé 2009; Brady 2009b; Luo 2010; Latham 2010; Chen 2009; Hwang 2010) and the Shanghai World Exposition in

2010. At the same time, these communication practices also target domestic audiences (Brady 2008: 35–60), aiming to foster a sense of national pride and “guide” public opinion in a way that legitimizes the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through discursive practices (Zhao 1998: 45–47; Shue 2004: 31–34).

A recent focal point of these domestic legitimation endeavors was the celebration of the PRC’s 60-year anniversary. On 1 October 2009, the Chinese leadership celebrated itself, its achievements, and the Chinese nation with a lavish parade, while the Chinese public (and audiences abroad) watched on television. However, the military equipment and civilian floats that rolled across Tiananmen Square that day only marked the pinnacle of a much broader propaganda project. Beyond these National Day celebrations, China’s propaganda specialists had “framed” the mega-event by regulating the cultural sphere and its discourses.<sup>1</sup> Deploying a broad range of cultural products, such as movies, exhibitions, plays, TV dramas, and documentaries, the Chinese authorities re-wrote their revolutionary history and adapted it to 21st-century China. These carefully coordinated propaganda efforts drew from discourses on historiography, modernity, nationalism, and political legitimacy with which the domestic audience had been “primed” for years.<sup>2</sup>

One of the main components of the CCP’s propaganda strategy is the analogy of China’s “road to revival” (*fuxing zhi lu* 复兴之路) – a phrase that the newly inaugurated PRC president Xi Jinping most recently evoked in his patriotic call for citizens to share in the “Chinese Dream” by fighting for “the great renaissance of the Chinese nation” (BBC 2013). This discourse of national renewal stands for a particular interpretation of China’s modernization process, which links together a series of historical events that forced China to open its doors to foreign powers after its defeat in the Opium War of 1840. Throughout this narrative, the Chinese people heroically fight for their liberation and the nation’s restoration under the guidance of the CCP. The main point of this discourse is that only the CCP and socialism with Chinese characteristics can lead China along its road to revival.

In this chapter, we examine how two particular cultural products explicitly contribute to this discourse, and how the producers conceptualize China’s road to revival through multi-modal communication practices (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001) to re-shape the meaning of Chinese modernization. The first of these products is the state-backed documentary *Road to Revival*, which China Central Television (CCTV)<sup>3</sup> produced and aired two years before the 60-year anniversary, and re-broadcasted on the eve of the event.<sup>4</sup> The second is a multi-media opera by the same title, which was staged in Beijing specifically for the 2009 anniversary celebrations, and which also aired on CCTV.<sup>5</sup> Since the two cultural products were designed by CCP propaganda officials and aired on national state television, they consequently provide a unique entryway into the Hu-Wen administration’s officially sanctioned interpretation of China’s drive for modernization.

In order to systematically analyze the discourse within these two products, we adopt a methodological approach that shares common ground with Critical Discourse Analysis,<sup>6</sup> in particular the works associated with Ruth Wodak and the Vienna School (Wodak et al. 2009).<sup>7</sup> The Vienna School's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis explores the ways in which "common conceptions" and "shared emotional dispositions" are discursively constituted. Discursive acts therefore have the power to define what is accepted as common-sense truths throughout society. Wodak and her colleagues focus on three interwoven dimensions of analysis, namely: contents, strategies, and linguistic means and forms of realization. The dimension of contents includes thematic areas such as a common political past, present, and future. The dimension of strategies is defined as plans "adopted to achieve a certain political, psychological or other kind of objective" (ibid., 31). The last dimension, linguistic means and forms of realization, focuses "primarily on lexical units and syntactic devices, which serve to construct unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness, origin, continuity, gradual or abrupt change, autonomy, heteronomy and so on" (ibid., 35). Vienna School scholars accordingly look at different types of discursive acts, including on the one hand political speeches and media discourse created by powerful elites, and on the other hand conversations and qualitative interviews with other social groups.

A strength of such critical discourse projects is that they emphasize both discursive and social practices, for instance by examining discourse in its social and historical contexts. At the same time, many such approaches focus primarily on written or spoken words. Our approach moves beyond the textual level that linguistic discourse analyses focus on and also examines visual and other non-verbal dimensions of communication. Following the work of Michel Foucault (1975/1995), we use the term "discourse" to refer to both linguistic practices (i.e. written or spoken texts) and nonlinguistic acts (i.e. acoustic and visual performances) that together constitute social reality (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 107–108).

The cultural products we are examining here offer examples of how specific actors construct "contents" on China's modernization. We argue that this process of construction works not only through content (discursive practice) but also through how these contents are performed and realized (social practice). In other words, we ask what the "constructive strategies" are that inform attempts to foster and perpetuate a sense of national pride and legitimize the rule of the CCP. In this sense, it is through complex communication processes that political actors combine coded signs at the verbal, acoustic, and visual level to produce, sustain, transform, or dismantle political legitimacy.

To capture and map these processes, we analyzed the TV versions of the two *Road to Revival* productions. We coded the visual material for a range of

discourses and analyzed how various signs are tied together to form an official interpretation of modern history and political legitimacy in China.<sup>8</sup> We focused on the narrative, selected key scenes within this narrative, and then examined in detail what is expressed in these segments, and how the productions present the content (including *mise-en-scene*, camera angles, color compositions, dynamics, acting, and so on).<sup>9</sup> Due to the amount of data analyzed here (over 160 years of history, presented in two genres, covered in roughly eight hours of visual material; see Figure 1 below),<sup>10</sup> our presentation of these findings will only refer to selected instances of the two programs in order to provide examples of how a specific position is relayed through discourse. Moreover, our analysis in this chapter does not include the reception and re-appropriation of these contents, even though we agree that the concept of the “political” is “far broader than that in common usage and not only concentrates on the language of the powerful elites, but also includes discursive acts which (...) involve power, or its inverse, resistance (...) in many different contexts, including non-official and informal ones” (Wodak et al. 2009: 3).

In Section 1 of this chapter, we provide a brief overview of the two products’ production backgrounds and of the general road-to-revival narrative. Our argument is that the two productions present the same linear historiography, albeit in different yet complementary ways: the documentary primarily presents facts and figures, juxtaposed with appeals to patriotic sentiments, while the opera first and foremost attempts to elicit emotional responses. These two elements, i.e. rational argument on the one hand, emotional appeal on the other, form a powerful discursive formation, which is the focus of our subsequent analysis. Section 2 analyses how the documentary presents the First Opium War, and Section 3 examines how the musical stages the Sino-Japanese War. Throughout these sections, our focus lies on how the two productions construct their discursive position by deploying specific visual and rhetorical tropes, and how they each use appeals to rationality and emotion to relay their position. Before concluding, we show the extent to which the productions use the same discursive mechanism to lend meaning to recent natural disasters (Section 4); in this case the floods that struck China in 1998 and the earthquake that devastated Sichuan ten years later. By doing so, we show that the CCP systematically writes itself into narratives of China’s modernization, and presents itself as the sole actor that can lead China into a prosperous future. We also show how this communication strategy has established a range of visual and verbal tropes that inform political discourse in China. Our argument is that these recurring tropes delimit a framework within which future politics in China will have to be negotiated, and that this poses a particular challenge as the new leadership moves to address the manifold problems that China’s modernization model has arguably caused.

## 2. The narrative of China's rebirth: Documenting and performing China's "Road to Revival"

In order to understand how the *Road to Revival* cultural products construct China's officially sanctioned modernization discourse, we need to first examine the institutional setting of their performance, as well as their overall narrative structures. As mentioned above, *Road to Revival* is both a TV documentary series and an opera production. It is worth noting that the documentary series was created by the same production team that also produced another CCTV documentary series, *Rise of the Great Powers* (*Daguo jueqi* 大国崛起; aired in November 2006 on CCTV-2).<sup>11</sup> In a sense, *Rise of the Great Powers* is the predecessor of *Road to Revival*. Whereas the former endorses the idea that China should study why and how specific nations rose to become Great Powers, the latter focuses on the story of China itself, i.e. how it can become a Great Power on the world stage of the 21st century.

The *Road to Revival* documentary is a CCTV production, and first aired in 2007 on CCTV Channel 1 (at 21:35 on 5–10 October 2007). It has since received various re-runs, has been published on DVD, and at the time of writing was available for viewing on the CCTV website (CCTV 2007). It is composed of six episodes, each 50 minutes long, covering China's history from 1840 to the present.<sup>12</sup> The grand music and dance epic *Road to Revival* roughly covers the same time period in its five acts (see Figure 1).<sup>13</sup> The opera is the third such epic after *The East is Red* (1964), and *Song of the Chinese Revolution* (1984).<sup>14</sup> It was sponsored by the Publicity Department of the CCP's Central Committee, the Ministry of Culture, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT), the People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Political Department, and the Beijing Municipal Government. The play premiered in Beijing at the Great Hall of the People on 20 September 2009, and was subsequently performed at the National Centre of the Performing Arts until 5 October. On the eve of China's national day, on 30 September 2009, CCTV Channels 1, 3, 4 and 9 each aired the performance at prime time (i.e. 20:00). The opera has since been re-enacted at the National Centre (January through March 2010) and has been released on DVD.<sup>15</sup>

Both the documentary and the opera serve as the official review of China's modern history since 1840, recounting the exploitation, arduous struggle, and finally economic development of China, as well as presenting expectations of the country's future. Since we are concerned with discourses on history, rather than with history itself, we do not recount the actual historical events in detail here, but instead only provide a brief overview of the general road-to-revival narrative to demonstrate how the various periods tie into Chinese historiography.

The road-to-revival story begins before the historical backdrop of China's entry into modernity (covered in episode 1 of the documentary and in act 1 of

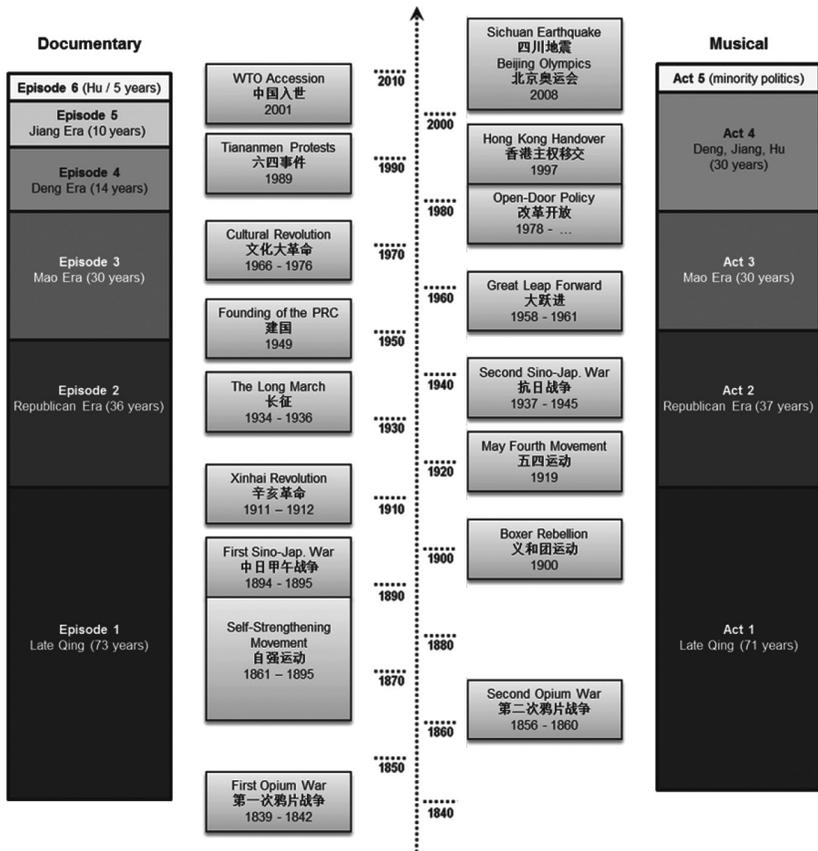


Figure 1. Modern Chinese history in the *Road to Revival*

the opera).<sup>16</sup> China is introduced as the oldest continuous civilization in human history, which encounters the so-called “West” during the reign of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). The narrative argues that at this time the West had already witnessed significant transformations, which included the Age of Discovery, the rise of capitalism, the Industrial Revolution, as well as the French and American revolutions. As the story goes, China’s encounter with the newly modernized Western nation-states leads to various encroachments on the part of the foreign imperial powers. These include Britain’s opium trade with China, the First and Second Opium War, the Unequal Treaties, and China’s defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. With the expansion of Western imperialism and colonialism, the “wind of modernization” also blows across Asia, threatening to sweep China away. The Qing government realizes it needs to modernize in order to survive, or it may lose the ability to choose its own destiny.

The narrative goes on to show a series of revolutionary events that came out of this realization, such as the Self-Strengthening Movement, the Hundred Day Reform (and its failure), the reforms in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, and finally the success of Sun Yat-sen's 1911 Revolution. All of these events are integrated into the CCP's historiography through the argument that the onset of modernity shattered China's old imperial order and forced the country to start out on its road to revival.

The next chapter of the narrative recounts China's Republican period (documentary episode 2, opera act 2).<sup>17</sup> It presents the 1911 Revolution as a failure, and the Kuomintang (KMT) republican movement as a "fake republic": the newly formed Chinese state is quickly torn apart by the rule of warlords and the ambitions of autocrats such as Yuan Shikai. The two cultural products show a number of significant events of this period, such as the May Fourth Movement and the New Cultural Movement, as well as the establishment of the CCP in 1921. The narrative stresses how the CCP gains support in China and eventually displaces the ruling KMT to found the PRC in 1949. This moment marks a first climax in the road-to-revival discourse, and the achievement of the so-called "first historical task of the CCP", which was to achieve China's independence, liberate the Chinese people, and guide the Chinese nation towards a new stage in its modernization.

This new stage is the subject of the remaining narrative, which captures the contributions of the four CCP leaders who have ruled the PRC: Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao (each leader is covered in one episode of the documentary; the opera divides their rule up across acts 3 and 4). The focus of the narrative is now placed on the so-called "second historical task of the CCP": strengthening the Chinese nation and creating prosperity for its people. The narrative recounts the various challenging events that each leader had to face, and presents the achievements of the Chinese nation during the respective historical periods. During the Mao era, this includes Cold War politics, but also the crises that befell China under Mao's reign, such as the Great Leap Forward, the anti-Rightist Campaign, and the Cultural Revolution.<sup>18</sup> Mao's mistakes are interpreted as results of his over-enthusiasm for radical socialism and his autocratic rule over China, which contrast with the collective leadership of the CCP that the road-to-revival discourse promotes. Despite Mao's mistakes, the narrative still presents Mao as a Chinese hero, who initiated the rapprochement with the United States that would provide the historical conditions for Deng Xiaoping's opening-up and reform policy in the late 1970s.

The *Road to Revival* now leads through the past three decades of the CCP's rule over China. It covers Deng's creation of "socialism with Chinese characteristics", which includes references to the opening-up of the coastal provinces, the

increased prosperity in urban China, and China “overcoming” the end of the Cold War in 1989. The narrative on the Deng era is followed by the achievements under Jiang Zemin, who oversaw the return of Hong Kong and Macao, and led China into the 21st century. For China under Hu Jintao, the narrative explains how the government reinforced the socialist market economy, established a society of comparatively well-off living standards, undertook high tech development projects such as the launch of its first manned space flight, and developed the western Chinese regions as well as the rural areas. China’s road to revival ends in the present.<sup>19</sup> At the start of the new century, the CCP has finally achieved its task of modernizing the nation.

