

# **The Ties that Bind: Party Social Identity and the Relevance of Ideology for the Chinese Communist Party**

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## Das Band, das zusammenhält: Die soziale Identität der Partei und die Relevanz von Ideologie für die Kommunistische Partei Chinas (German-language summary)

Die Rolle und Relevanz von Ideologie für die Kommunistische Partei Chinas (KPCh) ist ein vieldiskutiertes Thema in der akademischen Literatur. Seit den 1970er Jahren debattieren Wissenschaftler, ob ihre Parteiideologie noch Relevanz für die KPCh besitzt. Einerseits argumentieren sie, dass Parteiideologie vor allem seit dem Ende der maoistischen Ära zunehmend an Bedeutung verloren hat und Parteikadern der Glaube an Parteiideologie abgeht (z.B. Ding 1994; Chen 1995; Misra 1998; Lynch 1999; Shirk 2007; Zhao 2009; Dickson 2016). Andere Experten hingegen legen dar, dass Ideologie weiterhin bedeutsam ist, so etwa als Signal für die Innovationsfähigkeit der Partei (Holbig 2013), als Mittel mit politischer Überzeugungskraft zur Erhaltung der Legitimität der Partei (Bondes und Heep 2013) oder als Strategie zur Stärkung faktioneller Allianzen innerhalb der KPCh (Shih 2008; Zeng 2016a). Des Weiteren hat die wiedererstarbte Betonung von Parteiideologie unter Xi Jinping Debatten dazu hervorgerufen, ob Xi Ideologie innerhalb der Partei wiederbelebt, ob er eine neue Form ideologischer Hegemonie schafft oder ob er im Zusammenhang mit seiner Betonung der Bedeutung von Parteiideologie als Mao-ähnlicher Herrscher gesehen werden kann (S. Zhao 2016b; Brown 2018b; Pieke 2018; 2020; Sorace 2019; Mulvad 2019).

Meine Forschung in dieser Arbeit leistet einen Beitrag zu der Debatte zur Rolle der Ideologie in der KPCh seit 1978. Der Aufforderung von Sorace folgend, dass wir verstehen sollten, wie die KPCh „sich selbst diagnostiziert“ (Sorace 2016, S. 62), analysiere ich, wie die Partei selbst ihre Ideologie versteht, und ergründe, welche Rolle Ideologie dabei spielt, die Partei als Organisation zusammenzuhalten. Hierbei fokussieren sich meine Forschungsfragen vor allem auf das „warum“ und das „wie“ von Parteiideologie: Warum hält die Partei Ideologie nach wie vor für ein zentrales Medium, um ihr Überleben zu garantieren? Wie verwendet die Partei den Effekt von Parteiideologie auf einzelne Parteimitglieder? Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, stütze ich mich auf ein interdisziplinäres Forschungsdesign und analysiere einen Korpus von parteiinternen Dokumenten, die bislang kaum wissenschaftlich untersucht wurden.

In meinem interdisziplinären Forschungsdesign bediene ich mich theoretischer Ansätze sowohl aus der Politikwissenschaft als auch der Sozialpsychologie. Das Verständnis von Ideologie, auf das ich mich stütze, entstammt politikwissenschaftlichen Debatten. Hier verwende ich eine Definition von Ideologie, die auf Michael Freedon zurückgeht. Freedon definiert Ideologie als „eine umfassende strukturelle Anordnung, die sich gegenseitig definierenden politischen Konzepten *unanfechtbare* [decontested] Bedeutung verleiht“ (Freedon 2003, S. 54, Hervorhebung im Original). Um die Rolle und den Zweck dieser „unanfechtbaren Bedeutung“ für die KPCh zu analysieren, bediene ich mich

theoretischer Konzepte aus dem Bereich der Sozialpsychologie. Hier verwende ich Theorieansätze zu sozialer Identität und Selbst-Kategorisierung. Die Theorie der Selbst-Kategorisierung, die ursprünglich von Turner entwickelt wurde, zielt darauf ab, Verhaltensprozesse innerhalb von Gruppen zu erklären. Sie wirft Licht auf die Fragen, wann und warum Menschen sich sozialen Gruppen zugehörig fühlen und warum sie innerhalb von sozialen Gruppen relevanten Verhaltensnormen folgen. Bezogen auf den Fall der KPCh kann dieser theoretische Ansatz somit erhellen, wie und warum die Partei ihre ideologischen Narrative verwenden kann, um ihre Mitglieder an sich zu binden. Ideologie kann hierfür als eine Form der Manipulation von sozialer Identität dienen.

Auf diesem theoretischen Rahmen aufbauend stützt sich der empirische Teil der Arbeit auf eine qualitative Inhaltsanalyse von Parteidokumenten. Der analysierte Textkorpus hierfür besteht vor allem aus inner-parteilichen Dokumenten (*neibu*), die im Rahmen von Archivarbeiten zusammengetragen wurden. Darüber hinaus sind auch öffentlich zugängliche Dokumente Teil des Textkorpus, vor allem für die Zeitperiode nach 2006. Hier analysiere ich ebenfalls Parteidokumente, die vor allem der Kommunikation der Partei mit ihren Mitgliedern dienen, z.B. Parteimagazine wie *Seeking Truth* und *Red Flag*, aber auch Parteiregularien und Dokumente zur Parteipolitik. Der hauptsächliche Teil meiner Analyse stützt sich auf qualitative Methoden. Ergänzend und in einem begrenzten Rahmen verwende ich darüber hinaus quantitative Methoden, vor allem Häufigkeits- und Konkordanzanalysen.

Das Hauptargument dieser Arbeit besteht darin, dass die ideologische Arbeit innerhalb der Partei der Formung und Beeinflussung der sozialen Identität von Parteimitgliedern dient. In ihren ideologischen Narrativen kultiviert die Partei eine soziale Identität, deren hauptsächlicher Inhalt aus Treue und Loyalität gegenüber der Partei besteht. Hierbei erfüllt ideologische Arbeit in der Partei die Aufgabe, diese soziale Identität zugänglich zu machen und ihren praktischen Einfluss zu erhöhen. Außerdem stützt die Partei sich auf Parteiiideologie, um normative Regeln und Erwartungen für Parteimitglieder zu definieren. Diese haben die Akzeptanz der unbedingten Interpretations- und Entscheidungshoheit der Partei zum Inhalt.

Die ersten zwei Kapitel meiner Arbeit führen in das Forschungsthema ein und stellen das Forschungsdesign dar. Ich diskutiere den Stand der Forschung und präsentiere die Forschungsfragen für mein Projekt. Außerdem stelle ich den theoretischen und methodischen Rahmen für meine Arbeit vor.

In Kapitel drei – dem ersten empirischen Kapitel meiner Arbeit – beantworte ich die Frage, warum die Partei weiterhin an der Relevanz von Ideologie festhält. Hier argumentiere ich, dass die Partei eine klare Verbindung zwischen Überzeugungen und Verhalten identifiziert. Gemäß der Analyse



der Partei sind die Gründe für Fehlverhalten von Parteimitgliedern – z.B. Korruption oder illoyales Verhalten gegenüber der Partei – darin zu suchen, dass betreffende Parteimitglieder Defizite in ihren Überzeugungen aufweisen. Zum Beispiel argumentiert die Partei, dass ein wichtiger Grund für Korruption darin liegt, dass „die stabilisierende Kraft von Idealen und Überzeugungen“ (Liu Yuan 2017) betreffenden Parteimitgliedern abgeht. Im Lichte dieser Diagnose ist die Partei der Ansicht, dass eine angemessene Lösung dieser Probleme in ideologischer Erziehung sowie Kritik und Selbstkritik zu finden ist.

In Kapitel vier meiner Arbeit analysiere ich die Botschaften für Parteimitglieder, die in Parteiideologie enthalten sind. Ich führe aus, dass die ideologischen Narrative der Partei dazu dienen sollen, für Parteimitglieder eine positive soziale Identität zu definieren. Das Kernelement dieser sozialen Identität ist eine mythologische Darstellung der Partei. Dieser Mythos besteht aus Narrativen der Rolle der Partei in Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft und vermittelt ein Bild der Partei als heroischem, herausragendem und allgegenwärtigem Akteur. Beispielsweise präsentiert die Partei ihre Geschichte als Akteur in einem heroischen Kampf, in dem sie in der Lage war, sich in einer aussichtslos erscheinenden Lage durchzusetzen und siegreich hervorzugehen. Gemäß diesem Narrativ konnte die Partei „sich von einer unterdrückten, eingekreisten und massakrierten Organisation zu einer regierenden Partei entwickeln“ (N.N. 17.01.1981 (2014), S. 7). In Bezug auf die Gegenwart fordert die Partei von ihren Mitgliedern, dass sie den herausragenden Charakter der Partei verkörpern sollen, indem sie moralische Aufrichtigkeit und Entschlossenheit an den Tag legen. Beispielsweise fordert die KPCh von ihren Mitgliedern, dass diese „wissen, welche Dinge getan und nicht getan werden können, die Führungsrolle in Bezug auf Gesetzestreue, Disziplin und Tugend übernehmen, sich selbst disziplinieren und unter allen Umständen charakterstark bleiben und den Verführungen von Macht, Geld und weiblicher Schönheit widerstehen“ (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), S. 25).

In Kapitel fünf analysiere ich, wie diese soziale Identität zugänglich gemacht wird. In Theorien zu sozialer Identität wird davon ausgegangen, dass Zugänglichkeit eine Voraussetzung dafür ist, dass eine soziale Identität praktische Relevanz entfaltet. Beispielsweise ist nationale Identität für amerikanische Staatsbürger deutlich bedeutsamer als für Deutsche. Wie Schildkraut darstellt, „haben sich Amerikaner seit der Gründung ihres Landes mit amerikanischer nationaler Identität beschäftigt“ (Schildkraut 2011, S. 846) und sie „sind eine sehr patriotische Gruppe von Menschen“ (Schildkraut 2011, S. 847). Weil nationale Identität im Potpourri sozialer Identitäten für Amerikaner wichtiger ist als etwa für Deutsche, ist es einfacher, diese mit passenden Signalen zu stimulieren. In Bezug auf die KPCh stellt die Ko-optierung alternativer Identitäten eine Strategie dar, um die eigene Parteiidentität für Parteimitglieder zugänglicher zu machen. Die Partei strebt danach, andere Elemente sozialer Identitäten, die Parteimitglieder möglicherweise ebenfalls besitzen, mit der

Partei zu verknüpfen. Ein Beispiel hierfür ist etwa eine traditionelle kulturelle Identität. Hierdurch erhöht die Partei die eigene Zentralität und Relevanz im Verhältnis zu möglichen anderen Elementen sozialer Identität unter ihren Mitgliedern.

Kapitel sechs meiner Arbeit ist der Frage gewidmet, wie die Parteiidentität im Praktischen hervorgehoben werden kann. Abhängig von der sozialen Identität können fast alle Reize als Stimulus für eine Identität funktionieren, z.B. Symbole oder Aussagen, die in Zusammenhang mit dieser Identität stehen. Eine soziale Identität zu stimulieren bedeutet, einem Individuum zu signalisieren, dass er oder sie Teil einer (psychologischen) Gruppe ist und entsprechend der Verhaltensvorgaben dieser Gruppe agieren sollte. Um das Beispiel der nationalen Identität erneut aufzugreifen, lässt sich hierfür sagen, dass zum Beispiel Symbole wie eine Nationalflagge oder Nationalhymne als Stimuli dienen können, um diese soziale Identität anzusprechen. Im Falle der Partei dient eine panoptikumsähnliche Struktur dazu, Parteiidentität zu stimulieren. Zunächst verwendet die Partei ein Narrativ umfassender Überwachung. Sie signalisiert ihren Mitgliedern, dass die Partei allgegenwärtig ist und jedes Verhalten von Parteimitgliedern zu jedem Zeitpunkt sehen kann. Das bedeutet, dass die Partei die konstante Botschaft aussendet, dass Parteimitglieder dieser Organisation angehören und sich unter allen Umständen daran erinnern und entsprechend verhalten sollten. Darüber hinaus stützt sich die Partei auf formalisierte Sprache, die reglementieren soll, wie ihre Mitglieder sich ausdrücken. Die Verwendung offizieller „Parteisprache“ sorgt dafür, dass Parteimitglieder konstant an ihre Parteimitgliedschaft und somit diese soziale Identität erinnert werden. In diesem Zusammenhang ist es wichtig zu erwähnen, dass formalisierte Sprache vor allem Form und Ausdruck vorschreibt, d.h. was Bloch einen „Tunnel“ nennt (Bloch 1974, S. 76; 1975, S. 24). Sie schreibt vor, wie einzelne Parteimitglieder kommunizieren sollen. Dies bedeutet jedoch nicht, dass der konkrete Inhalt hinter der formalisierten Form klar festgelegt sein muss und sich nicht ändern kann.

Das siebte Kapitel beschäftigt sich mit dem Aspekt von Verhalten. Der Theorieansatz zu Selbst-Kategorisierung nimmt an, dass hervorgehobene und stimulierte soziale Identität zu Verhalten führt, das konform mit Gruppennormen ist. Zwar analysiere ich in meiner Arbeit nicht direkt das Verhalten von Parteimitgliedern, aber ich untersuche, wie die Partei danach strebt, Normen und Erwartungen bezüglich des Verhaltens von Parteimitgliedern zu formulieren. Hierfür schlage ich das Konzept der „strategischen Vagheit“ vor, das impliziert, dass sich die Partei zum absoluten und unanfechtbaren Richter über Verhalten erhebt. Mithilfe mehrdeutiger ideologischer Konzepte und vager Verhaltensregeln und Strafmaßnahmen erlaubt die Partei ihren Mitgliedern, diese unterschiedlich zu interpretieren und unterschiedliche Überzeugungen zu haben. Gleichzeitig behält die Partei sich das Recht vor, eine „korrekte“ Interpretation durchzusetzen. Sie erhebt sich somit zum letztinstanzlichen Richter über „korrektes“ Verhalten und „korrekte“ Überzeugungen.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass meine Arbeit neue Perspektiven zum Verständnis der Rolle von Ideologie eröffnet. Ich zeige, dass Ideologie nicht ausschließlich den Glauben an politische Überzeugungen im konventionellen Sinne zum Zweck hat. Im Gegenteil kann Ideologie auch als Instrument für die Manipulation sozialer Identitäten dienen. Die KPCh geht davon aus, dass eine enge Verbindung zwischen Überzeugungen und Verhalten besteht und Ideologie darum einen essentiellen Beitrag zur organisationellen Integrität der Partei leistet. Zur Erreichung dieses Ziels kultiviert die Partei eine positive soziale Identität für ihre Mitglieder, um eins zu werden mit der Partei.

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## List of abbreviations

CC	Central Committee
CCDI	Central Commission for Discipline Inspection
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
NLA	National Library of Australia
OCR	Optical character recognition
PRC	People's Republic of China

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## 1 Introduction

The problem: Is anyone still communist in the Communist Party?

Is anyone still communist in the Chinese Communist Party? This is the title of a podcast involving the two China scholars Victor Shih and Kerry Brown that was published in 2021 (C. Yu, Brown, and Shih 22.03.2021). The question is important for a communist party that rules a country allowing private property, accepting private entrepreneurs among its ranks and that is suffering from large socioeconomic discrepancies. It appears legitimate and obvious to ask whether anyone in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does still believe in communism, what it means for the Party and for China and if nobody believes in communism any more, whether it would have any impact.

Shih and Brown answer this question in both an affirmative and a negative manner. Arguing in favour of the negative view, Brown suggests that for the Party elite, CCP ideology “is a common language. I think it’s a bit like medieval Latin for the Catholic Church in the medieval period” (Yu, Brown, and Shih 22.03.2021). Shih agrees by arguing that ideology in the CCP has to be seen as “a shared set of practices”. In his reading, ideology is a common way of communication rather than a set of concepts to believe in<sup>1</sup>. In terms of belief in communism, Brown holds that “I think the last time anyone really believed this stuff was the Cultural Revolution” (Yu, Brown, and Shih 22.03.2021). However, at the same time, Brown also argues that there is a form of mandatory belief in the CCP. He maintains that “they [the CCP political elite] believe what they have to. I guess there’s only one person in China that probably does believe in Marxism-Leninism with Chinese characteristics purely, and that’s Xi Jinping because he’s the only person that has to.” (Yu, Brown, and Shih 22.03.2021).

Other scholars share this view that Party members do not generally believe in Party ideology anymore. In the wake of the beginning of economic reforms, many scholars have suggested that “ideology died” in the post-Mao era (Misra 1998; Lynch 1999; D. Zhao 2009). Already in the wake of the Tianan’men massacre in 1989, Ding spoke of the “decline of communism” (X. Ding 1994) and Chen diagnoses “the bankruptcy of the official ideology, Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought” (J. Chen 1995, p. 25). Dickson more recently argued that the Party is “lacking a shared religious tradition or ideology” (Dickson 2016, p. 232) and Shirk candidly stated that “almost no one believes in Communist ideology anymore” (Shirk 2007, p. 62). In the reading of these authors, it appears like ideology nowadays is not important for the CCP. The underlying argument is that communism does not play a role for the Party anymore, so that the answer to the question whether anyone is still communist in the CCP would clearly be negative.

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar argument with regard to the Soviet Union see Schull (1992).

However, as Shih and Brown point out, Party ideology does still appear to have a purpose within the CCP and they point to an ambiguous understanding of ideology. They argue that ideology appears to be both believed and not believed in and while, in their reading, it still carries significance, it does not matter as a belief system. The outlined positions partly sum up scholarly work on ideology in the Party. On the one hand scholars have argued that ideology is dead, Party members and cadres do not believe in it and it can in the best case serve as a pretence for a communist party that is not communist anymore. On the other hand, scholars also argue that ideology is still relevant for the Party and it still has multiple purposes both within the Party and for the Party governing China. The question of whether anyone is still communist in the CCP and why it matters is therefore subject to significant scholarly debate. So far, there is no consensus on the issue whether ideology in the CCP has truly died.

#### *The Party: Conceptualising the organisation*

Analysing ideology of the Party requires a conceptualisation of the core actor involved: the Party itself. Depending on the angle of research, multiple approaches to studying the Party can be applied. For analytical purposes, it is possible to treat the Party as one largely monolithic actor that is ultimately represented by central Party institutions, namely the Central Committee (CC) with its Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee at the national level. However, at the same time, it is also possible to understand the Party as an agglomeration of diverse sub-groups of people with varying interests and political standpoints. Which understanding of the Party is chosen depends on the overall research interest.

Here, I conceptualise the Party as a largely monolithic organisation. I focus on ideological statements and documents emanating from central Party organisations and do not analyse inner-Party diversity and discussion processes. The thesis takes into consideration the officially endorsed results of inner-Party ideological debates and treats them as central Party positions. At the same time, it does not deny that the Party is a diverse and heterogeneous organisation with internal political and ideological debates. However, these debates and decision-making processes are not the main analytical focus.

Correct ideas within the Party are to a significant extent the product of Party-internal policy debates. Multiple Party institutions are involved in this process. As Fewsmith argues, both the Central Party School and think tanks of varying degrees of Party affiliation play an important role in generating input for ideological and political debates, thereby contributing to the formulation of “correct ideas” (Fewsmith 2003). Additionally, research institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences contribute to the Party’s analysis of ideological issues, for example by providing analyses of the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union and lessons to be drawn (Shambaugh 2008a). Furthermore, Party schools below the centre are also involved in the process of ideological discussion and dissemination

of ideology to Party cadres in a process of study and training at different levels of the Party-state hierarchy (Pieke 2009; C. Lee 2015).

Additionally, Party leaders themselves, namely the Party general secretary, are involved in creating and advancing ideological agendas and changes thereof. While think tanks and research institutions are contributing to drafting ideological agendas, these are ultimately connected to the respective Party leaders. As Wu argues with regard to Jiang Zemin's Three Represents, "by making a break in ideology building, Jiang Zemin is successfully transforming his current institutional advantage into an ideological one. This is a vantage point from which he will not only be able to make rules for other leaders and for the operation of institutions but he will also, in the years to come, be in a position to judge which rules and leaders are politically correct" (Wu 2003, p. 180). Furthermore, scholars also analyse Party leader's personal experiences, beliefs and policy preferences to draw conclusions on their ideological standpoints and their potential contributions to ideology building and political decision-making (e.g. Lam 2015). This offers a means of understanding changes in the Party's ideological agenda.

The official affirmation of "correct ideas", i.e. the formulation of official ideological agendas, rests with the Party's central institutions. In particular, authoritative ideological concepts and statements are issued by the Central Committee of the Party. For example, related to officially endorsed correct ideology, the Central Committee issued a five-year plan for training Party cadres that includes directions on the kind of "correct" ideology that Party cadres are supposed to study (Dotson 31.12.2019). Additionally, the official sanctioning of Party ideology by including ideological changes in the Party constitution is, at least on paper, the ultimate decision of the Party's National Congress, the formally highest-ranking institution within the Party.

#### *The death of ideology*

The interpretation of the "death of ideology" is mainly a result of the course of reform of the Chinese Party-state after 1978. The CCP has to a considerable degree abandoned the state monopoly on the economy and it has significantly engaged in selling out public property. This privatisation of state-owned enterprises has not only led to substantial corruption (X. Ding 2000; Wedeman 2003; D. Yang 2004), but it has also undermined the Leninist foundation of the economy: state ownership of the means of production. Additionally, the Party has also allowed businesspeople to join its ranks, thereby fostering the understanding that a core motivation for Party membership is personal benefit. As Dickson and Tsai have argued, many successful businesspeople are Party members and hence close to the Party (Dickson 2003; Tsai 2005). It only appears natural that Party membership is seen as important for economic success and the advancement of political and administrative careers (Hillman 2014; X. Ma 2016; Koss 2018). These developments and also widespread cynicism toward communist ideology

after the Cultural Revolution (Misra 1998; Shambaugh 2008a; Shirk 2007; Dotson 31.12.2019; Pei 2006; Y. Sun 1999) have led to scholars arguing that ideology is dead in China. The hypothesis of the “death of ideology” has also led to fewer scholars engaging in research on CCP ideology compared to the Maoist era.

*The resurrection of ideology*

In the Party’s view, however, ideology is not dead. In spite of such scholarly claims, the Party still invests considerable energy in ideological debates. The Party still devotes efforts and resources to developing and spreading “correct ideas” (Fewsmith 2003) and to educating Party members and cadres on these ideas (Shambaugh 2008b; Pieke 2009; C. Lee 2015). Additionally, it still considers ideological atrophy to be one of the core reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union and wants to avoid this atrophy at all cost (Shambaugh 2008a; Li Ruiying 7.3.2011; N.N. 20.05.2011). Considering these efforts, it appears that the Party still believes that ideology plays an important role and it has a purpose for the Party.

