

CHINA'S POLITICAL DISCOURSE TOWARDS THE 21ST CENTURY:
'VICTIMHOOD', IDENTITY AND POLITICAL POWER

PSA Panel: 'China on the Verge of the Chinese Century'

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'Without legitimacy, words are invalid; invalid words lead man to nowhere'

(Mingbuzheng zhe yanbushun; yanbushun zhe shibucheng)

Confucius

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the nature and role played by culture in the construction of China's evolving political discourse with specific reference to a discursive theme of 'victimhood'. The reason lying behind this investigation is the assumption that modern China's political discourse has focused upon this idea of China as the victim of hostile external and internal predators. This has offered a convenient means by which an 'official' story of Chinese history and destiny, in effect the 'idea' of China's political identity, can be underwritten and used to consolidate the ruling elite's political legitimacy, authority and continued power. This, in turn, informs the conduct of political behaviour in China 'at the edge' of a very different vision of China in the twenty-first century.

Of central importance is the role of historical discourse. Clearly, historical discourse is not a 'given' nor is it value-free; it is itself constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.

Historical recording is highly selective and subjected to the influences of 'active forgetting'.

History, like political identity and discourse, is thus contingent upon the demands of the ruling elite and is written and re-written according to prevailing political patterns of power. The construction of historical discourse is thus about the play of power in the delimitation of who or what is recognised and valorised and who benefits from such a narrative. This sensitivity of perceived victimisation is characterised by a number of simultaneously experienced and enduring characteristics: 'anti-foreignness'; 'modernism', 'nationalism', 'culturalism'. These are distinctive but heavily inter-related and overlapping discursive themes. Moreover, the hegemonic discourse must be viewed as actively engaged in a critical tension with a variety of oppositional discourses within the CCP and beyond. Oppositional discourses form inescapable and *necessary* inter-discursive interlocutors with the dominant discourse. These micrological sites of contested power are to be found in a range of locations: intra-Party ('leftist'-'rightist' intra-socialist contests), extra-Party (aesthetic, generational, gender, sexual orientation), extra-'national' (Han and non-Han ethnic narrative affiliations; regional differences and geo-historical perspectives).

One of the key features of China's constructed political history is the portrayal of China-as-victim. From ancient invasion, nineteenth century Occidental 'semi-colonialism', counter-revolutionary dangers and late twentieth century criticisms of commercial piracy, human rights abuses and its Taiwan policy, China is usefully portrayed by its political elite

as victimised. This historical trauma was deeply ingrained in the national culture.

Politically, in almost any subsequent act of resistance found motivation in resistance to Western powers and striving for national independence. Culturally, almost any initiation of change is introduced with reference to self-resurrection so as to be able to 'stand on an equal footing among nations of the world' (*zili yu shijie minzhu zhilin*). The narrative of a century of victimisation forms a collective cultural memory that contributes directly to a contemporary sense of victimhood strengthened by history (the recounting of humiliating stories), symbolic art (statues of national heroes, museums, novels, music, poetry and paintings), and legendary figures such as Qing court general Lin Zexu. Such selective memories identify with the CCP's denunciations of anti-imperialism and eventual victory. The CCP has claimed legitimacy on a portrayal of itself as the historic agency that restored national unity, practical independence and ensured that, in Mao's words on the victory podium, 'the Chinese people has stood up.' This paper seeks, then, to trace this theme of victimhood and evaluate its lasting impact upon contemporary Chinese political culture and behaviour. It does so by way of a methodology drawn from the general approach of deconstructionism and, more particularly, through the application of discourse analysis to a selection of writings that illustrate the victimhood theme. At a time of major social change within China, it is argued that this central idea of China-as-victim adds to our deeper understanding of China's evolving political discourse, moves us to a closer reading of its present political behaviour on the eve of the twenty-first century.