In short, China’s road-to-revival narrative seeks to establish a sense of Chinese national identity by presenting a linear interpretation of historiography. It does so by drawing heavily from three specific discourses, which are closely intertwined: the exploitation, the struggle, and the development of China since 1840. The two *Road to Revival* products, i.e. the documentary and the musical, make extensive use of these three strands of discourse, albeit in different ways: The documentary provides the “correct” interpretation of history, based on facts and figures, and mainly appeals to the viewers’ rationality. All the while, it nevertheless underscores its analysis with the emotional sub-text of patriotism. The musical, on the other hand, aims to elicit specific emotional responses from the audience through highly symbolic and stylized performances of humiliation, struggle, and ultimately perseverance. In other words, it appeals primarily to viewers’ sentiments.

These two techniques – rational argument on one hand, emotional appeal on the other – together form a powerful discursive formation throughout Chinese political discourses, and are the focus of our subsequent discourse analysis. In what follows, we examine in detail three examples of how these discursive mechanisms work. We first analyze how the documentary presents the first Opium War. We then move on to examine how the musical stages the Sino-Japanese War. Finally, we show how the two cultural products deploy the same discursive mechanisms to portray natural disasters in present-day China.

### 3. National humiliation and righteous struggle in Chinese political discourse: Documenting the “Opium War”

To illustrate how the documentary uses various techniques to lend authority to its narrative,<sup>20</sup> the start of the Opium War in 1840 is particularly instructive. The Opium War is generally portrayed in China as a turning point in Chinese history, and as the start of the so-called “century of humiliation” (Gries 2004: Chapter 3; Zhao 2004:46–51). Contemporary Chinese propaganda promotes this sense of

humiliation in a broad range of contexts (Nyíri et al. 2010) and cultural products (Callahan 2010), including TV dramas, movies, high school textbooks, and even decks of cards.<sup>21</sup>

According to Callahan, the idea of humiliation at the hands of colonialists and imperialists, as well as the strong patriotic sentiments this idea elicits among domestic audiences, is deployed for various strategic reasons: Firstly, the humiliation discourse includes a range of antagonistic *out-groups*, such as “greedy, crazy, reckless, shameless, unreasonable, and inhumane” foreign imperialists, as well as domestic collaborators and “traitors” (Callahan 2010:41), which provide template enemies for the protagonist *in-group* (i.e. the Chinese nation) to struggle against. Secondly, this discourse potentially lends credibility to the government’s claim that the PRC will never itself act in an imperialist fashion towards others, and that China is, and always has been, a peaceful and cultured (*wenming* 文明) civilization. In Callahan’s words, China is presented as an “innocent victim”, despite the fact that the “empire has itself invaded, occupied, and exploited Vietnam, Korea, and many other countries” (ibid., 43). Thirdly, the humiliation discourse strengthens the idea that China had to struggle to where it is now. China’s success today becomes the outcome of a national effort to overcome almost insurmountable obstacles, and consequently legitimizes the force that claims to have put an end to roughly one hundred years of suffering and injustice: the CCP.

With regard to this humiliation discourse, the *Road to Revival* documentary is no exception. In the documentary, the First Opium War also marks a turning point in Chinese history. This turning point is presented by first showing the present: the Mawei Wharf in southern China’s Fuzhou city. As the camera shows quiet harbor images, the omnipotent narrator emphasizes that this shipyard, established in 1866, was not only China’s first, but also at the time Asia’s largest dock. As the camera cuts to the bust of the Qing official who conceived of this project, the narrator explains that the shipyard was part of the Self-Strengthening Movement that grew out of the Opium War.

The documentary then shifts from the present into the past: the viewer is presented with black-and-white footage of traditional Chinese junks, before the screen erupts with special effects. An animated map depicts southern China, with a modern gunboat approaching the Cantonese coast. The camera zooms out as digital canon shells hit Guangzhou and Macao. The scene is underscored with the sounds of engines, canon fire, and explosions. The camera zooms into the map and the screen turns into a blazing inferno. A series of short shots show scenes of war, while the large number 1840 is superimposed on the screen. The battle scenes are followed by another animated view of the map, in which the gunboat moves north along China’s coast towards Beijing. The camera again drops into the map to show more images of fire, explosions, and of marching soldiers. This is then followed by

a final image of China's map, as the narrator explains: "Historians call this war the Opium War. In this fashion, ancient China began its modern history".<sup>22</sup> The camera then shows two tranquil yet foreboding shots of the deserted Imperial Palace in Beijing, with the sky overcast and dark. The narrator leads the viewer into the next section by asking: "So, why did this war erupt between China and England, and what consequences would it have?"

What is significant about this introduction is how it sets the stage for the more elaborate discussion of the Opium War, and of Chinese history in general. The sequence establishes a particular style of representation, used extensively throughout the program. In this case, the visual and acoustic arrangement constructs the historical events as an action sequence: the digital map at the outset of this sequence rotates and zooms at jolting speeds; the soundscape consists of generic modern war sounds (including anachronistic sounds of World War II aircraft engines), which suggest destruction and struggle while omitting any references to death; the shots are linked through frames of fire; the dynamics are fast-paced, with each shot only about one second long. The frequent return to the three-dimensional map with its animated gunboats infuses the discourse on war with the visual tropes of interactive computer games.

With these impressions in mind, the viewer is introduced to the main narrative on the war-torn Qing Empire. The following eight minutes are a montage of black-and-white footage from motion pictures depicting the Opium War, more digital maps, close-ups of 19th-century documents and photos, as well as occasional animated scenes of warships firing their canons. The voice-over summarizes the economic situation in Europe, the dynamics of the Opium trade, and the struggle of the Qing government to stand up against the foreign invaders. The frequent quoting of names, dates and numbers suggests "factuality" (Iedema 2001: 191); an impression that is further relayed by showing the viewer evidence (documents, photos, artefacts) from the respective period. The historical representation is interrupted by occasional shots of present-day historical sites, which create an impression of what Benedict Anderson has called homogenous, empty time (2006: 26) – the documentary collapses the past and present, and locates them in diverse historical locations, effectively anchoring history in the now and here.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the documentary is interspersed with interview statements by a number of Chinese and foreign academics (Figure 2). The use of expert interviews is an important device throughout the program. The documentary includes interviews with over 80 Chinese experts and around 30 foreign scholars from renowned universities. The interviews each feature a medium close-up shot of the respective expert, sitting either before a bookshelf or before a blue-screen that shows a historical image. The comments of reputable academics legitimize the



Prof. Niu Dayong  
 牛大勇  
 Director of the History Department  
 at Beijing University

Professor Hans van de Ven  
 Center of East Asian Studies  
 Cambridge University

Professor Gong Shuyi  
 龚书译  
 History Department  
 Beijing Normal University

Professor Christopher Hughes  
 Asia Research Centre  
 London School of Economics

Professor Qian Chengdan  
 钱乘旦  
 History Department  
 Beijing University

Associate Director Hunag Xingtao  
 黄兴涛  
 Centre for Qing Studies  
 People's University

Figure 2. Expert interviews to establish factuality

facts and figures, and provide the viewer with the impression that the documentary is relaying a consensus among foreign and Chinese scientists in a neutral and factual way. That the interview statements all tie into the documentary's main narrative becomes apparent in how the various interviewees present the Opium War in this particular segment.

The documentary traces the origins of the First Opium War to Sino-British trade. It shows historian Niu Dayong, who states that by the 19th century, China was exporting high-value luxury items such as tea to Britain, in exchange for large quantities of silver. Niu argues that in order to reverse the flow of silver out of England and into China, the British decided to use the “weapon” of opium. British traders started to sell the drug to the Chinese in large quantities, and consequently caused wide-spread addiction throughout China. Niu’s comment is immediately followed by remarks from Hans van de Ven, who argues that Britain was a more advanced economy than China due to its Industrial Revolution. The narrator subsequently adds that the surge of British production capacities in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution encouraged Britain to expand its global market. The First Opium War is then interpreted as a military action initiated and supported by the British government.

At this point, the documentary uses the statements of two academics to back up its argument. First, Gong Shuyi from Beijing Normal University notes that the opium tax constituted a significant part of the British national income. Second, Christopher Hughes, a British scholar at the London School of Economics, comments on the economic situation in England at the time. He says:

When we do look at the Opium War now, one of the things that people justify it by is that, uhm, it was part of a process of opening up markets. In those days, ah, we used gunboats to do it.

It is noteworthy how quotes like this one have been manipulated by the documentary team to relay the official CCP message. Throughout the series, all foreign commentators speak in their native language. The documentary then translates the statements in its sub-titles. In this case, the translation reads: “At the time, we implemented the Opium War in order to open up markets. In the past, we used arms to open up markets”. It is significant how the phrases which Hughes originally uses to qualify his statement (i.e. the context “when we look at...” as well as the evidentiality “one of the things that people justify it by”) have been deleted here. Also, the impersonal phrase that the Opium War was “part of a process of opening up...” has been changed to an active phrase with a clear agent: “we implemented the Opium War in order to open up...”. The effect of these two changes is a shift in meaning. Together with the visual label on screen that identifies Hughes as the professor at an English university, the translation suggests that Hughes is speaking for “the English” (marked by the additional personal pronoun “we”). It further suggests that he is identifying himself with the British authorities, and assures that his comment confirms the official Chinese interpretation of Britain’s motives.

We contacted Hughes and asked him what the original context of his statement had been (correspondence with the authors on 24 June 2010). Hughes was

originally interviewed by a Chinese film-crew on how the British and Chinese economies developed differently. The Opium War was not the central issue in the interview. Throughout his original talk, Hughes explained that Britain had not been a Great Power yet when the Opium War started, that the country was only on the verge of industrializing, and that it was experiencing political crises at the time. He argued that this domestic insecurity politicized the Opium trade and allowed merchants to exploit Britain's identity crisis to forcefully open the Chinese market. The way Hughes' quote has been edited and placed into a new context not only assures that the domestic situation in England is omitted and that the complexity of the situation is significantly reduced, it also reverses Hughes original argument that the British government was not steering this economic expansion, but was itself to a significant degree steered by private actors. Through this reversal of meanings, the documentary effectively assures that the interview statement justifies the official interpretation, according to which the agents of modern history are primarily nation-states.

In the subsequent scenes, the documentary follows up on these quotes by elaborating further on Britain's military superiority during the armed conflict. The narrator asks the question: why was China so easily defeated in the war? This question is answered by Chinese historian Qian Chengdan, who states:

England's military strength was based on the Industrial Revolution. At the time, England had already completed this Revolution and had become the world's sole industrialized nation; it had embarked on the road to capitalist development. China, on the other hand, was a backward agricultural country.

Again, the overall narrative has been simplified to draw a clean line between the powerful industrial aggressor and the feeble agricultural victim. This narrative implicitly argues that as a first step on its road to revival, China needed to reform its political and social institutions to become a modern "nation", and needed to "industrialize" by developing or adopting new production technologies. Consequently, the documentary then moves on to discuss two movements that tried to achieve these goals: the Self-Strengthening Movement of the late Qing Dynasty, as well as Sun Yet-sen's Revolution of 1911. In order to lend legitimacy to these revolutionary endeavors, the segment portrays the Qing Dynasty as completely ignorant of the outside world, as incompetent to defend against Western encroachment, and as conservative and backward by nature.

To drive this point home, the sequence concludes with a moral assessment of history.<sup>24</sup> The camera shows black-and-white images of kneeling Chinese officials, juxtaposed with gunboats firing their canons and British soldiers storming a Chinese bastion. The documentary cuts to scenes of the deserted imperial palace in a rainstorm. The soundtrack features no acoustic effects, but instead

underscores the narrative with a melancholic classical violin arrangement. The voice-over states the following:

What little knowledge of the modern world the Qing court had gathered withered away without a sound. As the tragedy of history befell them for the first time, the contemporaries remained mostly ignorant and apathetic. Only as this tragedy was re-enacted did they feel a keen sense of personal loss.

The segment in its entirety has established a pattern, which the producers adopt in various variations throughout the documentary: first, the past is anchored in the present. Next, the program gives a short overview and hooks the viewers' interest through fast-paced dynamics and special effects. It then hints at a "bigger picture" by posing open questions. As a fourth step, the documentary presents the official narrative on the issue, legitimized through additional factual evidence and minutely edited expert comments. Finally, the respective sections close by appealing to the viewers' patriotic sentiment and conclude with emotionally charged images, sentimental music, and melodramatic words (note the use of phrases such as "tragedy", "befall", and "sense of personal loss" in the quote above).

The theme that brings the various historical fragments together as one "big picture" is precisely the personal loss that the narrator emphasizes. This theme turns the seemingly chaotic currents of history into one meaning-generating story. The essence of that story is that the humiliation at the hands of foreigners should be felt as a personal sense of shame by each individual Chinese viewer, and that this shame can only be overcome by persistent struggle under the leadership of the CCP.

#### 4. Performing the Second Sino-Japanese War

While the documentary obscures some of its emotional impact by constructing a sense of factuality, the musical version of China's *Road to Revival* almost exclusively focuses on pathos. In this section, we examine the style in which the musical recounts and represents the Second Sino-Japanese War (Act 2, Scene 6), and how this performance and its mode of representation create a specific emotional impact.

Similar to all major scenes in the musical, this segment starts with a female and a male announcer, dressed in grey, formal clothing, explaining the historical backdrop to the audience. This introduction is a carefully calculated, highly emotional performance, in which the announcers' voices are strained by barely contained rage, and are often trembling with sobs. In order to reproduce these effects in writing, we have transcribed the short segment in Figure 3, using special annotation to indicate the emotional dynamics.<sup>25</sup>

<p>女报幕员： 一九三七年七月七日 (.) 晚八时 (..) 一声 <b>枪响</b> (..) &lt; / 宛平县城卢沟桥上空 &gt; 月亮 (..) \ 被击碎。 卢沟桥 / 化作一把出鞘的大刀， 抗日战争 / 全面 &gt; 爆发 (hh)。</p> <p>男报幕员： 第二天 (..) &lt; 中共中央 (.) 通电全国 &gt; (.) 平津危急 (.) / 华北危急 (.) &lt; / 中华民族危急 (.) 只有 &lt; 全民族实行抗战才是 / 我们的出路。 迎着漫天 \ 炮火 (.) 发起 / 捍卫中华母亲的 (.) \ <b>血战</b>。</p>	<p>Female Announcer: On 7 July 1937 (.) at eight o'clock at night (..) the sound of a <b>gun-shot</b> (..) &lt; / above the Marco Polo Bridge in the town of Wanping &gt; <b>shattered</b> \ the moonlight. The Marco Polo Bridge / turned into an <b>unsheathed sword</b>, and the War of Resistance against Japan / erupted &gt; everywhere (hh)</p> <p>Male announcer: On the second day (..) &lt; the Central Committee of the Communist Party (.) dispatched a telegram to the entire nation &gt; (.) [stating that] / <b>our only way out</b> of the Beijing-Tianjin crisis (.) / out of the North China crisis (.) &lt; / out of the <b>Chinese nation's crisis</b> (.) was if &lt; the entire nation engaged in a <b>War of Resistance</b>. In the face of artillery fire that engulfed the entire sky \ [the CCP] launched / a <b>bloody battle</b> to defend (.) \ <b>mother China</b>.</p>															
<p>Notation (see Chilton 2004: 206):</p> <table border="0"> <tbody> <tr> <td>(.) - smallest significant hesitation</td> <td>&lt;</td> <td>- tempo increases significantly</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(..) - small significant hesitation</td> <td>&gt;</td> <td>- tempo decreases significantly</td> </tr> <tr> <td>/ - steep pitch rise in following stretch of speech</td> <td><b>bold</b></td> <td>- intensity increase</td> </tr> <tr> <td>\ - steep pitch fall in following stretch of speech</td> <td><u>underlined</u></td> <td>- trembling of voice (sobbing)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>hh - perceptible out-breath</td> <td>[the]</td> <td>- translation addition (not in original)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		(.) - smallest significant hesitation	<	- tempo increases significantly	(..) - small significant hesitation	>	- tempo decreases significantly	/ - steep pitch rise in following stretch of speech	<b>bold</b>	- intensity increase	\ - steep pitch fall in following stretch of speech	<u>underlined</u>	- trembling of voice (sobbing)	hh - perceptible out-breath	[the]	- translation addition (not in original)
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\ - steep pitch fall in following stretch of speech	<u>underlined</u>	- trembling of voice (sobbing)														
hh - perceptible out-breath	[the]	- translation addition (not in original)														

Figure 3. Emotional introduction to the War of Resistance

Note how the announcers raise their voices substantially to stress particular nouns, such as “gun-shot”, “Chinese nation’s crisis”, “War of Resistance”, and “mother China”. The female announcer additionally introduces sobs to her speech when recounting the fatal first shot that sparked the war. The choice of words is also revealing: the vocabulary suggests a peaceful China under “moonlight”, ripped asunder by battle. The protagonists are “we”, the Chinese nation, led by the Communist Party. The antagonist is only implied. Japan is not mentioned as an actor in this speech, and is only represented in the word “War of Resistance against Japan” (*kangri zhanzheng* 抗日战争), which in the Chinese makes use only of the first Chinese character for *Riben* (Nihon). Similar to the documentary, the musical conjures up an atmosphere of doom and gloom, while simultaneously introducing the general frame through a seemingly factual statement: the turmoil of history befalls an unprepared China, forcing the heroic Chinese nation and its vanguard to act.