Following from this, other scholars have indeed argued in favour of the relevance of ideology. While they do not necessarily suggest the existence of widespread belief in communism in China, they still hold that CCP ideology is not irrelevant. For example, they have discussed the adaptations of the CCP’s ideological concepts (e.g. Dittmer 1993; Dickson 2006; Lam 2006). Additionally, they also argue that ideology has changed its function and now serves, for example, as a means of legitimation (e.g. Holbig 2013; Holbig and Gilley 2010) or as a tool to signal factional loyalty (e.g. Shih 2008; Zeng 2016). In their arguments, ideology remains relevant, albeit not as a belief system.

A considerable resurrection of studying ideology in the CCP has taken place since Xi Jinping took power. Because Xi has paid increased attention to ideological study and indoctrination for Party members and cadres, scholarly focus has shifted back to issues such as study meetings and education for Party members and cadres (e.g. Dotson 31.12.2019; 29.01.2020; Hart 02.07.2021). Scholars are also paying more attention to coercive discipline and educational measures such as televised confessions (Sorace 2019). Additionally, Pieke has suggested understanding CCP ideology as a quasi-religious undertaking, or what he calls a communist civil religion (Pieke 2018; 2020), heeding the question of how ideology matters to the Party and its members.

However, this is only the beginning of better understanding why ideology is important for the Party. As we expect that ideological work will assume increasing significance in the Party’s rule, a systematic study of the purposes of Party ideology in the past will better inform our understanding of its function at present and in the future. This is precisely what this thesis aims to do. The main question it seeks to answer is what is the purpose of Party ideology for the Party. This question about the purpose of Party ideology entails two sub-questions. The first one is why does the Party believe

ideology still matters. The second question relates to the problem of how the Party wants to make ideology relevant to its members even if they do not believe in communism anymore. In other words, what is the ideological message the Party offers to its members? Answering these questions allows for analysing Party ideology from the point of view of the Party and for better understanding the role that ideology still plays for the Party.

*The contribution of this thesis*

The main contribution that this thesis intends to make is to offer a fresh perspective on why ideology still matters for the Party in its relations with Party members. Applying concepts from social psychology and arguing for a social “Party identity”, I intend to bring a new angle to the question of the relevance of ideology in a field where the views of many scholars and the Party appear to diverge. In other words, I strive to address the conundrum of the death versus the relevance of ideology by analysing the purpose of ideology from the Party’s perspective.

The first question with regard to the purpose of ideology is the question of why ideology matters. This is not a question that is specific to China, but it concerns the objective of ideology more generally. In particular, it is an important question for political organisations that have an organisational ideology. According to the sociologist Kwong who has among others studied the problem of corruption in China, ideology can help maintain organisational coherence. She argues that “Only a bureaucracy with a coherent organizational culture and effective resources to fulfil its mandate can inspire its members to follow organizational rules in the exercise of their authorities and prerogatives to attain meaningful and attainable goals.” (Kwong 1997, p. 151). Ideology can be a motivating factor for action and it can create attachment to an organisational structure.

The CCP itself also believes that ideology matters to the Party. We can assume that the Party still views ideology as valuable because of its efforts in thought work and the resources it invests in ideological adaptations, reformulations and education and study for Party members and cadres. However, we do not know what the Party considers to be the purpose of ideology. Why does it still matter for the Party and what does the Party want to achieve with ideology? The involved puzzle is that the Party and individual Party leaders still consider ideology to be important and valuable, whereas many Party members do not believe in communism anymore.

In this thesis, I argue that ideology is alive and relevant. The Party’s efforts of ideological education and rectification should not be dismissed as futile or mere official performance because they are too far-reaching and resource-intensive to be meaningless. Therefore, I will answer the question of whether ideology is still relevant to the Party affirmatively. The major question here is not whether ideology matters or not, but rather why it matters and how it works.

To answer the research question, I rely on a multidisciplinary approach that draws on political science and social psychology. The definition of ideology stems from the field of political science.

Additionally, I draw on concepts of social identity and self-categorisation from social psychology. The advantage of such a multidisciplinary approach is that it allows for moving beyond familiar perspectives, offering a fresh view on the question of ideology. This is particularly important because theoretical approaches from social psychology have so far been largely neglected in the study of ideology in China. One of the few exceptions of applying theoretical approaches from social psychology to the study of Chinese politics more generally is the work of Ji (2004). She studies the functioning of language in mass campaigns in Maoist China. However, apart from this study, social psychology approaches are significantly underrepresented in the study of Chinese politics in general and of ideology in particular. It can therefore make a new and valuable contribution to the study of ideology.

The contribution of this thesis to the question of why CCP ideology matters is twofold. Firstly, it suggests that we should take Party ideology seriously. We can assume that the Party does invest significant resources in reframing and spreading its ideology and in indoctrinating Party members and cadres in it because it believes that ideology has an important purpose. The second major contribution of this thesis is its multidisciplinary approach to understanding the purpose of Party ideology. I identify two core messages in Party ideology. Firstly, the Party sees a close connection between beliefs and behaviour. Secondly, the Party cultivates a social identity for its members and cadres. In the following, I briefly point to the theoretical considerations underlying this thesis.

The theory: Ideology and social identity

#### *Conceptualising ideology*

Research on ideology is a classic problem of political science. There is an array of literature on how to define and analyse ideology and how it functions in a political system and society. In his introduction to ideology, Eagleton offers a list of at least 16 possible different approaches to ideology covering issues of meaning, communication, action-orientation or power (Eagleton 1991). These understandings of ideology can be linked to various fields of political science, such as, for example, the study of political communication and propaganda or theories of power or legitimacy. Schwarzmantel discusses main families of ideology such as liberalism, socialism and conservatism and perceives them as different manifestations of dealing with the challenges of modernity (Schwarzmantel 1998). Moving beyond this view of ideology in the framework of large ideological families and in order to account for new ideological concepts as well as ideological change, Freeden introduces a morphological approach to ideology (Freeden 2003). In his view, the function of language and the negotiation of meaning play a crucial role in studying ideology.

The analysis of the role of ideology in China is also mainly a problem of political science approaches. Scholars perceive ideology for example as a means of legitimation, of discussing and fostering political change or—particularly for the Maoist era—as a totalitarian means of indoctrination

and social control. Again, these are classic political science approaches to political problems of state-society relations, of legitimacy and of power. The study of ideology is thus well-grounded in political science. It has made important contributions for better understanding, for example, how the CCP has adapted to changes under the conditions of economic reform and how it uses ideology as a legitimating device for its rule.

However, to offer a fresh perspective on the conundrum of ideology in China since the end of the Maoist era, I suggest widening our angle of analysis and taking a multidisciplinary approach to analysing ideology in the CCP. While ideology and the definition of ideology are a topic of political science, I additionally apply a theoretical approach from social psychology. Multidisciplinarity in general has the advantage that it allows for looking at a problem from a different perspective and thereby being able to generate new insights. In the following, I point out in more detail the theoretical considerations from social psychology.

#### *Insights from social identity theory*

A core message in the Party's understanding of ideology is that beliefs and behaviour are closely connected. This presumption of a link between beliefs and behaviour existed in the CCP under Mao and it is still visible in the entire post-Mao era and until now. It is concerned with Party members' thoughts, their correct behaviour and also their commitment and loyalty to the Party as an organisation. In the eyes of the Party, the "correctness" of beliefs is closely linked to "correct" behaviour.

The relationship between cognitions, i.e. beliefs, and behaviour is an important topic in social psychology. More specifically, social identity and self-categorisation theory are concerned with cognitions and behaviour within groups (see for example: Turner 1982; Turner et al. 1987; Tajfel and Turner 2004). They address the question of how people become part of (psychological) groups and how and under what circumstances they behave in line with group norms and expectations. They ask how and why people identify with groups and incorporate a sense of social belonging into their identities. They are concerned with question of ideas, identities, social belonging and compliance with group norms.

For the case of the CCP, insights from social psychology allow us to analyse the ideological messaging of the Party in relation to its members. It surpasses the question of whether a particular Party member believes in communism or whether he simply joined the Party for personal material benefit. It allows us to understand how ideological utterances of the Party can create a social identity among Party members that binds them to the Party. Such an approach can explain Pieke's interview results that Party members and cadres state that they consider Party ideology to be important, but

they do not believe in it (Pieke 2009). Social identity theory can explain these findings because it does not primarily treat ideology as a belief system.

However, one word of caution with regard to the explanatory power of social identity and the setup of this thesis is in order here. Studies in social psychology on group identities usually focus on how the manipulation of group identities influences behaviour among group members. This is often done in an experimental manner. In contrast to this, I do not analyse the concrete impact of ideology on Party members by, for example, interviewing Party members regarding their individual belief systems and relation to Party ideology. I do not study the question what a single individual Party member believes in. On the contrary, I focus on analysing the message that the Party sends to its members in its ideological utterances and how this can function as a means of social identity creation. In other words, I focus not on the recipient's end, i.e. Party members and cadres, but on the sender's end, i.e. the Party. While I can explain the purpose of Party ideology, this approach cannot measure the direct impact of the Party's strategy on Party members. Also, it cannot quantify the success of the Party's ideological indoctrination.

The purpose: Combining political science and social psychology for understanding ideology

To explain the purpose of ideology, I combine a definition of ideology from the field of political science with self-categorisation theory. Freedman defines ideology as "a wide-ranging structural arrangement that attributes *decontested* meanings to a range of mutually defining political concepts" (Freedman 2003, p. 54). I use social identity and self-categorisation theory to explain how these decontested meanings of mutually defining political concepts are supposed to function in the Party's relationship with its members. These theoretical approaches mainly build on the work of Tajfel and Turner (Turner 1982; Turner et al. 1987; Tajfel and Turner 2004). They point out that apart from personal identities, people also have social identities and analyse how they function and can be made meaningful.

Combining these theoretical insights, I analyse what the Party presents as its ideology as decontested meanings of mutually defining political concepts. I argue that this decontested meaning is not only and not primarily communism. Rather, I hold that in Party ideology we can see a strong Party-focused social identity that the Party presents to its members. This social identity has the Party as its core and requires loyalty and unquestioning attachment from Party members. In other words, and provocatively, the core of ideology is not primarily communism: it is the Party.

The assumption that the core of ideology is the Party opens a new perspective on the conundrum of whether ideology is dead. It implies that the assumptions that "ideology matters" and "ideology is dead" are not necessarily opposed. It also means that I do not fully reject the assumption that "ideology is dead" as long as the underlying understanding of ideology focuses on the belief of



Party members in communism. Importantly, the argument of the death of ideology depends on the understanding of ideology and what kind of ideology is considered to be “dead”.

#### *Linking beliefs and behaviour*

The first important argument on ideology is that the Party holds that beliefs shape behaviour. This is a crucial reason for why the Party still considers ideology to be relevant. Behaviour involves behavioural rules of the Party but also commitment and loyalty of Party members to the Party. In the logic of the Party, correct ideological concepts lead to correct behaviour and loyalty. Following from this, incorrect behaviour and lack of loyalty should ideally be handled by correcting ideological concepts among Party members with the help of study and education.

Resulting from this is the second important point: The link between beliefs and behaviour is a continuity of the Party’s historical understanding of ideology. Since its time in its base camps and guerrilla warfare in Yan’an with numerous detached and difficult to reach outposts (Johnson 1968; Selden 1969; 1971) the CCP considers beliefs to have a core role for influencing behaviour. While this understanding of ideology was a result of the difficult conditions under which the CCP operated in its wartime areas, it was also influenced by traditional Chinese understandings of thought and behaviour and the Soviet assumption that correct beliefs are an important prerequisite for behaviour. In other words, while the Party’s understanding of the link between beliefs and behaviour has mixed origins, it has existed within the Party since its formative years and has been maintained under Mao after 1949 as well. Although authors like Pei hold that ideological beliefs are not the main reason for the behavioural problems that the Party is confronted with (Pei 2016), the Party until today maintains this historically grown assumption.

#### *Building a social identity*

The core argument of this thesis is that Party ideology is concerned with building a social identity for Party members and this social identity has the Party as its core. All other aspects, including behavioural norms and compliance with and enforcement of these behavioural norms, can be subsumed under this one basic assumption: the central anchor point of ideology is the Party. Whatever Party members do and believe in: the Party wants them to have a social identity that is focused on the outstanding role and greatness of the Party. It wants them to subsume their lives and loyalties to the Party and ultimately submit to the Party’s overarching leadership.

As the basis of its social identity, the Party advances a political myth as a common narrative (Bottici and Challand 2006). This political myth includes the self-understanding of the Party as a hero and historic saviour continually and successfully struggling against external enemies. Party membership is rhetorically presented as membership in a kind of elite group and a special status is attributed to it. It appeals to feelings of honour and pride as well as revolutionary success, victory and

responsibility for the advancement of the Chinese people. This element of the social identity of Party membership that the Party fosters thus equally appeals to a positive identity compared to non-Party members. Party membership is portrayed as special, the membership in a form of elite. It creates a strong and positive in-group definition and a “rally around the flag” effect. There is thus a forceful social identity embedded in Party ideology that puts the Party at the centre and aims to make Party members part of an exalted organisation.

To make this social identity effective in shaping behaviour, the Party also relies on ideology to constantly raise its salience. It has to incessantly ensure that the Party social identity occupies a core place among potential other identity elements of its members, such as, for example, identities of culture, profession, ethnicity or gender, thereby increasing the relevance or accessibility of Party identity. Additionally, it has to offer strong stimuli to make Party identity visible and distinctive. The stimulation of social identity among Party members involves questions of the Party and its individual Party members as well as of Party members and “the other”. Party ideology is expected to manipulate how the individual relates to the Party and sees itself in the Party, thereby impacting on the salience of social identity. At the same time, it also involves delineating who is inside and who is outside of the Party, thereby defining the borders to other identity elements. This process allows for deindividuating people as members of the Party because it pressures them to understand themselves primarily as part of a group, i.e. the Party, rather than as an independent individual.

To summarise, the concept of a Party social identity transported through ideology is the core element of the argument of this thesis. The main argument is that ideology functions differently from what might generally be assumed. It creates a social identity among Party members the centre of which is the Party. Through processes of social identity manipulation, this Party identity is made salient. This Party identity is also underlined in the Party’s behavioural expectations, i.e. group norms, for its members because the behavioural expectations codify a central interpretative role for the Party.

*Interpreting group norms: The vagueness of rules and norms*

The final concern of social identity theory is the issue of behaviour. Social identity theory assumes that behaviour and group identities of an individual are closely linked. This means that if a person holds a certain social identity and this identity is made salient, social identity theory argues that the person can be expected to behave more in compliance with group norms. In other words, in social identity theory, behavioural compliance is a core assumption regarding the effects of a salient social identity.

In the case of the CCP, this thesis argues that the core expectation for Party members is the submission to the Party. In other words, the Party is at the centre of behavioural requirements for its members. It expects them to be loyal to the Party, submit to its decisions, accept the ultimate interpreting authority of the Party and comply with rules and decisions of punishment even if they are

not clear or subject to change. As much as other identity elements, such as the Party social identity itself and also the mechanisms to make it relevant and salient, centre on the Party, behavioural rules and expectations also have the Party as its focus. They are in line with the other social identity elements that I analyse in this thesis: at the core, everything centres on the Party.

The requirement of ultimate submission to the Party is reflected in the vagueness of rules and norms for Party members. This thesis holds that the ideological concepts that Party members are supposed to believe in, Party discipline rules of behaviour and punishment for inappropriate behaviour are defined in a vague and ambiguous manner. The vagueness and ambiguity of behavioural expectations and punishment imply that the Party has to decide whether advancing a particular ideological position or a certain kind of behaviour among Party members is incorrect and worthy of punishment. At the same time, the Party also decides on the severity of punishment, depending on the case in question and its overall “circumstances”. In other words, the Party reserves the ultimate right of interpretation for itself. What is important is not primarily the content of the rules, but it is the fact that the Party is the only legitimate interpreting authority. This means that the vagueness of rules and norms does not focus on the norms themselves but on the position of the Party in relation to them.

One final word of caution is necessary with regard to the rules on corruption. Corruption is a form of misbehaviour among Party members and cadres that the Party sanctions. However, at the same time, corruption is also a crime in criminal law. The legal regulations on corruption are comparatively clear and, in relation to Party rules and regulations, both crimes and punishment are defined in a relatively concrete manner. This means that there are better delineated instruments for the fight against corruption that can be applied when Party members break legal regulations. In other words, in contrast to other behavioural and ideational expectations of the Party, the concept of strategic vagueness, as suggested here, does not broadly cover regulations on corruption.

The method: Studying inner-Party communication

In this thesis, I study the communication of the Party with its members and cadres. I analyse why ideology matters for the Party in relating to its agents and how it is supposed to impact on Party members and cadres. Studying this kind of communication poses several challenges. The first challenge is the question of access and which material to choose. The second one concerns the content of the material and how to analyse it. I discuss these challenges here briefly and leave more technical methodological considerations to the following chapter.

The first challenge of analysing inner-Party communication is the question of material. Party members and cadres have access to different kinds and levels of inner-Party material. This is obviously the most direct source for understanding the way the Party communicates to its members and how ideological issues are presented and discussed. However, because it is inner-Party material, it is by

definition not public. I was able to obtain a set of such inner-Party material in archival work in the National Library of Australia (NLA). This material is very valuable because it contains a large set of documents and it has not been comprehensively analysed so far. Therefore, the source material used here is in itself valuable and can make a major contribution to analysing the CCP's ideological communication. However, access to inner-Party material—as valuable as it is—is usually not comprehensive. There are always gaps in the material and periods of time that are not covered. Therefore, alternative publicly available sources have to be used as well to fill these gaps and to make the coverage of source material more comprehensive.

Public communication of the Party is not difficult to obtain. The Party engages in massive communication offensives on all kinds of topics and material that is available online abounds. The challenge is not to access the material but to choose which material to use. Because I am interested in ideology and its function of Party members and cadres, I chose online material that has this group of people as its main target audience. This does obviously not mean that this material cannot be accessed by other people inside and outside of China, but some material that the Party publishes is directed mainly at Party members and cadres. This is, for example, the case with the website and app *Xuexi Qiangguo* (学习强国 Study a strong country) or the Party's theoretical journal *Seeking Truth* (*Qiushi* 求是). While this material is publicly available, it is directed mostly at Party members and particularly cadres and most ordinary Chinese citizens do not read it. This is certainly due to the character of the material that I turn to now.

The second challenge of studying inner-Party communication and particularly ideological communication relates to its content and how to understand it. As part of official Party ideology, Party language is formalised and prescriptive for its users. Additionally, it is seen as being rather repetitive in nature. Both aspects make Party material difficult and sometimes rather uninteresting to read. This is the reason why ordinary Chinese people do not generally read Party documents, particularly those documents that are primarily directed at Party members and cadres. However, these characteristics make Party material especially useful for the analysis here. Firstly, because Party material published in the name of Party institutions and in Party journals is supposed to be officially endorsed, it is carefully crafted. As official publications of the Party, we can assume that the chosen formulations are not coincidental. On the contrary, an officially published document undergoes careful drafting and editing. This means that it generally reflects official positions of the Party and small changes in wording can be assumed to have meaning. Secondly, repetitiveness in Party documents also has a purpose. Although the repeated reference to the same concepts (often even using the same words) makes the documents appear uninteresting, such repetition points to official positions and it formalises officially accepted

language. Thus, even though Party documents are challenging to read, their issues do at the same time also represent opportunities for analysis and provide insights in the Party's relation with its ideology.

This chapter introduces the problem of ideology in the Chinese Communist Party. It outlines how the question of ideology and its purpose for the Party are debated among researchers studying the CCP and points out the divided opinions on the relevance of ideology for the Party. To offer a contribution to this debate, it suggests a multidisciplinary approach combining insights on ideology from the field of political science with a social identity approach from social psychology. The following chapter presents this multidisciplinary approach in greater detail. It discusses the academic literature that this thesis builds on and outlines the theoretical approach that I rely on.

## 2 Understandings of ideology: An alternative approach

The role of ideology for the CCP has in the past received varying degrees of scholarly attention. In the Maoist era, the contents and functions of ideology for the CCP were widely debated and studied. Scholars identified a connection between correct beliefs and correct behaviour in the CCP's understanding of ideology and they discussed ideology as a means of influence and indoctrination. However, in the post-Mao era, scholarly attention to ideology declined. Scholars still discussed the adaptation of ideological content of the CCP and also paid limited attention to the changed purposes of ideology in the post-Mao era. However, studying Party ideology was not a core preoccupation of political science studies on China anymore. This changed only recently with regard to the Xi Jinping administration and scholars are beginning to pay attention to ideology again. It appears that due to Xi's Party discipline and ideological education campaigns, ideology has returned to scholarly attention.

This thesis argues that ideology still matters to the Party. I demonstrate that it is important to the Party because the Party identifies a close connection between beliefs and behaviour. In the understanding of the Party, correct thought leads to correct behaviour. Additionally, the Party creates a narrative that links correct beliefs among Party members to their loyalty to the Party.

Based on this, the core puzzle of Party ideology is how the Party wants to make ideology relevant to its members again. If Party members do not believe in the realisation of communism anymore but the Party claims the ongoing importance of ideology, the main question is how the Party strives to redefine the contents of ideology to make it relevant to Party members. I argue that the purpose of Party ideology is to offer a social identity for Party members and cadres that has the Party itself as its core. This social identity is an identity of historic, present and future outstandingness and greatness of the Party. Through various mechanisms in Party ideology, this social identity can be made relevant and salient for Party members. Creating and fostering a social identity is a means of redefining ideology and raising its relevance for Party members and cadres beyond the lacking belief in communism.

This chapter outlines the argument of the thesis in greater detail. First, I will discuss the concept of ideology as it is used here before presenting the scholarly debates on ideology in Maoist and post-Mao China. Based on this, I point out the research gap and outline the argument to fill it. Finally, I introduce the theoretical concepts of social identity and self-categorisation that underlie the argument and present the methodological considerations.