METHODOLOGY

Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary field of study that has emerged from several disciplines of humanities and social sciences, such as linguistics, literary studies, anthropology, semiotics, sociology, psychology, and speech communication. However, in general, discourse analysis denotes a theoretical and methodological approach to language and language use. This study adopts Norman Fairclough's methodological framework of discourse analysis that relates linguistic analysis of texts and verbal utterances to a wider social context (Fairclough, 1989, 26). Language as social practice means, firstly, that language is an integral part of society, not external to it; secondly, it is a social process; and, thirdly, language is a socially conditioned process. Language, in this methodological approach, is thus both discourse and social practice, and discourse is used to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is only a part. In addition to the text, this wider process includes the related processes of production and interpretation. Text analysis, therefore, is just one part of discourse analysis which should include productive and interpretative processes. Furthermore, discourse also involves social conditions, which Drawing upon Fairclough's methodology, the production and interpretation of texts operates in three dimensions: *situational*, *institutional*, and *social*. The *situational* dimension is defined as the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs. The *institutional* dimension constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse. Lastly, the *social* dimension involves the whole of a given society as an organisational entity. The key to this methodological approach therefore lies in gaining an understanding of the relationship between the text, the way that it has been produced, and the social condition within which it is created, promulgated and comprehended.

With these three dimensions of discourse (*situational, institutional and social*) establishing one set of analytical parameters for the study of text, this methodology develops three additional analytical levels for examining and explaining text: *description*: the formal properties of the text; *interpretation*: the relationship between text and social interaction-seeing text both as the product of production and as a source of interpretation; *explanation*: the relationship between social interaction and social conditions.

At the *descriptive level*, three types of 'value' can be seen to operate: experimental, relational, and expressive. Experiential value is a trace of and a cue to the way in which the experience of the text producer is represented. It builds into the analysis of the text the play of knowledge and beliefs, and therefore is intimately involved with textual content. Relational value is a trace of and a cue to the social relationships enacted through the text. Therefore, it is directly involved with social relationships. Expressive value is a trace of and a cue to the text producer's assessment of the social reality, and therefore relates to subjects and social identities. All these three types of value are realised through the use of vocabulary and grammar. However, one cannot directly extrapolate from the formal features of a text to these structural effects on the constitution of a society. The relationship between text and social structures is mediated largely through discourse because the values of textual features became real only when they are embedded in social interactions, where texts are produced and interpreted against a background of schema. 'Schema' are usefully defined by Henry Widdowson as 'cognitive constructs or configurations of knowledge which we place over events so as to bring them into

alignment with familiar patterns of experience and belief. They therefore serve as devices for categorising and arranging information so that it can be interpreted and retained.'(Widdowson, 1983, p.54) These discursive processes and their dependence on schematic knowledge are the concern of the second stage of the procedure; interpretation.

Interpretation is concerned with participants' processes of text production and text assessment. But, within the limits of this study, the focus is placed upon the latter in order to explore issues of social power. Interpretations are generated primarily through a combination of the text's content and the interpreter's particular schematic knowledge. Formal features of the text are the 'cues' which activate elements of interpreter's schemata. Interpretations are generated through the dialectical interplay of cues and schemata. There are three dimensions of interpretation: textual, intertextual, and contextual. The textual dimension consists of phonology, grammar, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics. The intertextual dimension relates the text to a historical series of texts. Therefore, intertextual interpretation is a matter of deciding which textual series a particular text belongs to, and what can be taken as interpretive common ground for participant readers. Contextual interpretation refers to what has previously described as situational, institutional. and social context as societal determinants of a text. Broadly, contextual interpretation can be formulated into four major questions: 'What is going on (contents)?'; 'Who is involved (subjects)?'; 'In what relations (relations)?'; 'What is the role of language (connections)?' The stage of interpretation breaks-open received delusions of autonomy on the part of subjects in discourse. It renders explicit what, for many readers, is generally implicit: the dependence of discursive practice on the unexplicated schematic knowledge often

presented in the form of 'common-sense' assumptions and self-evident 'truths'. However, interpretation alone does not explain the relations of power and domination and the ideologies built into these assumptions illuminate the way that discursive practice forms a site of social struggle. Therefore, a further analytical dimension need to be introduced; explanation.