On the stage (Figure 4), the main performance, entitled “My Mother” (*wo de muqin* 我的母亲), begins: the background screen lights up with fire and explosions. Sounds of modern warfare, i.e. of sirens, airplane engines, and explosions, suggest an air raid in progress. As the digital bombardment intensifies, about fifty human bodies roll down the slanted stage. The stairs and bridge again function as a projection screen, depicting blood that drips down from above. The musical score (violins and percussions) is intense and agitating, building slowly to a climax

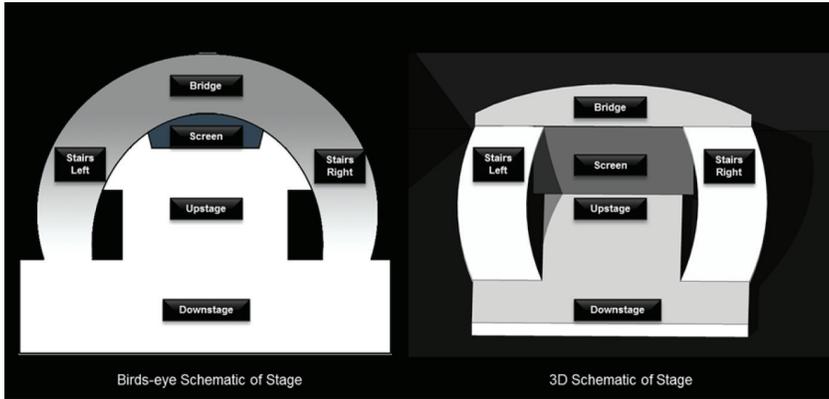


Figure 4. The stage in the *Road to Revival* opera

at which two performers pull a large red sheet across the entire stage, covering up the bodies of the fallen.

Amidst this stylized blood-bath appears a woman, dressed in plain clothes. She acts out formulaic gestures of despair (bracing herself, folding her hands before her face, convulsing with pain, etc.) to a dramatic, classical opera score. Around her, the red sheet rises and falls like waves on an ocean of blood. At the height of a musical crescendo, the woman raps her body in the sheet; as the stage lights up brightly and the orchestra launches into the main theme, the heads of the fallen protrude through slits in the sheet. Their faces are frozen in stylized screams of agony. The sheet is pulled back, and the men and women beneath release a synchronous cry of pain that mutes the orchestra. The scene is frozen in silence, with the entire cast staring towards the audience with conviction.

The percussions set in, slowly rising in intensity, and a single, battered man emerges from the mass of people on stage. As the main actress raises her hand, pointing ahead, he slowly struggles downstage. When he reaches the front of the stage, the men and women behind him shout out the following call-to-arms in unison, which also appears on the screen behind them:

The Japanese bandits have seized our three eastern provinces and have invaded North China. Our entire nation will not rest until they are eradicated! If we, the descendants of Emperor Yan and Emperor Huang, the progeny of the Chinese race, born into this time and bearing arms, cannot expel the Japanese invaders, how can we call ourselves human (*ren*)? Our entire Red Army and all allied forces: head towards the front to engage the Japanese in a battle of life and death. For our nation: kill! For our country: kill! For our compatriots: kill! For our children and grandchildren: kill! We hereby solemnly swear this oath to fight to the bitter end!

日本强盗夺我东三省，又侵我华北，非灭亡我全国不止，我辈皆炎黄子孙，华族胄裔，生当其时，身负干戈，不能驱逐日寇，何以为人！我们全体红军，联合友军，开赴前线，与日寇决一死战。为了民族！杀！为了国家！杀！为了同胞！杀！为了子孙！杀！谨此宣誓，血战到底！

The actors have meanwhile all risen to their feet and are staring ahead, their faces smeared with blood and their eyes full of rage. Each call to “kill” is emphasized with a stomping of the feet, which coincides with a low drum crescendo. As the group swears its oath, the main male character raises an oversized cleaver and thrusts it into the stage. The scene erupts with dynamic music, and the actors begin to dance. The choreography consists of battle scenes, ranging from shadow-fights to slow-motion enactments of being shot. The dance concludes with the actors making room for a single soldier, who kneels before the main female lead to present an imperial Japanese flag, fastened to the bayonet of a rifle. The woman stumbles forward, seizes the flag, and tears it to pieces. She throws the torn rags to the ground, as the other actors assemble around her, and all gaze into the distance with a socialist-realist gaze that is glowing with determination. End scene.

The various elements of this performance are not only highly representative of the rest of the musical, but also work together as a whole to emphasize a particular discursive position. The message is seemingly abstract and highly stylized: the artistic movements and digital projections function as symbols for suffering, struggle, and victory, but in an idealized form. The actors, for instance, function as synecdoches: the bodies stand for all Chinese victims of war, the fighting men and women represent all children of China, and the single woman stands for all mothers, and by extension: for the Chinese *motherland*. The musical score, together with the color arrangements and the synchronized choreography give the performance an epic, monumental air.

Yet these suggestions of artistic value by no means leave the message open for much critical reflection, as a piece of avant-garde art arguably would: instead, all elements are linked together through a redundancy of visual and acoustic cues, all meant to activate the same sense of patriotism. The silent faces in agony, the sudden scream, the scenes of battle, the color red in the animations, the red sheet, and of course the flag of the enemy<sup>26</sup> – all these symbols come together to relay the same message: the proud Chinese nation has defeated its antagonists through collective struggle against all odds. What is more, the opera's style of representation legitimizes and normalizes this message by suggesting that this particular emotional interpretation is a natural part of the historical narrative, and that feelings of injustice and humiliation should be a core dimension of Chinese national identity.

## 5. Struggling forward with the times: Crisis discourse for the 21st century

Jumping ahead in time, we find that the discourse that is used to explain Chinese revolutionary history prior to the founding of the People's Republic resurfaces along China's road to revival, both in its documentary and its musical form. The narrative of suffering, struggle, and ultimately victory is re-used to frame current affairs, again depicting the leadership of the Party as the decisive factor in winning the "battle" – be it the battle against communal disease, natural disaster, or man-made crisis. One such contemporary usage of this narrative concerns the Yangtze River floods which hit China in 1998.

The massive Yangtze River flooding lasted from June to September of 1998 and was considered the worst flood in China in decades, resulting in thousands dead, millions homeless, and billions of dollars in economic loss. During this flood, the PLA dispatched tens of thousands of troops to help with disaster relief work. The PLA is generally represented in Chinese disaster discourses as the backbone of rescue and relief efforts, and is presented as a strong guarantee for the safety of people's lives. In the Chinese official historiography, the 1998 flood was selected as one of the sixty major events since the founding of the Peoples' Republic.<sup>27</sup> It fits neatly into a discourse that portrays China as a country that has frequently encountered natural calamities.

The documentary places these events in immediate succession to another catastrophe: the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. The viewer has at this point been informed that financial speculation left China's neighboring economies at the mercy of this epic economic disaster, while China's communist leadership made all the right strategic moves to protect the nation from yet another whirlwind of history. Following this struggle with economic forces, the documentary shows an action sequence. An animated video shows flood-waters gushing across a dike, drowning a model village and sweeping away trucks as miniature animated villagers run for their lives. The animations are juxtaposed with original footage from the rescue efforts: helicopter-views of flooded villages, people wearing swim-vests floating in the murky waters, and rescue crews maneuvering the currents with motorboats. An ominous soundtrack underscores the scenes, while the narrator lists facts and figures. The number 1998 is superimposed over the images. The sequence concludes with another digitally altered shot, this time of an urban skyline, which is drowned by gushing waters.

After the devastation comes salvation. The camera cuts to an image of then-president Jiang Zemin, who stands at the shore of the Yangtze River, giving an inspirational speech to the aid forces (note the militarist vocabulary):

Persistently fight bravely! Persist, and then persist some more! Then we will certainly be able to achieve the final victory!

Monumental music sung by an army choir sets in, and the documentary shows movie footage of PLA soldiers climbing muddy dikes as though they were storming a battlefield. These dramatic scenes are interspersed with real-life images of the rescue teams struggling to build barriers against the murky floods. The last images of this effort are again taken from movie footage, which shows a newly-built dike covered by a myriad of red flags that wave in the wind. As was the case with the Opium War segment, the camera now cuts to the seat of power: the capital city (this time to the Gate of Heavenly Peace rather than the Imperial Palace). The scene is tranquil and devoid of people. The melancholic classical violin arrangement from earlier sections plays again, and the narrator explains:

One cannot understand disaster until one has experienced it. No matter whether it is a crisis in the economic realm or a calamity in the natural world, both require solid national strength. In the final instance, development is the primary mission of the Party as it governs and rejuvenates the country.

As with all historical content, the documentary provides a moral assessment, legitimizing CCP rule as a requirement for national strength and prosperity. The documentary comes full circle: after showing a China without national strength and Party rule, the final two episodes firmly establishing a causal link between the PRC's recent achievements and its political leadership. The subsequent scenes go on to depict various instances of the good life in present-day China, ranging from happy old couples, to prosperous farmers, dancing minorities, and proud citizens of Beijing who prepare for the Olympic Games.

Just as the documentary extends its narrative of national struggle to recent natural disasters, so does the musical deploy its emotive tools to represent this topic. The 1998 floods are covered in Scene 6 of Act 4, which is entitled "There Can Be No Defeat". The scene is introduced by the announcers, who explain that 300,000 PLA soldiers and 3,500,000 volunteers joined the relief efforts and formed "a particular type of Chinese steel, which is impenetrable".

The actual performance is reminiscent of the previous war scenes: the stairs function as a projection screen for images of torrential rains. A group of actors, dressed in military attire, prepares for the relief efforts. They lock their bodies together to form a barrier, as the digital background screen turns into a waterfall of gushing waters. Throughout the following scene, the array of actors plays out scenes of struggle – this time against the muddy tides rather than a human enemy: the men perform an elaborate dance choreography that features sand bags as the main props. The choreography consists of acrobatics, dance elements, as well as slow-motion gestures of men lifting bags up over their heads, or buckling under the pressure of imaginary waters. The entire scene is underscored with a monumental musical score.

The dance performance leads into a freeze, accompanied by a decrescendo in the music. The mass of soldiers is piled up to a large damn at the front of the stage. The main male actor in the scene slowly struggles forward, carrying a sand bag. His facial expression is a mix of agony and defiant determination. He finally reaches his compatriots, heaves the sand bag on top of the dam, and collapses with exhaustion. At this point, the music again picks up, and the imaginary relief effort launches into its final phase. The men pile sand bags at increasing speed as the main protagonist slowly rises to his feet. The voice of Jiang Zemin booms from the loudspeakers, his words appearing on the digital background screen:

Our Chinese nation has a strong cohesion. No calamity can push us down. The Chinese people cannot be defeated!

While the above analysis has focused on the 1998 floods, it is worth pointing out that more recent natural disasters are framed in a very similar way. The most important example is the earthquake that hit Wenchuan (Sichuan Province) in 2008. The quake is staged in Act 4, Scene 14 of the musical, which is again introduced by the announcers. The subsequent performance utilizes a large mass of actors, dressed in army fatigues and doctor's coats, who scurry the ground for hints of survivors. A sole female actress sings a melancholy ballade. As in previous scenes, the performers create iconic scenes with their bodies, repeatedly emphasizing their anguish and distress with slow-motion gestures and stylized facial expressions. The scene reaches its climax as the helpers discover a little girl in a red dress, hidden under the imaginary rubble. The girl is lifted up by the actors, and is passed along a seemingly endless sea of helping arms. As the girl is finally saved, the actress sings "I am calling out to you".<sup>28</sup> As this sequence shows, the central elements of the road-to-revival discourse are strategically reworked to place even the most recent challenges to Chinese national unity into the politically correct context.

## 6. Conclusion

This chapter analyzed two recent cultural products, the TV documentary *Road to Revival* and the multi-media opera by the same name, and explored in what ways the CCP and the Chinese state use communication strategies to "write" the PRC's revolutionary history and adapt it to 21st-century China. Through our critical decoding of the multi-modal communication processes that are at play within the two *Road to Revival* media products, we have shown how this official discourse draws from events such as the first Opium War and the second Sino-Japanese War to construct a modernization discourse that legitimizes a specific vision of politics in modern China.

This vision works in a reductionist way: Chinese modernity is the outcome of national struggle against humiliation and suffering, and any success within this narrative is made possible only through the leadership of the CCP. A core feature of this discourse is that it naturalizes the nation-state as the main actor of historical progress, and that it frames politics as a quest by nation-states to gather resources and maximize their power. Anything that takes place outside this framework is downplayed or made to serve the overarching grand narrative.

The outcome is a fundamentally realist discourse, and one that strongly serves the agenda of China's leadership: within the discourse of national rejuvenation, the protagonist is an "imagined community" (Anderson 2006) that encompasses what might otherwise be complex, disparate social spheres: the Chinese people, the Chinese state, and the Chinese Communist Party. These different spheres come together as one Chinese nation, tied together through a shared historical experience (cf. Wang 2012: Chapter 1). What is more, the discourse establishes in clear terms what the social purpose should be that follows from the collective experience of Chinese modernity (building an economically prosperous and politically strong Chinese nation), and what road map will achieve that purpose (a neo-liberal capitalist economic approach, combined with authoritarian one-party politics).

This discourse of revival comes with a pantheon of visual tropes, or what the cultural historian Aby Warburg has called "pathos formulae" (cf. Müller & Kappas 2011: 320), which are by now firmly established as core symbols of Chinese nationalism. Deploying these visual elements and juxtaposing them with at times strongly manipulated factual statements helps depict any contemporary challenge as manageable, be it a natural disaster, a communal disease, or an economic crisis. The discursive framework is thus easily transposed to more recent events, such as the Yangtze River floods of 1998 or the Wenchuan earthquake of 2008. What is "revived" in these instances is the revolutionary discourse of Chinese history and the patriotic sentiment that this narrative elicits.