## The concept of ideology

To begin with, the core concept of this thesis requires clarification. The concept of ideology is debated in political science and numerous conflicting understandings exist in the vast literature on ideology. It is not the task of this thesis to review the entire history of the literature on ideology and other scholars have assumed this task in an excellent manner (e.g. Eagleton 1991). In addition to reviewing the multitude of approaches to ideology, Gerring tries to systematise them by detailing the definition of ideology according to their understanding of ideology's location, subject matter, subject, position, function, motivation and cognitive/affective structures (Gerring 1997). In his view, because definitions of ideology assume different positions on understanding ideology with regard to these various aspects, they are naturally divergent and partially contradictory. However, as valuable as these encompassing reviews and attempts at systematisation are, we still require a single understanding of ideology that can serve as the basis of this thesis. In the following, I outline common approaches to ideology before elaborating on the understanding of ideology that underlies this thesis.

A first approach to ideology that is common in the literature is to see ideology as a way of viewing the world and of understanding and dealing with problems arising in social life. For example, Schwarzmantel discusses the main ideological families liberalism, socialism, conservatism and nationalism as reactions to the challenges of modernity (Schwarzmantel 1998). He argues that "the particular form of society, 'modernity', that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century gave rise to a common set of problems and questions, to which the different ideologies provided distinctive answers" (Schwarzmantel 1998, p. 4). In a similar attempt to understand ideology as means for interpreting the world surrounding us, Geertz argues for understanding ideology as a cultural system (Geertz 1964). He holds that "it is when neither a society's most general cultural orientations nor its most down-to-earth, 'pragmatic' ones suffice any longer to provide an adequate image of political process that ideologies begin to become crucial as sources of sociopolitical meanings and attitudes" (Geertz 1964, p. 64).

A second widespread approach to ideology is to understand it as a way of distorting reality, a "false consciousness" that is fostered among people. This approach is ultimately grounded in Marxist understandings of ideology. Eagleton discusses this understanding of ideology at length and points out that many thinkers on ideology that were influenced by Marxist understandings have been "much preoccupied with the idea of true and false cognition, with ideology as illusion, distortion and mystification" (Eagleton 1991, p. 3). This is the case because Marx and his followers perceive ideology to be part of the superstructure and thus an instrument that is shaped by economic relations and used by the dominating class. Writers like Gramsci, for example, discuss how the production and reproduction of ideas serves as a means of political domination, or, in Gramsci's words, "hegemony"

(Jones 2006; Schwarzmantel 2015). For example, Hall applies this idea of ideology as a means of shaping political domination to policing and social control in the case of Great Britain in the 1970s (Hall et al. 1978).

Thirdly, authors analyse ideology as a means of understanding political discourse and its concrete political impact. For example, Lin et al. apply computerised methods to mapping political discourses and identifying divergent uses of language and argumentation among republican and democratic presidential candidates in the US and in document collections from Israeli and Palestinian sources on the Israel-Palestine conflict (W.-H. Lin, Xing, and Hauptmann 2008). They point out that the use of different language allows for deciphering the ideological positions of various speakers. Similarly, Jost et al. discuss discursive structures of ideology and their impact on individual attitudes and situational evaluations (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009). Here, they understand ideology as a cognitive and linguistic construct that is reflected in political debates and attitudes.

The approach to ideology that I apply in this thesis is closely connected to this understanding of ideology as a cognitive and linguistic construct. However, I am not primarily concerned with political attitudes and how they are shaped by or reflected in ideological discourses. Rather, I am studying a socio-psychological effect of ideology that allows for understanding how ideology can influence people even if they might not believe in the officially propagated ideology, or in other words, the official “ism”. In the case of China, this is communism. In other words, I do not understand ideology as an “ism” that mainly serves to cope with the particular socio-economic challenges nor as a kind of “false consciousness” or merely the root and reflection of a political attitude.

Rather, in this thesis, I rely on a linguistic and cognitive definition of ideology that is grounded in politics. As already indicated in the introduction, for the purpose of this thesis I borrow Freedén’s understanding of ideology. He defines ideology as “a wide-ranging structural arrangement that attributes *decontested* meanings to a range of mutually defining political concepts” (Freedén 2003, p. 54). With his approach to ideology, he is seen as the “founder of the morphological approach to ideology” (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 383). In this sense, Freedén’s concept of ideology adds an additional approach to its analysis.

Central to Freedén’s understanding of ideology is the idea of interpretation. Decontested meanings are a form of using interpreted language as a common and largely unchallenged way of expressing ideas. As Stanley outlines “if ideas are individual interpretations, ideologies are interpretative frameworks that emerge as a result of the practice of putting ideas to work in language as concepts” (Stanley 2008, p. 98). In this sense, ideology is a set of language that consists of a certain way of speaking and of expressing ideas in a generally agreed upon manner: “sedimented ideas about



particular experiences” (Stanley 2008, p. 98). In other words, in Freedén’s sense, ideology is a form of interpreted and established language. However, this does imply that it can also be reinterpreted and evolve.

Both political science scholars and researchers focussing on China have applied Freedén’s concept of ideology in their empirical work. For example, his approach to ideology has been widely utilised in the study of populism. Mudde relies on Freedén’s understanding of ideology to define populism as a “thin-centred ideology” (Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2018) that focuses on an understanding of “the people” versus the “corrupt elites” as its core. According to Rovira Kaltwasser, the advantage of such a minimal interpretative definition is that it offers “an unprejudiced conception of what populism is” (Rovira Kaltwasser 2012, p. 192) that does not include statements on fixed political views or economic systems for understanding populism. In the view of these authors, the important aspect of defining populism is the interpretative power involved in understanding it as an ideology with the contradiction between the people and an elite at its core. Divergent understandings of “the people” and “the elite” form a decontested meaning in different political traditions of populism (e.g. left-wing versus right-wing populism), but they can be interpreted, i.e. decontested, in different ways, and they can be combined with diverse additional ideological elements. The concept of the decontestation of meaning and the interpretative basis of Freedén’s approach to ideology is also applied by Holbig in her study of CCP ideology. Citing the example of the reinterpretation of Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents” to become the “Three for the People” under Hu Jintao, she argues that a core characteristic of CCP ideology is to “creat[e] a moving target that is always sufficiently far away to justify the CCP’s long-term monopoly on leadership” (Holbig 2013, p. 72). Here, she also relies on the interpretative understanding of ideology that is embedded in Freedén’s decontested meanings.

The interpretative and linguistic approach is also what makes Freedén’s definition of ideology appropriate for this thesis. The advantage of his definition is that it allows for analysing ideology as a reflection of meaning in language and thus as something that people use to communicate meaning with. Additionally, it limits the study of ideology to the political realm, which is useful as well because I am mainly concerned with the CCP’s ideology and the meanings the Party communicates to its members and cadres. Finally, this definition is advantageous because it does not involve any judgements about the content of ideology. As obvious in the above discussion of research on populism, the political concepts that Freedén refers to can be any kind of political concepts. Therefore, it offers enough space to analyse such political concepts and their decontested meanings without being limited to the rather narrow question of “who is still communist in the Communist Party?”. In the following, I

first of all discuss how scholars have so far understood ideology in the CCP before outlining the contribution of this thesis in greater detail.

From totalitarian indoctrination to irrelevance?

The CCP's relationship with its set of ideological beliefs is a diverse and varying one. Scholarly analysis of the role of ideology for the CCP ranges from understanding it as a means of totalitarian indoctrination and governance in Maoist China to benevolent neglect or even irrelevance in post-Mao China. Scholars discuss both the changing and adapted content as well as the function of ideology in Maoist and post-Mao China.

### *Ideology in Maoist China*

In Maoist China, ideology was seen as being directly connected to the behaviour of people. Discussing how the Chinese Communist Party perceives and uses ideology, scholars identify a clear link between beliefs and behaviour where "correct ideas" are the prerequisite for "correct behaviour". Fostering ideological education and indoctrination is seen as a means of achieving desirable behaviour and turning people into worthy members of society. Building on this link, scholars also discuss means and strategies for such ideological education. They identify strategies of physical coercion as well as psychological group pressures and identity manipulation as means to achieve the desired ideological indoctrination and influence on thoughts.

The connection between beliefs and behaviour

The practical focus of the CCP's ideology and the connection between beliefs and behaviour is reflected in the Party's adaptations of Marxist-Leninist ideology to Chinese conditions, particularly in the role of Mao Zedong Thought. In his classic study of the Chinese Communist Party, Schurman distinguishes between what he calls "pure" and "practical" ideology (Schurman 1966). In his categorisation, pure ideology is Marxism-Leninism. Schurman sees it as "a set of ideas designed to give the individual a unified and conscious world view" (Schurman 1966, p. 22). In other words, pure ideology consists of beliefs that individuals are expected to acquire and hold and that should shape their way of thinking and interpretation. On the contrary, practical ideology according to Schurman is "a set of ideas designed to give the individual rational instruments for action" (Schurman 1966, p. 22). He argues that Mao Zedong Thought is the practical ideology of the Chinese Communists because it reflects the concrete adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese realities. It thereby provides a guide for individual Party members on how they should act and what expected revolutionary actions and behaviour should look like. Schurman hence sees Chinese ideological teachings as a practical tool to implement a Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy—a worldview—to the Chinese revolution. Steiner also underlines this functional understanding of Party ideology when he argues that the Party line is a "specific device by which 'ideology' and 'politics' are brought into harmony to meet a particular programmatic need"

(Steiner 1959, p. 32). This understanding of Party ideology is in line with Freeden's definition of ideology as consisting of decontested meaning.

The idea of seeing a link between beliefs and behaviour is not exclusive to the Chinese Communists. It is also reflected in the Soviet undertaking of creating a "new Soviet man" (Schwartz 1973; Kelly 2016). Schwartz states that the Soviet regime undertook considerable efforts "to mold Communist character" (Schwartz 1973, p. 40). This communist character should reflect highest ideals and standards of beliefs and behaviour. As Soboleva argues, the undertaking of building this "new Soviet man" reflects an understanding of ethics "which must correspond to the socialist ideal and serve as a tool for achieving this ideal. The central issue of this approach was the problem of how to construct communist forms of upbringing and how to modify people's moral consciousness and worldview." (Soboleva 2017, p. 85). In other words, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union engaged in similar efforts as did the Chinese Communists to influence beliefs and morals and thereby create morally and behaviourally superior citizens and cadres.

#### Ideological indoctrination and re-education

In the logic of the link between beliefs and behaviour, the Party invested significant resources in educating and indoctrinating Party members, but also ordinary people more broadly. The attempt at ideological indoctrination is, for example, reflected in re-education efforts of intellectuals (U 2007), socially marginalised individuals such as beggars and prostitutes (Smith 2012; 2013), prisoners of war during the Korean War (Schein 1956), or foreigners arrested in China for "counterrevolutionary" or alleged espionage activities (Lifton 1956; 1961) and other "enemies of the people" (Hinkle Jr. and Wolff 1956). Additionally, political campaigns and what Ji calls linguistic engineering played an important educating role for the general Chinese population during political campaigns (Ji 2004). In ideological re-education activities, the Party expected those subject to it to develop correct thought and thus become worthy members of society. Both physical and particularly psychological coercion and identity manipulation were the main methods through which the Party aimed to achieve this re-education process.

Ideological re-education and physical and psychological pressures were particularly intense in highly coercive environments such as prisons and re-education camps. Analysing the experiences of expelled former prisoners in China and American prisoners of war, Lifton and Schein et al. speak of "thought reform" (Lifton 1961) and "coercive persuasion" (Schein, Schneier, and Baker 1961), respectively. In prison settings, this coercive environment involved physical coercion such as hunger and malnutrition, sleep withdrawal, forced labour and physical mistreatment including, for example, shackles and locking prisoners up in tiny confined spaces (Bao and Chelminski 1973). In addition to physical coercion, the Chinese Communists exerted significant psychological pressures in order to

break down old belief elements of identity, or in the words of Schein et al. to “unfreeze” a prisoner (Schein, Schneier, and Baker 1961) before being able to form new beliefs and convictions. Although this kind of pressure was most easily exercised in a prison environment, particularly psychological coercion also played an important role in ideological indoctrination of the broader Chinese society.

The main setting where psychological coercion outside of prison was exercised was the small group (*xiaozu* 小组). King Whyte identifies these small groups as a form of political ritual and argues that they “should provide not only an effective way for elites to influence the behaviour and attitudes of subordinates, but also a secure and rewarding organisational environment for its participants” (King Whyte 1974, p. 17). In this sense, they served not only as a basic unit for political study and education, but also as a primary reference group and thus had an identity forming function, creating group solidarity and attachment (King Whyte 1974). The psychological pressure exercised in small groups resulted from the fact that passivity or non-participation was not meant to be tolerated in small group activities (Teiwes 1978) and behaviour was judged at all times. To sanction perceived “bad” behaviour or “incorrect thoughts”, small groups were in a position to—at least ritualistically—exclude members from the group.

Ritualistic exclusion from a small group took place in the form of criticism and self-criticism. Criticism and self-criticism has roots both in Soviet techniques of extracting confessions and in Chinese traditions of self-cultivation and improvement (Lifton 1961; Nivison 1956). In criticism sessions, an individual was required to confess not only incorrect behaviour but also the flawed way of thinking behind it or simply incorrect thoughts that had not even resulted in problematic behaviour. Other group members offered severe criticism of that individual to “educate” him or her in correct ways of thinking and behaviour. Psychologically, this process results in “aversive arousal, coupled with peer rejection, [that] became the driving force through which the target was coerced” (Ofshe and Singer 1986, p. 8). Criticism and self-criticism thus served as an educational tool for indoctrinating people with correct beliefs and behaviour and exerted psychological pressure because it threatened to deprive individuals of their main social basis and peer group. Within small groups, people were expected to develop collectivist group attitudes so that exclusion from the group on the basis of ideological “mistakes” would exercise the full psychological force of alienation from the group (Schurman 1959). After all, “if the target is to exist in the community, he or she must conform to community rules even if they are not privately accepted” (Ofshe and Singer 1986, p. 11).

Party members and cadres were not exempt from these forms of ideological education and indoctrination. On the one hand, the education and indoctrination of Party members and cadres relied on extensive study sessions of political documents (Compton 1952). On the other hand, as Teiwes outlines, indoctrination and inner-Party rectification of Party members and cadres also consisted of

coercive psychological pressures in small groups and through criticism and self-criticism (Teiwes 1978). For Party members the same was true as for other persons: correct and loyal behaviour resulted from correct beliefs. Hence it was necessary to continuously indoctrinate them in correct ideology as well and thereby turn them into active and loyal agents of the regime.

Two important qualifications concerning the effectiveness of ideological indoctrination and re-education are to be made here. The first qualification regards the obvious limits on criticism and self-criticism in the context of small groups. Firstly, this technique only functions in the context of heightened political awareness and intense pressure. This implies that criticism and self-criticism need to be strictly carried out in order to build up the necessary pressure to conform on the targeted individual. An intense political atmosphere within the small group is required to make the criticism credible and not allow those subject to it to treat it as a mere performance.

The second qualification concerns individual escape options and is closely related to the first one. If sufficient pressure is to be applied to an individual to comply with group regulations both in beliefs and behaviour, it is important for the individual not to have the possibility to escape, either physically or mentally. It is necessary for the group to be the primary social reference for the individual and it has to have its identity tied to its performance and status within the group. If an individual has an escape option in the form of other, more important social contacts that are defining for its view of itself and its identity, then the group will not be able to exert sufficient social pressure on an individual because it does not feel that it needs or wants to be part of the group. Similarly problematic is the access for the individual to outside information that contradicts the message of criticism or also ideological education. This is the case because, as Schein argues, “on matters of opinion, people tend to rely primarily on the opinions of others for determination of whether they themselves are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’” (Schein 1956, p. 153). Therefore, a closed informational system has to be maintained for criticism and self-criticism and any further-reaching thought reform to be effective (Lifton 1961; Singer and Ofshe 1990; P. Hu 2012).

Following the beginning of the policy of reform and opening up, this closed-off environment with intense psychological pressures was difficult to uphold. This means that ideological re-education as it was practiced under Mao lost its ability to exercise forceful psychological pressure. Scholars hence advocate a changing role of ideology for the Party and its relation with the Chinese people.

#### *The fate of ideology in post-Mao China*

The focus of scholarly analysis has shifted from Maoist to post-Mao China. Very generally, the field of political science studies on China broadened and many areas of research appeared, e.g. studies on different societal actors within China. Regarding ideology, this meant that it was not the primary focus

of scholarly research anymore. The scholars that did still study ideology significantly focused on the adaptation of the content of the CCP's ideological concepts. Additionally, some scholars also discussed purposes that ideology still fulfils for the Party, such as legitimation and the signalling of factional loyalty. However, more recently under Xi Jinping, ideology has become a more important focal point of scholarly analysis again. This was driven by Xi's Party rectification and ideological education campaigns. In the following, I will outline the topics of scholarly discussion on ideology in post-Mao China before pointing out the research gap that this thesis aims to fill.

Adaptation of ideological content and the issue of belief

A core topic of the study of ideology in post-Mao China is the changing content of the CCP's ideological concepts. Very generally, scholars analyse the genesis and contents of the ideological innovations of the respective leadership generations. For example, they discuss the basic elements of Deng Xiaoping Theory (e.g. Dittmer 1993), Jiang Zemin's Three Represents (e.g. Dickson 2006), Hu Jintao's Three for the People, Harmonious Society and Scientific Development (e.g. W. Lam 2006) and more recently the ideological contributions of Xi Jinping (e.g. Lam 2015; 2016; Garrick and Bennett 2015; Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2018) and they highlight the main contents of these adapted ideological concepts. In addition to the analysis of single ideological concepts of Chinese political leaders, scholars also identify more general themes underpinning these changes, such as, for example, the increasing incorporation of Confucian elements into official CCP ideology (Delury 2008; Noesselt 2015; Noesselt and Senghaas 2016), a reform of Leninist principles that Tsang terms "consultative Leninism" (Tsang 2009) or the link of ideological changes to underlying social and political conditions (X. Lu 1999). However, underlying these debates on adapted content of CCP ideology is always the issue that Chen calls the "fundamental-instrumental discrepancy—a process in which the linkage of the pursued policies with ideological tenets, though maintained in form, was gradually eroded" (F. Chen 1995, p. 5). Thus, in spite of ideological adaptations and revised content of the CCP's ideological principles, the basic issue of the relevance of the Party's ideology to peoples' daily lives and the issue of ideological content diverging from socio-economic realities is still prevalent.

Related to this problem, scholars also discuss how the CCP aims to turn its ideology into an ideationally dominant element again and adapt it to Chinese circumstances. Comparing the attempts at ideology-building in China and Russia, Chen argues that both countries are struggling to define an ideological basis for what he calls "authoritarian capitalist" regimes (C. Chen 2016). Although he sees China as better positioned for this than Russia, Chen still holds that both countries are far from a successful redefinition of their ideological bases. On the contrary, other scholars argue that the CCP has engaged largely successfully in a hegemonic project that allows for the Party to advance its adapted

and changed ideology (X. Su 2011). Such a hegemonic project involves traditional cultural elements as well, for example, when Zheng speaks of the CCP as an “organizational emperor” (Zheng 2010; 2020a).

However, the major issue of these adaptations of Party ideology is still the question in how far particularly Party members believe in the Party’s ideology. As Holbig indicates, “in the political science literature on contemporary China, ideology is mostly regarded as a dogmatic straightjacket to market reforms that has been worn out over the years of economic success, an obsolete legacy of the past waiting to be cast off in the course of the country’s transition toward capitalism” (Holbig 2013, p. 61). This diagnosis points to the argument of many scholars that Party members and cadres do not believe in the Party’s ideology anymore and that “ideology died” in post-Mao China. However, as part of these adaptations in light of the alleged bankruptcy of ideology, the crucial puzzle is how the Party attempts to recreate a form of ideology that it can offer to its members to believe in. The question is what is the purpose of Party ideology for the Party and how is it supposed to fulfil this purpose? I seek to contribute to answering these questions and to shed light on this puzzle. In the following, I first discuss scholarly views on the purpose of ideology for the Party.

Functions of ideology: Legitimacy and signalling factional loyalty

Beyond the development of the content of CCP ideology, some scholars also discuss the function of ideology in post-Mao China. In contrast to what ideology was seen as under Mao, the impact of ideology on behaviour does not appear in their analysis anymore. Rather, they focus on ideology’s role to serve as a means of legitimation and for signalling factional loyalties.

A main function that scholars in the post-Mao era attribute to ideology is the legitimation of CCP rule. In their view, the constant adaptation and reformulation of Party ideology plays a core role in it. For example, Holbig and Gilley argue that the innovativeness of the Party and its ability to reformulate Party ideology and reform itself from within represent an important claim to ideological legitimacy (Holbig and Gilley 2010b; Holbig 2006). As already pointed out above, Holbig analyses this innovativeness and redefinition with regard to the CCP’s concepts of the “Three Represents” and the “Three for the People”. In a similar sense, Bondes and Heep suggest that different frames contained in the CCP’s ideology serve as elements of political persuasion, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of the Party (Bondes and Heep 2013). The redefinition of ideology paired with the rewriting of history as a means of legitimation can also be found in large-scale propaganda events, such as, for example, the sixty-year anniversary celebrations of the People’s Republic of China in 2009 (Hwang and Schneider 2011). Scholars thus see the legitimating function of ideology—particularly socialist ideology—mainly in the Party’s capacity to innovate and adopt ideological principles to changing circumstances.

Nationalism is an additional ideational element that scholars discuss as having a legitimating function. Particularly to counter the fleeting function of economic performance as a legitimization strategy, scholars suggest that the nationalist element in Party ideology can serve to legitimise CCP rule as well because it equalises a patriotic love of the country with the Party-state and its ability to advance the nation's interests (Liao 2012). Zeng also sees patriotism and the national rejuvenation of China as an important legitimating element of what he calls "informal ideology" (Zeng 2016b). In his view, the main task of informal ideology, including patriotism, is to delegitimise liberal democracy and establish the CCP as the only political force capable of governing China. As both Schell and Delury as well as Mühlhahn point out (Schell and Delury 2013; Mühlhahn 2019), this narrative of rejuvenation has been a continuous intellectual trend and desire in China since at least the early twentieth century, although as Mühlhahn states, the official government line propagates "that China's rise is forty years old and began with the rule of Deng Xiaoping in 1978" (Mühlhahn 2019, p. 1). In other words, the CCP employs and attributes a long-existing desire for and narrative of rejuvenation and China's rise in order to bolster its legitimacy. However, nationalism is a double-edged sword as it can easily undermine social cohesion and turn against the Chinese Party-state (Holbig and Gilley 2010b). Although as an element of official ideology, it can serve to legitimise CCP rule, it can also easily backfire and jeopardise Party rule if the CCP is perceived as not properly defending China's national interests.