Explanation is a portrayal of 'discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them'. Two dimensions will be examined closely in the present study: the reproduction of discourse and the relations of power. When aspects of schematic knowledge are drawn upon as interpretative procedures in the production and interpretation of texts, they are thereby reproduced. Reproduction is generally an unintended and unconscious effect of production and interpretation. It connects the stages of interpretation and explanation. The former is concerned with how schematic knowledge is drawn upon in processing discourse, and the latter with the social constitution and change of schematic knowledge, including their reproduction in discourse practice. In this sense, social determinations and effects are mediated by schematic knowledge in a dialectic relationship between social structures and schematic knowledge through discourse. Thus, social structures shape schematic knowledge, which in turn shape discourse; and discourse sustains or changes schematic knowledge, which in turn sustains or changes social structures. However, social structures are embedded in relations of power, and the social processes and practices are sites of social struggle. Therefore, explanation is a matter of assessing a discourse as part

of processes of social struggle within a matrix of power relations. Power relations determine discourses and these relations are themselves the outcome of struggles, and are established and naturalised by power elites. The focus upon social determination places emphasis on the past; on the results of past struggle. Any discourse will have determinants and effects that operate in all three analytical dimensions and at all three analytical levels. In applying this analytical framework, a discourse is to be evaluated multi-dimensionally according to the situational, institutional, and social dimensions and descriptive, interpretive and explanatory levels of analysis.

TEXTUAL FEATURES OF CHINESE POLITICAL DISCOURSE

It is useful to begin this part of the discussion with a brief comment on the Chinese 'language of politics'. As Hodge and Louie note, unlike the 'word-centred' Western languages, 'Chinese culture is strongly visual and semiotically promiscuous'(Hodge and Kam Louie,1998, p.8). Thus, the Chinese language of politics is rich in metaphor and allusion. Political meanings are understood by the author and the audience to be implicit and implied. Metaphoric references are, for individuals and masses alike, triggers to formulaic memories and to a particular, constructed, discourse and official 'grand narrative'. The language of this narrative is charged with symbolic signposts: to sacrifice and overcoming; to martial terms and a siege mentality; to the 'terrains of power' formed by the conjunction of landscape and memory. Such language is essentialist, patriarchal, and marked by historical silences. The apprehension of meaning, therefore, is made all the more complex as meaning is detached from the words themselves and reconstituted in the 'dark corners' of political discourse. This is evident not only in the bizarre Orwellian

'doublespeak' of the Cultural Revolution (Jung Chang, 1993, 298); Schoenhals, 1996), but also in the less feverish and enduring practices of political discourse into the contemporary period.

At the strategic level of study, Chinese political discourse is characterised by three features: building a consensus (*gongshi*), a drive for unity (*tuanjie*), and a need for the propagation of this 'consensus' through education (*jiaoyu*). Consensus is the highest priority and first step in mobilising the Party and the People for whatever goals the power elite strives to achieve. Building a consensus is frequently assumed to be consistent with China's supposed cultural tradition wherein a centralised, unified discourse has been habitually favoured for legitimating action. Building a consensus in political discourse therefore constitutes the major site of, and strategy for, establishing legitimacy and authority. The exercise of power and the construction of knowledge are at full play in establishing and perpetuating a supposed national political 'Truth' as seemingly self-evident and thus unchallengeable. Unity is organisationally-oriented, aiming at reducing internal friction to a minimum level. This chiefly takes the form of producing a public consensus at the top levels of state and Party and the absolute suppression of oppositional discourses inside and outside the CCP. Such exclusionary practice has been and remains a process viewed not only as necessary but perfectly legitimate by China's power elite given the high value placed upon societal stability and order in the dominant political discourse.

Education is one of the principal social channels through which the discursive mythology of consensus is constructed within the CCP membership and the Chinese people more widely. The unique forms of such educational power include not only the integrating of

the discursive consensus into formal national educational curriculum up to postgraduate levels, but through the establishment of a national political study system operating at all levels and every walk of life, constituting the politicisation of social life. This study therefore focuses upon the processes by which this political mechanism of discursive consensus is constructed in the PRC.