While our chapter shows how CCP propaganda deploys strategically designed cultural products in order to present this specific narrative of Chinese national history and its justification of the Party's rule over China, we have not explored to what extent these discourses are received by audiences. Future research will have to address how the official road-to-revival discourse resonates with audiences, and how it is re-used and at times challenged in other contexts. The kind of historical discourse approach that Wodak and others (2009) have proposed highlights one possible avenue that such research could follow, as do sociological and ethnographic accounts of how cultural artifacts proliferate through social networks (e.g. Sperber 1996 or Latour 2005).

What this chapter has shown is how two cultural products stage officially sanctioned historiography in two complementary ways: whereas the *Road to Revival* documentary is intended to appeal primarily to the viewers' rationality, the musical mainly aims to elicit specific emotional responses. Both products achieve their goal by carefully deploying a range of communication strategies, and by layering symbols in different modes and across different media. Seen as a whole, the two approaches work as a coherent discursive formation. The importance of this discursive formation should not be underestimated. CCP propaganda has opted to base its guiding narrative on a view of modernity that promotes relentless industrialization and strong us-vs-them stereotypes. It is this narrative that now provides the emotive meaning-making framework for future administrations. It will be one of the daunting political tasks for the new leadership to establish its "Chinese Dream" through policies that address the many economic, social, and political challenges that the PRC faces, while simultaneously maneuvering within the restrictive albeit legitimizing discursive framework that the previous generation of leaders has bestowed upon it.

## Notes

1. Kinder (2003) provides an overview of communication techniques such as "framing" and "priming". Chilton (2004) shows how framing applies to discourse analysis. Holbig (2006) and Brady (2009a) have examined instances of "framing" in China.
2. For comprehensive analyses of nationalist and historiographic discourses in contemporary China, see Zhao (2004), Callahan (2010), and Wang (2012).
3. CCTV is China's state-owned, national television station.
4. For an analysis of the 60-year anniversary of the PRC, see Hwang & Schneider (2011).
5. Since this production combines both opera and musical elements, we use the two terms interchangeably throughout this paper.
6. Critical Discourse Analysis has its roots in British socio-linguistics, most prominently represented by Fairclough (1995). Continental European approaches include the works of van Dijk (1993) and Jäger (2004). Chilton (2004) provides an approach that is tailored to political communication, and that is grounded in evolutionary psychology.
7. The Vienna School of Discourse Analysis has roots in the sociolinguistic approach as well as within the tradition of Critical Theory. The main concern of the Viennese School is to "establish the linguistic relations between specific linguistic subsystems and social structures...in order to explore the specific social significance and function of a concrete linguistic or grammar option" (Wodak et al. 1999:9).
8. Note that although our analysis highlights how historical facts are arranged and certain statements manipulated to stress a particular viewpoint (what we call: a discursive position),

- it is not our aim to argue for a particular “correct” interpretation of Chinese history here. Instead, we show how communication techniques are deployed to create one particular “truth”.
9. In this sense, this chapter is concerned primarily with content and with styles of representations. We do not analyse the detailed context of these discourses or their reception by viewers.
  10. We have created sequence-protocols of both programmes, as well as shot-protocols of selected sequences. In order to account for the fact that the opera was originally performed for a primary audience rather than for the television viewer, we have digitally modelled the stage. This allowed us to re-construct the actual performance in three dimensions.
  11. This production discusses the rise of nine Great Powers: Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the United States. *Rise of the Great Powers* can be seen as a sign that the Chinese authorities are becoming more confident, and that they are increasingly open to discussing China's growing international influence.
  12. The six episodes are respectively entitled “Tremendous Thousand-Year Change” (*qiannian jubian* 千年巨变), “Months and Years of Hard Struggle” (*zhengrong suiyue* 峥嵘岁月), “China's Rebirth” (*Zhongguo xinsheng* 中国新生), “Great Transition” (*weida zhuanzhe* 伟大转折), “Striding into the New Century” (*shiji kuayue* 世纪跨越), and “Carry Forward the Revolutionary Cause and Stride into the Future” (*jiwangkailai* 继往开来).
  13. These acts are entitled, respectively, “Territorial Sacrifice” (*shanhe ji* 山河际), “Arduous Rhapsody” (*rexue fu* 热血辅), “Pioneering Plan” (*chuangye tu* 创业图), “Song of the Great Tide” (*dachao qu* 大潮曲), and “Ode to China” (*Zhonghua song* 中华颂).
  14. *The East Is Red* was first staged for the PRC's fifteenth anniversary. It described the Chinese people's revolutionary history in song and dance, spreading Mao's political messages. *Song of the Chinese Revolution*, created for the 35th anniversary of the PRC, recounts the revolutionary history of China up to the prosecution of the so-called “Gang of Four”.
  15. For information on the opera (in Chinese) as well as streaming video, see NCPA 2009.
  16. For a general overview of China's history, from the pre-modern era to the present, see Fairbank and Goldman (2006). Liu (2004) covers the Opium Wars, the Unequal Treaties, and China's clash with foreign colonial powers.
  17. Zarrow (2005) examines China during the late Qing and the Republican era. Mitter (2004) provides a detailed analysis of modern China's revolutionary history from the perspective of the May Fourth Movement.
  18. On Mao-era China, see the respective sections in Fairbank and Goldman (2006). MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006) provide an account of the Cultural Revolution.
  19. For in-depth analyses of the political and economic situation in contemporary China, see Shirk (2007), Fewsmith (2008), and Naughton (2008).
  20. The observation that documentary film-making constructs specific discursive positions is by no means limited to the case of state-regulated mainland Chinese media. For analyses of how other documentaries manipulate visual and acoustic sources, see Iedema (2001) and Nichols (1991 & 2001).

21. As Breslin and Shen (2010) have shown, the discourse of humiliation also infuses many online discussions, especially regarding Chinese foreign policy.
22. All translations throughout this paper are the authors'.
23. See Nichols (2001) for a detailed examination of this effect in documentary film.
24. It should be pointed out that Chinese historiography has traditionally aimed to evaluate history on moral grounds (Mittag 2008), and that this tradition remains alive in contemporary Chinese historiography of the Marxist persuasion.
25. In order to remain coherent, the annotation in the English translation reproduces the general dynamics of the original sentence, rather than the precise word-order of the original. Consequently, only the Chinese original features the precise word-emphasis.
26. Note how now that the narrative unfolds, the enemy is explicitly named in highly emotive language: the Japanese are now "bandits" and "invaders" who have "seized" Chinese territories and consequently deserve to be "eradicated".
27. It is worth noting that "flood prevention" is not a recent addition to the legitimizing repertoire of discourses in China. Floods in fact already had a significant meaning in the political discourse of pre-modern China.
28. The earthquake is quickly becoming a cornerstone of political discourse in China; it reinforces the familiar narrative of suffering, struggle, and victory. To provide two brief examples, various Chinese pavilions at the Shanghai World Exposition referred to this event in order to evoke patriotic sentiments in Chinese guests. Also, the earthquake plays a central role in a recent Chinese blockbuster: Feng Xiaogang's movie "Aftershock". This 2010 melodrama tells the story of a family torn apart after the 1976 Tangshan earthquake, only to be re-united at the very scene of the Wenchuan earthquake 32 years later.

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## CHAPTER 7

# China's soft power

## Formulations, contestations and communication

Qing Cao

Durham University

This chapter examines the discursive structure of 'soft power' in China, its cultural, historical and political backgrounds and the role the mass media play in mediating its meanings. Conceptualised within critical discourse analysis, this study assesses soft power discourse as a form of articulating traditional values by China's political and intellectual elites, and offers a view on China's future direction. It also discusses how official formulations of soft power are contested, critiqued, but crucially communicated in the commercialised but diversified mass media. Specifically, it focuses on three levels of analysis: (1) a *description* of the language of 'soft power', (2) an *interpretation* of soft power as an institutional practice, and (3) an *explanation* of the broad socio-political dynamics that shape the discourse of soft power. The chapter argues that the Chinese notion of soft power is significantly different from Nye's. It functions in part as an instrument for an ideological reformulation in the official discourse and reconstruction of cultural identities in the intellectual discourse. The chapter concludes with a critical evaluation of the significance and implications of the soft power discourse.\*

**Keywords:** Soft power; Chinese media; Confucianism; ideology; traditional Chinese culture; Chinese socialism; discourse analysis; external communication

### 1. Introduction

In the closing years of the 2000s, China staged two high-profile international events – the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Coinciding with China's growing influence, these events carry extra symbolic significance – the emergence of a non-Western global power (Sugden & Tomlinson 2011; Caffrey 2013). Some commentators suggest that this potential shift in global

structure is not only economic and political, but cultural (Jacques 2012; Callahan & Barabantseva 2012). As the only surviving civilization of the oldest cultures in the world, China is shaped by its own traditions and values and, since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, these have never been better appreciated within China than they are today. Following centuries of turmoil and struggles for national salvation since the First Opium War (1839–42), China has gradually regained its cultural confidence, a confidence that has been boosted by strong economic growth. This economic take-off has only intensified China's unremitting search for a viable route to modernity, a search which draws increasingly on China's time-honoured traditions (Nolan 2003). Widely seen as a coming-of-age party, the Beijing Olympics proved a successful debut on the world stage of a 'cultural China' in contrast to a 'political China' – the latter being an image marked in the post-Cold War Western media by human rights abuse in the 1990s (Cao 2012a).

Both the Beijing Olympics and Shanghai World Expo are seen as important occasions to project China's soft power – the power to influence the hearts and minds of people of other nations through 'attraction'. Since its introduction into China in the mid-2000s, Joseph Nye's (2004) concept of 'soft power' has gained immediate currency and prominence in China's official, academic and popular discourse, largely because it arrived at a time when China was trying to project a peaceful international image amidst perceptions of the 'threat of China'. 'Soft power' provides the Chinese elites with a useful conceptual frame to develop a strategic approach for enhancing China's international standing, dispelling suspicions of China's wider roles and activities, and articulating a Chinese vision of a world order inspired by Confucian values (Wang 2010; Zhao 2012; Guo 2012). Domestically, soft power discourse creates a multiplicity of spaces wherein the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) constructs fresh political identities underpinned partially by a Confucian political philosophy, and envisages the revival of the Chinese nation. While the academic community broadly endorses this move, some intellectuals extend the discussions to a rejuvenation of China's cultural traditions which have been largely abandoned since the founding of the PRC in 1949 (Zhang 2010; Li & Fu 2011). Others, however, critique, contest and express reservations on the official formulation of soft power. These discussions, debates and contestations are facilitated primarily by the changing landscape of the mass media, spearheaded by the rapid growth of the Internet as the primary platform (if not a 'public sphere') for public debate in China. The prolific use of soft power generates areas of consensus, solidarity and some sense of a common purpose, reinforcing a sense of shared national identity. On the other hand, it produces a plethora of tensions, controversies and criticisms that reflect discord, fissures and fault lines in the Chinese society in a complex, dynamic but evolving system of meaning production, negotiation and mediation.

It might be useful, right at the outset, to state clearly a working definition of soft power as used in this study – *it is a set of values that a given community articulates and practises as its own foundational principles which might, at times, exert some form of appeal to members outside that particular community*. This chapter delineates broad patterns of Chinese formulations of soft power, its cultural, historical and political backgrounds, and the pivotal role the mass media play in disseminating and mediating the soft power discourse. Conceptualised within traditions of critical approach to discourse (Wodak 2008; Fairclough 1989, 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999), it focuses on the soft power discourse as a form of a return to China's cultural traditions amidst the value vacuum left by an obsolete Marxist ideology, and on emerging Chinese views on global issues. In particular, it examines how the process of formulation, contestation and communication of soft power is facilitated by the changing functions of Chinese media following three and half decades of economic reforms. Structurally, the chapter focuses on three levels of analysis (Fairclough 1989): (1) a *description* of the language of 'soft power', (2) an *interpretation* of soft power as text and as an institutional practice of the mass media, and (3) an *explanation* of the broader socio-political dynamics that largely shape the soft power discourse. The chapter starts with a discussion on the concept of soft power and of critical discourse analysis as an effective approach to examining soft power. This is followed by a detailed analysis of official and academic discourses before moving to consider the communication of soft power through the mass media.

Data collected for analysis include the CCP's official documents, elite academic writings, and more importantly, mass media reporting. The study concentrates on online texts for mass consumption, including summaries of academic writings and views of leading intellectuals. This focus enables a delineation of the media's choice of reporting on soft power and whether it is a convergence or divergence of official views. Hence, this study is not an exhaustive survey of Chinese academic literature on soft power or indeed official policies; rather, it provides an analysis of key features of soft power discourse as propagated in the mass media for popular consumption. This discursive examination is contextualised in the interplay between the mass media and politics as part of socio-political processes in the Chinese society, which determine largely the production, circulation and consumption of soft power discourse. The chapter concludes with a critical assessment of the significance and implications of soft power discourse.

## 2. Social change, discourse and soft power

In recent decades, transformations of economies, political landscapes, societies, communities and cultures, facilitated by the onset of globalisation and information

technology, have had an important bearing on the way we see the roles of culture and traditions, and in the age of the Internet, how we relate and communicate with each other. Indeed, many (Habermas 1987; Giddens 1991; and Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999) argue that these transformations are, to a significant degree, transformations mediated through the media, in language and discourse. This is because discourse constitutes core mechanisms through which social practices evolve. In this sense, the accelerating changes brought about by modernity *exist* in discourse as well as in processes outside discourse. Moreover, as the world shrinks rapidly in the process of globalization (or global capitalism), societies, communities and individuals try to make sense of, and adapt to, their changed circumstances by constantly re-assessing and negotiating with their cultures, traditions and assumptions. More importantly, they have to interact with other cultures and assumptions in ways that were unimaginable before the globalised world. In such a process, any discourse involving national identities will be intertwined with a complex web of internal and external relationships. The circulation and exchange of ideas and practices across national boundaries is also intertwined with the positions of other nations and cultures politically, economically and culturally. Thus, articulation of indigenous values, standpoints and attitudes from a non-Western society will inevitably enter a symbolic world to compete with established norms and principles.

Language use is a socially constituted and historically situated mode of action that is in a dialectical relationship with other processes and aspects of the society. The discourse of soft power is no exception. It is both socially shaped and shaping, and therefore generated within a specific socio-political and historical context. It is this character of the social constitution of soft power discourse that this study aims to unravel. Discourse is concerned primarily with the use of language to represent social practices from a specific point of view (Fairclough 1995: 56). The connections between language use and social practices are not always apparent but often hidden, particularly when language use, like the soft power discourse, occurs at a national level and in a cross-cultural context. This is where critical discourse analysis emerges as an effective instrument for this study. Critical discourse analysis is problem-oriented and interested in revealing ideologies, interests and power through a 'retroductable' investigation of semiotic data (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 3). It is particularly useful in examining systematically and explicitly various 'structures and strategies' (Van Dijk 2007) at all levels of soft power. Specifically, this study investigates the *recontextualization* and *intertextuality* of China's soft power discourse. *Recontextualization* refers to the act of taking an argument and restating it in a fresh context, with the respective element reformulated in accordance with the new situation. It often results in the element acquiring a new meaning as meanings are generated in the process of use and reuse. *Intertextuality*, on the other hand, means that all texts are interrelated both in the past and present. Such

links can be established in many different ways, either through reference to a topic or through significant associated actors and events (Reisigl & Wodak 2009:90).