Regarding the function of ideology within the Party, some scholars also discuss ideology as a means for signalling factional loyalty of Party cadres. Analysing the use of ideological slogans in provincial Party-controlled magazines, Shih argues that performance in ideological campaigns in post-Mao China serves to enforce the factional bargain and signal loyalty to top leaders (Shih 2008). He holds that "those who go out of their way to aggrandize a particular leader suffer the social cost of being seen as a bootlicker" (Shih 2008, p. 1179). Furthermore, by committing to a political leader, they forego the possibility of joining another faction if their patron falls from power. Zeng, while accepting Shih's findings for the period of the early 2000s, argues that from the mid-2000s onwards, this function of ideology changed (Zeng 2016a). He proposes that ideological campaigns do not fulfil the function of identifying loyal followers anymore, but rather that their strategic task is to recruit new followers. The work of Shih and Zeng thus suggests that ideology can also play a role in factional politics. However, their studies focus on provincial Party elites, i.e. head of government and provincial Party chief, and thus allow only limited conclusions about other actors in the Party at lower levels in the hierarchy.

The return of ideology under Xi Jinping?

Since Xi Jinping came to power in late 2012, a renewed scholarly interest in Party ideology has arisen. This interest was fostered by Xi's new ideological contributions and his anticorruption and Party discipline campaign with an emphasis on ideological education. Scholars have analysed the contents



of Xi's ideological concepts, but also the ideological campaign that accompanied the anticorruption activities. They discuss both the shape and function of increased ideological education under Xi.

The Chinese Dream, the Four Comprehensives and the twelve Socialist Values propagated by the Xi regime are among the main ideological concepts that scholars focus on. Particularly the Chinese Dream as the centrepiece of Xi's ideological innovation has received scholarly attention. Brown identifies four main narratives underlying the Chinese Dream: a historical, a moral, an ideological and an aesthetic one (Brown 2018a). He suggests that these narratives provide a key to understanding the thoughts of Party leaders. At the same time, the Chinese Dream also promises to achieve the "great renaissance of the Chinese people" and build a strong and prosperous country by 2021 and 2049<sup>2</sup>, respectively (Lam 2015). It thereby capitalises on a long-existing and continuous intellectual trend in China that discusses and desires the rejuvenation of China and its rise to its historic status and power (Schell and Delury 2013; Mühlhahn 2019). On the negative side, however, the strong and explicit rejection of "Western values" as spelt out in the infamous Document No. 9 is part of the ideological project of the Xi administration as well (Economy 2018; S. Zhao 2016a), albeit in a negating manner. Because of Xi's far-reaching ambitions and his attempt to significantly contribute to the CCP's ideological concepts paired with the rejection of other influences, Mulvad even speaks of Xiism as a new hegemonic project (Mulvad 2019).

In addition to the contents of Xi's ideological project, scholars have also focused on his ideological campaign and the role that a renewed emphasis of ideological education can play for the Party more generally. They argue that the Party under Xi attempts to use ideology as a legitimating device (S. Zhao 2016a; 2016b) and to instil confidence in Chinese socialism and the leadership of the Party (Lam 2016). In addition, particularly Brown has strongly argued in favour of understanding the ideological campaign paired with the anticorruption campaign as a means of strengthening the Party (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova 2018; Brown 2018c).

Further zooming in, some scholars also discuss the impact of the Party's ideological concepts and the ideological campaign on the CCP's relations with its cadres. This scholarly interest is a relatively recent phenomenon and is directly connected to Xi's actions in this regard. For example, Pieke discusses the concept of Party spirit and how it can serve as a form of communist civil religion fostered by cadre education and tourism to revolutionary areas (Pieke 2018; 2020). While Pieke suggests a way of understanding Communist belief, both Sorace and Chen discuss ways of the Party to control Party

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<sup>2</sup> These two dates mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CCP (founded in 1921) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) (founded in 1949), respectively. By 2021, China is expected to have built a moderately prosperous society (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会) and by 2049, the country should be a fully modernised, strong and wealthy socialist country.

members' beliefs and behaviour and create attachment to the Party. Chen argues that the Party under Xi relies on a newly established ideological responsibility system that functions in tandem with performance evaluations and affects promotions of cadres (Xuelian Chen 2018). In addition to promotion-related control of ideological performance, the Party also relies on ex-post punishments, and, under Xi, it has revitalised the practice of televised confessions of cadres. According to Sorace, these serve to extract affect and foster the Party's control over emotional and ideational aspects of its members' lives (Sorace 2019). In conclusion, we can say that during the Xi era, scholars have begun to pay increasing attention to the contents and functions of ideology for the Party. At least tentatively, some scholars have also started studying ideology in the Party's relation with its own members and cadres.

*Ideology and the CCP: What we know and what we do not know*

What we know

From the discussion of scholarly work above, three large areas of research emerge. Firstly, for the Maoist period, what emerges from the literature is a diagnosed link between correct behaviour and correct beliefs. The link is visible both in how scholars such as Schurman and Steiner analyse ideology and also in the efforts at ideological indoctrination and thought reform under Mao.

Secondly, for the post-Mao period, significant scholarly work concentrates on how the CCP adapted its ideological concepts and reformulated them. Based on the logic of an ideological path dependency, scholars discuss new ideological concepts that different leadership generations of the CCP introduced and in how far they can serve to justify policy shifts. In the analysis of these ideological concepts, it becomes obvious that some CCP adaptations, and particularly their relationship with the socio-economic reality of China, appear to be stretching orthodox Marxist teachings to their limits.

Thirdly, scholarly work has analysed the recalibration of ideology as a means of legitimising CCP rule. Particularly ideological adaptation and innovation are important elements of this legitimising function of ideology. Additionally, they also study the use of ideology as a means of signalling factional loyalty. However, the discussion of ideological legitimacy mainly reflects the relationship between the CCP as a ruling party and those that it rules, i.e. the people of China.

What we do not know

One further aspect that we seem to know about the role of ideology in China is that most people do not believe in it anymore—including many Party members. However, two questions arise with regard to the alleged death of ideology. The first one is "is ideology really dead?". If we take into consideration how the Party handles ideology, the answer to this question should be negative. As it did in the Maoist era, in the post-Mao era, the Party also conducts ideological education campaigns for Party members. Additionally, the Party invests significant efforts and resources in educating particularly its members

and cadres. Furthermore, the Party until now argues that ideological atrophy was an important cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Shambaugh 2008a; Li Ruiying 7.3.2011; N.N. 20.05.2011). Therefore, from the point of view of Party rhetoric and the Party's activities to advance ideology and indoctrinate its members, we cannot assume that ideology is dead and entirely lacking purpose.

The second question related to the alleged death of ideology is "if ideology was really dead, would it matter?". At least for Party members and cadres, the answer to this question is probably positive. The Party depends on its members and cadres to govern and implement its policies in a vast and extremely diverse country such as China (Koss 2018). If these Party agents do not have any common set of values or beliefs that they are attached to, the dangers of the country degenerating into a kleptocracy are high (Pei 2016). If the only link attaching Party members and cadres to the Party were material benefits and the prospect of career advancement, kleptocratic tendencies and plundering of state assets would be an overarching tendency overshadowing everything else. However, so far this is not the case in China (Wedeman 2012; Ang 2020). Therefore, we can assume that ideational elements do play a role for Party members and that the Party offers a system of ideas that is sufficiently convincing for Party members to allow the Party to govern and prevent at least the worst outgrowths of decay.

What we do not understand well, however, is the role of ideology in this relationship between the Party and its members. In other words, the question is what are the purposes of ideology in the Party's relationship with its members and cadres and how does the Party want ideology to work? We do not have a clear understanding of why the Party still considers ideology to be important in its relation with its members and cadres, and we do not understand either how it wants ideology to shape this relationship. Analysing the purpose of ideology from the point of view of the Party will allow us to gain a better understanding of why the Party deems ideology to be relevant and how it wants it to foster its relations with its members. This is the main guiding research question of this thesis.

How we can understand the Party's ideological messages towards Party members

The very basic assumption of this thesis is that ideology matters. Based on taking the Party's ideological messaging seriously, I argue that the Party, also in post-Mao China, still identifies a link between beliefs and behaviour. The Party diagnoses incorrect beliefs as the basis for incorrect behaviour and, for example, argues that corruption among Party members is a consequence of ideological issues. Furthermore, and even more crucially, the Party connects ideological beliefs to attachment and loyalty to the Party. In this logic, organisational issues within the Party arise due to ideological problems and the Party officially argues that ideological education is an important and appropriate means of fixing such issues. The important question resulting from this is how the Party aims to implement the

function of ideology in this sense, i.e. how it wants to influence Party members' behaviour and particularly ensure loyalty to the Party.

The core argument of this thesis is that ideological work of the Party strives to influence the social identity of its members. In social identity and self-categorisation theory of group processes, social identity and the activation of thereof is theorised as triggering behaviour in conformity with group norms<sup>3</sup>. I therefore argue that ideological messaging of the Party towards its members aims to foster a social identity that attaches Party members to the Party. The core of this social identity is the Party. It is not primarily concerned with individual belief, for example in Marxist economic theory. Rather, it fosters the belief in and acceptance of the central role of the Party for individual Party members. This Party social identity consists of a myth of the Party, a story of heroism and greatness, fostering an elite identity.

To make this social identity work in practice, it is necessary to make a social identity accessible and increase the salience of this identity. Self-categorisation theory assumes that humans have multiple social identities and one can be made salient at the expense of others in order to foster behaviour in line with group norms. In the case of the Party, I firstly argue that Party identity is made relevant and accessible through a process where the Party takes over alternative social identity elements and connects them to itself. These are traditional cultural elements, such as a long historic tradition of just leadership and a narrative of the Party as a benevolent father figure. Secondly, the stimulation of Party identity to make it salient takes place through processes of constant stimulation of group membership as well as de-individuation. In the case of the Party, I hold that with the help of impersonalised supervision narratives and formalised language and rituals, the Party attempts to merge individual Party members into a larger social group that is the Party. It thereby increases the salience of their social identity that ties them to the Party.

The last issue in this chain of social identity and self-categorisation theory is the impact on behaviour. Self-categorisation theory assumes that a salient social identity fosters behavioural conformity with group norms. In the case of the Party, I argue that the core behavioural norm for Party members is the acceptance of the leading role of the Party. For this I suggest a concept that I call "strategic vagueness". It entails that ideological concepts and related behavioural norms within the Party are sufficiently vague and ambiguous to be applied in a discretionary manner. Here, I argue that the overall interpreting authority and exercise of discretion rests with the Party while leaving significant wriggle room for Party members to tailor their personal beliefs and behaviour around these vague norms. In my argument, the overall norm to comply with is not a particular behavioural

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the theoretical assumptions underlying this thesis see next subchapter.

requirement or belief in a concrete ideological concept. Rather, it is to fully accept and submit to the interpreting authority of the Party.

Summing up, I therefore argue in this thesis that the Party's ideological message to Party members is "all about the Party", rather than "all about communism". It is the Party that is at the core of Party members' social identity and it is the Party that is in charge of interpreting and enforcing vague behavioural rules and norms. While this focus on and importance of the Party is distinctively Leninist, other elements of Marxist ideology, e.g. Marxist-Leninist economic theory including the importance of state ownership of the means of production, are moved to the background. Although Marxist-Leninist rhetoric still appears in the Party's ideological messaging, it is part of a formalised canon of language and of strategically vague Party norms. I thus suggest that the ideological message of the Party to its members is still an important one, albeit one that is slightly different from what one might expect. In the following, I present the basic arguments of social identity and self-categorisation theory underlying this thesis.

#### Ideology and social identity formation

The Party is concerned with the behaviour of its members and with their loyalty to the Party organisation. Such issues of group cohesion are an important concern of social psychology. Generally speaking, group cohesion is often understood as "an indicator of an individual's desire to remain a member of a group" (Evans and Dion 2012, p. 690). If this condition is fulfilled, groups are seen as overall performing better than in the opposite case (Evans and Dion 2012). However, as Pescosolido and Saavedra argue, cohesion is a multilayered and complex concept that can include many different elements (Pescosolido and Saavedra 2012). They therefore recommend diversifying it and applying sub-concepts, such as, identity, mood or belongingness. For the analysis here, I rely on a theoretical approach to social identity formation.

#### *Psychological group membership*

At the core of social identity and self-categorization theory is the understanding that group membership is cognitive rather than physical. The founder of social identity theory, Henri Tajfel, postulates that social group membership is purely psychological and that "the essential criteria for group membership [...] are that the individuals concerned define themselves and are defined by others as members of a group" (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 376). This understanding of a group implies that group membership is not limited to small groups where individuals are in direct face-to-face contact with each other. Rather, individuals can be part of very large social groups simply by identifying themselves as part of that group. For example, an individual can define itself to be part of a social group based on gender considerations, race, nationality or also more profane characteristics such as

followership of a particular sports club. In this understanding, social groups do only constitute themselves through a cognitive idea of group membership.

Connected to the understanding of group membership as being psychological is the so-called minimal group paradigm. The minimal group paradigm assumes that individuals can be ascribed to groups that are merely psychological and that this group membership will lead to positive ingroup and negative outgroup discrimination (Spears 2011; Treppe and Loy 2017). In other words, the minimal group paradigm presumes that when individuals are separated into groups even based on entirely meaningless and arbitrary criteria such as flipping a coin, they will still show discriminatory group behaviour. For example, they are willing to distribute points in a psychological experiment more to their ingroup rather than to the outgroup (Hornsey 2008). This behaviour underlines that group membership is purely psychological and individuals act in a discriminatory manner only on the basis of their perceived group membership.

The main goal of social identity theory is to explain intergroup behaviour and processes of intergroup discrimination. The basic assumption of the theory is that individuals are members of psychological groups and they gain positive value or self-esteem from this membership by comparing their ingroup positively with other groups (Spears 2011). In the words of Tajfel and Turner, “the aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimensions” (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 378). The social identity model thereby wants to explain why people discriminate against outgroups and also why they strive for changing and improving the status of their respective ingroup. This can be done through social competition with other groups or through social creativity of redefining the own group in a more positive manner (Tajfel and Turner 2004). However, what the social identity theory does not primarily focus on is intragroup behaviour, i.e. the question of how individuals behave inside groups and particularly why they tend to behave in line with group behavioural expectations and stereotypes. This is what self-categorisation theory seeks to explain to which I turn now.

### *Self-categorisation theory*

Self-categorisation theory shares the basic assumptions of social identity theory. Like social identity theory, self-categorisation theory assumes that group membership is a psychological process and it also accepts the minimal group paradigm. Additionally, it also concurs with the idea that group membership leads to discriminatory processes. However, the main concern of self-categorization theory is not to explain these intergroup processes, but rather to understand intragroup behaviour. In the words of Turner, the original theorist of self-categorisation theory, the goal is to explain “how individuals are able to act as a group at all” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 42). Here, self-categorisation theory

wants to comprehend why and under what circumstances individuals comply with ingroup norms and expectations and can effectively act as a group.

#### Self-categorisation and social identity

One of the most essential assumptions of self-categorisation theory is that an individual's self-concept consists of different elements. Turner assumes that the most basic levels of abstraction of the self-concept are what he calls the "superordinate level of the self as human being", the "intermediate level of ingroup-outgroup categorizations based on social similarities and differences between human beings that define one as a member of certain social groups and not others" and lastly the "subordinate level of personal self-categorizations based on differentiations between oneself as a unique individual and other ingroup members that define one as a specific individual person" (Turner et al. 1987, p. 45). In other words, a person can categorise him- or herself as a human being, a member of a particular social group and as an individual, depending on the relevant point of comparison. In this logic, if compared to persons that are not defined as part of a particular social group, an individual will tend to see himself as a member of his social ingroup. If he compares himself to other individuals in his ingroup, however, he is more likely to self-categorise himself as an individual person.

Two important clarifications of the idea of self-categorisation are in order here. First, self-categorisation theory does not assume that an individual can only be part of one single social group. On the contrary, the self-concept of individuals consists of multiple social group memberships that are based on different comparative processes. For example, an individual can categorise himself as part of the ingroup that is the Party. At the same time, membership in the ingroup of businesspeople can also be part of his social identity. Both categorisations refer to slightly different ingroups and define themselves in relation to different outgroups. They thus also include divergent behavioural expectations and stereotypes.

The second clarification refers to the variation between social and individual elements of a person's self-concept. These categories for self-categorisation that Turner describes are not two diametrically opposed ends of a scale. Rather, all elements of self-categorisation can be present in a person at the same time and affect his or her behaviour simultaneously (Treppe and Loy 2017). In other words, an individual always has individual character traits and experiences in addition to various (cognitive) social group memberships that influences his or her self-concept and thus also behaviour. Therefore, self-categorisation does not mean fully abandoning parts of one's identity at the expense of others.

The idea that individuals have various options for self-categorisation at all times leads to the question when a particular element of self-concept is relevant to an individual. Turner assumes that

self-categorisations can be activated at different times and in different situations—in his words, they are “switched on” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 44). This “switching on” of an element of an individual’s self-concept is dependent on the situation that the individual finds itself in—it is made salient. For example, in the example mentioned above, both the “Party” element of a person’s social identity can be “switched on”, i.e. made salient, and also the “businessperson” part of a person’s identity. The exact procedures of how elements of identity are made salient will be discussed below.

Before turning to the question of how the salience of a self-categorisation is increased, I want to discuss what happens if a particular social identity is made salient. Turner argues that the increase in salience of an element of a person’s social identity leads to a process he terms “depersonalization”. In his words, “depersonalization refers to the process of ‘self-stereotyping’ whereby people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their individual differences from others” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 50). While the term “depersonalization” sounds like a way of depriving a person of his individual characteristics and subjecting him to totalitarian control, this is not what Turner means. Rather, it indicates that an individual’s “self-perception is dominated by social identity” (Trepte and Loy 2017, p. 7). In other words, in one particular situation, an individual categorises himself as part of a group—a social identity is salient—and he thus perceives himself in a self-stereotyped way, i.e. he assigns to himself the characteristics that are assigned to the group both by himself and others. This depersonalisation process is key to understanding group phenomena because it directs attitudes and behaviours of a person who is ascribing to the salient social identity (Hornsey 2008, p. 209). The process is entirely reversible and a particular self-categorisation can be overridden by another self-categorisation at any time. It can also be reactivated as well, i.e. self-categorisations fluctuate back and forth between different elements.

The salience of social identity

In order to influence individuals’ behaviour in line with group expectations and stereotypes, a social identity has to be made salient. Because divergent elements of the self-concept can be salient at different times, the salience of a particular element of the self-concept depends on the situation an individual finds himself in, or, in other words, on the “stimuli” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 47) or “cues” (Trepte and Loy 2017, p. 7) that the individual receives. In Turner’s theoretical argument, this process follows a principle of meta-contrast where “within any given frame of reference [...], any collection of stimuli is more likely to be categorized as an entity [...] to the degree that the differences between those stimuli on relevant dimensions of comparison (intra-class differences) are perceived as less than the differences between that collection and other stimuli (inter-class differences)” (Turner et al. 1987, pp. 46f.). In other words, this means that a particular social identity is salient when the outward stimuli



an individual receives reduce the differences between him and fellow ingroup members while at the same time increasing those between him and outgroup members. Because these outward stimuli can change depending on the outward situation, different elements of an individual's self-concept do become salient.

Oakes further enlarges on the concept of salient social categories and introduces the concepts of fit and accessibility (Oakes 1987). The concept of accessibility refers to how central or important a particular social category is to an individual. The more important and central a social category, the more likely external stimuli activate it. The second concept, fit, Oakes defines as "the degree to which observed similarities and differences between people (or their actions) are perceived as correlated with a division within social categories" (Oakes 1987, p. 130). That means that a social category "fits" if it aligns with the particular stimuli that an individual is subject to and best categorises the similarities and differences that such a stimulus refers to. To connect this idea to this study, for the Party it is not only important to create a "Party identity" for its members. At the same time, it also needs to attempt to ensure that Party social identity occupies a central place in the conglomerate of social categorisations of its members. Furthermore, it has to constantly offer forceful stimuli to remind its members of this "Party identity" and make sure that the stimuli maximise the differences between the "Party identity" and other possible social categorisations so that the "Party identity" has a higher probability of being salient.

In addition to this understanding of accessibility and salience of social categories, Reicher et al. discuss deindividuation manipulations as a further means of increasing the salience of a social identity. They introduce what they call the social identity model of deindividuation (Reicher, Spears, and Postmes 1995). They criticise the assumption of other deindividuation studies that assume that emerging individuals in a group and thereby deindividuating them leads to anonymity and thus anti-group and antisocial behaviour. Reicher et al. hold that this understanding of deindividuation does not explain experimental evidence where individuals included in groups do actually comply with group norms and engage in pro-group behaviour. Thus, based on self-categorisation theory, they suggest that individuals, when becoming part of a group, alter their self-categorisation from the individual to the social level and thus comply more strongly with group requirements. In the words of Reicher et al., "in becoming part of a group, individuals do not lose all sense of self, rather they shift from the personal to the social level of identification" (Reicher, Spears, and Postmes 1995, p. 177). Reicher et al. thus assume that deindividuating individuals can actually increase the salience of their social identity and thus tie them to the group more strongly. This theoretical assumption is experimentally confirmed, for example, by Spears et al. in an experiment of computer-based communication (Spears, Lea, and Lee 1990). Thus, it appears that deindividuating individuals, i.e. decreasing stimuli that identify them as

individuals and increasing stimuli that identify them as part of a group, will lead to a more salient social identity and hence more compliance with group expectations and norms.

One important clarification regarding this mechanism is in order here. As already pointed out above, deindividuation has nothing to do with totalitarian indoctrination and with depriving a person of his or her individuality or identity. It simply refers to powerful stimulations that induce the social element of a person's identity and leads to the self-categorisation as a member of a particular group and with the behavioural expectations and stereotypes attached to it. The deindividuation manipulations that Reicher et al. talk about in their social identity model of deindividuation do not fall into the category of totalitarian mechanisms of governance either. On the contrary, they, for example, refer to visual cues that make people indistinguishable from other group members, thereby turning them into stereotypical group members rather than individuals. This could for example be a particular set of clothes that visually turns people into stereotypical representatives of a group, e.g. a uniform. This means that deindividuation manipulations are a common strategy in many groups and organisations to strengthen a social identity and thereby increase group cohesion.