At the level of content, political consensus is constructed in two main domains: historical and theoretical. Historical discourse centres around re-formulating and re-defining events of the past one and half centuries in a Marxist view, in particular, historical materialism. The framework consists of a series of designation and/or naming. For instance, 'pre-modern', 'modern', and 'contemporary' stages of Chinese history¹. Each of these classificatory stages is historically positioned by a particular event: the Opium War, the May 4th Movement, and the founding of the PRC respectively. Similarly, China's political development is etched into the social fabric by way of a historical discourse that 'names' particular events as signposts of progressive change: 'Feudal reform', 'Old Democratic', 'New Democratic' and 'Socialist Revolution' (led, respectively, by Qing court reformers, Sun Yat-sen, and Mao Zedong). In such processes of 'naming' and positioning, meanings are formulated or reformulated and established as forms of historical truth. For example, the focus upon the historically progressive role the CCP has played in overthrowing the 'three mountains' on the back of the Chinese people: imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic-capitalism. The theoretical foundations for such claims are drawn from the Marxist-Leninist doctrine of historical and dialectical materialism as reinterpreted through 'Mao Zedong Thought' or, latterly, 'Deng Xiaoping Theory'. This Marxist-Leninist reading

of history, interpreted through Chinese revolutionary experience, has been established as 'the' universal, 'scientific' truth, and has become the official discursive ideology of the CCP. The intersection of the two domains of political discourse (practice and theory), *praxis*, constitutes the principal discursive site where the legitimacy of the rule of the CCP is positioned.

Case Study Text : Jiang Zemin, Report at the 15th CCP National Congress. 12th September 1997 (CCP, 1997a, 3-5).²

When the National Party Congress is being held toward the end of the 20th century, we have a common realisation that our Party shoulders a lofty historical responsibility for the destiny of the Chinese nation.

Earth-shaking changes have taken place in China over the past century from 1900 when the Eight-Power Allied Forces occupied Beijing, subjecting the Chinese nation to great humiliation and bring the country to the verge of subjugation, to the year 2000 when China will enjoy a fairly comfortable life on the basis of socialism and will make big strides towards the goal of being more prosperous and strong.

After the Opium War of 1840, China was reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country. The Chinese nation was faced with two great historical tasks: to win national independence and the people's liberation, and to make the country prosperous and strong and achieve common prosperity for the people. The former task was set to remove obstacles and create essential prerequisites for the fulfilment of the latter task.

The past century has witnessed the Chinese people undergoing three historical changes on their road of advancement and the birth of Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, three great figures who stood at the forefront of the times.

The first change was represented by the Revolution of 1911, which overthrew the autocratic monarchy reigning in China for thousands of years. It was led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen. He was the first man who raised the slogan of 'rejuvenating China' and pioneered the national and democratic revolution in the full sense in modern times. The Revolution of 1911 failed to change the social nature of old China and free the people from their hard lot, but it opened the sluice-gates for progress in China and made it impossible for the reactionary rule to remain stale any longer.

The second change was marked by the founding of the People's Republic of China and the establishment of the socialist system. This was accomplished after the founding of the Communist Party of China and under the direction of the first generation of collective leadership with Mao Zedong at the core. Through the Northern Expedition, the Agrarian Revolution, the War of Resistance Against Japan and the War of Liberation, we overthrew the three big mountains of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism. The Chinese people rose to their feet. Proceeding from New Democracy, they took the road to socialism and scored tremendous achievements in socialist construction. This was a great victory of the people's revolution which has never been recorded in Chinese history, a great victory of global significance for socialism and national liberation.

The third change was featured by the reform, opening and endeavour to achieve socialist modernisation. It was a new revolution initiated by the second generation of collective leadership with Deng Xiaoping at the core. Basing itself on achievements scored in revolution and construction since the founding of the People's Republic of China, our Party reviewed historical experiences and lessons and blazed a new trail in building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The exuberant vigour and vitality of socialism displayed in China has attracted world attention.

Our conclusion drawn from the great changes over the past century is as follows: Only the Communist Party of China can lead the Chinese people in achieving victories of national independence, the people's

liberation and socialism, pioneering the road of building socialism, rejuvenating the nation, making the country prosperous and strong, and improving the people's well-being.