This study examines soft power discourse as derived from two principal sources: the 'original' concept as formulated and popularised by Joseph Nye, and the idea of soft power as articulated and highlighted in 2007 by the then CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao at the 17th CCP National Congress (Hu 2007). Nye first developed the 'soft power' concept in *Bound to Lead* (Nye 1990) and returned to it in *The Paradox of American Power* (Nye 2002), then substantially elaborated it in *Soft Power* (Nye 2004). Essentially, Nye sees soft power as a means to obtain desired outcomes without tangible 'threats' or 'payoffs'. It can also be seen as an indirect way of achieving foreign policy objectives in world politics. This 'second face of power' could be obtained by, for example, the admiration of people from other countries of a country's values, institutions, level of prosperity and openness (Nye 2004:5). Thus, soft power is conceived by Nye in contrast to hard power – the object of making others change their behaviour remains the same, but soft power co-opts while hard power coerces. Hu's 'recontextualized' formulation of soft power, however, is a much broader concept that derives its meanings from a constant reference to a rich intertextual repertoire of Chinese traditional values, though these are connected with the current 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. In short, Chinese soft power is constituted by the best of the Chinese traditions and contemporary practice. This notion allows maximum flexibility in defining soft power in a way that serves its purposes. In Hu's report to the 17th Party Conference, soft power was recontextualized within a 'blueprint' of cultural development that focuses on four areas: socialist values, harmonious society, traditional culture and creative industry (discussed in the next section).

The Chinese recontextualization takes place at multiple levels. First, soft power draws on China's traditional values to substantiate its validity and efficacy. Second, it is employed as an effective rhetoric to construct both a new political identity for the CCP and a cultural identity for the Chinese nation. Third, it is used as a mobilising rationale to develop China's cultural industry in order to compete with the 'influx' of foreign cultural products that has occurred since China's 2001 accession to the WTO. Finally, it creates a new way of articulating a Chinese view of international affairs and extending its cultural influence through external discourse. The decontextualized soft power from Nye's original formulation is intertextualized in various ways. It is linked first of all to an increasing body of texts – top leaders' speeches, policy papers, reports of the CCP conferences and government meetings that have applied Confucian values since the Hu-Wen (President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao) leadership in 2003. Correspondingly, soft power provides a convenient vehicle through which socialist principles, objectives and values are clandestinely connected with China's classical texts in the construction of a hybridized text of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. However, the immediate

intertextual context is the academic discussions that have taken place around soft power since its introduction to China in early 2000s. The current political ideology of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ creates a hegemonic version of an idealised soft power discourse that engages in a critical tension with a variety of academic discourses that see different ‘truths’ both in Chinese society and in the assessment of China’s weight in the world. The academic discourses are intertwined with a different body of literature that concerns the salvation of Chinese traditional values amidst their destruction in both Maoist socialism and current capitalist developmentalism. Thus, a dynamic but complex web of recontextualization and intertextualization can be discerned in the construction of China’s soft power in an official/academic, socialist/Confucian, historical/contemporary and internal/external nexus.

### 3. Changing political identities: The official discourse

#### 3.1 Soft power and its objectives

Translated in Chinese as *ruan quan li* (软实力), *ruan shi li* (软实力), or *ruan li liang* (软力量), soft power entered China’s mainstream discourse in early 2000s, first in international politics and then in domestic policies, inter-provincial competition and corporate governance (Han & Jiang 2009). A proliferation of academic papers emerged around the mid-2000s and, in 2006 alone, over 200 journal articles were published on soft power. Gradually, soft power started to be adopted by Chinese leaders and policymakers in their speeches and policy documents. However, it was the political report to the 17th CCP National Congress by Hu Jintao in 2007 that gave soft power strategic significance at the highest level. Hu (2007)<sup>1</sup> stresses, in his report to the Congress, the vital importance of culture and its critical role in international competition: ‘in today’s world, culture has increasingly become a crucial source for national cohesion and creativity. It is an essential factor in the competition for comprehensive national power.’<sup>2</sup> For the first time, Hu calls on the Party ‘to enhance the national soft power’ as a strategic goal in the new century. Here, soft power is subsumed under the broad concept of culture, defined not only in terms of its instrumental values in international competition, but more substantially its communicative values in reinforcing national cohesion, identity, and solidarity. Culture takes such a central focus that soft power as defined in Hu’s report almost equates to ‘cultural power’ (Sheng 2008).

The culture-based conception of soft power is further emphasised by Hu (2007) highlighting the urgency to ‘develop the Chinese nation’s spiritual homeland ... and enhance Chinese culture’s international influence.’ The statements on

soft power objectives are substantiated by policy-oriented strategic approach – ‘fostering a harmonious culture’, ‘promoting traditional culture’ and ‘encouraging cultural innovation and regeneration’. Beneath the ‘socialist culture’ rhetoric, in Hu’s vision to enhance China’s soft power and to underpin his blueprint for China’s future, lays a decisive return to China’s cultural traditions. In contrast to ‘socialist core value’ that moves little beyond a ritualised rehearsal of Marxism, policy guidelines on China’s traditional culture promotion are detailed, specific and substantive – from improving traditional culture teaching to exploiting classical cultural resources, protecting material and non-material cultural heritage, launching cultural industry projects and enhancing national communications systems (Cao 2012). Following the 17th CCP Congress, soft power has rapidly proliferated in the official discourse on a wide range of discussions over domestic and international issues.

The discursive meaning of soft power is rather different from Nye’s formulation. First, Nye’s soft power was developed as a fresh strategic approach to optimise American influence at the peak of its global power; it is thus situated in the American foreign policy tradition and embedded in a broad political and cultural heritage of liberalism. Soft power as it emerged from the CCP 17th National Congress fulfils domestic functions as much as foreign policy imperatives (Barr 2011: Chapter 2). Second, Nye describes soft power primarily in terms of its instrumental value – ‘getting others to want the outcomes that you want’ (Nye 2004: 5) – as a ‘soft’ approach to American foreign policy in the post-Cold War world. The difference between hard and soft power, for Nye, lies only in a different approach to achieving the same desired foreign policy goal. This is illustrated in his latest formulation of ‘smart power’ in the Obama administration’s foreign policy (Nye 2011); this being a co-ordinated and optimal use of both forms of power. The Chinese official conception, however, emphasises first of all the communicative values in mobilising an understanding of the imperative to build a strong, coherent national culture and identity. Thus, Hu’s exposition could be seen as a broad discursive consensus building exercise, or ‘communicative action’ (Habermas 1998) at the highest level. Given the hierarchical structure of China’s political communication system, top leaders’ speech carries explicit political authority and priority for the national project to be promoted and carried out by various government departments.

Third, while Nye’s externally-oriented soft power aims exclusively at changing the behaviour of people outside the U.S, China’s official soft power discourse is both internally and externally directed, focusing primarily on changing domestic priorities and practices. Moreover, it is emphasised as an integral but crucial part of national culture building through a discourse of national cultural security (Renwick & Cao 2008). Its external dimension is viewed largely as a natural

extension of China's expected cultural rejuvenation. Consequently, reviving traditional values, enhancing communication infrastructures, but more importantly developing a strong national identity constitute its central components, and are therefore the defining characteristics of the official discourse of soft power. The Hu-Wen leadership thus incorporated much of Confucianism in its revamping of political ideologies in a *renben* (people first) approach to government. Consequently, the idea of soft power is intrinsically intertwined with a discursive genealogy of neo-Confucianism and is subsumed under the general concept of cultural revival in post-reform China.

### 3.2 Soft power and the construction of a new political ideology

As a fresh conceptual frame in discussing China's national strength and strategic direction, the recontextualized soft power has also become a discursive vehicle through which the CCP's ideological underpinnings have surreptitiously shifted. Following Hu's 2007 call for soft power development, substantial official discourse has been produced through government documents, policy papers and conference reports. These recontextualized writings on soft power provide a nexus of the official delineation of soft power. Within this package, a new two-tier discursive formulation has emerged for discussing value systems – Marxist socialism and traditional culture. Each component is a self-contained package with its own system of description, vocabulary, imagery and meaning, but crucially the mode of relating to realities. The former, representing more of the past, is characterised by a discursive reductionism, abstraction and ritualisation. It consists largely of a closely knit bundle of slogans, concepts and imageries, providing an ideologically coloured frame for key political speeches and policy formulations, which serve to maintain discursive continuities with a revolutionary past and the current political legitimacy. In contrast, China's cultural traditions are constructed as comprising the real soft power – where China's true strengths and enduring values lie. Departing radically from an imported Marxist orthodoxy, the political elites have effectively underpinned a newly formulated value system, substantially with traditional cultures, which aims to sustain a rapidly changing society, maintain a minimal level of socio-political stability, and crucially search for a viable Chinese road to modernity.

A discursive unity is thus forged between contemporary socialism and traditional values, achieved through a range of discursive innovations centring on the notion of 'comprehensive national power' (*zhonghe guoli* 综合国力) – a term Chinese elites prefer to use in assessing China's overall capacities in relation to other nations. As a pragmatic, non-ideological term, 'comprehensive national power' incorporates soft power as a key component but bears flimsy relevance

to Marxist socialism. Soft power is applied as a conceptual tool through which the 'superstructure' – the dominant ideology that serves the economic base – is reinvented. Marxist socialism carries only a nominal discursive accord with subsequent policy formulations. Its largely symbolic if not phantom existence provides a much needed legitimacy for a political party that has attempted to transform itself from a revolutionary to a governing party. Still dominant in the economy, the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), arguably the strongest indicator of socialism, contribute significantly to the Chinese economy, but at the same time create tensions that the CCP has yet to resolve. One is the 'free market' nature of a Chinese economy that China has had to adopt to join a 'global economy' lead by the capitalist West. The other is the role and functions of SOEs that are yet to be re-defined amidst a widening gap between rich and poor which is detrimental to the 'socialist' image.

In contrast, the highly visible but substantive discourse of revitalising traditional cultures has taken on a new level of importance, underscored by top leaders' emphasis. It has facilitated an ideological transfiguration that orients identity politics toward national strength building. Undoubtedly, nation building has always been tinted with a nationalism that emphasises a traditional cultural revival pertinent to an internal audience. Contrary to the Marxist orthodoxies largely renounced in the post-reform China, traditional values are ideologically neutral and much less threatening to external constituencies. Significantly, the externally absent Marxism is equated to 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' that, in turn, is subsumed under a Confucian discourse of harmony as typified in the political report below:

Social harmony is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. There is an inherent unity between scientific approach to development and social harmony... Building a socialist harmonious society is a long-term historical task that extends to the whole process of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. (Hu 2007)

As Hu's hallmark contribution to the CCP theories, the 'scientific approach to development' (*kexue fazhan guan* 科学发展观) is nevertheless infused with traditional values. This is in contrast to Jiang Zemin's 'three represents' (*sange daibiao* 三个代表) that co-opt capitalist class into China's new political elites. Though the 'three represents' broadened the CCP's political base by allowing 'capitalists' to join the CCP, the alleged power/money fusion aggravates social tensions that mostly stem from an unequal distribution of wealth. The 'scientific approach to development', however, has become a rebalancing act to alleviate such tensions. Soft power, premised on a cultural revival, has emerged as a significant part of a political and cultural campaign for a sustainable development as well as an external strategy for

enhancing China's soft influence (Li 2009; Lai & Lu 2012). The traditional culture focused soft power is made crystal clear by a state council minister:

Values, in particular core values of a nation, have evolved over a very long period of time in a country's history. It is a comprehensive system that includes ways of thinking, ethical codes, beliefs and convictions. They derive from people's social life and practice, reflecting a continued cultural tradition. A nation's core values, therefore, constitute the key component of cultural soft power. (Cai 2009)

Subsuming traditional values under soft power is part of pragmatic nationalism that underlines the Hu–Wen leadership's key policy innovations. The 2002 CCP 16th Congress, when Hu officially took over the Party's stewardship from Jiang Zemin, represents the transition from a broadly 'national spirit' boosting patriotism to a policy-oriented Confucian humanism. A fresh discursive package, centring on the Confucian concept *he* (和 peace, harmony, union) is created. New codes of meaning are framed into *he* and promoted as representing China's core values with a contemporary relevance. Throughout the 2000s, the Hu/Wen leadership also derived from the Confucian *minben* (民本) as a centrepiece in formulating the 'harmonious society' policy. *Minben* was even portrayed as the Chinese approach to a 'socialist democracy' through two Confucian notions – *min wei bang ben* (民为邦本 people as the basis of the state) and *min gui jun qing* (民贵君轻 people as more important than rulers) (Cao 2007). Traditional culture as soft power has become the latest addition to the discursive packaging of a new political identity of the CCP and cultural identity of the nation. The figure below illustrates key differences between Nye's conception of soft power and the Chinese official formulations of soft power:

	Nye's notion of soft power	Chinese notion of soft power
<b>Objectives</b>	Achieving foreign policy aims	Achieving foreign policy aims Constructing new political identities
<b>Sources</b>	Contemporary institutions and values	Largely traditional Confucian values
<b>Approach</b>	Cultural industry-driven activities	State-sponsored activities
<b>Audience</b>	External audiences	External as well as internal audiences
<b>Outcome</b>	Changing the behaviours of people in other countries	Changing the perceptions about China of people from other countries. Changing perceptions about the political identities of the CCP of people inside China
<b>Features</b>	Instrumental to bringing about desired outcomes	Communicative – constructing and promoting consensus

### 3.3 The problems of China's soft power

China is fully aware of its soft power deficiency (Cai 2009) and this partially explains the internal-directed nature of its soft power oratory. China is also careful not to arouse any suspicions of exporting ideologies – its culture-based external communication is mostly defensive and presented as a soft image of China's growing international activities. Chinese officials play down the so-called 'China Model' (Huang & Cui 2005; Yu et al. 2006) and distance themselves from the 'Beijing Consensus' proposed by Ramo (2004). In China's own assessment, the Confucius Institute project has been broadly successful with over 400 opened in over 100 countries by 2013; other efforts are less fruitful despite considerable investment. In 2010, China's revenue from film and audio-visual product exports were 0.12 billion US dollars compared to 14.56 billion dollars in the U.S. (Guangming Ribao 2013). The international cultural market share in 2011 was respectively taken by the U.S. (43%), the European Union (34%), Japan (10%), South Korea (5%), leaving China (4%) in the fifth place (Ministry of Culture 2012). For this and many other reasons, an American China watcher sees China only as 'a partial power' (Shambaugh 2013).

As regards China's dismal competitiveness in cultural products, some see the problem as lying in the state's monopoly in allocating all funds to government agencies or state-owned enterprises, and a heavy-handed censorship that stifles the creative energy of Chinese artists (Peng 2012; Nye 2013). Others deem it to be the government's erroneous idea of equating enhancing soft power to improving external propaganda campaigns (Ding 2008; Ge 2012). However, the cross-border flow of cultural products and services are only an indication of soft power, not soft power itself. After all, in Nye's and Chinese academic definitions, 'culture' is only one source of soft power along with 'domestic values and politics' and 'foreign policy'.

## 4. Academic discourse: culturalism

### 4.1 Soft power as part of an intellectual project

Compared to official rhetoric, academic discourse of soft power is far more diverse and complex (Liu 2006). Significantly, in recent decades, it has been infused with an intellectual resurgence of traditional values (Tang 2009a, 2009b), in particular the 'cultural fever' prevalent in the 1980s. Cultural fever refers to the rise of interest in Chinese traditional culture, western learning and the future of China in the post-reform era. It includes the emergence in academic and intellectual circles of neo-Confucianism as well as liberalism criticising autocratic politics and advocating that 'humanistic values' be incorporated in the Chinese political system.