Applying self-categorisation theory to ideology

In social psychology, self-categorisation theory is applied in very different contexts in order to explain diverse group phenomena. To start with, Hogg applies the concept of self-categorisation to the understanding of group cohesiveness (Hogg 1987). For him, group cohesiveness rests on a shared and salient positive group identity that leads to people's positive perception of ingroup members and negative perception of outgroup members. A further group phenomenon that is explained with the help of self-categorisation theory is group polarization. Wetherell argues that views and opinions among group members tend to cluster around the most stereotypical position within a group rather than fall in line with a common middle ground (Wetherell 1987). A very important area of application of self-categorisation theory is also the field of crowd behaviour (Reicher 1984; 1987). According to Reicher, it allows for explaining why people in large crowds behave in line with certain behavioural requirements and standards even though they find themselves in a group of persons that they do not know and with whom they have not pre-arranged any behavioural standards and expectations. More recently, self-categorisation theory has also been applied to questions related to media consumption, for example, in order to explain how media consumption influences stereotypes and bias (Mastro and Kopacz 2006; Trepte, Schmitt, and Dienlin 2018).

In this thesis, I apply self-categorisation theory to the Party. I understand the Party as a psychological group that offers a very distinctive social identity to its members. This identity distinguishes Party members from non-members and elevates them to a form of elite position. The social identity is made accessible and salient for Party members both by ensuring that the Party

occupies a central role for Party members and also through linguistic processes of deindividuation. Self-categorisation theory thereby offers a model for understanding how the Party uses ideological messaging to its members to create attachment to and a degree of cohesiveness within the Party.

Based on self-categorisation theory, my core argument is that ideological messaging of the Party manipulates Party members' social identity. I argue that the social identity that is offered to Party members in the Party's ideological messaging centres on the Party itself and orthodox Marxist ideological concepts are only one element and tool within this social identity. Throughout the thesis, I will discuss Marxist concepts where they relate to the Party's social identity, but it is not the goal of this thesis to discuss the Chinese adaptations of Marxism since the early days of the CCP. Other scholars have done very important work on this topic and there is a very rich body of literature. Rather, the contribution that I intend to make is to offer a fresh perspective on why and how ideology still matters to the Party in its relations with Party members.

## Methods

The main goal of this thesis is to study the communication of the Party with its members in order to understand the role that ideology still plays for the Party. For this, I selected a set of material for qualitative and supplementary quantitative analysis that primarily reflects the communication of the Party with its members. In the following, I first present the dataset before outlining in greater detail the methodological approach.

### *Selection of material*

The primary source material for this thesis, to a significant extent, consists of Party-internal material. There is a considerable number of Party-internal documents and publications that are issued by different Party organisations and departments. Such documents and internal news bulletins "circulate only to regime insiders" (Dimitrov 2017, p. 121) and thus have a highly restricted audience. A prominent example of Party-internal news and publications is *Neibu cankao* (内部参考) that Schoenhals described as "the most important controlled-circulation information bulletin in the People's Republic of China" that "contains domestic news reports intended exclusively for China's political elite" (Schoenhals 1985, p. 65). Newsletters and briefings that are issued by Party organisations at the central level are also supposed to have an informational character for their readers and report on current trends and developments. As Yan and Zhao point out, they, for example, "contain guiding ideas on the work of their own departments and systems; advanced experiences and typical examples for falling behind; newly emerging situations; [and] internal discussions on new problems and their solutions" (Yan and Zhao 1993, p. 82). Additionally, confidential inner-Party material also serves as a means of communicating policies and important speeches of leaders and as

a means of internal political communication more generally, “transmit[ing] a situation from subordinate to superior, and from superior to subordinate” (Yan and Zhao 1993, p. 75). In other words, Party-internal material is a form of political communication and information exchange within the Party that is distributed along restricted channels. It can thereby reflect messages that the Party sends to its members and cadres and the way these messages are communicated. This internal communicative nature of the material makes it the best-possible source for understanding the role ideology plays in the Party’s relationship with its members and for analysing the messages the Party wants to send to them.

The Party-internal material used in this thesis was extracted in archival work from the NLA. Because Party-internal material is by definition internal and not directly publicly available, I relied on this document collection from the NLA archives. The collection is not exhaustive in the sense that it fully covers all time periods and all possible materials. Even though important publications are available in a relatively comprehensive manner, there are obviously gaps and some issues of Party journals are missing. However, the overall value of the material outweighs these issues. The dataset for this thesis covers the period of 1978 to 2006 and it consists of 869 articles. They were mostly published in the Party publications *Party Style and Party Discipline* (*Dangfeng yu dangji* 党风与党纪), *Selected Restricted Material* (*Neican xuanbian* 内参选编) and *Reference Material on the Research of National History* (*Guoshi yanjiu cankao ziliao* 国史研究参考资料) and thus in publications that mainly address Party members. *Party Style and Party Discipline* is a bimonthly magazine issued by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and *Neican Xuanbian* is a selection of articles from the above-mentioned *Neibu cankao* (Yan and Zhao 1993). The tables of contents of the volumes were searched manually and all documents extracted that—based on their headlines—appeared to be relevant to the topic in question. This resulted in a corpus of material with articles on topics of political discipline and ideology.

Because such Party-internal material in library archives is not comprehensive, I also had to rely on publicly available material. This is the case particularly for the period after 2006. In order to still be able to mainly analyse the Party’s communication with its own members, I focussed on publicly available Party material the audience of which are mainly Party members. These were the Party magazines *Qiushi* (求是 *Seeking Truth*) and *Hongqi Wengao* (红旗文稿 *Red Flag*) as well as written and televised confessions of Party cadres<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, I also considered Party regulations, such as, for

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<sup>4</sup> A more detailed list of the sources and detailed information on the length of the corpus can be found in the appendix.

example, the 2018 discipline regulation, published on various Party-related websites, but these were collected in a more erratic snowball sampling system rather than systematically.

In addition to the material for qualitative analysis, I also collected a sample for supporting quantitative analysis. This quantitative sample consists of publications and work reports of the Central Committee and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection that is responsible for policing the behaviour of Party members. Furthermore, it also includes additional material for the post-2012 period also mainly collected from Party websites that mainly address Party members, such as for example *Xuexi Qiangguo* (学习强国 *Study a Strong Country*). Because this sample is relatively small for quantitative text analysis and not fully representative, it can only supplement the qualitative analysis. It is thus only a starting point for further, more systematic work that could be done in this regard.

One last point I would like to raise with regard to the selection of analysed material is the limited access to print sources. For the sample for the post-2006 period, a lot of material is available online either on Party website or in respective databases, such as the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). However, the articles for example in the Party magazine *Qiushi* on CNKI are only available for a period until 2013. More recent articles are blocked. Therefore, I gathered articles on the website of the magazine, but similarly, not all articles are accessible either. As a result, the systematic sample is not as encompassing as it should ideally be and I also had to rely on more unsystematic sampling, for example of Party regulations. These limitations make the sample of inner-Party documents analysed for the period before 2006 even more valuable because it provides access to a large set of so far under-utilised inner-Party documents.

### *Qualitative methods*

The main method of qualitative analysis was text analysis. Here, I follow Hermann's (Hermann 2008) steps of content analysis for extracting meaning from communication. This communication is the communication between the Party organisation and its members expressed in written material directed mainly at these Party members. The goal is to identify the messages of the Party embedded in its communication and to understand what ideological content is transmitted and how. In other words, I am interested in the "what" of the Party's ideological messaging as well as the "how" of transmitting these ideological messages, i.e. more linguistic features of how the Party communicates with its members. Thus, the coding and interpretative strategy outlined below took place in two steps. First, I systematically single out the messages of the Party, i.e. the "what" of communication with the help of qualitative content analysis. Second, based on the coded text elements, I extracted strategies of messaging, i.e. the "how" of communication.

The main approach to qualitative content analysis is an inductive one. Following the logic of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; 1979), I inductively generated a set of categories for my content analysis that is based on the analysed material. Drawing on Mayring's (2015) discussion of techniques of qualitative content analysis, I developed a set of categories and revised the categories in feedback loops throughout the analysis<sup>5</sup>. The unit of analysis to be coded in a category could range from a phrase as the smallest unit to multiple paragraphs as the largest unit. I conducted the coding process with the coding software MaxQDA (*MaxQDA - The Art of Data Analysis* (version MaxQDA 2018.2.0) 2018).

For interpreting the coded material, I relied on the interpretative processes of summary and structuration as suggested by Mayring (2015). First, relevant elements of the material were summarised in the categories of the coding process. This provides an overview of the messages of the Party to its members in Party discipline documents. However, this can only be a first step and starting point for further analysis because it is only descriptive in nature. Therefore, in a second step, I structured and interpreted the coded material according to how ideology functions in the Party's messages in Party discipline documents. In other words, I moved from the concrete question of "what do they (the Party) say" to "how is their message supposed to function" or "what impact is it supposed to have on Party members". The analysis of "how" does obviously involve the content of "what do they say", but it also includes more linguistic factors, such as what words and phrases are used, how (well) are they defined etc. Whereas the "what" of Party messages is of course an important starting point, the "how" of its functioning is more important because it allows to answer the question of "why does the Party still make such an effort to promote ideology among its members".

In addition to the qualitative content analysis that forms the main part of the analysis, I also undertook supplementary quantitative analysis to triangulate some results from the qualitative analysis and deepen the analysis with regard to specific features of language. I now turn to the methodological considerations for this part.

#### *Quantitative methods*

In addition to the primarily qualitative approach, I also conducted supplementary quantitative content analysis relying on Adolphs' discussion of techniques for electronic text analysis (Adolphs 2006). This was mainly used for triangulation and for better understanding of linguistic features of Party discipline messaging. For example, I conducted concordance analyses of selected terminology. I chose terminology for concordance analysis that appeared particularly important or meaningful during the qualitative analysis. For example, for terms that were frequent or unexpected, I conducted a

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<sup>5</sup> The codebook can be found in the appendix.

concordance analysis in order to determine the greater context in which they were used and understand better what message is connected with these phrases. An example of this is the term *peiyang* (培养 to nurture, to educate) appearing frequently in confession documents.

Additionally, I conducted frequency analysis of words and phrases in the chosen material. Frequency analyses can provide a better understanding of overall characteristics and topics of a particular set of texts. For example, for this thesis I conducted frequency analyses in the form of word clouds of single words. This method makes it possible to visualise the most frequently appearing words in a text and to discover basic patterns. Additionally, I also conducted frequency analyses of longer phrases to determine whether there are commonly used phrases and what these phrases are. The repeated use of longer phrases points to certain topics importantly appearing in a set of texts and is also an indication of repetitiveness.

When conducting frequency analyses of words in a corpus of texts, it is important to apply a stopword list to this text material. Stopword lists are lists of words that frequently appear in a particular language and that usually have a grammatical function but carry no meaning. In English, this could, for example, be articles like “a”, “an” or “the” that have a grammatical function and will very probably appear very frequently in a text but do not have meaning for the content of the text. In Chinese, this could, for example, be the character “的” (*de*) that has a grammatical function as an attributive particle but does not carry meaning in itself. To exclude such words from a frequency count in order to achieve meaningful results, I applied a stopword list. This thesis uses the baidu stopword list (Baidu n.d.) that I further expanded to include, for example, punctuation marks<sup>6</sup>.

Regarding the material for quantitative analysis overall, it was important that it was already available in machine-readable format or was made machine-readable. Thus, as discussed above, I mainly relied on publicly accessible material from the internet. Additionally, I also added a small set of scanned archive documents that were made machine readable with the help of optical character recognition (OCR)<sup>7</sup>. In order to prepare the material for quantitative text analysis, the Chinese texts still had to be segmented into words. For this, I used the software *Jieba* (2013), written in the programming language python<sup>8</sup>.

### *Methodological limitations*

This thesis focusses on document-based analysis as the main research method. This analysis can shed light on the Party’s ways of communication and on the purposes of ideology for the Party. However,

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<sup>6</sup> The full stopword list as used here can be found in the appendix.

<sup>7</sup> I used Abby Fine Reader as a software for OCR.

<sup>8</sup> The python code for operating jieba can be found in the appendix.

this methodological approach also has obvious limitations and some questions cannot be answered in this manner. Rather, answering these questions would require a fieldwork-based methodology. Two problems, in particular, cannot be addressed through documentary research. First is the question of why individuals choose to join the Party. The second question concerns the “recipient side” of ideology, i.e. how Party members and cadres perceive and react to the Party’s ideological narratives.

The first question that this thesis does not intend to answer is why individuals choose to join the Party. Scholars often argue that Party members only join the Party because they are hoping for improved career options, for example in the public service, or because they want to rely on political networks within the Party to improve their business opportunities and their personal wealth (Hillman 2014; X. Ma 2016; Koss 2018). However, some scholars also propose that aspiring Party members have to negotiate difficult and contradictory moral messages because they are joining an organisation with high official moral aspirations (Hansen 2013). These are valid arguments and I do not intend to challenge them in this thesis. I acknowledge that personal reasons of people for joining the Party can be very individual and also focus on private interests. Yet, this topic is not part of this thesis and it cannot be addressed with the methodological focus chosen here.

On the contrary, I suggest that the question of why people join the Party does not matter for the focus of this thesis. My analysis is concerned with processes of group formation and the impact ideology has on that *after* an individual has joined the Party. I am interested in why the Party stresses ideology and ideological education so much and how ideology works to contribute to social identity formation for Party members. This is a process that takes place after joining the Party and is not primarily concerned with why people join the Party.

The second limitation of my analysis is its focus on the “supplier side” of ideology. I analyse the ideological messaging emanating from the Party as it can be seen in Party documents—both Party-internal and public. However, the analysis does not consider the “recipient side”, i.e. Party members. I do not study how individual Party members perceive the Party’s ideology and what they think about it. Additionally, I do not study either what precisely individual Party members believe.

The questions raised above cannot be answered in this thesis due to methodological limitations. They would require conducting extensive fieldwork in China and interviews with Party members and cadres. However, in the current heightened political atmosphere under the Xi Jinping administration, such fieldwork and access to Party members and cadres who are willing to speak openly and truthfully about sensitive issues is difficult or even impossible to gain. Additionally, questions of research ethics have to be considered as well. Particularly when researching sensitive topics, it is important to consider the safety of potential interview partners and informants. Due to



reasons of access and safety, I thus only rely on documentary analysis for this project. Although this methodological focus implies obvious limitations, documentary research still allows to analyse the “supplier side” of ideology and understand the purposes that ideology fulfils for the Party.

#### Outline of the thesis

Based on the argument sketched above, the thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter three argues that the link between thought and behaviour of the Mao era is still very much visible in contemporary Party discussions. I show that the Party still perceives ideological flaws to be important causes of two main behavioural issues among its members: corruption and loyalty to the Party.

Following the argument that the Party believes that ideology and behaviour are closely connected, the remaining part of the thesis explains how the Party wants to ideologically influence its members to achieve good behaviour—particularly loyalty. Chapter four introduces the Party social identity that the Party offers to its members. It shows how the Party raises its members to an elite status by creating a myth of the Party. Chapters five and six deal with processes of making this social identity accessible and salient. Chapter five discusses how the Party refers to traditional cultural narratives to present itself as a caring and nurturing entity and alludes to traditional leadership narratives, thereby increasing the accessibility of this social identity. Chapter six outlines how formalised language and an impersonalised supervision narrative serve as a means of deindividuation, thereby fostering the salience of the Party social identity. Afterwards, I turn to the link between social identities and behaviour. Chapter seven discusses how the Party relies on strategic vagueness to establish itself as a supreme interpreting authority. Chapter eight concludes.

### 3 Linking belief and behaviour: Why ideology matters

Ideology matters. The Party makes significant efforts to indoctrinate its members and cadres in Party ideology and it invests time and resources in ideological campaigns and ideological study and education. For example, Party schools do, among more practical skills, also educate Party members in the Party's ideological concepts and principles (Pieke 2009; C. Lee 2015). Additionally, the Party recently published a new five-year plan for cadre training that includes ideological training (Dotson 31.12.2019; Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019) and it has dedicated guidelines for managing the education of Party members (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019). Furthermore, it recently re-emphasised inner-Party democratic life meetings that also include ideological study and debates (Dotson 29.01.2020).

The main question is why the Party considers ideology so important for its relations with its members. What purpose is ideology supposed to have for the Party? In order to be able to understand this better, we have to first understand what the Party itself thinks about ideology. In the words of Sorace, we should "listen to how it [the Party] is diagnosing itself" (Sorace 2016, p. 62). Discerning the self-diagnosis of the Party provides us with a first understanding why the Party still considers ideology to be so important.

Listening to the self-diagnosis of the Party is the main goal of this chapter. It argues that the presumption of a link between beliefs and behaviour that was described in the last chapter for Maoist China is still existent. In the eyes of the Party, the core behavioural problems that it is facing are corruption and issues of loyalty and commitment of Party members. The Party assumes that these are significantly caused by individual incorrect beliefs and incorrect beliefs that infect the Party from the outside. The main approach that the Party suggests for dealing with these issues is the correction of ideological beliefs and education of Party members and cadres. This chapter discusses the findings from qualitative content analysis and outlines in detail the concept of the belief-behaviour presumption.

The connection between beliefs and behaviour in post-Mao China

In the eyes of the Party, beliefs and behaviour are closely linked. For the Party, incorrect thoughts, i.e. ideological flaws, are problems in themselves and should be improved and corrected. However, at the same time, incorrect beliefs cause problematic behaviour as well. Such behaviour includes individual issues such as corruption but also the unity of and loyalty to the Party. In the eyes of the Party, incorrect beliefs lead to incorrect behaviour and they negatively influence the Party's unity in thought. Additionally, what the Party considers to be incorrect beliefs can also create alternative foci of loyalty for Party members and is thus an organisational issue for the Party as well.

Scholarly analysis of Party members' behaviour in post-Mao China does not share the Party's pronounced analytical emphasis on ideology. It is largely focussed on corruption and scholars see mostly systemic issues as reasons for problematic behaviour (e.g. Z. He 2000; Manion 2004; W. Chan 2004; H. S. Chan and Gao 2008; C. Wu 2016). Pei, for example, argues that "Our research identifies the institutional flaws of the Leninist party-state, not the moral failings of its members, as the root cause of regime decay" (Pei 2016, p. 217). In scholarly work, ideology does not play a major role for understanding the behaviour of Party members.

What is the problem? Party members' behaviour

In terms of problematic behaviour of its members, the Party mainly identifies two areas of behaviour: material corruption and loyalty to the Party. For the Party, corruption is a problem because it damages the Party's legitimacy as well as the successful implementation of its political goals. It thus directly impacts on the Party's ability to govern. The problem of loyalty in the eyes of the Party manifests itself in the existence of alternative beliefs and foci of loyalty among Party members. These directly impact upon the organisational coherence of the Party and are therefore an immediate threat to its governing ability as well.

### *Corruption*

Material corruption is a problem that has accompanied the Party since the early days of the People's Republic and that significantly worsened since the beginning of economic reforms. Already under Mao, corruption was a problem, for example in the form of the misuse of state resources (Lü 2000; Q. Fang and Li 2019). However, after the beginning of economic reforms, corruption worsened significantly (Wedeman 2004) and bribery became more prominent (Ko and Weng 2012). New forms of corruption developed as the reforms progressed, such as, for example, corruption in the stock market, real estate or in macroeconomic management (T. Gong 1997), collective corruption (T. Gong 2002; Shieh 2005), transnational corruption (T. Gong 2006) or the sale of offices (Ren and Du 2008; Pei 2016). In the eyes of the CCP, corrupt behaviour among Party members is particularly problematic for two reasons. It damages Party legitimacy as well as the CCP's ability to implement its political goals, thereby negatively impacting upon its governing capacity.

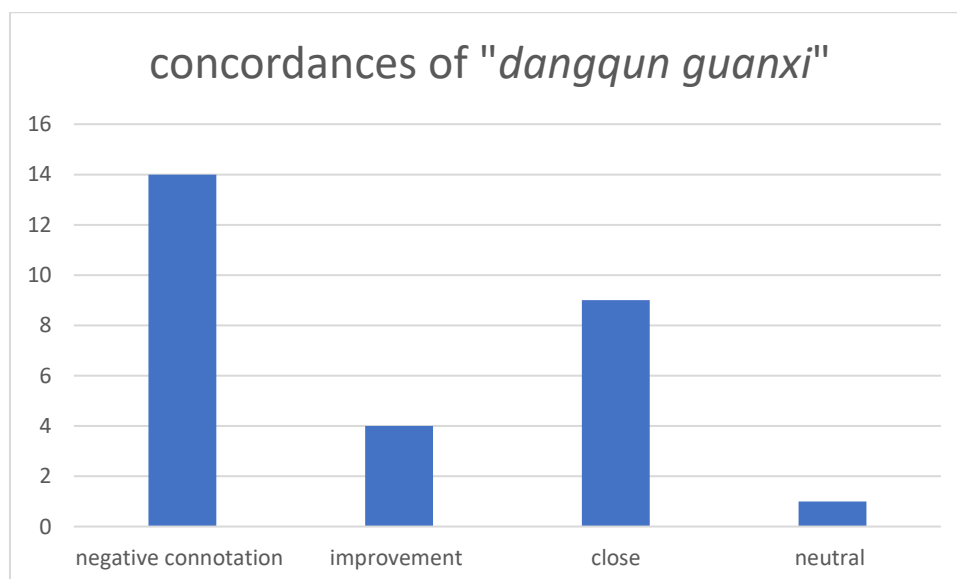
### Damage to Party legitimacy

The first negative influence of corruption in the eyes of the Party is an adverse impact on its legitimacy as a ruling Party. The legitimization of Party rule is a continuous topic in academic research and scholars debate for example the role of economic growth and performance (D. Zhao 2009; Dickson 2016), improved governance (Noesselt 2014), nationalism (Holbig and Gilley 2010b) or also ideology (Holbig 2013) on Party legitimacy. However, bad behaviour of Party members and personal enrichment

overshadows these attempts at legitimating CCP rule (Dickson 2016; Economy 2018) and the Party itself is aware of it.

The Party is concerned that the population is discontent with the performance and behaviour of Party members. An inner-Party article on clean government points out that “the masses are extremely dissatisfied and strongly react to these problems of incorruptibility and corruption” (N.N. 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 12). Additionally, it argues that discipline inspection work should particularly focus on issues that the population is most discontented with and pays most attention to (Wang Jian 15.08.2000 (2014)). The perception of (dis)satisfaction is also reflected in the way the term *manyi* (满意 satisfied) is used in Central Committee and Central Commission for Discipline Inspection documents. A concordance analysis of this term shows that out of 66 uses of the term, 33 appear in a negative form, i.e. expressing perceived dissatisfaction of “the masses” with the Party. Additionally, in another 16 instances, the use of the term indicates an effort on the part of the Party to improve people’s satisfaction, i.e. to work on their performance and legitimacy.