Descriptive analysis:³ Jiang's statement is characterised by extensive 'experiential values' realised in the use of declarative sentences throughout and a vocabulary specific to the CCP's history (i.e. 'people's revolution', 'people's liberation', 'old China', 'reactionary rule', 'social nature', 'collective leadership', and 'national democratic revolution'). This 'names' major historical events in an ideologically significant form, locating the CCP in a teleological story harnessing the political past, present, and future in a unified presentation of the world. In so doing, Jiang is reaffirming the 'revolutionary' identity of the CCP. A noticeable reformulation is the three named historical figures, Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping, each identified with a (progressive) revolutionary stage of progressive development. Importantly, the positioning of Deng Xiaoping in this historical dimension seeks to establish the continuities of CCP leadership rather than the unspoken discontinuities as the basis for contemporary CCP legitimacy to rule. Thus, the text is positioning itself in direct descent from these antecedent revolutionary totems and in immediate descent from 'Deng Xiaoping Theory'. This central theme of the logic of inevitability in the leadership of the CCP is evident at the outset with Jiang's assertion of a social consensus (*gongshi*) ('a common realisation') underpinning CCP rule grounded in a trajectory of historical progression ('a lofty responsibility for the destiny of the Chinese nation'). This is reinforced at the closure of the text in the careful use of the word 'conclusion' (*jielun*) to confirm CCP leadership. The text between these two opening and

closing ideas, a selective reading of revolutionary history, is carefully crafted to offer a cumulative line of argument that builds to a seemingly inevitable and unchallengeable 'truth'.

In terms of the address's 'relational values', social relationships are textually enacted through a discursive projection of progressive history. The emphasis placed in the text upon the process, patterns and implications of historical 'change' seeks to present an inclusive narrative embracing the Party and the masses. Thus, Jiang's speech discursively 'names' three historical subjectivities of change. The first is found in the use of 'we'. *Dajia* ('we') in 'we have a common realisation' is significant. The meaning of the word in Chinese is ambiguous and elusive in denotation, meaning something between 'we' and 'everyone' depending on the specific context of usage. Again, the use of 'we' in the context of the emancipation struggle ('we overthrew the three big mountains') is ambiguous. Following on immediately from references to the establishment of the CCP, leadership of Mao and liberation victories, the usage could be interpreted to refer to the Party, to the masses or to both. The second is the reference to the 'three great figures'. Notably, the references to Mao and Deng are deliberately encoded with symbolic significance for the Jiang leadership in the linking of their names to 'collective leadership'. This is considered further below but the immediate point is that they did not act alone in their leadership roles. Unsurprisingly, the third element is 'the Chinese people'. The text is marked with this phrase and to 'the Chinese nation'. Assumptions of homogeneity, 'sameness' and common cause are implicit in this projected imagery and is thus characterised by the exclusionary play of discursive power.

In terms of expressive value (the text producer's assessment of the social reality and social identity expressed through the text), the speech actively draws its audience together as participants in a common heritage of 'humiliation' at 'the verge of subjugation'. To this activated memory of victimisation is associated the optimistic expression of pride in a soon-to-be-realised 'comfortable life' and thus a discursive line of emancipation, progress and betterment is established in the minds of his audience by the speaker. The deployment of metaphor in the representation of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism as 'three mountains' symbolises the Party's role as a liberator of the nation and the people and therefore its leadership credentials. Further metaphoric usage in references to 'road of advancement' and to 'the road of building socialism' carry encoded meaning in associations with the story of the Long March. Finally on this point, allusions to leadership 'generations' suggests a sense of 'family' succession, continuity and reassurance.

Interpretive analysis: Textually, the extract is a self-contained narrative of the history of the Chinese state and people victimised, liberated and actively pursuing strategies for 'self-strengthening'. Intertextually, the text suggests a rich repertoire. China as a victim is activated in a number of schematic dimensions. Firstly, Jiang's text links into a solid corpus of historical writings⁴ detailing the rising-up of China against its historic experience of victimisation. Jiang's text intersects with a broad discursive background in referring to the wars with Western powers, subsequent defeats and unequal treaties in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Secondly, the text draws upon Party writings, including those of Mao, reflecting upon China's status as a victim of imperialism. These form an immediate discursive space linked closely with the anti-Japanese conflict, the civil war, and

the anti-imperialist confrontation. Both types of writing are characterised by a denunciation of imperialist invasions of China, and the exposition of internal reform or revolution as the necessary prerequisites for national independence, 'rejuvenation' and international standing. Thirdly, a textual discourse interwoven tightly into the fabric of this speech comes from Deng Xiaoping's writings in the 1980s and 1990s, in particular, the guidance line of 'one centre, two basic principles' (*Yige zhongxin, liangge jibendian*)⁵. Fourthly, the speech is entwined with a number of key statements by Jiang during the period from 1995 onwards. These include his address to the September 1995 CCP Plenum in which he initiated his 'pay attention to politics' campaign and his May 1997 speech to the Central Party School in which Deng's economic reformism would be balanced by moral and political concerns.