Assaulted and blamed for China's 'backwardness' in the May Fourth Movement (1910s–1920s) and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Confucianism made a strong comeback in the 1980s. It was tolerated by conservative elders but supported by a reform-minded leadership for a 'new authoritarian' style of government to push forward the reform agenda, despite being contested by a liberal campaign for democracy (Xiao 2008, 2012). However, the 1990s witnessed a wider embracement of China's indigenous values, against a backdrop of a rapid economic growth and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, when the concept of soft power came to China, Chinese scholars broadly shared Nye's notion of the term as an intangible, non-material but abstract power that has certain capacities to attract people from other countries, or to influence perceptions and attitudes (Wang 2006; Pan 2006; Liu 2006). However, what sprang immediately to their minds was the 'rich cultural heritage' of China. Their mission to protect and promote Chinese traditional values found an almost 'natural' expression in the concept of soft power. To them, this was a familiar concept in a new term.

Thus, soft power is decontextualized from Nye's formulations in American foreign policy and Hu's in his rhetoric of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. The academic discussion of soft power is intertextually interwoven with a rich body of historical texts of Confucianism (Tang 2009b). This formulation of the term intrinsically derives from China's classical period on the thinking on interstate competition during the Warring States Era (475–221 BC) (Ding 2008). A wise king, according to Confucius, attracts peoples far and wide by his virtues' (以德来之 *yi de lai zhi*). Confucius compares a country's moral power to the north polar star: 'He who exercises government by virtues is like the northern polar star that stays in its place but all other stars turn toward it'. Attraction by moral appeal is further developed by Mencius, the second founding father of Confucianism: 'to subjugate people with force you lose their hearts; to convince people with your virtues you win their hearts'. Sun Zi, China's ancient military strategist, echoes this line of argument in his classic *the Art of War*, stressing the wisdom and moral superiority of winning adversaries' hearts and minds rather than attacking their fortified cities. To Chinese academics, Nye's characterisation of soft power as consisting of 'attraction' appears to be similar to the Confucian philosophy of winning people's respect by moral appeal. The Confucian belief that a country can obtain a great power status through a 'benevolent government' (仁政 *renzheng*) and 'rule by virtues' (德治 *dezhi*) comes close to Nye's soft power as a combination of institutions, values and practice seen as legitimate and carrying moral authority to people beyond national boundaries (Nye 2004: 6). Incidentally the contextual backgrounds of Nye's soft power and Confucius' moral appeal bear considerable similarities. Both develop the idea as a non-violent approach to interstate relations and a means of extending influence across national borders.

## 4.2 Constructing a depoliticised 'cultural China'

The academic focus on soft power also orients toward domestic practices; namely the imperative to develop a coherent national value system, a sustainable developmental model, a cohesive nation and an innovative culture (Tong 2008; PUCSPRP<sup>3</sup> 2009a). Similarly, it sees China's strong internal development as a way of enhancing its external influence through a traditional emphasis on self-cultivation as a means to strengthen one's position. In ascertaining soft power resources, Chinese scholars identify a similar but a wider spectrum to Nye's definition – culture, political values, institutions, foreign policy and the quality of its citizens (PUCSPRP 2009b) – though overwhelming priority is placed on culture. So, while Nye sees American popular culture as *part* of its soft appeal, Chinese academics views China's traditional culture as the *basis* of soft power:

promoting Chinese culture refers, in fact, to disseminating traditional culture, not modern one; though traditional culture could be packaged in a modern fashion. China's traditional culture is unique with potential universal values. It constitutes the foundation of China's cultural appeal. (PUCSPRP 2009b: 3)

Thus, despite some complaints about China's popular culture being dominated by American films and cartoons, Japanese computer games and Korean TV soaps, the real concerns revolve around China's capacity to establish a national cultural identity that can incorporate traditional values and contemporary life, but also underpin future development (Men 2007a, 2007b, 2008). The key to developing such a capacity, the academics believe, lies in an effective and successful resolution of the tension between seeking inspirations from traditional values and pressing ahead with the country's project of modernisation and political reform. This is phrased as the 'modernization of China's cultural traditions (Tang 2009b; Zheng 2010).

## 4.3 Soft power and the international outlook

The external dimension of the academic soft power discussion is characterised by 'cultural nationalism' with an articulation, based on the Confucian ideal of harmony, of a Chinese perspective to global issues (Huang et al. 2006). In contrast to Nye's call to extend American liberal values and maintain leadership in the world, Chinese academics emphasise the need for developing a 'harmonious' relationship with different countries, nations and societies, through an appreciation of their cultures, traditions and values (Yang 2008). Thus, they are opposed to seeking global leadership (Jia 2008) as a soft power objective. Most scholars see the Confucian concept *he* (和) as representing China's core values. *He*, as a word with multi-dimensional meanings, can be translated as 'harmony', 'union' or 'peace' depending on the context. Prior to the arrival of the soft power concept, leading

Chinese scholars (Fei 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Zhang 2004) had already highlighted *he* as embodying China's traditional values. However, it is *he er bu tong* (和而不同 harmonious without homogeneity) that Chinese scholars argue symbolizes a Chinese approach to global issues, and therefore constitutes the cultural foundation of a Chinese conception of soft power (Cao 2007; Fang 2007).

A quotation from Confucius' *Analects*, *he er bu tong* refers originally to a desirable personal quality that only a *junzi* (君子 a true gentleman) possesses. *Junzi* as an idealized man has achieved the highest level of virtues through self-cultivation. A *junzi* is capable of interacting harmoniously with others without compromising his principles. The *he er bu tong*-based soft power articulates an alternative Chinese vision of a desirable world order in an implicit critique of the western-dominated and promoted discourse of liberalism. *He er bu tong* as a Chinese approach to international conflicts assumes, first, that *he* should be the ultimate objective in international interactions. Second, it argues for an appreciation of cultural differences. Third, more importantly, it presumes that no values should be imposed upon others because any claim of universal values has to be tested by the attraction they may exert on people in other cultures – a defining characteristic of 'soft power'. Implicitly, *he er bu tong* recognises that there is a limit to any truth claim of universal values and that values are culture-specific and tradition-bound (Yang 2008). Tapping into the deep well of Confucian traditions, Chinese intellectuals have constructed a discursive package of a traditional value-based soft power. However, most academics recognise that China's soft power lags far behind a hard power that it has gained mainly through economic growth. As a 'civilisation-state', China's external influence is seen as disproportionately weak. As one scholar (Pang 2009) puts it, 'it is regrettable that China has not developed a 'China model' that can pass the test of history in tackling global issues and contributing to global governance'. China's cultural repertoire provides merely a soft power potential, not soft power itself.

## 5. Dynamics of the soft power debate: The mass media

### 5.1 From control to negotiation: The changing media

Given the nature of the political communication system in China, official formulations of soft power are propagated and circulated largely through the state media – those national media institutions under the direct supervision of the CCP propaganda department such as the *People's Daily* and China Central Television (CCTV). However, increasingly, discussions, debates and contestations of dominant interpretations of soft power take place in wider media outlets. This is possible

due largely to spaces created by media commercialisations in the 1990s and the economic, social and cultural changes in post-reform China. The most notable feature of the process is the change in the media system 'from control to negotiation' (Huang 2007). That is, after facing increasing resistance, pressure, and challenges from various social sectors, the state has gradually relaxed its control over the media and allowed some negotiation to take place among different actors – the state, society, the market and the media. Though uneven in power relations, differing and dissenting views have steadily made their way into the mass media. Taking advantage of new channels of communication such as the Internet, individuals have started to participate in public debates to articulate views on a wide range of issues. Moreover, parallel to a linear top-down political communication by key state media institutions managed by CCP propaganda departments, horizontal and rapidly expanding media platforms have emerged that engage closely with the public as media consumers, creating a nascent, though limited, social space. It is in this changed and changing context of mass communication that the wider public has actively participated in the discursive formations of soft power.

Thus, a two-tier system operates in the dissemination and discussion of soft power. On the one hand, still defined as the CCP's mouthpiece, state media like the *People's Daily* and CCTV propagate the official formulations in the form of reporting speeches, reports and conferences in relation to soft power. Hu Jintao's 17th CCP Congress speech, as a primary policy document, was extensively reported as providing a guiding principle for soft power development. On the other hand, a host of other media outlets engage in a more open discussion of soft power, in addition to relaying official views. The Internet is by far the most popular and freest channel of communication, and is favoured by a young, educated and relatively well-off urban population who have largely switched off from conventional media like television and newspaper in seeking information. Thus, disparate views on soft power appear mostly on the Web. Significantly, in an effort to engage the general public, in particular the rapidly expanding 'netizens' – 591 million in total by the end of June 2013 including 464 million accessing the Internet through mobile phone –, key state media like the *People's Daily* have started to operate websites that provide a broad range of information. These websites host a variety of forums that discuss controversial issues that may not appear in the print media. Open discussions of soft power can also be found on state media sponsored online discussion forums, such as *qiang guo lun tan* (强国论坛 Great Power Forum). As a result, China's media have become less linear, and consequently dominant interpretations of soft power are less hegemonic. It is in such a media environment that the concept of soft power, its mode of promotion and development and its wider role have come under scrutiny and contestation, contributing to a broader discursive formulation of the term.

## 5.2 Soft power: Tensions, contestations and negotiations

Critical assessment of the official discussions of soft power occurs mostly in the Internet and some academic journals and books. While the official media remain largely monological in their reports of closed official views, the Internet provides the main vehicle for a relatively free discussion of soft power, and one of its functions is the posting of academic articles that contest official formulations of soft power. The first area of contention revolves around the strategies for developing China's soft power. Some (Gan 2008) insist that China should concentrate on 'commonality of humanity' rather than 'particularity of Confucian values' in extending China's 'soft appeal'. Others focus on the official approach to soft power development and projection, accusing the state cultural management bureaucracies entrusted for soft power development of constraining China's soft power due to their conservative attitudes towards artistic innovation and creations (Zheng 2008). Politicising cultural management, they argue, suffocates China's cultural creativity. They contend that soft power development should not rely on state-centric, bureaucrat-led grand projects; rather, the state should help foster a favourable socio-political environment wherein arts and culture can flourish naturally (Peng 2012). In a similar vein, some critiques focus on the official confusion over external communication (对外宣传 *dui wai xuan chuan*) and soft power projection, arguing that soft power lies in content rather than form (Ding 2008). A more radical view, however, questions the whole idea of soft power projection, claiming that Western soft influence is so strong that China does not stand a chance in soft power completion or for a truly equal dialogue with the West (Du 2010). The soft power concept itself, it is argued, was designed in the United States as a strategy to contain the rise of non-Western cultural influences, in the same way as Huntington's 'clash of civilisation' and Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis. However, more substantial contestations relate to China's domestic politics. It is argued that soft power derives essentially from China's current practices – what China does now – rather than traditional values (Jiang et al. 2009). A view typical of this comes from a renowned international relations scholar:

Domestic problems of disharmony<sup>4</sup> are directly relevant to the government's capability for domestic political mobilisation. It constitutes the foundation of China's capability of international political mobilisation. When a country is perceived as representing moral integrity, social progress, and the right direction of development, it will exert political appeal to other nations. Soft power is a form of international mobilisation capability. How the international community perceives our country is part of the basis upon which we can effectively enhance our international status and mobilisation capability. When the international community approves of our behaviour, our international status, our mobilisation capability will rise, and vice versa. (Yan 2007: 1)

Significantly, this incisive but dissenting voice is not only posted in the intellectual elite website *Love Thinking* (爱思想 *aisixiang*)<sup>5</sup> but included in a Peking University (北京大学国家软实力研究院 Peking University National Institute of Soft Power Study) report that is made fully available online in the CCP flagship *People's Daily* sponsored website *People's Net* (人民网 *renmin wang*).<sup>6</sup> Thus, this standpoint carries extra discursive weight in counterbalancing the dominant interpretation of soft power in a depleted socialist rhetoric. It recontextualizes soft power in what China does rather than what the leaders say. Indeed, as a major research project on soft power, the Peking University PUCSPRP report is forthright in assessing the importance of 'domestic institutions' in soft power development:

For years, people in our country debated on whether we should adhere to the CCP one-party rule or follow the Western example of a multi-party system. Whether or not a multi-party system suits China's circumstances, the extent and duration of such a debate indicate that this Western-derived political system is more appealing to some people in China. (PUCSPRP 2009b)

Thus, the PUCSPRP text reorients soft power to the domestic political system rather than government policies and can be seen as a move that challenges to the core dominant interpretations. Though such an explicit and bold contestation to official formulations of policy key terms is rare, these remarks reflect the broader context of a political development manifested not only in peripheral media outlets but in elite academic institutions. It also indicates the openness, extent and intensity of debates in the academic community and political institutions. One Peking university professor (Pan 2008) complains about the CCP Central Party School emitting too many disparate voices, some arguing for liberal politics while others for authoritarian control. As a CCP senior officials training agency, Pan believes it should maintain a consistent system of beliefs and leave intellectual debates on politics to academia.

The diverse understandings, interpretations and debates of soft power and criticisms on domestic politics reveal the increasing weight of the so-called 'people's character' of China's mass media, a movement largely brought about by an economic momentum that has helped the media to expand 'negative freedom' (Berlin 1969) in non-political areas, and progressively depoliticised the state, the economy and culture, resulting in considerable media liberalisation (Lee 2001). 'Negative freedom' refers to situations where people can do or say what they want without 'interference by other persons.' The rapid growth of popular media, unleashed by market forces and facilitated by the advance of information technology, contrasts with declining Party paper circulations. The unchanging, stern-faced communication style by key state media institutions and ritualistic, though diminishing, chanting of Marxist ideology can hardly appeal to young and

better informed generations of audiences. In these circumstances, most people have turned away from the state media where official soft power discourse circulates, and sought information on the Internet, using search engines that give them some degree of autonomy. This changed pattern of information acquisition means that a wide range of formulations, interpretations and contestations of soft power are readily available and assessable. The discursive negotiations on soft power played out in the media reflect the changing nature of China's reform, to the extent that change is no longer brought about by merely implementing policies determined solely by the political elites. There is a growing space for political, intellectual and social actors to be engaged in an interactive process. Thus, to win public support has become imperative for the CCP, because the broad social base and increased media space gained by alternative voices puts growing pressure on the political elites. They have to try to use their dominant discursive positions to cultivate a public attitude and knowledge congruent with their policies, though it seems they have increasing difficulty in doing so.

## 6. Conclusions

A significant aspect of soft power discourse in China lies in a shared consensus by the political and intellectual elites that China's traditional values could provide some form of underpinning for China's future development. Despite their differences, policymakers and academics converge on the imperative of a traditional cultural revival bolstered by popular support. Though it remains to be seen how traditional values can actually be applied through institutional practice, it nonetheless seems inevitable that Marxist rhetoric will one day be displaced by a value system that will incorporate some elements of traditional culture. This is reflected in the changing media systems wherein soft power discourse is continuously negotiated, mediated, reshaped and ultimately reproduced and consumed by Chinese society. In this fragmented but expanding mass media and in the gradual shift of the media's role from the CCP's 'mouthpiece' to the 'modern bard' of the people, much broader-based voices for shaping public opinions are emerging. For this reason, soft power discourse has become a part of China's identity politics, informed by wider social, cultural and political forces and processes, as China transforms itself from a revolutionary state to an emerging global power. Witnessing a waning American influence following the 2003 Iraq invasion and the 2008 financial crisis, China's policymakers have become convinced that a balance of hard and soft power is vital for any great power to be sustained and respected. Thus, projecting soft power is not only strategically imperative in fending off China's negative

external perceptions, in particular after the 2008 Beijing Olympics, but also morally preferable in extending China's soft influence in a manner commensurable with its growing international profile.