Figure 1 Concordances of the term *dangqun guanxi* in selected CC and CCDI documents



What the Party perceives as an overall “damaged relation between the Party and the masses” caused by Party members’ corrupt behaviour is even more problematic. A good relation between the Party and the masses (*dangqun guanxi* 党群关系) is core to the Party’s concept of the mass line (Selden 1969; Kim 1969; Teiwes 1976) and damaged relations with the masses are therefore a serious concern for the Party. An opinion piece in *Party Style and Party Discipline* argues that “not punishing corruption will influence current reform and opening up and economic construction and it will influence the relationship of the Party with the masses. It is thus an issue of life and death for the Party.” (Lin K. 01.10.1993 (2014), p. 12). A concordance analysis of the term *dangqun guanxi* reveals a similarly dire

picture (see figure 1). In roughly a third of the cases, the term appears together with the adjective *miqie* (密切 close, intimate), indicating a close relationship of the Party with the masses. Because of these aspired close relations, it is even more problematic for the Party if the relations are in poor shape. This damaged relation is reflected in the use of the term *dangqun guanxi* because in half of the cases it is used with a negative connotation indicating harm to the relations between the Party and the masses. It is, for example, used together with verbs such as *sunhai* (损害 harm, damage), *weihai* (危害 jeopardise, endanger), *pohuai* (破坏 damage, wreck), *ehua* (恶化 worsen) or *hen bu xietiao* (很不协调 not coordinated, not harmonized). Furthermore, a few times it is also used together with verbs indicating the necessity to improve the relationship, such as *cujin* (促进 advance) or *gaishan* (改善 improve).

#### Damage to political goals

In the eyes of the Party, the second issue area related to corrupt behaviour of Party members is the damage it causes to political goals of the Party. More concretely, this involves the general governing capacity of the CCP, but also economic reform and overall social and cultural development. Firstly, the Party points out how the spread of corruption negatively impacts upon the process of policy implementation at different levels of the institutional hierarchy (N.N. 01.08.2000 (2014)). For example, corruption in policy implementation can lead to severe issues in the areas of environmental protection and the safety of food and medicinal products (Wu Guanzheng 01.10.2004 (2014)). In addition to hampering the Party's governing ability, these issues also harm the legitimacy of the CCP because, for example, unsafe food products and drugs are an issue of significant popular concern.

Secondly, the Party argues that corruption among Party members also negatively influences its policy of economic reform. The Party repeatedly cites corruption as a factor harming economic reform and production (Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014); Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014); Liu Fengfu 15.07.2003 (2014); Peng 01.10.2004 (2014); Zhou M. 11.2007; Lei 2014; Liu M. 06.2014). It argues that "these kinds of abominable work styles do not only undermine the reputation of reform and obstruct the smooth progress of reform, as well as destroy the modernisation of socialism, but can further on also corrode the Party's structure, destroy a significant part of the cadre corps and endanger the state and the people. It can cause endless harm." (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.03.1985 (2014), p. 24). In other words, the Party believes that corrupt behaviour among Party members can damage everything that is important to the Party. This is the case because it "severely harms the state's undertaking of socialist construction" (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 16.08.1982 (2014), p. 20), "damages the four modernisations" (Wang H. 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 19), "contradicts the requirements for the development of the advanced productive forces" (Liu Fengfu 15.07.2003 (2014), p. 10) and negatively

impacts upon productivity and production initiatives (Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014); Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014)).

Thirdly, the Party also diagnoses a negative impact of corruption on the overall societal atmosphere. Party documents repeatedly point out that Party members' abuse of public power for private gain corrupts and pollutes the societal atmosphere and negatively influences cultural development (N.N. 18.05.1982 (2014); Su R. 15.11.2000 (2014); Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014); N.N. 15.01.2002 (2014); Pan 01.04.2005 (2014); Lei 2014). Additionally, the Party also believes that corruption poisons people's thoughts and thereby has an overall negative influence on the societal climate (N.N. 18.05.1982 (2014)). In summary, the Party thus holds that corrupt behaviour of Party members damages Party legitimacy and the overall governing ability of the Party in the form of policy implementation and economic and social reform.

#### *Loyalty and organisational coherence*

The second behavioural issue for the Party is the question of loyalty among its members. The Party wants its members to be absolutely loyal to the organisation and work for the interests of it. Alternative beliefs and foci of loyalty challenge this absolute commitment to the Party. In the eyes of the Party, commitment issues challenge the organisational coherence of the Party.

#### *Alternative beliefs and foci of loyalty*

Alternative beliefs among Party members create alternative commitments and alternative foci of loyalty. In the eyes of the Party, alternative beliefs mean that they conflict with the Party's ideals and behavioural and ideational expectations. Additionally, they imply that Party members consider other things at least as important as their status as a Party member, and they act in line with their alternative desires and commitments, rather than acting as a selfless Party cadre.

The first and major alternative focus of loyalty is money. This problem is closely related to the discussion of corruption above because Party members' whose thoughts are occupied by personal enrichment are more likely to also engage in corrupt activities. In the words of the Party, the challenge is that some Party members and cadres "put money above everything else" (*yiqie xiang qian kan* 一切向钱看) (e.g. Wang H. 15.03.1985 (2014); N.N. 30.03.1986 (2014); Wang W. 30.07.1989 (2014); Wang C. 05.2003). Party members and cadres are using their privileged position in the Party-state hierarchy to enrich themselves and enjoy a lifestyle that they would otherwise probably not be able to afford. The Party perceives these people as having an "incorrect approach" (Yin 01.08.2005 (2014), p. 20) to power and responsibility as well as enjoyment and luxury. According to this line of thinking, they are unable to cope with the ordeals of power, money and beauty and do not approach them with the

correct attitude that is expected of a Communist Party member or cadre (Tao 01.08.2005 (2014)). If money becomes the main concern for Party members, loyalty to the Party suffers.

Closely connected to the issue of money is the problem of personal relations (*guanxi* 关系) that can also be an alternative focus of loyalty. Related to money, the Party sees the practice of *guanxi* and invitations and gift-giving as a way of hiding illegal corrupt transactions (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhongwen Chubanyu Fuwu Zhongxin 18.01.1982 (2014); Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 18.01.1982 (2014); N.N. 29.05.2002). However, the Party does not only see *guanxi* as problematic because they can foster corruption. On the contrary, such relations are an issue in themselves because the problem of “*guanxi* practice” is “expressed by the fact that in political life, the focus is not on relations of the Party anymore, but only on individual relations, private relations” (Chen Junsheng 15.04.1982 (2014), p. 20). Individual private relations are, like a commitment to money, a focus of loyalty that lies outside the Party.

The third loyalty issue is the existence of alternative beliefs that form alternative centres of loyalty. For example, Chen Peizhong argues that some Party members engage in what the Party calls “feudalist superstitious beliefs” (Chen P. 15.09.2005 (2014), p. 11), which usually refers to practices such as the Confucian worship of ancestors or local folk religions. Although Party members are not allowed to participate in religious practices (Zhongguo Gongchandang 01.10.2018), religious activities among Party members are not entirely uncommon and even the Falun Gong was reported to have Party members among its followers (Chen 2005). Such religious activities are a problem for the Party, not only because they are an infringement on Party rules, but particularly because they create an alternative centre of loyalty. Religious structures—-independent of whether they are organised or not—have their own set of beliefs, moral codes and higher beings to which one owes loyalty. This does not only contrast with the Marxist assumption that religion is part of the superstructure and thereby an instrument of the ruling class to ensure the obedient subordination of the ruled class. It also clashes with the Party’s claimed status as a vanguard organisation that commands superior knowledge and has correct answers to all social and developmental questions, demanding ultimate loyalty from its members.

The issue of organisational strength

The Chinese Communist Party is a party that is officially committed to Leninist principles of Party organisation. This means that organisational strength of the Party is reflected in it being able to implement the principle of democratic centralism, have loyal and committed Party members and cadres that embody the Party’s self-understanding as a vanguard and faithfully implement the Party’s policies. However, in addition to loyalty issues due to alternative beliefs among Party members, the CCP also identifies a number of challenges related to its organisational strength and coherence. These

include corruption as a challenge to Party organisation, weaknesses in Party building and resulting challenges to its governing capacity (*zhizheng nengli* 执政能力).

Firstly, corruption is perceived as a major challenge to the Party's organisational strength and coherence. As already discussed above, the Party identifies corruption as a legitimacy issue and damage to the implementation of its political goals. Additionally, it also sees corruption as an organisational issue and a danger to its status as a governing party. For example, in an article in *Party Style and Party Discipline* it is argued that "If we do not oppose corruption, our Party will have trouble implementing the Three Represents and supporting its advanced character and purity. It cannot have cohesive force and fighting capacity, it cannot obtain the trust and support of the people and it might lose its ruling status." (Su R. 15.11.2000 (2014), p. 7). What is obvious here is that corruption is perceived as a challenge to the core organisational principles of the Party. It does not only threaten the implementation of the Party's ideological principles, but it also endangers the Party's core self-understanding as a pure, advanced, strong party that governs on behalf of the people. That this problem is an ongoing one is visible in more recent statements in the Party magazines *Seeking Truth* and *Red Flag*. In 2010, it is argued in *Seeking Truth* that "corruption can make the Party lose its governing status [*zhizheng diwei* 执政地位]. The fate and future outlook of any political regime ultimately depends on the support of popular sentiment. The essence of corrupt behaviour is indifferent towards the basic interests of the people and infringes upon them." (Shao 2010, p. 35). In addition to threatening the Party's governing status, corruption also undermines Party building. In *Red Flag*, it is argued that "at the present stage, there are still many weak links with regard to Party building. Some deep-seated problems that are caused by corruption have still not been thoroughly resolved. At the same time, we also have to prevent corruption problems that have already been contained to a sufficient degree from arising again." (Wang C. 07.12.2017). In the view of the Party, corruption endangers its core self-understanding as a vanguard, weakens Party building and threatens the Party's governing status.

Secondly, the Party more generally diagnoses weaknesses in Party building and compliance with Party rules. It identifies these issues as a threat to the organisational strength and coherence of the CCP. For example, issues arise when Party members and cadres do not implement the Party's policies and are lax in their work. Wu Guanzheng argues that "we have to see that in the discipline inspection committees of some places, in ministries and work units, there are problems of insufficient implementation of the tasks and duties entrusted to them by the Party constitution." (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 4). The lax implementation of policies is also reflected in the phrase "*shang you zhengce, xia you duice*" (上有政策, 下有对策) that the Party uses to describe that there is a policy directive coming from above and that lower levels turn into a counter-policy (e.g. Zhonggong



zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.03.1985 (2014); Lin Q. and Zeng 15.10.2000 (2014); Fu J. 15.09.2001 (2014)). Similarly, the Party argues that “orders are not carried out and prohibitions are not enforced” (*you ling bu xing, you jin bu zhi* 有令不行, 有禁不止) (e.g. Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.03.1985 (2014); N.N. 31.03.1985 (2014); Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.02.1986; 30.04.1986 (2014)a; Wei 15.09.1993 (2014)). These statements point to issues of policy implementation caused by lax behaviour of Party members and cadres.

Additionally, the Party argues that governing the Party and Party members' compliance with principles are problematic as well. The lack of strict Party governance is directly related to lax behaviour among Party members and the Party's organisational strength and coherence being weakened. For example, in his work report to the seventh plenary meeting of the CCDI, Wei Jianxing argues that “in some localities, the governing of the Party and the government is not strict, some leading cadres seek good relations with everyone at the expense of principle [*haorenzhuyi* 好人主义] and have a low style of work. The implementation of discipline and the law are generous and soft and there are regular cases of problems not being reported or hidden and not examined properly.” (Wei 01.02.2002 (2014), p. 6). Wei names this as a core problem in Party style and it has the potential to severely weaken the Party organisation. This is also the case for the kind of incorrect behaviour that the Party terms “bureaucratism”. Former Party Secretary of Heilongjiang province, Zhang Yi, argued that “bureaucratism seriously obstructs the implementation of the policies of the Party's line. It violates the basic interests of the people, the demands of the development of the productive forces and the forward direction of advanced culture. It causes the Party's line and methods to lose shape in the process of implementation or even leads to them not being implemented. [...] Bureaucratism also corrodes the cadre corps. Among the cadre corps of our Party, examples of cases of dereliction of duty and of breaching Party, political and legal discipline occur because of bureaucratism.” (Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 20). Lack of strict governing of the Party and compliance with Party principles is a particular problem because it impacts upon the Party members' willingness to work for the Party and its ideals and to implement its policies (Chen P. 15.09.2005 (2014)).

Thirdly, according to the Party, both corruption and weaknesses in Party building harm the Party's governing capacity. In very clear words, Wang Heshou points out that “all thought and behaviour of Party members directly impacts upon the image of the Party among the people, its combat effectiveness and its leadership function” (Wang H. 15.11.1986 (2014), p. 6). This is a problem because “the problems of belief, organisation and work style in our Party have not yet been solved very well. Discipline and leadership are lax and, therefore, Party style and societal atmosphere have not been fundamentally improved” (Wang Youxin 15.12.1983 (2014), p. 12). The Party's concerns about weaknesses in Party members' beliefs and Party building impacting upon the Party's ability to

successfully govern is also obvious when the Party argues that “we have to put the work of rooting out malpractices in relation to the bigger picture of strengthening the building of the Party’s governing capacity, the construction of a socialist harmonious society and protect Party members’ vanguard spirit and the practice of governing according to law. We have to grab and advance this work.” (Li Zhilun 01.05.2005 (2014), p. 11). To remedy such issues, Party members are, for example, required to “thoroughly study and understand the ‘Decision’ of the Fourth Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee and understand and earnestly hold on to the rules of building the Party’s governing capacity.” (Wu Guanzheng 01.10.2004 (2014), p. 7). We can thus conclude that the Party diagnoses a number of serious problems. In the following, I will discuss in greater detail why the Party believes these issues are occurring and how it intends to solve them. Here, the presumption of a link between beliefs and behaviour, i.e. the assumption that problems occur because of and can be solved with ideological aspects, becomes obvious.

#### Why do they do it? Reasons for Party members’ behaviour

The Party holds that poor behaviour among Party members is caused by incorrect beliefs. It discusses various ideational issues as reasons for the non-desired behaviour of its members. In line with assumptions from the Maoist era, I argue that also in post-Mao China, the Party still postulates a link between beliefs and behaviour. In the following, I discuss the ideological issues the Party identifies as leading to bad behaviour as well as where the Party holds these incorrect beliefs originate from.

#### *Incorrect beliefs*

Very generally, the Party holds that flawed ideological beliefs are a root cause of corruption among Party members. This is evident in, for example, the portrayal of the case of former Hubei vice-governor Li Daqiang in the inner-Party magazine *Party Style and Party Discipline*. The case was distributed in a notice of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection under the title “Leading Cadres Have to Firmly Build an Ideological Line of Defense” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianchabu 01.11.2000 (2014)) and is supposed to serve as a warning example for Party members. In this report, the CCDI argues that Li’s “shaken beliefs and ideals” (p. 10) led to his corrupt behaviour. In flowery language, it states that “his line of defence in thought collapsed, greed gained the upper hand, and he became the prisoner of money.” (p. 10) Li himself is quoted as having said that “the key to my mistakes is that my Party spirit was not strong, my concept of Party discipline was poor, my standpoint was not firm and I had strong selfish feelings.” (p. 10) Similarly, the Party’s magazine *Red Flag* argues that “The occurrence of corruption is brought about by many factors, including faint ideology among Party members, slack organisation and relaxed discipline [...]” (Gong M. and Wang 24.02.2018). In the Party’s understanding, wrong beliefs lead to corruption.

Secondly, and more concretely, the Party also argues that incorrect capitalist and exploitative thoughts lead to corruption and all kinds of debauched behaviour among Party members. The Party holds that these ideas are a challenge to correct behaviour for Party members and cadres and it demands that they should “strictly oppose influences of decadent ideology and culture such as money worshipping, hedonism and extreme individualism” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 4). In the eyes of the Party, these are remnants of “feudalist history” and “corrupting thoughts of individualism” (Han Z. 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 25). Capitalist and exploitative beliefs are thus clear causes for corrupt and decadent behaviour. Because this argument is closely connected to the origins of incorrect beliefs, I do not discuss this point in greater detail here. Rather, I will enlarge upon this point below.

Weaknesses in Party organisation are the third issue that is caused by incorrect beliefs. The Party identifies flawed beliefs and feeble principles as an important reason for weak organisational structures, for example manifested in a lack of governing ability. Very generally, the Party holds that corrupt thoughts and behaviour have a corroding effect and cause an “unhealthy organisational culture” (Mou and Cao 08.2008, p. 67). Weaknesses in ideology lead to Party members “only pay[ing] attention to building and reform and neglect[ing] strictly governing the Party” (Liu S. 15.08.1989 (2014), p. 28) and “los[ing] the connection with the fine Party spirit of arduous struggle” (Wu Guangcai 01.08.2003 (2014), p. 17). Such ideological flaws lead to “suddenly arising problems in the building of the Party’s governing ability” (He Y. 15.09.2004 (2014), p. 3). The same is true for a type of behaviour that the Party calls *haorenzhuyi* (好人主义 trying to be on good terms with everyone and neglecting principle). It negatively impacts on the principles Party members are supposed to hold and on their ability and willingness to also strictly enforce these principles and Party discipline (for further examples see table 1).

Table 1 Reasons for bad behaviour of Party members and for problems identified by the Party

Reasons for bad behaviour and problems the Party identifies	Examples
Ideological flaws generally lead to undisciplined behaviour	<p>“Beliefs guide behaviour. All these incorrect beliefs directly obstructs the deepening and development of our struggle.” (N.N. 18.05.1982 (2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“A lot of incorrect tendencies exist because of the erroneous beliefs of Party members.” (Wang H. 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 25)</p> <p>“Fraud, superficial behaviour and boastful behaviour are certainly not normal work style problems. In these cases, there are problems of thought and intrinsic quality. They are phenomena of problems or even lack of Party spirit.” (N.N. 30.04.1985 (2014), p. 28)</p>

	<p>There are multiple reasons why Party members and cadres engage in unhealthy practices, but the essential reason is that their Party spirit is not pure and their concept of Party discipline is weak.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 30.03.1986 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“All kinds of mistakes are difficult to avoid because of a lack of experience, because the quintessential understanding of Marxism is not deep and also because the worldviews of some leading comrades have departed from the proletariat on all kinds of levels.” (N.N. 15.09.1989 (2014), p. 5)</p> <p>“Why are formalism and bureaucratism such a persistent ailment? There are many reasons and one has to do with serious errors in the beliefs of some comrades. Some Party members use harsh words when talking about bad tendencies and illegal and non-disciplined activities but only mention bureaucratism and formalism casually.” (Wu Y. 01.12.2001 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“We have to strengthen education in Party spirit and Party style and support building a Party serving the interests of the people. Awareness of ‘official ranks’ is the ideational source of bureaucratism.” (Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 21)</p> <p>“Relaxing the study and improvement of the worldview causes the distortion of the outlook on life and value system and is the basic reason for ‘people whose crimes were discovered’ to walk on the path of corruption and decay. Because of lack of study, they misinterpret the Party’s line, guidelines and policies and turn a blind eye on Party regulations and discipline.” (Hu Z. 2010, p. 32)</p>
<p>Ideational flaws lead to corruption</p>	<p>“Saying that the leaders of these danweis are lax and feeble does not really name the problem clearly. Them being lax and feeble is not the main issue, but it is that the beliefs of these leaders have bit by bit degenerated and they went the wrong way. Could it be that relaxing policies and taking economic measures created a distortion of ‘mainly looking at money’ and gave green light to speculating and swindling elements or is it that leaders are ‘lax and feeble’?” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 25.02.1982 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“The support of ideals and convictions is the basis of anticorruption. The loss of ideals and convictions</p>

	<p>means to walk on the path of non-discipline and crime and to separate from the Party and the people.” (Wang L. 01.12.2000 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“An important reason for corruption and degeneration is that ideological and political studies were relaxed, the building of a [correct] ideological concept and worldview have been neglected and thereby the power entrusted by the people was used and turned into an instrument of personal advantage.” (N.N. 01.02.2005 (2014), p. 18)</p> <p>“Some people think that they can gain advantages from the Party’s ruling status and they entered the Party by making false pretensions. For obtaining personal benefits, they do not hesitate to violate the Party system and damage the Party’s discipline. Some leading cadres who have not established a Marxist worldview, outlook on life and value system follow the bad example of corrupt elements.” (Shao 2010, p. 34)</p> <p>“The occurrence of corruption is brought about by many factors, including faint ideology among Party members, slack organisation and relaxed discipline [...]” (Gong M. and Wang 24.02.2018)</p> <p>“The reason why these corrupt officials and enemies number one degenerated to this point is that the stabilising force of ideals and convictions was shaken and the main switch of worldview, outlook on life and value system was loosened” (Liu Yuan 2017)</p>
<p>Influence of incorrect capitalist and exploitative thought leads to corruption and decadent behaviour</p>	<p>“The criminal activities in the economic area severely poison the societal atmosphere and they directly contradict the Four Cardinal Principles. They are the manifestation of the liberalisation of the capitalist class and have already damaged the Party’s prestige. They affect the life and death of the Party and the big question of which path to walk on.” (N.N. 15.03.1982 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“Why do we have to crack down on criminal activities in the economic sphere? Because these criminal activities in reality are activities of capitalism trying to destroy socialism.” (Wan L. 10.07.1982 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“After the liberation, although the feudalist exploitative system was destroyed, the consciousness and attitude of the feudalist class is still influential and has still not been eradicated. Until now, this influence still has followers in some areas. It influences and disturbs the implementation of state policies and</p>