Contextually, the speech is 'situated' by the nature of the activity of promulgating the text, its topicality, and its purpose (Fairclough, 1995, Ch.4,5; 19 , Ch.6). Jiang's report is significant primarily in declaratory terms in signposting the shape of China's policies to the year 2002 (the 16th National Congress) and beyond. The importance of the text is underlined by the formation of a small group of advisers to help draft the speech as early as October 1996 (Gilley, 1998, 312). The topicality of the speech lies in the issues of legitimacy and authority sought by the CCP by way of material promises after the long decades of sacrifice and suffering. The capacity of the reform programme to deliver on these promises is crucial to these legitimacy issues and is recognised in the programme outlined by Jiang in his address. The programme confirmed by the Congress provided for the end of state ownership of enterprises, for an expansion of private enterprises and wider

shareholding. In the textual extract, Jiang makes sure that his 'expositions' of Party policy are perceived as building upon 'Deng Xiaoping Theory' and 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'⁶.

The purpose of the address was to publicly identify the core principles upon which the latest national political consensus was to be based. For Jiang, the speech was a major moment in the consolidation of his own leadership; for demarcating his distinctive policy contribution as a formal leader before he would anticipate moving to the more mystical informal leadership behind the bamboo screen; and for establishing the 'fourth generation' leadership he wanted to succeed him.

The text is institutionally contextualised in relation to the political balance within Jiang Zemin's 'third generation' leadership lite and the size of the President's room for manoeuvre. Although in 1997 Jiang held the Presidency, chairmanship of the Central Military Commission and is General-Secretary of the CCP, the limits to his power were defined by the army, resilient Leftist ideological guardians, and senior members of the Party. These limits had been apparent in 1995-96 in a retreat over his 'pay attention to politics' campaign when confronted by significant Leftist criticism. It was evident again in the weeks leading-up to the Congress in Jiang's decision not to restore and occupy the post of Party chairman (abolished by Deng in 1982) in the face of opposition by the most senior Party members.

The social context is marked by the authoritative power of the text in the society as a whole. The meanings enclosed within the text are given, in an absolute sense, within a closed Party discourse before wider public dissemination. But, as Bruce Gilley has illustrated, the discursive authority of the CCP was largely lost by 1997 in a popular nihilistic angst identified both in the official Xinhua newspaper and a government survey (Gilley, 1998, 264)⁷. A central aim of the speech, therefore, was to confirm the basis upon which a strong China was to be constructed; one in which welfare reform and income redistribution would be central, crime and corruption attacked, and efficient and effective governmental management instituted.

Explanatory analysis: The extract opens Jiang's political report which in turn confirms a new era for the CCP; that of the third generation of Party leadership. The objective in the reiteration of history is as significant as it has been in the past in legitimising the CCP's leadership role. It is central to mobilising consensual legitimacy derived from the anticipated fulfilment of two key historical tasks: preventing China from being victimised by foreign powers and building a prosperous and strong nation.

China witnessed one hundred years of foreign invasions from the Opium War (starting in 1840) to the Resistance War against Japan (ending in 1945) with devastating consequences for China. It was a hundred years of desperate struggle for survival to be ended by the restoration of national independence (*wai qu lieqiang*) and internal resurrection (*nei qiu fuxin*). These two tasks naturally have a strong appeal among the broad masses. The appeal is particularly strong, however, among intellectuals. Framing

history by giving prominence to these tasks and making them goals of the CCP establishes a common cause with the people and, by assigning responsibility to itself for the attainment of these goals establishes a legitimacy. This is the fundamental claim made by the CCP, and is a core function of this text. Therefore, in this text's functionality, what has changed from previous similar documents (e.g. political reports of previous CCP's national congresses) is a reframing of contemporary history through the redefining, reformulating, addition, deletion, or repositioning of the CCP in relation to certain events (Deng Xiaoping, 1983, 255-274)⁸ For instance, three figures (Sun, Mao, Deng) and three corresponding events (the Revolution of 1911, socialist revolution, and socialist construction) are identified as significant in the past century. But this leaves many post-1949 socio-political events as a historical blank. In 'naming' the Northern Expedition, the Agrarian Revolution, the War of Resistance Against Japan and the War of Liberation before 1949 the CCP's historical credentials are meant to be established as uncontested. What has never changed is the portrayal of the CCP's leading role in overthrowing 'the three mountains' and the historical inevitability of such a role. Thus, truth and power are simultaneously enable a legitimated and legitimating authority to be constructed through a monopolised discursive space. This is the broadest social context in which this textual extract is produced, understood, propagated, and eventually implemented.

