

Ideology, Propaganda and Political Discourse in Xi Jinping's China

Workshop organized by the Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences

Date: September 17, 2015

Venue: Oriental Institute, Conference Hall 3, Pod Vodárenskou věží 4, Prague 8

PROGRAM

Each presentation is approximately 20 minutes followed by 25 minutes of discussion.

9:00 – 9:15 Opening remarks

9:15 – 10:45 *Examining Chinese Propaganda through Critical Discourse Analysis*

Lutgard Lams (KU Leuven)

A Decisive Role for Markets? Economic Rhetoric and Practice in the Xi Era

Peter Sandby-Thomas (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth)

10:45 – 11:00 *Coffee break*

11:00 - 12:30 *China's Age of Ascendancy: Ecological Civilisation or Ecological Crisis?*

Maurizio Marinelli (University of Sussex)

Discourse of Hostile Forces in Xi Jinping's Politics

Qian Gang, David Bandurski (University of Hong Kong)

12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch break*

14:00 – 15:30 *Ideology and Thought Work in Contemporary Xinjiang*

Ondřej Klimeš (Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences)

The Media of Political Communication in North Korea

Jana Hajzlerová (Charles University in Prague)

15:30 Final remarks, conclusion

Last update: September 13, 2015

Registration required for attendance.

For registration and questions, please contact Ondřej Klimeš: [klimes\(at\)orient.cas.cz](mailto:klimes(at)orient.cas.cz)

Abstracts of the presentations

Examining Chinese Propaganda through (Critical) Discourse Analysis

Lutgard Lams (KU Leuven)

My presentation for this workshop aims to demonstrate how content and (critical) discourse analysis can be useful methodological instruments to uncover ideological patterns in official Chinese discourse as disseminated in Chinese state media, CCP documents, or government leaders' speeches. A first part contextualizes official discourse in Xi Jinping's China by presenting an outline of the current political climate and explores some of the propaganda mechanisms employed to consolidate power and legitimize the one-party rule. This introductory part will be followed by a discussion of two analytical methods, used in Communication Science and Linguistics, to examine political communication. The more quantitative approach of *content analysis* allows for frequency counts of certain ideological keywords and mapping of thematic prominence in order to get valuable insights in policy priorities and discern trends and evolutions in the political scripts of the various leaderships. The most important keywords (*qihao*) or ideological banners symbolizing the former leaders' contributions to the nation will be listed to facilitate comparison with the *manifest* content of President Xi Jinping's discourse. *Latent* meanings and framing patterns can be decoded with a qualitative *discourse analysis*, which also considers the linguistic context of the keywords, semantics in lexical and syntactical choices, argumentation patterns and other symbolic strategies of meaning generation. The scheme of recurrent patterns found by Lams (2014) in her diachronic, discourse-analytical study of Chinese state media discourses over the various generations of leaders serves as a theoretical paradigm for the investigation of continuities or shifts in the discourses of the Xi Jinping era. Some excerpts of speeches by Xi Jinping and of media articles from CCP publications illustrate current propaganda tactics at work.

A Decisive Role for Markets? Economic Rhetoric and Practice in the Xi Era

Peter Sandby-Thomas (University of Massachusetts Dartmouth)

The widely held view of the Chinese Communist Party's legitimacy is that it overwhelmingly depends on the material performance of the economy as well as ideological support from nationalism. However, such an account is not able to explain the continued support despite the many economic problems, including increasing

income inequality and unequal growth rates. As such, this paper contends that economic legitimacy is as much about ideology as material performance. This point highlights the evaluative dimension often neglected in contemporary accounts of legitimacy and, thus acknowledged, draws attention to the power that the Party has in shaping society's interpretation of economic performance. Indeed, the central premise of this paper is that economic reform program undertaken since 1979 should be viewed as a 'governance project' initiated by the CCP has sought to reshape the values and standards by which the Party's legitimacy has been assessed. In making this argument, the paper goes onto examine the recent economic reforms announced at the Third Plenum and to consider whether they are suggestive of a new state-society relationship in which the evaluation of the Party's economic performance will be subject to change.

China's Age of Ascendancy: Ecological Civilisation or Ecological Crisis?