	<p>laws, normal relations between people and societal peace. It damages the unity of the masses, jeopardises the building of a socialist spiritual civilisation and negatively blocks the improvement of Party style and societal atmosphere.” (N.N. 30.11.1986 82014), p. 19)</p> <p>“After the broadening of opening the economy, the beliefs of Western societies of extreme individualism, money worshipping, liberalism and hedonism that put the individual in the centre had an influence on the worldview, outlook on life, value system and concept of ethics of our Party members and cadres.” (Sun Z. 15.05.2002 (2014), p. 9)</p>
<p>Incorrect thoughts and weak principles lead to a weak organisation</p>	<p>“Cracking down on criminal elements is still not strong enough. In some areas and departments, they have not taken effective measures or eliminated resistance in a timely manner, particularly when investigating cases with very damaging and corroding impact. When large cases occur among leading cadres in important cadres, resistance is even stronger. This is particularly due to the laxity and weakness of leading cadres who do not support principles.” (Wang Youxin 15.12.1983 (2014), pp. 21f.)</p> <p>“The incorrect tendencies in some localities cannot be overcome and the reason for this is that the political life of cadres in these places is not regular, they cannot conduct criticism and self-criticism and the leaders are weak and slack.”(Zhongwen Chubanwu Fuwu Zhongxin 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Problems in ideological knowledge and intrinsic quality are the reason for bureaucratism where people do not take sufficient responsibility for the Party and the people.” (N.N. 15.01.1985 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“A basic reason is forgetting about and departing from the guiding principle of the Party wholeheartedly serving the people, not knowing about and not being able to correctly handle relationships between the part and the whole and the individual and the collective, placing the advantages of the part above the advantages of the state and the people, seeking advantages for the part and even harming reform and the great undertaking of the four changes.”(Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.03.1985 (2014), p. 24)</p> <p>“The guiding beliefs of some party members are not correct, they only pay attention to building and reform and neglect strictly governing the Party.” (Liu S. 15.08.1989 (2014), p. 28)</p>

	<p>“Some leaders still have incorrect understandings and, in some localities, the problem of ‘one soft hand and one strict hand’ has not yet been solved well. This is a large obstruction to the work of building Party spirit and clean government and anticorruption.” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“Some cadres separated themselves from the important thought of the Three Represents, they do not firmly remember the ‘two tasks’ and they lost the connection with the fine Party spirit of arduous struggle.” (Wu Guangcai 01.08.2003 (2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“Formalism and bureaucratism seriously corrode the cadre corps and destroy Party style and societal atmosphere. Bureaucratism and formalism appear in work style and the root of it lies in individualism and in worshipping the consciousness of official status. This leads to the goal of work of some Party members and cadres not coming from public spirit, but they work for their private advantage or for gaining an official position, protecting it and being promoted.” (Wu Y. 01.12.2001 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“We have to see that the current building of the Party’s governing ability also faces some suddenly arising problems, for example: The Party’s method of leadership and governing, the leadership system and work system are not yet sufficiently perfected, the ideological style and work style of some Party members and cadres has to be changed urgently, the styles of formalism and bureaucratism and the phenomenon of extravagance and wastefulness still persist, in some places the basic organisation of the Party is weak and lax and corrupt phenomena in some areas are very severe.” (He Y. 15.09.2004 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Currently, there are a few deficiencies and problems in the concepts of power, status and personal advantages of Party members and cadres. This is visible in the following: Some people cannot correctly face and use power, some even use power for personal advantage and trade money for power, some people cannot correctly face advance and retreat, they use relationships to obtain official posts and solicit help from potential backers, they crave official positions from the organisation and leaders, some cannot correctly face the achievements of their political career, they engage in formalism, make empty reports, practise fraud and deceive their superiors and delude their subordinates and some</p>
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	<p>cannot correctly face supervision and even oppose and evade supervision.” (Yin 01.08.2005 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“Currently, among a small number of Party members and cadres there are problems of ideals and convictions that are difficult to ignore: some doubt that the Party’s ideals are not outdated and whether the goals of the Party’s struggle can still be reached so that they are not willing to struggle for ideals and convictions. Some ask first whether there is an advantage for themselves when something comes up, only talk about individual advantages and do not talk about the Party’s and the people’s advantages. A very small number of Party members has abandoned ideals and convictions and are at odds with the Party and some even look for comfort in feudal superstitious practices. Party members who doubt the Party’s ideals and convictions will have difficulties to remain clear-headed and steady in complicated political situations and easily waver in decisive moments or even make wrong choices. Under no circumstances can we treat the problem of ideals and convictions lightly.” (Chen P. 15.09.2005 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“Due to the corroding effect of corruption, already for a long time an unhealthy organisational culture exists in some Party and government institutions.” (Mou and Cao 08.2008, p. 67)</p>
<p>Trying to be on good terms with everyone (haorenzhuyi 好人主义) and lack of principle weakens the organisation</p>	<p>“Some are seeking good relations with everyone and do not dare to talk principle.” (Qian and Ye 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 24)</p> <p>“Currently a very irregular phenomenon exists: in places where haorenzhuyi is rampant, this does not only not receive appropriate criticism and good-willed admonishment, but it also often ends in a reputation of ‘good relations with people’ and ‘have self-restraint’ and they are placed in important positions. On the contrary, those comrades who dare to support principle and have moral courage are given the cold shoulder and are isolated.” (Cai Y. 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“During the last years, Party organisation in some units was not strict, haorenzhuyi spread, the vulgar study of relationships became rampant, some problems were not exposed in time or when exposed not handled appropriately, and large problems became small over time and disappeared. This is an important factor why some problems develop again after rectification, some cases are not handled in time</p>



	<p>and why some Party members and cadres who commit mistakes get on further and further on that road.”(Zhou Z. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“Currently in some departments and localities, haorenzhuyi is severe and governing discipline is loose and flexible. [...] This severely harms the strictness of Party discipline and the law and influences the success of anticorruption.” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 8)</p>
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*The origins of incorrect beliefs*

The reasons for incorrect beliefs among Party members are externalised and individualised. In the eyes of the Party, ideological beliefs are not problematic because the underlying ideological concepts are flawed. Rather, what is considered bad ideological beliefs among Party members is an individual problem of single Party members and it is a problem that comes from outside the Party.

The external source of incorrect beliefs of Party members is, first of all, reflected in outside actors bringing incorrect thoughts into the Party. In different eras of Party history, these outside actors differed. However, the basis of the Party’s argument is that persons from outside the Party or people who were seen as having separated from the Party were responsible for incorrect beliefs and resulting behaviour. For example, an official discussion of Party history argues that immediately after the foundation of the People’s Republic, staff leftover from the Guomindang regime introduced bad thoughts and thus poor behaviour into the Party. “Some staff was retained from the old system and some further staff from the old system were recruited so that they participated in the work of New China. Therefore, the work style of bureaucratism was introduced into the new system.” (Wang C. 02.2003, p. 14). Additionally, particularly in the early 1980s, incorrect beliefs and behaviour among Party members was attributed to the remnants of the Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four (N.N. 28.05.1982 (2014)). In a work report of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, it is suggested that “because the negative results of the ten years of domestic turmoil have not been eliminated, ‘leftist’ tendencies in thought and the thought of extreme individualism as well as the thought of anarchism still have extremely negative influences on some comrades” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 20.09.1982 (2014), p. 5). Although the Cultural Revolution is not an event outside the Party, the Party still attributes responsibility to few individuals such as the Gang of Four, i.e. forces separated from the Party.

An additional external source responsible for Party member’s incorrect thoughts and thus poor behaviour is capitalism in general and the exploitative classes more specifically. The Party understands capitalism as an external force and belief system that negatively impacts on the purity of thought of Party members and thus leads to them behaving in undesired manners. For example, in a speech, Jiang

Zemin argued that “the phenomenon of corruption is a product of the exploitative classes and the exploitative system. What distinguishes the socialist system from all new social systems of the exploitative systems in history is that it basically eliminates the conditions for the arising of corruption.” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 3). Already at the beginning of the 1980s, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection argued that some people were not able to withstand Mao’s famous “sugar-coated bullets” and were corrupted by “the degenerate thoughts of feudalism and capitalism” (N.N. 15.05.1981 (2014), p. 3). However, this line of argument is not merely a phenomenon of the 1980s. In an opinion piece in *Party Style and Party Discipline* in 2006, the author argues that already Marx and Engels were of the opinion that corruption is a phenomenon caused by “the system of private property, an exploitative system and an exploiting class” (Xu Jingye 01.04.2006 (2014), p. 14). Furthermore, the influence of Western thought more generally is considered problematic because “after the broadening of opening the economy, the thoughts of Western societies of extreme individualism that puts the individual at the centre, money worshipping, liberalism and hedonism had an influence on the worldview, outlook on life, value system and concept of ethics of our Party members and cadres” (Sun Z. 15.05.2002 (2014), p. 9). The Party thus considers capitalism, the thought of exploiting classes and Western thought more generally as external factors that cause incorrect thoughts among Party members and thus also lead to incorrect behaviour.

In addition to externalising the causes of problematic thought and behaviour, the Party also individualises them. Like with external causes, it is not the Party or the Party’s ideological system that is at fault, but the individual Party member or cadre is considered to be the problem. This can be seen in how the Party talks about people or institutions that are considered to have incorrect beliefs or behave in undesired ways. It refers to these people and institutions with terms like *you de* (有的 some) (e.g. Qian and Ye 01.08.2000 (2014); Wu Guanzheng 15.06.2005 (2014)), *yi xie* (一些 a few) (e.g. Wu Y. 01.12.2001 (2014); Wu Guangcai 01.08.2003 (2014)) or also *shao shu* (少数 a small number) (e.g. Fu J. 15.09.2001 (2014)). Thus, when talking about incorrect beliefs and poor behaviour, the Party always stresses that only a small number of people or institutions is involved in it. Bad thought and behaviour are thus seen as an individual rather than a systemic problem. The Party’s analysis of the root causes of its problems are an important prerogative for how the Party believes these issues should be dealt with.

#### How can we fix it? Remedying Party members’ behaviour

Like in the reasons for the Party’s problems, the assumed link between beliefs and behaviour is also clearly visible in the solutions the Party proposes. The Party argues beliefs have to be improved and Party members strengthened against outside ideational influences in order to improve behaviour. This is, for example, visible in a recent slogan of Xi Jinping’s anticorruption and Party discipline campaign.

This slogan advances the principle of “not wanting to be corrupt, not being able to be corrupt, not daring to be corrupt” (不想腐、不能腐、不敢腐 *bu xiang fu, bu neng fu, bu gan fu*) (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 20.08.2020; He T. 13.03.2020). “Not wanting to be corrupt” is a clear ideational element in the correction of behaviour because it implies that Party members have beliefs that ensures that they behave in line with the requirements of the Party. The concepts of how the Party intends to remedy Party members’ behaviour is the topic of the subchapters below.

#### *Correcting ideological beliefs*

The Party believes that incorrect ideological beliefs are dangerous for the Party. This logic is evident in a speech Jiang Zemin gave at a national work meeting on discipline inspection and supervision propaganda and education. He said “if they [leading Party cadres] do not have Party consciousness [*dang de yishi* 党的意识], if they do not help the Party overcome difficulties, if they are indifferent towards the affairs of the Party or are even divided from the Party in heart and practice, this is extremely wrong and dangerous” (Fu J. 01.04.2002 (2014), p. 6).

Following from this, the Party still believes that a core method of dealing with behavioural problems among Party members is correcting these beliefs. As it is argued in *Party Style and Party Discipline*, “deepening the knowledge of the guiding thought of discipline work will solve a number of problems” (Xu M. 01.09.1993 (2014), p. 21). This is because the Party holds that “in comparison with other political organisations, one of the particular characteristics of the CCP’s methods for fighting corruption is the importance of political and thought work and the emphasis of building thought.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017). In this logic, when Party members are educated and hold correct ideological principles “not a lot of illegal and undisciplined things will occur, even if the Party’s regulations are not perfect” (Wang H. 15.11.1986 (2014), p. 10). Incorrect behaviour has to be remedied by correcting beliefs.

The Party also believes that correcting ideological principles among Party members will strengthen the Party organisation. This can, for example, involve the improved implementation of the Party’s overall political goals. It argues that “only when earnestly rectifying incorrect tendencies can the people’s active spirit in building socialism be mobilised and the development of the undertaking of socialist reform be advanced” (N.N. 15.08.1986 (2014), p. 23). Socialist reform is one of the basic political goals of the Party and it believes that correct beliefs and behaviour among Party members are required for achieving it. Put differently, the Party holds that education and study of concepts of Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline are required because they can “cause every Party member to rely on a strong concept of Party spirit and outstanding ideological style to advance inner-Party democracy

and self-consciously exercise such democratic rights on the basis of the Party’s interests [...]” (Cai C. 01.01.2005 (2014), p. 11).

Ideology thus does not only have value on its own. On the contrary, it has a very clear purpose for the Party. The Party believes that correcting ideological concepts among Party members will positively impact on their behaviour. In the following, I discuss education and study as well as criticism and self-criticism as two important methods the Party wants to use to correct ideological concepts. Additionally, table 2 below provides further examples of the Party’s view of how to deal with problematic beliefs and behaviour among Party members.

Table 2 Ideational remedies for bad behaviour among Party members as discussed by the Party

Means for correcting behaviour	Examples
Generally correct ideological beliefs and concepts	<p>“We have to support the Four Cardinal Principles, deeply conduct political and ideological education, grab Party style, Party discipline and political discipline, resist all forms of decadent capitalist ideology and eroded lifestyle and strongly build socialist spiritual civilisation.” (Han G. 31.12.1984 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“If Party members have a concept of right and wrong in ideology, not a lot of illegal and undisciplined things will occur, even if the Party’s regulations are not perfect. Additionally, there are some things that the Party constitution and regulations cannot regulate and we then have to rely on the Party spirit of Party members.” (Wang H. 15.11.1986 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“In order to prevent Party members and cadres from committing mistakes, we have to support the parallel building of the two civilisations and ideological and ideological and political work.” (Cui 15.08.1989 (2014), p. 26)</p> <p>“We have to persist in the correct political direction, political position and political viewpoint. We have to incessantly raise the ability of political differentiation and political keenness and we have to strictly maintain political discipline.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 45)</p> <p>“We have to protect the Party’s basic line and guarantee the practical implementation of the basic line.” (He Y. 2008, p. 21)</p> <p>“For more effectively solving the problem of corruption we still have to go through building the system of core socialist values and shape an effective system of not wanting to be corrupt, not being able to be corrupt and not daring to be</p>

	<p>corrupt. This means that we have to smash the ‘unspoken rules’ that have for thousands of years controlled officials.”(Lin Y. and Yue 03.2016, p. 73)</p> <p>“In comparison with other political organisations, one of the particular characteristics of the CCP’s methods for fighting corruption is the importance of political and thought work and the emphasis of building thought. Effectively fighting corruption needs the combination of punishment and prevention, of systemic construction and education on honest and clean politics, of rule by law, rule by virtue and rule by rites and the combination of building Party style and clean government with reversing societal atmosphere.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)</p> <p>“Steady ideals and convictions and holding on to the Party’s sophisticated spirit is the basis of the Party’s pursuits. For strictly governing the Party, we have to pay attention to standards and discipline, the firm bottom line of discipline. We have to guide people to make virtuous progress and develop the leading function of their ideals and convictions and their virtuous sentiments.” (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lian Zheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p>
<p>Criticism and self-criticism</p>	<p>“For Party members and cadres who committed mistakes, we have to, according to the situation, conduct education of criticism and implement discipline. Where it is required to be lenient, we have to be lenient and where it is required to be strict, we have to be strict.” (N.N. 30.08.1984 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“We have to look at the Party’s three fine traditions in work style: closely unite theory and practice, closely unite with the masses and criticism and self-criticism.” (Han G. 30.06.1986 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“For preserving the vanguard role of Party members, one has to preserve upright and clean hands and use noble personalities to gain the confidence of the people. [...] In light of wrong behaviour leaving the Party’s mission, bravely support principles, conduct criticism, bravely oppose and fight wrong tendencies and struggle for upholding the Party’s vanguard role and pure spirit.” (Yang H. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“For Party members who break the discipline of the Party we have to use criticism as education or other disciplinary methods according to the regulations of the Party constitution and the spirit of ‘learning from past errors to avoid future mistakes and cure the sickness to save the</p>

	<p>man’ depending on whether the error is small or severe.” (N.N. 26.03.2003 (2014), p. 5)</p> <p>“Conducting criticism and self-criticism is an effective method for strengthening the unity of the Party, resolving contradictions within the Party and protecting the Party’s discipline.” (Chen P. 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“The report of the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress pointed out: We have to persist in conducting criticism and self-criticism [...]” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)</p> <p>“Persisting in democratic life meeting and organisational life meetings and the system of appraising Party members through discussion and having heart-to-heart talks, conscientiously conducting criticism and self-criticism, nipping people’s ears and pulling their sleeves and make them blush and sweat all have the function of really raising Party members’ education on organisational life.” (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019)</p> <p>“Frequently conducting criticism and self-criticism and inviting discussions and inquiries as well as making people blush and break out in sweat should become the normal state.” (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018)</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>“We should take negative behaviour as an example, judge it from a high level of politics and ideology and conduct education within the Party. Only under these circumstances can negative behaviour disappear, people be on guard against it and the political and ideological awareness of Party members can rise. Conducting ideological education within the Party leads to people knowing on a political and ideological level which things Party members are not supposed to do and which ideological beliefs a Party member should oppose because they run counter to the ideals that Communism fights for.” (Wang H. 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 26)</p> <p>“First, we should put education on Party spirit at the first place on Party school curricula and develop the good work style of connecting theory and practice. The education of reserve cadres should firmly establish a Communist worldview, consciously overcome individualism and firmly establish the ideology of wholeheartedly serving the people. Second, we should combine Party rectification and the education of reserve cadres in Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline. At the same time, we have to discover and train new outstanding elements and eliminate the small number of people with bad morality and talents. Third, old cadres should teach reserve cadres in the nurturing of Party spirit and the Party’s fine traditions and</p>

	<p>be on friendly terms with revolutionary classes.” (N.N. 27.03.1985, p. 14)</p> <p>“If on the one hand cases are investigated to eradicate incorrect tendencies and on the other hand, ideological work follows and Party members and cadres strictly honour Party discipline, the result of rectifying the Party can be stabilised.” (Han G. 15.02.1986 (2014), p. 28)</p> <p>“We have to strengthen education on political work and ideology, grab the education of the largest part of the Party members and cadres on ideals, the mission, discipline, law and virtue and lead them to establish correct values, outlook on life and worldview. We have to resolutely oppose money worshipping, hedonism and extreme individualism.” (Cao C. 15.12.1993 (2014), p. 25)</p> <p>“We have to strengthen the educational guidance for Party members and cadres, spend energy on liberating thought and on transforming the minds. We have to lead the thoughts and ideology of Party members and cadres towards making pioneering efforts, daring to venture out into the world and daring to try things and strongly develop a socialist market economy.” (Gui 24.11.1993, p 26)</p> <p>“For building a correct Party style, we first of all have to strengthen study. We have to combine and put into practice, study, study and even more study. We have to thoroughly study Marxism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory as related to Party style and clean government and anticorruption and study Jiang Zemin’s important thought of the Three Represents. Only when we study the quintessence of Marxism and grab the spirit and substance of Deng Xiaoping Theory, we can conduct anticorruption work and take the correct direction. Only then we can avoid routinism and walk less on crooked roads.” (N.N. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 13)</p> <p>“All offices should organise Party cadres to thoroughly study the important speech of Comrade Jiang Zemin and the report to the Fifth Plenum of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. They have to unite the thought and understanding as well as behaviour of all cadres on the task of anticorruption that the Central Committee determined.” (Cao Q. 01.02.2001 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“We have to advance the political trend and fine tradition of thought work within our Party. We have to strengthen the education in Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline of all Party members and cadres. This is the basic way for leading cadres to self-consciously resist the</p>
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	<p>corrosive beliefs that developed under conditions of the policy of reform opening up and the socialist market economy.” (Fu J. 1.1.2003 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“The function of thought education is guidance. It can raise a person’s quality, clarify a person’s understanding and strengthen self-discipline. It can further deal with the basis and prerequisites of a person’s problems in actions and motives and it is the basic measure for opposing corruption and building clean government.”(Fu K. 01.08.2004 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“We have to take Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents as a guidance and take anticorruption education as a basic work for building Party style and clean government and the struggle against corruption.” (Yang A. 15.03.2006 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“Corrupt behaviour is rational behaviour, it is behaviour that arises because of a corrupt consciousness. Problems in thought should be resolved with the help of thought education. Conducting thought education for people with a corrupt consciousness is a necessary measure for guarding against corruption.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)</p> <p>“We have to deeply study the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important speech. Beliefs are the guide of behaviour.” (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lian Zheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p>
<p>Correction of ideological beliefs strengthens the organisation</p>	<p>“For protecting the unity of the Party and the Party’s discipline, we have to check from a political point of view whether the Party is a battle organisation that has the function of a leading core. For rectifying Party style it is necessary to resolve the Party’s problem of being lax and feeble in politics, ideology and organisation.” (Wang H. 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“With the help of thought work, we have to even better protect the unity of the entire Party with the Central Committee.” (Wang H. 31.05.1984 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“In the past, no matter how weak the Party was and how harsh the conditions were, it still had a strong fighting strength because it had Marxist and Communist ideals. With common ideals it also had iron discipline.” (N.N. 15.12.1985 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“We have to rely on strictly implementing democratic centralism. In the history of our Party, whenever we relied on the demands of the principle of democratic centralism, we handled inner-Party democratic life well.” (N.N. 22.12.1993, p. 7)</p>



	<p>“For strengthening the discipline of the Party, [...] we have to strengthen political discipline and protect the authority of the centre. All Party organisations, Party members and cadres have to steadfastly hold on to the Party’s theory and basic line, in political questions maintain a high degree of unity with the Party centre, protect the unimpeded implementation of central decrees and earnestly ensure the implementation of the Party’s line, principles and policies.” (Lin Q. and Zeng 15.10.2000 (2014), p. 32)</p> <p>“In the realms of politics, thought and behaviour, we have to preserve a high level of unity with the Central Committee led by General Secretary Comrade Hu Jintao.” (He G. 2012, p. 8)</p> <p>“We have to insist in focusing on the centre, serve the big picture and emphasise the quality and outcomes of education and management of Party members.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019)</p> <p>“We have to guide Party members to correctly understand the overall circumstances and ensure that their thoughts and behaviour are unified with the demands of the Central Committee of the Party.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019)</p> <p>“Under the guidance of Xi Jinping’s thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era we have to unite our willpower, be united in action and move forward.” (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019)</p>
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#### Education

Education and study are among the most frequent methods of rectification that the Party suggests. The Party holds that correcting beliefs through education and study will solve behavioural problems. For example, Chen Peizhong suggests that building a correct worldview, outlook on life and value system is a virtue in itself because it “helps in all situations to be able to overcome tests, remain clear-headed, correctly handle the state’s, the collective’s and the individual’s advantages, have a high-level sense of responsibility and sense of mission, a high responsibility for the advantages of the people, be both diligent in attending to state affairs and honest and clean in administration, support the vanguard role in ideology and virtue of a party member and fulfil the model function of the vanguard role of a Party member” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 11). All kinds of issues can hence be solved if Party members and cadres only have correct beliefs.