The effect of the text is to attempt a reproduction of existing relations of power and to exclude potential or sublimated oppositional discourses. The discourse is understood in a matrix of social structures as reorienting the Party and the nation towards a revised economic reform programme. Jiang overtly calls up the (selectively chosen) legitimating

cloak of 'Deng Xiaoping Theory', his 'primary stage theory', in order to provide a sense of continuity and legitimate his point of departure. The distribution of relatively larger text space to Deng Xiaoping's reform era indicates a continuation of policies by the 'third wave' leadership. This textual feature also highlights a priority of economic development tempered by Jiang's 'pay attention to politics' campaign initiated at the September 1995 CCP Plenum. Jiang's political pragmatism led him to orient his programme towards the unacceptable face of economic reform and high-speed, high-level growth: poverty, crime, corruption and 'socialist spiritual culture'.

CONCLUSIONS

In China's official political discourse, a large number of commonly used words have acquired ideologically charged meanings in daily life. They, together with other more formal 'naming' political lexicons, form a pervasive discursive space penetrating every single cell of society, contributing to the politicisation and erasure of distinctions between public and private lives. The continual elevation of 'the political' to discursive pre-eminence serves to marshal control of this discursive space to the grand narrative of Chinese revolutionary history. Political meaning is thus characterised by displacement of the linguistically signified from the signifier, opening-up meaning to the contingencies of lite-driven official systems of signification and representation. These discourses, as contingent systems, are thus systems of power and, consequently, are sites of continuing tension between consensus-formation and oppositional contestation; an unresolved tension in Chinese political discourse as China seeks a legitimate and authoritative basis for its reform process on the cusp of the 21st century.

NOTES

1 Pre-modern (*jindai*), modern (*xiandai*), and contemporary (*dangdai*) of Chinese history starts respectively in 1840, 1911, and 1949.

2 The title of this speech is *'Hold High the Great Banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory for an All-round Advancement of the Cause of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics into the 21st Century'*.

3 In the case study, many linguistic units are counted in Chinese due to the nature of textual analysis of the original Chinese version. However, analysis of the English version is also included wherever necessary.

4 Representative authors on this subject include Lin Zexu, Gong Zizhen, Wei Yuan (first generation of Qing Court reformers in mid-19th century), Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu, Tan Sitong (reformers in late 19th century), Zhang Binglin, Zou Rong, Chen Tianhua (radical scholars in early 20 century), Sun Yats-sen, Huang Xin, Cai Yuanpei (revolutionaries and scholars in early 20 century), and Li Dazao, Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun (leaders scholars in the first quarter of this century).

5 One centre means 'economic development'. Two basic principles are 'adhering to reform' and 'opening up, and four cardinal principles'.

6 For exemplary texts shaped by this report, see, CCP (1997b); Yan Changgui, Lu Jining, and Gao Lu, *et.al.*

7 Gilley quotes the May 1995 Xinhua article as commenting that 'even though the market economics propounded by Deng Xiaoping have won the support of the Chinese people, complaints about the fall in moral standards have increased day by day. ... [the] disappearance of social norms, the death of morals, and the disintegration of traditional

values.' Gilley also quotes the conclusion of the State Economic Reform Commission 2,000 household survey that the 'level of people's satisfaction with the reforms has continued to fall year by year, ... [whilst] demands for a greater sense of security have clearly risen.'

8 An typical example is the Cultural Revolution which was framed as a positive dominant theme in the CCP's 9th National Congress, as a disaster in 6th Plenary Session of the 11th National Congress, and made a absence as a topic in the 15th National Congress. For an official authoritative text guiding the CCP's redefining of contemporary history, see, Deng Xiaoping, 'Some Views on Drafting "*Resolution on Some Historical Issues of the CCP since the Founding of the PRC*"' in Deng Xiaoping (1983).

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