The official concept of soft power is as broad as its objectives are wide. These objectives include constructing new political, cultural and historical identities, shaping current priorities, articulating Chinese worldviews and projecting a cultural influence beyond its borders. Anticipating China's rise in the early 1990s, Lucien Pye (1994: 18) asked two fundamental questions – 'where indeed are the Chinese headed?' and 'What will be the essence of state power in the new post-Cold War world order?' Capturing key Western concerns, these perceptive questions point to the nature of Chinese internal and external politics and identity. However, though recognizing China as a 'civilization state' radically different from Western 'nation-states', Pye (1990: 58) nonetheless predicted that China would either go astray or successfully convert to a Western polity. Yet China has increasingly resorted to its own traditions as shown in the soft power discourse. Recently some studies have started to focus on what China is rather than what China should be. They include such books as *Chinese Communist Party as Organisational Emperor* (Zheng 2010), *When China Rules the World* (Jacques 2009, 2012), *China: the Pessoptimist Nation* (Callahan 2010) and *On China* (Kissinger 2012). These studies see a progressive expansion of China's hard power in the foreseeable future, but they do not predict a similar growth of China's soft power.

Not all these elements are fully discussed and debated. But equally importantly, all these elements are changing as China continues to search for a viable route to modernity. Soft power as a discursive practice reflects precisely the intricate process and features of such a change. In the future, it is inevitable that China's soft power concept and practice will also change, though it is difficult to ascertain what that change will be. However, the real challenge for China's political elites is finding a coherent, sustainable route to further development that connects meaningfully with both its own cultural heritage and global norms.

## Notes

\* An early version of this paper was published as 'The Language of Soft Power: Mediating Socio-Political Meanings in the Chinese Media' in *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies* 25, pp. 7–24. This chapter is fully updated and substantially rewritten.

1. When quoted from online articles, page number will not be provided unless the number is available in the original text.

2. Unless indicated otherwise, the translation from Chinese to English is the author's own.
3. Peking University China's Soft Power Research Project (PUCSPRP) is sponsored by the State Commission of Development and Reform (国家发改委 *guojia fagai wei*). The project *Study on Strategies of Enhancing National Cultural Soft Power* is hosted by the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies at Peking University.
4. 'Disharmony' insinuates social tensions and conflict. It refers normally to tensions created by widening gaps between rich and poor, for example.
5. Its homepage: [www.aisixing.com](http://www.aisixing.com). For this article, see [www.aisixiang.com/data/13332.html](http://www.aisixiang.com/data/13332.html)
6. Its homepage: [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)

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## Issues in discourse approach to social transformations in China

### A synopsis

Hailong Tian & Paul Chilton

Tianjin Foreign Studies University / Lancaster University

This chapter discusses theoretical and methodological issues concerning doing critical discourse analysis in China. The authors believe that China's unique social, cultural and political context justifies an assumption that the Western originated paradigm of critical discourse analysis needs tailoring and appropriating when being applied in China. Starting from this assumption, the chapter discusses four issues relevant to discourse approach to the socio-political transformations in China: a 'wider' angle critical perspective, a research focus on the functionality of discourse, the emergent public sphere, and qualitative research method. It is argued that, while the first two issues are basically important for an appropriation of CDA in China, the second two issues needs to be given more attention, for the new media has become a new tool for discourse struggles, and the qualitative research methodology needs to be given more weight in CDA-related social research in China.

**Keywords:** Western originated CDA; appropriation of CDA in China; four issues

### 1. Introduction

In the Introduction to this edited volume, Cao provided a brief account of the development of the discursive regime in China. The writing system in the 3000 years of history is referred to as 'an enduring force in keeping the Chinese culture intact', that is, by having access to the same written language people of different nationalities, while living thousands of miles apart and speaking hundreds of dialects, shared the same set of cultural norms, literacy, identity, values, assumptions and worldview that kept them united. This enduring force, typically embodied in the classic text of Confucius' *Analects*, has ceased to be as powerful in

the 20th century as it used to be, and still less powerful in post-modern times when situations become more complex and unstable. In the seven chapters collected in this volume, the use of the Chinese language in the form of political discourse and media discourse invokes more possible ways of understanding. The meanings expressed by the use of a word, a metaphor, or even a fixed and formulaic proverb, become flexible, changeable, and indefinite, a possible proper understanding mostly resting on the negotiation of the speaker and hearer in terms of both sides' social values, political conditions and economic interest. This situation becomes more salient in the context where the new media such as Internet are used and manipulated by subjects of different social status. Here an example in point is the meaning of 'soft power', a buzzword emerging in the first decade of 21st century China. To interpret this concept, there are externally-oriented formulations as well as internally-oriented formulations, and official as well as academic formulations, each formulation backed up with its unique conditions and imaginations of the interpreter. Its meaning becomes more diversified and heterogeneous as the Internet turns out to be a discursive site for public debate, where different versions of soft power compete for recognition, legitimacy, consensus and authority (see Chapter 7 for details).

The message carried in this (and other) chapter(s) of this volume is that China is changing, and this change is occurring not only in domains such as economics, politics, and media, but in discourse, that is, in the way in which complex kinds of verbal exchanges are institutionalized around macro-topics and realized in genre and text. Accordingly, to understand the socio-political changes in China, it is important to understand their discourse aspects. But how do we approach the discourse aspect of socio-political change? Researches in this volume show that a possible way of researching discourse in China is firstly to examine how discourses change in context-dependant ways, and then to relate the discourse changes with the social factors that lead to these changes or are the effect of them. These two levels of analysis, descriptive and explanatory, are in fact the general practice of critical discourse analysis (KhosraviNik 2010), which convincingly explains why a discourse approach to the socio-political transformations in China is needed. But a discourse approach is needed not for the sake of research methodology, but for the fact that the discourse aspect of social change has become so salient that in postmodern times it becomes the real change itself. To quote from Kress (2001: 37), 'the social is *in* the linguistic sign: it is not around it, not correlated with it nor is it there as a resource to use.' Therefore, it is necessary that 'to "do" social life is to "do" discourse' (Wetherell et al. 2001: 4).

In this concluding chapter we discuss issues concerning such a discourse approach, with an intention that this approach is particularly applied to the Chinese socio-political transformations. We are aware that social transformation

is currently a global phenomenon, and the discourse of globalization has been researched in a more or less general sense (e.g. Fairclough 2006; Blommaert 2009). However, we believe that the socio-political changes in China have characteristics that deserve special attention. Obvious reasons might be that social change in China brings change to a very large population, and to every corner of the society. But more fundamentally this change is taking place in a country whose political system is not the same as that of Western countries. Taking into consideration the socio-political context in China, we assume that a discourse approach to these social changes have unique features that raise a number of theoretical as well as methodological issues. We will discuss these issues in turn.

## 2. A 'wider angle' critical perspective

Wetherell's 'to-do-the-social-is-to-do-discourse' motto justifies the importance of a discourse approach to the socio-political transformations, and this applies to the Chinese context as well. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as such an approach began to receive much attention from the Chinese academics and saw many applications in China during the last two decades. As it originates in the Western academic context and puts a strong emphasis on its political commitment, CDA nevertheless needs some tailoring and appropriating when being applied in China. We want to emphasize this point for the simple reason that we see a long tradition of criticism and self-criticism in China and this tradition is different from the Western tradition of criticism and/or critique.

For a discussion of the Western and Chinese traditions of critique, Chilton, Tian and Wodak (2009) have outlined the development of the two traditions. The word *critique* and its translation equivalent in the Chinese language have different concepts at their etymological origins. In the ancient Chinese language it originally meant a removal of something undesirable, the action of which may bring painful sufferings to a subject. This conception of 'critique' has already implied the connection of criticism with action, and this connection is strengthened and reinforced in Confucian discourse of 'rectification of names,' according to which 'words should be chosen by the ruler in the belief that they determine the way people think about reality, in line with the policies espoused by some such ruler' (Chilton, Tian & Wodak 2009: 500). In the Chinese tradition textual criticism becomes essential in the period from the middle of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century, when the re-analysis of classical texts and the questioning of the authenticity and accuracy of texts by the use of rational methods were favoured. Ideas about free thought, as well as radical criticism of the authoritarian empire, had their roots in the 16th century, as was the case, *mutatis mutandis*, in the West, where the

tradition of textual criticism, reaching back to the 16th century, were eventually merged with political critique in the European Enlightenment.

It is from this period of time on that the Western tradition and Chinese tradition of critique began to emerge. The former produced much philosophical exploration to Kantian critique, Marxist criticism, the Frankfurt school of critical theory, leading to further developments in the second half of the twentieth century, including, for instance, Bhaskar's critical realism, critical cultural studies and critical discourse analysis. In contrast, the Chinese tradition of critique consisted rather of political practices. Reinforced by political movements such as the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the meaning of critique was, for many people, especially those being criticised (mostly intellectuals), associated with pain and painful reflections, which can certainly be traced back to the original meaning of criticism in the ancient Chinese language. Against such an epistemological background, it is not surprising to see that some Chinese scholars agree to do discourse analysis but not "critical" discourse analysis, or they prefer to do "positive discourse analysis", that is, analysis of discourses that are representations of "positive" rather than "negative" social phenomena (e.g. Xiong 2001; Huang et al. 2007). What they are worried about is that their scholarly discourse analysis may evoke critique from others (e.g. those in power) who in turn bring criticism back to them.

As it is, a critical perspective in the Western sense may meet obstacles in merging itself with the discourse approach in China. To remove the obstacles, a political environment of free speech is essential, and at the same time a tailored critical perspective is necessary in the discourse approach to the Chinese socio-political transformations. For such a tailored critical perspective Tian (2008, 2009) proposes a 'wider angle' critical perspective that is different from that of the Western CDA. In the Western CDA practice, the scholarly discourse analysis consciously engages in socio-political commitment. This engagement of CDA in social practice leaves CDA a characteristic of having a 'narrow' focus on specific socio-political issues. To expand this focus wider from social issues to the issues of discourse, say the functions of discourse, we may actually take a 'wider angle' critical perspective. Tian (2008, 2009) expresses his new critical perspective in geometrical terms. In geometry, an angle that is less than 90 degrees is called an 'acute angle', and an angle that is wider than 90 degree and narrower than 180 degree is called an 'obtuse angle'. In Tian's (2008, 2009) proposal, the 'acute angle' is metaphorically referred to the Western CDA, as it is 'sharp' in the sense of criticising the undesired social problems and of bringing about social change. In the same way, the 'obtuse angle' is metaphorically referred to the newly proposed critical perspective on discourse analysis, which is not so ambitious as the Western CDA in its emphasis of political commitment but milder in the sense that the 'wider angle' critical perspective of CDA aims to understand the workings and functions of discourses in

the socio-political transformations, that is, to understand how discourse works to construct and represent social realities in the complex of societal context.

This way of doing CDA in China is an outcome of dialogue between reflections on discourse and critique in China and the West, and also of a recontextualization of Western originated CDA in the Chinese context. The 'wider angle' critical perspective does not fully follow CDA's political commissions. By doing critical analysis of political discourse, media discourse, and discourse of discrimination, the CDA practice preferably aims to make explicit the implicit ideologies embedded in these discourses, and in so doing, to solve undesired social problems that have a discourse aspect. In a society where freedom of speech exercises to a somewhat greater extent, this sort of commitment is expected to be realized (though in fact with obstacles and therefore the effect is doubted, see Chilton 2005), but still in the way in which social agent and agency 'internalize' the discourse in the practice, 'just as designs for a new automobile engine are internalized and materialized in the engine itself' (Fairclough 2006: 10). In the Chinese society where public sphere is vague in the structure of the society, CDA's political commitment becomes limited, and it is more dependent on those who have sources of power to internalize the discourse change in real social change. It is therefore understandable that discourse analysis with a critical perspective (critical in the Chinese traditional sense) is possible only if the critical perspective takes a 'wider angle', with a focus on exploring the role of discourse in the social transformations. We will discuss this shortly.

### 3. Functionality of discourse

A discourse approach to society may take political commitment as its ultimate goal, as is claimed by the Western CDA. By such an approach to social discrimination, for example, the ultimate purpose is to remove racial discrimination from the society. Though the effect is often doubted (e.g. by Chilton 2005), academic discourses, in the forms of descriptions, interpretations, explanations, analysis and theories, sometimes serve strategic ends and are in some cases pursuing strategies to push social change in particular directions (Fairclough 2006). We do see the emancipatory force of academic discourses in the social sciences and humanities, but this often seems to be a long-term pursuit of goals. For a more practical end, both in academic life and in politics, we can agree on one minimum, though limited aim – that the discourse approach helps in the interpretive, subjective and communicative understanding of the functions of discourse in society.

For the various theoretical accounts of the functions of discourse in society, we refer to those proposed by van Leeuwen (1993), van Dijk (1997) and

Fairclough (2000, 2003) in particular, among others in the vast CDA literature. In this concluding chapter we do not have space for scrutiny of these theories; therefore we simply examine the functions of discourse in certain social events that occurred in the recent Chinese society. We can see, in one way or another, that these events and happenings have discourse aspects in themselves and that they evolve or develop either through discourse itself or through social agents who make use of discourses. We hope that our account may explain how discourse works in the complex of power, institution and ideology in the Chinese context, and will call more attention to researching these complexes.

One example is the case of the recent struggle over the typical way in which *Shanxi vinegar* (山西醋) is produced. There is a long tradition and huge industry producing vinegar in Shanxi, a province in the northern part of China, and the vinegar produced in this province is generally known as ‘Shanxi vinegar’, though it has different trade marks and commercial brands. In August 2011, it is reported in ‘Voice of China’, a programme of China Central Broadcasting Station that 90% of Shanxi vinegar is produced by way of *goudui* (勾兑) rather than by way of *niangzao* (酿造). Technically, *goudui* (勾兑) and *niangzao* (酿造) refer to different ways of producing vinegar, and so far as this study is concerned, it is not so necessary to explain in detail the chemistry of the two processes as to simply state that vinegar of better taste and higher quality is not produced in the *goudui* (勾兑) process but in the *niangzao* (酿造) process. When interviewed on the broadcasting programme, Wang Jianzhong, an official in the Shanxi Vinegar Association, an organisation of vinegar producers, confirmed that less than 5% of the Shanxi vinegar on the market is produced by the superior process known as *niangzao* (酿造).<sup>1</sup> This disclosed information, suggesting the lower quality of the Shanxi vinegar that is available on most markets, was certainly likely to bring a bad reputation to the vinegar industry of the province and to cause a great potential drop in sales. Against this context, the Shanxi Vinegar Association made an institutional statement, saying that what Wang Jianzhong said about the way most Shanxi vinegar is produced is not true. The statement further asserts that most of the Shanxi vinegar is produced by the method of *niangzao* (酿造) rather than that of *goudui* (勾兑). In other words, the Association denied the truth of the information provided by Wang Jianzhong, the speaker on the broadcasting programme.

It can be seen that there exist two contrasting discourses about how the Shanxi vinegar is produced, namely, the *niangzao* discourse and the *goudui* discourse. The two discourses are in fact two representations of the ways in which Shanxi vinegar is produced, and the two different representations, according to Fairclough (2001), are due to the different ways in which differently positioned social actors ‘see’ and represent the Shanxi vinegar’s production process. To the audience of this discourse struggle and the consumers of the Shanxi vinegar, the truth concerning

the way in which the Shanxi vinegar is produced is still not known, but what is known is that the speaker on the broadcasting programme, Wang Jianzhong, was removed from his position soon after.<sup>2</sup>

The Shanxi vinegar case suggests a number of things that are useful for understanding the functionality of discourse in the Chinese context. We list some of them as follows for consideration in further researches.