Maurizio Marinelli (University of Sussex)

Since the beginning of the 'Reform and Opening up' era in 1979, rapid industrialisation, extensive land development and full-scale urbanization have been a priority of the Chinese Government's economic policy. In November 2012, however, the official acknowledgment, in former President Hu Jintao's words, that 'unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable development remains a big problem', raised some serious questions about the Chinese society's continuous experience of unprecedented ecological pressures and environmental constraints. In the last few years, the political discourse has been dominated by a growing emphasis on the importance of re-balancing the economy, promoting sustainable growth, and accepting the 'new normal': a vision of a qualitatively different development pattern within the context of a softer (and perhaps more sustainable) pace of growth. Top political leaders, from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, have emphasized the importance of 'ecological civilisation construction'. At the 18th Party Congress (8-12 November 2012), this concept was enshrined into the Party's Constitution, and then it was progressively incorporated into the Xi Jinping's metanarrative of the China Dream of national greatness, prosperity and strength.

In this context, I intend to analyse the historical, political and discursive dimensions of the contribution offered by a few selected Chinese intellectuals to the current debate on the importance of 'ecological civilisation construction'. The final aim of this paper is two-fold: 1.) to offer a more nuanced analysis of the Chinese Government's imperative to 'Advance Ecological Civilisation and Build a Beautiful China'; and 2.) to evaluate, from a historical perspective, the necessity to move away from a dominant pattern of combining ultra-rapid industrialisation and full-scale urbanisation which has often seemed to prioritise the building of grandiose cities of spectacle as opposed to liveable

cities where human beings want to live. Specific reference will be made to the deadly blasts, which on 12th August 2015 ripped through the hazardous chemicals warehouse of the Ruihai Logistics International Ltd in the Tianjin-Binhai area –known in Chinese as: 天津港“8·12”特别重大火灾爆炸事故 .

Code Red: Reading China through the Political Discourse of the CCP

Qian Gang, David Bandurski (China Media Project, University of Hong Kong)

This research looks at the history, development and current use of the phrase “hostile forces,” or *didui shili*, within the political discourse of the Chinese Communist Party, and explores the ways in which the quantitative and qualitative study of key terms, or *tifa*, in China's “mainstream” Party discourse can assist in monitoring political trends in China.

Ideology and Thought Work in Contemporary Xinjiang

Ondřej Klimeš (Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Since the beginning of reforms in 1978, China has been undergoing radical transformation in economy, politics, society, education, media, culture and other aspects of life, while the party-state has vacated many of the realms it had previously sought to control. The situation in Xinjiang presents an interesting case study of this trend in a framework where state policy is driven by a unique set of objectives based on the region's unique geopolitical position and ethno-cultural context. In this vast, important and rich area inhabited by some 10 million Turkic Muslim Uyghurs with distinct national identity and long history of independent statehood, the People's Republic has managed to attain only a low level of Uyghurs' identification with its state project and is constantly dealing with a varying degree of dissent, tension or violent backlash. The state therefore seeks to devise and execute policies which aim to simultaneously shape multiple aspects of Xinjiang's reality, namely economy, demography, social structure, education, religion and culture. Ideology, propaganda and political discourse are a powerful instrument of legitimation and implementation of these measures, and function as a crucial link between state and society. The presentation lays out preliminary findings on what are some of the state's ideological concepts in contemporary Xinjiang.

The Media of Political Communication in North Korea

Jana Hajzlerová (Institute of East Asian Studies, Charles University in Prague)

Often described as a *known unknown*, *hermit kingdom* or *impossible state*, North Korea remains a puzzling issue in the international arena with both policy makers and scholars struggling to understand what really lies behind the Pyongyang's poker face. The militarized one-party system, peculiar ideological doctrines of *juche* and *songun*, and the Kims' personality cult are often addressed in political sciences. However, the two successful hereditary successions enthusiastically accepted by loyal citizens, virtually sealed off between the state borders with no sign of any political resistance, in the era of economic dependency and the development of information technologies (that even North Korea is not spared from), urge us to focus our attention on the idiosyncratic nature of political communication in North Korea, for that might be where the success, or rather the survival, of today's North Korea lies. To this end, the article discusses the specific genres of political communication, currently employed in North Korea, and their historical roots (1), and elaborates on the role of traditional media in spreading the political message (2). To showcase a typical genre of a mediated political communication, the article further introduces a case study of Kim Jong-un's New Year's speeches, analyzed for framing techniques and storytelling patterns through rhetorical and narrative analysis (3).