1. The quality of the Shanxi vinegar is represented by discourses. In real life, there does exist a kind of Shanxi vinegar that has a good quality, but this real and tasted quality is no longer interesting to the social actors involved in this discourse struggle. For them, and for the audience of this discourse struggle, the good quality is not personally felt by tasting the vinegar, but is made known by the discourse about the quality of the vinegar. This relates to the discourse function of representation.
2. The quality of the vinegar is constructed to a great extent by discourse. Discourse does not represent, but also constructs. In this case, the *goudui* discourse constructs a low quality of Shanxi vinegar and the *niangzao* discourse constructs a high quality of Shanxi vinegar. In both discourses exists a constructive and transformative force of discourse. This relates to the discourse function of construction.
3. The constructive force of discourse does not work all the time and in all situations, it depends on the social position of the discourse producer. In this case, the *goudui* discourse eventually gives way to the institutional *niangzao* discourse because it is not in the dominant, decisive, and ruling position. The discourse that enjoys the benefits of the constructive force is the discourse of those who are in a dominant position. So the functions of discourse involves power.
4. The dominant discourse has power because it has an institution behind it. This institution, together with the prevailing ideology, is what Fairclough (1989) calls 'power behind discourse', the power of the relatively enduring set of the whole social order and social relations, including the systems. The institution of the vinegar association, together with the interest of the whole vinegar industry of the province, endows the power to the discourse that should have and must have been considered to be telling the truth. Obviously, discourse functions in relation to institution and ideology.
5. Discourse is social practice, and it has social effect. In this case, the discourses are in fact a struggling means, by which the two sides (i.e. Wang Jianzhong on the one side, and Shanxi Vinegar Association on the other) struggle with each other, resulting in the removal of Wang Jianzhong from its position. Discourse thus participates in social practice.

To such a complex practice of discourse we may apply the term ‘functionality of discourse’, which, on the one hand, indicates explicitly the functions of discourse in society, for example, the functions of representation, construction, and participation (Fairclough 2003; Tian 2009), and on the other hand, explains that discourse fulfils these functions together with the power of the social agents and their institutions, their prevailing ideologies, norms, interests, and many other factors that may work on the discourse. To investigate the functionality of discourse in Chinese society, then, is to understand the complexity of the discourse in relation to the people who make use of the discourse out of their own interest. This research issue is urgently significant for the present Chinese context of discourse, because new media such as the Internet have enjoyed a rocket-speed development in China and create more chances for the increasing number of netizens to make their voices heard. We will look at this context by examining the emerging public sphere in China.

#### 4. An emerging public sphere

The notion of public sphere is in contrast to that of private sphere. The family is conceived as private, so in the simplest sense everything outside the family belongs to the domain of the public which, according to Habermas (1992), has a spatial location known as the public sphere. Habermas further locates the public sphere in structural terms and identifies the bourgeois public sphere as part of the private realm of civil society that is distinct from and yet related to the public realm of state authority. This bourgeois public sphere is situated as an interface between the private realm and the public realm of state authority, and therefore puts the state in touch with the society. The people who participate in the public sphere, therefore, are members of the civil society and national community rather than the state subjects, and they participate in the public sphere through the vehicle of public opinion that is based on rational-critical discourse. The public opinion is a discursive construction of what people in the society believe to be the prevalent opinions in the society at specific times, and it has a shaping force for the culture and politics of the public sphere.

Thus, the public sphere is ‘a network for communicating information and points of view’ which eventually transforms them into public opinion (Habermas, cited from Koller & Wodak 2008: 1). For the operation of the public sphere, that is, for the points of views to be communicated and eventually transformed into public opinions, two factors can be recognised as essential: one being freedom of speech in a society, the other being a rational elite or intellectuals. In the Chinese socio-political context, however, there might be a third factor, that is, the new media of the Internet. Some scholars highlight the importance of this factor in

the emergency of public sphere in China and call it 'web public sphere' (e.g. Xiong 2011). As the internet enters the Web 2.0 age, netizens do not only receive but also transmit information, by way of the new media, say blogs and microblogs. The technology greatly facilitates the freedom of speech of the intellectuals. Against this context, scholars believe that a public sphere is beginning to take its shape in China, in the sense that it enables citizens to participate in democratic dialogue.

A discursive event may serve to illustrate such an emerging public sphere. It is a recent public debate over a penalty imposed on Wu Ying, a 29-year-old woman entrepreneur of Zhejiang province. Wu Ying took 770 million *Renminbi* yuan (approximately 121.8 million US dollars) between May 2005 and February 2007 from 11 investors who live on high interest of loans. She was arrested in February 2007, accused of committing finance defraud crime, and sentenced to death on 18 December 2009 by Jinhua Intermediate People's Court, as this local court found that 380 million yuan of the money fraudulently pooled could not be returned and large amounts of other debts were unpaid. Wu Ying appealed to the provincial Higher People's Court but her appeal was rejected 18 January, 2012. While her case is in the final process of review by the Supreme People's Court,<sup>3</sup> a debate over and discussion of her penalty occurred in the public, among lawyers, entrepreneurs, economists and other elite of the society.

For example, on 4 February, 2012, about two weeks after the rejection of Wu Ying's appeal, Zhang Weiying the forum chair economist called for the protection of Wu Ying on the 12th Forum of Chinese Entrepreneurs. Two days later, 6 February, Xinhua News Agency published two articles, expressing the opinions of 8 professionals who discussed the case in terms of law, economics and finance. In addition, Chen Zhongtian, Xu Xi, gurus in the field of law, and Zhang Shuguang, Liu Xiaoxuan, gurus in the field of economics, all speak out their opinions that Wu Ying should not be sentenced to death though they agree that she may have committed crimes of some kind. At the meantime, the elite of the society, such as Li Kaifu, Pan Shiyi, Xue Manzi, Chen Jinsong, and Yi Zhongtian, speak out similar opinions via their microblogs. Xu Xi also starts an on-line opinion poll on his microblog which attracts 20,000 voters, of which 94% expressed the idea that Wu Ying did not commit crime that deserves death penalty.

Although a spokesman from Zhejiang Higher People's Court expressed on 7 February the correctness of its verdict, it seems that the public favours an opposite opinion, which can be formulated as that Wu Ying did not commit a crime that deserves penalty.<sup>4</sup> This public opinion, embedded in public discourse, a set of cultural and social practices in public sphere, 'constitutes a powerful political weapon of the citizenry vis-à-vis the state' (Ku 1999: 6), and consequently has a discursive force that shapes the culture and politics of the public sphere. For this case, as it turns out, the Supreme People's Court, after carefully reviewing the case,

overturned the judgment of the provincial court on April 20, 2012, and sent the case back for retrial in Zhejiang Higher People's Court.

This discursive event raises new issues for critical discourse analysis. Facilitated by the technology of new media (in the form of blogs, microblogs, etc.), various voices spread out quickly, turn to be united as one, and ultimately reach a public opinion. What is important, the new media encourages participation and free voicing in a way in which it saves the face of the speakers who otherwise might worry about their speaking in face-to-face communication. The discursive strategies employed in the public debate, both those concerning the use of language and those concerning the internet operation with using language, are therefore significant for the practice of discourse analysis.

In addition, the symbolic power of the participants also requires attention in the critical discourse analysis of the emergent public sphere. In the Wu Ying case, for example, professionals make use of their knowledge and expertise and make rational reasoning in the public debate. Their social prestige and position make it possible to have their opinions up moved to mainstream media and shed influence whatever to the top decision makers. These socially influential people are important, as is seen in the Wu Ying case, especially in a public sphere which begins to take its shape.

## 5. Qualitative research method

Doing critical discourse analysis in the Chinese context, with the aim of understanding discourse functionality in socio-political transformations, we have proposed to consider the Chinese social and political context as unique and characteristic of its own – as indeed the case for all social and political contexts, whether sub-national, national or international. Theoretically, following Tian's framework outlined above, one might argue that it is useful to take a 'wider angle' critical perspective, focusing on the study of discourse functionality in society and privileging observation of the emerging public sphere in China. This does not imply that we start a new and different method for doing critical discourse analysis in the Chinese context. Rather, we think that the general principles underlying the analytical tools of discourse analysis are applicable. For example, the linguistic analytical tools provided by systemic functional grammar, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics are found useful by a number of Chinese scholars. What we would like to highlight in this concluding chapter is the point that methodologically qualitative research, based on a deep understanding of the way human language works, is essential to the analysis of the discourse that constitutes and is constituted by the current and ongoing socio-political transformations in China.

Qualitative research is different from quantitative research in that it emphasises ‘the bottom up’ process, that is, it starts from the ground with the researcher’s collection of data, proceeds with data analysis and micro theory formation, and eventually reaches an emancipatory understanding of the object of research through the researcher’s reflection on the research (Chen 2000: 12). We have many examples of applying qualitative research methods in discourse analysis (e.g. Wodak & Krzyzanowski 2008), and based on Chen (2000) we can summarise some of the principles of qualitative research that are relevant to discourse analysis:

1. The researcher takes herself or himself as the tool of research. This requires that the researcher is sensitive to the current happenings in a particular society, and thus sensitive to relevant areas for investigation, together with the discourses that may provide data for analysis.
2. The researcher admits his or her ‘bias’ in the research. That is, the researcher starts the research from his or her ethical and perhaps political stance if he or she has one. It is not clear, philosophically speaking, whether total ‘neutrality’ is possible, but a reasoned ‘critical distance’, as opposed to strategically interested orientation, should always, as a matter of principle, be aimed for.
3. The researcher frequently reflects critically on his or her research. This complements any possible unconscious bias or selectivity in the research, and is helpful in achieving an emancipatory understanding of the object of research.
4. The researcher does not give priority to theory formation, but proposes specific, local and problem-oriented micro-explanations from data analysis. This does not, however, rule out further rational exploration leading to hypotheses and potential theory-building.
5. Finally, the research should lay emphasis on participation in social change. This means that qualitative research needs to be aware that it is potentially involved in constructing the reality in the process of constructing outcomes of the research. The apparent circularity here is not a defect, but a part of an interactive evolution analysis and thoughts.

The above summarised principles of qualitative research coincide with precisely those of critical discourse analysis, and the reason we outline them here is that we are fully aware that, in the Chinese context, the current discourse approach to social change badly needs such a paradigm. Under the disguise of pursuing scientific and objective truth, many current researches on the discursive dimension of social change still follow the empirical and structural traditions, and end up with either losing the critical edge of discourse analysis or sacrificing the ethical significance of the research. This situation needs to be changed.

## 6. Conclusions

In this concluding chapter we discussed issues that we believe are important for discourse approach to the socio-political transformations in China. Taking a ‘wider angle’ to do critical discourse analysis appeals to what ‘critique’ is conceptualised in the tradition of Chinese culture. The ‘wider angle’ also suggests that to do critical discourse analysis in the Chinese context is to explore the discourse functions in the socio-political transformations rather than to fulfil a political commitment. This Chinese way of doing critical discourse analysis provides possibilities of investigating complex social transformations in China, including changes in the emerging public sphere that largely relies on the new media of Internet. To fulfil this ‘commitment’, scholars of critical discourse analysis need to take methodologies that are more of a qualitative orientation.

## Notes

1. See the information at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2011-08-07/041222947824.shtml> (visited on 5 March, 2012).
2. See the information at <http://www.yicai.com/news/2011/08/994890.html> (visited on 5 March, 2012).
3. More information on this lawsuit case is available on a number of news websites, for example, <http://english.people.com.cn/90882/7729977.html>
4. For example, Yang jingjie from *Global Times*, reports that observers call “for a relaxation of limits on informal lending”(see at <http://english.people.com.cn/90882/7710737.html>), and Xinhua News Agency also summarizes the online poll by saying “many people calling for a more lenient punishment”(see <http://www.sina.com.cn>).

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## Author biography

**Qing Cao** is Senior Lecturer in Chinese Studies and Head of Chinese Department at Durham University, UK. Previously he taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His research focuses on the mass media and socio-political processes in China, and mutual perceptions and representations between China and the West. His recent publications include *China under Western Gaze* (World Scientific 2014).

**Paul Chilton** is an emeritus professor (Linguistics Department, Lancaster University). His is a cognitive linguist investigating geometrical models of fundamental linguistic conceptualisation. His discourse-oriented work investigates metaphor and cognitive frames in social and political contexts. He also is associated with critical discourse analysis (CDA). In recent years he has worked closely with Chinese scholars investigating new discourses in contemporary China, with financial assistance from the Leverhulme Trust in the UK.

**Yih-Jye Hwang** is an Assistant Professor at Leiden University College the Hague, Leiden University. He holds a doctoral degree in International Politics from Aberystwyth University. His present research aims to provide a genealogical account of various social, political and cultural phenomena connected to the process of development of civil societies in East Asia, such as identity, nationalism, democratization, and human rights. His research interests also include Foucault's thought, theories of nationalism, and IR theories in general.

**Maurizio Marinelli** is Senior Lecturer in East Asian History at the University of Sussex. He specialises in contemporary China's intellectual and urban history. His research investigates how China's relations with the rest of the world have influenced historical narratives and shaped ways of representing each other within their respective intellectual discourses. He is currently working on the socio-spatial transformation of the port city of Tianjin from the foreign concessions era (1860–1945) to the present.

**Yufang Qian** is Professor and Director of Centre for Intercultural Discourse Studies at the Zhejiang University of Media and Communications, China. She obtained her MA from the University of Bucharest (2002), and Ph.D. from University of Lancaster (2008). Her recent publications include *Discursive Constructions Around Terrorism in the People's Daily (China) and the Sun (UK) Before and After 9.11* (Peter Lang 2010).

**Peter Sandby-Thomas** received his Ph.D. in Politics and International Relations from the University of Nottingham and is a Visiting Professor in Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. He is the author of *Legitimizing the Chinese Communist Party since Tiananmen: a critical analysis of the stability discourse* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge 2010) and his work has been published in the *Journal of Contemporary China* and *China: an International Journal* amongst others. His research focuses on the role of ideas in the legitimization of power, China's 'soft power' development, and the representation of China in Western political discourse. He can be reached at: p.sandbythomas@gmail.com

**Florian Schneider**, Ph.D., Sheffield University, is Lecturer for the Politics of Modern China at the Leiden University Institute of Area Studies. His research interests include questions of political thought, governance, foreign policy, as well as digital and political communication in the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. His research approach combines discourse analysis with semiotics as well as cognitive science. Recent projects deal with the political relevance of staged mass-media events in mainland China, and with nationalism in Chinese online networks. He is the author of *Visual Political Communication in Popular Chinese Television Series* (Brill 2012).

**Hailong Tian** is currently Professor of Discourse Studies at Tianjin Foreign Studies University. Previously he worked as Dean of School of Foreign Languages at Tianjin University of Commerce. He is elected vice president of China Association of Discourse Studies and Association of Chinese Sociolinguistics. His research interests centres on the complexity of discourse in relation to society, particularly to the socio-political transformations in contemporary China. He has published widely in national and international journals, including editing a special issue of *Journal of Language and Politics* (2010, with P. Chilton and R. Wodak). He is now general editor of Nankai Discourse Studies book series (Nankai University Press).

**Jingrong Tong** is Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, UK. Her recent publications include articles on investigative journalism in China, self-censorship within newsrooms, and media-government relationship. She is the author of *Investigative Journalism in China* (Continuum 2011).

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