In the eyes of the Party, education and study are appropriate means to handle a broad range of behavioural issues. Very generally, the Party argues that “for implementing the Central Committee’s policy of rectifying Party style, we first of all have to grab study well and unite thought and understanding with the spirit of the Central Committee” (Qiang 30.01.1986 (2014), p. 6). Thus, Party style that broadly comprises of different kinds of behaviour of Party members can be improved and corrected with the help of education and study. Slightly more concretely, the Party holds that education in Party discipline involves the compliance with and protection of Party discipline decisions (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014)). At the same time, the Party argues that education and study are also appropriate methods for dealing with issues of corruption among Party members and cadres. For example, it suggests that “we have to incessantly raise the quality of leading cadres in thought, morality and scientific culture. Based on thought, we have to build an embankment of fighting corruption, building clean government and forestalling moral degeneration” (N.N. 01.03.2001 (2014), p. 20). Similarly, the Party points out that “strengthening education is the basic work of anticorruption and building clean government. It is the ideational guarantee of Party members and cadres fighting corruption and forestalling moral degeneration. To respond to suddenly arising problems in Party members’ and cadres’ beliefs and work style, we have to conduct thorough education within the entire Party on Party style and Party discipline, support the fine traditions, enhance the righteousness of new trends, resist evil influences and earnestly accomplish honest and pragmatic work for the people” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 45). However, the Party also points out that education is mostly the appropriate method of dealing with what they call “ordinary mistakes” (*yiban cuowu* 一般错误) of Party members (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 11). In other words, the Party acknowledges that some mistakes cannot be solely handled with the help of study and education. The role of this vagueness of appropriate punishment is discussed at a later stage in this thesis. At this stage, however, it is important to note that the Party believes that behavioural issues among Party members, either related to the Party’s work style generally or corruption particularly, can be solved with the help of education and study for Party members and cadres.

In addition to behavioural issues, education and study can also serve to deal with organisational problems. This is the case because education is also supposed to strengthen the Party’s vanguard role and thereby its status as a ruling Party. In other words, vanguard education (*xianjinxing jiaoyu* 先进性教育) is an important element of the Party’s educational efforts (e.g. Wu Guanzheng 15.03.2005 (2014); Li Zhilun 01.05.2005 (2014); He Y. 01.08.2005 (2014); 15.01.2006 (2014)). It is the task of vanguard education to “strengthen the building of the Party’s vanguard role. It has a significant meaning for consolidating the Party’s governing status and protect the completion of its governing mission” (Xu Jingye 01.04.2006 (2014), p. 13). The contents of this vanguard education in the eyes of

the Party is to “support the ideals of communism and the conviction of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (Chen P. 15.09.2005 (2014), p. 10), thereby increasing the organisational strength of the Party.

In terms of educational methods, the Party suggests multiple different approaches to educating its members and cadres. Firstly, the Party proposes education with the help of model cases that can serve as warning examples for Party members (e.g. N.N. 01.02.2001(2014); Yang A. 15.03.2006 (2014)). It calls for “deeply analysing and investigating model cases” (Sun X. 2017) because model cases can help conduct “education on Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline” (Ma G. 30.10.1983 (2014), p. 17). Because the function of role models is discussed in greater detail at a later stage in the thesis, it may suffice here to point out that model cases are an educational strategy that the Party refers to. In addition to role models, the Party also underlines the importance of study for education and how both study in small groups and educational materials such as, for example, the magazine *Party Style and Party Discipline* are core elements of study (Liu Fengyan 15.04.2005 (2014)). This is also evident in Politburo study sessions and democratic life meetings, the importance of which has been strengthened again under Xi Jinping (Dotson 29.01.2020; Hart 02.07.2021). Education and study are thus expected to take place together with other Party members, involve the study of a common set of documents and be educated in the CCP’s core ideational elements. A further element of such group sessions is criticism and self-criticism which I turn to now.

#### Criticism and self-criticism

The practice of criticism and self-criticism is not limited to the Maoist era. On the contrary, even in the post-Mao era, it is still perceived as a core organisational principle of the Party. As a means of rectifying the beliefs and behaviour of Party members, it also appears in Party documents in the post-Mao era. Particularly throughout the 1980s, criticism and self-criticism has been referred to as part of the Party’s “fine traditions” (*youliang chuantong* 优良传统) or “fine work style” (*youliang zuofeng* 优良作风). These include “closely uniting theory and practice, closely connecting with the masses and criticism and self-criticism” (e.g. Han G. 30.06.1986 (2014); Wang W. 30.07.1989 (2014); Li Zhengting 30.12.1989 (2014)), thereby acknowledging it as an important practice of the Party.

In the post-Mao era, criticism and self-criticism is still supposed to fulfil the function of correcting Party members’ beliefs and purifying the organisation. Party documents emphasise that criticism and self-criticism is a form of education and “we have to advance from criticism and self-criticism to necessary struggle in thought” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 26.04.1982 (2014), p. 3). In cases where Party members and cadres have committed mistakes, the Party pledges for conducting education in the form of criticism in order to “consciously strengthen the training and awareness of Party spirit” (Chen P.

15.09.2005 (2014), p. 11). Here, the Party closely connects the improvement of Party members' beliefs and behaviour and the organisational strength of the Party. It argues that "criticism and self-criticism is the main method of inner-Party thought struggle. It is a weapon for strengthening the unity, the vitality and the vigour of the Party" (Li X. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 26). In other words, criticism and self-criticism is perceived as a method of remedying organisational problems.

Even in most recent times of the anticorruption and Party rectification campaign under Xi Jinping, criticism and self-criticism is still fostered as a means of educating Party members and correcting their beliefs. Even among the highest ranks of the Party, at the Politburo level, Chinese media report that members have to partake in criticism and self-criticism meetings in order to strengthen Party building and eradicate incorrect work styles. (*Global Times* 25.06.2013; *China Daily* 25.12.2020). Additionally, the rhetoric of criticism and self-criticism under Xi also appears to strengthen the confrontational part of the practice that is based on severe peer-group attacks. Both the CCP's Discipline Regulations and the Five-Year Study Plan stress that it is the goal of criticism and self-criticism to make people "blush and break out in sweat" (*honglian chuhan* 红脸出汗) (*Zhongguo Gonchangdang* 01.10.2018; *Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting* 11.2019). This rhetoric is reminiscent of the earlier Maoist practice of criticism and self-criticism where people were supposed to be at least temporarily ostracised from their primary peer group in the Party.

#### *The organisational function of correcting ideological beliefs*

The Party perceives correcting ideological beliefs as a means for strengthening the Party organisation and improving its governing ability. Firstly, the Party holds that correct beliefs will produce a strong Party organisation able to fight for the implementation of its policies and goals. The Party believes that correct ideological principles are a core reason for its success because "in the past, no matter how weak the Party was and how harsh the conditions were, it still had a strong fighting strength because it had Marxist and Communist ideals. With common ideals, it also had iron discipline." (N.N. 15.12.1985 (2014), p. 4). As much as ideology impacts on behaviour, it thus also impacts on the resolve and commitment to the Party. This is because "under the guidance of Xi Jinping's thought of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, we have to unite our willpower, be united in action and move forward." (*Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting* 11.2019). Study and education are the means to achieve this because "we have to get all Party members and cadres, particularly leading cadres, to clearly understand the correctness of the Central Committee's line, resolutely support it and loyally and actively implement it" (Chen Z. 15.03.1984 (2014), p. 25). Correct actions in the interest of the Party and the implementation of its policies hinge on Party members holding correct beliefs.

Secondly and even more crucially, correct ideological principles allow for fostering the unity of the Party. The Party repeatedly emphasises that it is of core importance to be united with the Party in

general and the Party centre in particular<sup>9</sup>. Here, Party documents use the phrases *baochi [gaodu] yizhi* (保持[高度]一致) or also *jizhong tongyi* (集中统一) or *tuanjie tongyi* (团结统一) to express unity with the Party centre and the leadership of the Party. The Party suggests that “we have to firmly uphold the Four Cardinal Principles and advance the entire Party’s degree of unity with the Central Committee on political questions” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 20.09.1982 (2014), p. 5). This idea of unity with the Party centre is present at all times, so that in 2012, *Qiushi* magazine suggests in very similar words that “in the realms of politics, thought and behaviour, we have to preserve a high level of unity with the Central Committee led by General Secretary Comrade Hu Jintao.” (He G. 2012, p. 8). Unity has to be achieved not only on a behavioural level that results merely in obedience. Rather, the Party considers it important to achieve unity also on an ideational level for achieving correct behaviour and loyalty to the Party.

### Summary

The core argument of this chapter is that the assumed link between beliefs and behaviour in Party ideology is still prevalent. The Party argues that the core problems it is facing are corruption and issues of loyalty and commitment of its members. In the eyes of the Party, these issues are to a significant extent due to weakened or incorrect ideological beliefs. Such incorrect beliefs either originate and enter the Party from outside or they are the result of individual mistakes. In other words, the Party itself and the correctness of its ideological concepts are not questioned. In line with this assumed link, the Party also holds that dealing with incorrect behaviour has to involve correcting Party members’ ideological beliefs. Thus, the suggested remedies are to correct beliefs and strengthen ideology, foster self-discipline and criticism and self-criticism among Party members and engage in education and study to learn about correct beliefs.

The presumed connection between beliefs and behaviour in the Party’s understanding of ideology offers one explanation why the Party still considers ideology to be so important. If, as Schurman discussed for the Maoist era, ideology is supposed to impact on behaviour and correct beliefs can only manifest themselves in correct actions, then beliefs and ideology are at the root of the entire relationship of a Party member with the Party. Additionally, if the Party wants to remain a strong organisation capable of governing a one-party state, it is important that it can rely on the loyalty and commitment of its members to implement policies and also suppress alternative voices when necessary. The reason for the importance of ideology lies in this assumed connection between beliefs and behaviour.

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<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the concept of “Party centre” see chapter seven.

What the belief-behaviour nexus cannot answer, however, is the question of how ideology is supposed to impact on Party members' behaviour. In a situation where belief in an ideology is high, it is probable that people also behave in line with ideological requirements. Yet, if belief is at least questionable, then the relationship with behaviour becomes questionable as well. Therefore, we have to ask how ideology is supposed to impact on Party members. This question is the topic of the remaining part of this thesis.

## 4 Mythologising the Party: Party social identity

Who believes what in the Chinese Communist Party? Or phrased somewhat differently: Who is supposed to believe what in the CCP? This question is crucial for the functioning of the CCP's ideology among its members and cadres. It is at the centre of the question that Shih and Brown discuss: who is still communist in the Chinese Communist Party? At the same time, it is also at the centre of the link between beliefs and behaviour that the Party assumes. Because the Party holds that there is an intimate connection between these two, it is central to understand what these beliefs are really about. In his study of Party schools in the PRC, Pieke argues that the Party cadres he interviewed in Party schools did "not necessarily treat this [the Party's official] ideology as something that they had to believe in at a fundamental and deeply personal level" (Pieke 2009, p. 142). However, if this is indeed the case, the question of the content of Party ideology and of what Party members are supposed to believe in is even more crucially important.

This chapter deals with the question of what Party members and cadres are supposed to believe in. It argues that the core function of Party ideology is to create a social identity for Party members and cadres. Through this social identity, they can feel that they are a part of the Party, they are incorporated into the Party and they are attached to the Party. This social identity contains the self-understanding of the Party. It describes how the Party sees itself and what it wants to be as well as how it perceives its members.

What should such a social identity ideally look like? Tajfel and Turner argue that the goal of individual identity in general is to create positive self-esteem for an individual. Or, to say it in their words, "Individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem: they strive for a positive self-concept" (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 377). This means that individuals want to strengthen positive identity elements, while at the same time discarding negative ones. This is true as much for elements of individual identity as it is for group identity. An individual prefers to be a member of social groups and thereby adopt social identities that positively enhance his or her self-esteem. While this seems intuitively obvious that individuals want to enhance their self-esteem and therefore strive for positive elements of identity, it also has important implications for social identities and the kinds of social identities people want to assume. As Tajfel and Turner point out, it means that individuals will try to positively distinguish their own in-group and the social identity that is associated with it from other outgroups. They argue that "positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups" (Tajfel and Turner 2004, p. 377). Therefore, for the question of what a social identity should look like it is important to keep in mind two points. Firstly, individuals strive for positive identity elements. Secondly, a positive social identity can be fostered by comparing an in-group favourably with a to-be-defined outgroup.

The positive social identity of the Party, I argue, consists of a political myth. It is a myth that is embedded in Party ideology and that defines Party membership as the membership in an outstanding, exclusive and exceptional organisation. It reflects a form of elite culture that does not define itself necessarily in a meritocratic sense but as membership in an exclusive circle. This positive social identity, as reflected in Party ideology, mainly consists of four elements. Firstly, in a historic dimension, it answers the question “where do we come from?”. Telling a story of heroism and struggle, it develops a narrative of the Party’s origins that distinguish it positively. Secondly, in a contemporary dimension, it answers the question “who are we now?”. In this sense, Party ideology and the social identity embedded in it tell a story of greatness and righteousness, of a political organisation that is superior to and has higher standards and expectations than others. Thirdly, in a future dimension, it answers the question of “where do we go?”. Here, it tells a story of a knowledge of the truth and of a bright future. Finally, Party ideology and thus social identity also answer the question of “who are we not?”, thereby telling a story of outsiders and outlining who is not part of the in-group and in how far these people are negatively distinguished from Party membership. Regarding the narrative of outgroups, it discusses how its vanguard role distinguishes it from average citizens. More importantly, however, it separates itself from badly behaving Party members who are not considered worthy of being Party members anymore. In the following, I will first discuss the concept of a political myth before elaborating on the social identity in Party ideology in greater detail.

### Political myths

The term “myth” has many meanings depending on the context that it is used in and the topic that it is applied to. In common understanding and everyday language, a myth usually refers to “an ancient, fictional story, especially one dealing with gods, heroes etc.” (‘Myth’ n.d.). In line with this understanding, myths are also the topic of religious studies and anthropology where scholars, for example, analyse stories of spiritual or divine beings as part of the myths of a culture or religion.

In addition to this understanding, myths are also a topic for political scientists. They are concerned with a specific kind of myth, i.e. political myth. As Tudor points out, these can for example include national revolutionary myths, but also founding myths like the myth of the Roman Empire (Tudor 1972). In the understanding of Tudor, a political myth is a way of narrating a political story in a dramatic form. It is thus not entirely fictional, but it aims to advance a very specific interpretation of historic events or facts. He holds that “a political myth, as I understand it, is one which tells the story of a political society. In many cases, it is the story of a political society that existed or was created in the past and which must now be restored or preserved. In other cases, it concerns a political society destined to be created in the future, and it is told for the purpose of encouraging men to hasten its advent.” (Tudor 1972, p. 138). Thus, in this understanding, a political myth is not only a dramatic



narrative of interpreted events, but it also aims to foster concrete political outcomes. It wants to preserve or create a certain kind of political society that is the topic of the myth. In a similar vein, Bottici and Challand argue that a myth should be understood as “a continual process of work on a common narrative by which the members of a social group can provide significance to their political conditions and experience” (Bottici and Challand 2006, p. 316). This means that the important basis of a political myth is that it is a narration of interpreted facts that a group of people commonly works on developing. In other words, a political myth is nothing god-given, but it is actively created by humans. The political myth of the Party is such a narration that provides an interpretation of the role of the Party and its members in past, present and future.

Where do we come from?

History and the interpretation of it is a core element of the CCP’s social identity. History provides a narrative for the Party where it comes from, who it is and what it achieved. This means that the Party’s interpretation of history justifies its right to existence and to govern. At the same time, it provides Party members with an understanding of the organisation they are part of. This understanding forms the basis of the Party’s social identity and it offers a narrative of why the Party is special. The historic narrative of the Party mainly centres on a story of heroism. This historic account consists of four elements: the Party’s experience of struggle and suffering, its rise to power against all odds, the narrative that only the Communist Party was able to achieve this and a resulting historic responsibility.

The first element of the Party’s historic narrative of heroism is that of commitment, struggle and suffering. The Party argues that the heroic struggle and unwavering commitment of Party members was necessary to achieve revolutionary victory. In other words, in terms of social identity, this historic understanding implies that Party members are brave and committed heroes struggling for the revolutionary mission of the Party. For example, an essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline* argues that “during the years of armed struggle, numerous Party members and armed revolutionaries did not hesitate to sacrifice their blood and advance wave upon wave to attain the victory of revolution” (Li Y. 15.03.1987 (2014), p. 24). In other words, Party members are willing to suffer hardships and sacrifice everything, including their lives, to achieve the goals of the Party. As Xi Jinping points out, socialism with Chinese characteristics was “built on the base of our Party’s long struggle” (Xi 17.11.2012) and it was achieved at the cost of “untold hardships and high prices that had to be paid” (Xi 17.11.2012).

Secondly, the Party’s interpretation of its history includes the story of its rise against all odds. It argues that, based on its heroic struggle and suffering, it was able to rise to power even though outward circumstances were dire. In its own words, after the establishment of the PRC, the Party “turned from an oppressed, encircled and massacred organisation into a ruling party” (N.N. 17.01.1981 (2014), p. 7). In other words, the Party was able to rise like a phoenix from the ashes and achieve

revolutionary victory. As Xi Jinping points out, “for 95 years, our Party surged forward with great momentum on a glorious course. Our Party is the world’s first ruling party that originally only had around 50 members and developed into a party with more than 88 million members.” (Xi 28.06.2016). The same message of the Party as a small organisation rising to strength and power is also conveyed in an essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline* that argues that the Party’s revolutionary path went “from small to large, from weak to strong, incessantly overcoming difficulties and marching towards victory” (Xu Jingye 01.04.2006 (2014), p. 15).

Thirdly, the Party claims that it was the only organisation that was able to achieve this rise to power under difficult circumstances and through struggle and the willingness to suffer. According to the Party, this was the case because the Party organisation and its members were endowed with outstanding characteristics and particular wisdom that allowed them to achieve this success. For example, Deng Xiaoping argues that “in the past, no matter how weak the Party was and no matter how harsh the conditions were, it [the Party] still had strong fighting strength because we have Marxist and communist ideals” (N.N. 15.12.1985 (2014), p. 4). Additionally, in an essay in *Party style and Party discipline*, it is argued that “a magic weapon of our Party that gives it irresistible fighting capacity and that allows it to conquer the enemy and win victory is ‘iron discipline’” (Han G. 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 12). Jiang Zemin sums up these characteristics when arguing that “the fighting strength [of the Party] originates in communist ideals, convictions and iron discipline” (Jiang Z. 27.09.1991). In the eyes of the Party, no other organisation could have achieved the same success.

The fourth element of the Party’s narrative of history is its historic responsibility (*lishi renwu* 历史任务) and historic mission (*lishi shiming* 历史使命). In the Party’s own understanding, its struggle and the resulting victory endow it with a particular historic mission and responsibility to advance its cause. For example, it is argued that “the Party has always made the liberation and development of the productive forces its historic responsibility and it consistently pays attention to building the economy and raising the living standard of the people” (Jiang C. 12.2002, p. 2). Jiang Zemin stated that “our Party is the vanguard of the proletariat and entered the stage of history as its representative” (Jiang C. 12.2002, p. 2). In order to be able to fulfil this historic responsibility, the Party demands that when studying its members should “closely grab the focal points, emphasise study, understand and grab the basic experiences of the Party, the scientific content of the important thought of the Three Represents, strengthen and advance the responsibility of Party building in the new era and the large questions of the historic responsibilities of the Party in the new century and the goals of struggle” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 5). Party members and cadres should “consciously use the important thought of the Three Represents to guide one’s ideology and behaviour, eagerly become firm realisers of the important thought of the Three Represents and better shoulder the historic mission entrusted to them

by the Party and the people” (N.N. 01.08.2003 (2014), p. 11). What the Party calls for here is that Party members and cadres are aware of the historic responsibility and mission of the Party. They have a mission and duty that others do not have.

Who are we now?

Based on the Party’s understanding of its historic origins, this chapter shows how the narrative of heroism and greatness is still reflected in the Party’s contemporary understanding of itself. I argue that the social identity that the Party offers to its members here is one of an organisation that has outstanding qualities and high demands for its members and cadres and it struggles for higher goals. The Party’s historical identity as a military organisation engaged in struggle is still reflected here. For Party members, this means that the Party argues that they are expected to be better than average people, be brave and more committed. In short, this social identity is supposed to tell Party members that they are members of an organisation that is different, better and more enlightened than others.

*The ongoing importance of struggle*

The first contemporary element of the Party’s social identity is the ongoing importance of the Party’s military tradition and struggle. Although the Party has been a ruling organisation for more than seventy years, its military tradition and the continuing importance of a narrative of struggle are an important part of the answer to the question of who or what the Party considers itself to be now. The goals of the Party have to be struggled for and problems that the Party encounters along the way have to be addressed with the means of struggle. As Hu Yaobang pointed out in a speech, “we have to surmount every difficulty and eagerly struggle for building a strong socialist country that is modernised and that has a high level of democracy and civilisation” (Hu Y. 01.01.1982 (2014), p. 18). Elsewhere, the Party argues that “only if we strongly uphold the fine tradition of arduous struggle and let the noble sentiment and strength of Party members influences the masses and work hard, we can reach the goal of building a moderately well-off society” (Chen P. 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 11). The tool of struggle is still an important one for the Party to reach its goals (for further examples of this element of the Party’s social identity see table 3).

“Arduous struggle” is also considered to be part of the “Party’s fine traditions” (优良传统 *youliang chuantong*) or fine work style (优良作风 *youliang zuofeng*). In other words, it is part of what the Party considers its core values and its DNA. It argues that among its fine traditions are “the connection of theory and practice, closely connecting with the masses, criticism and self-criticism, modesty and prudence, arduous struggle and democratic centralism” (N.N. 30.08.1989 (2014), p. 12). Elsewhere, the Party points out that “education in the Party’s fine traditions and work style have to be strengthened” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 13). These include “the work style of connecting theory

and practice, closely connecting with the masses, criticism and self-criticism and diligence and thriftiness and arduous struggle” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 13). This means that the Party holds struggle to be of ongoing importance. It is a heritage of its guerrilla war tradition and the Party still considers itself to be a fighting organisation willing to engage in struggle to implement its goals.

The object of struggle, however, is not permanent or fixed. On the contrary, it can be adopted according to outward circumstances. Particularly throughout the 2000s, struggle often appeared together with corruption. In other words, the Party argues that a main object of struggle now is monetary misbehaviour among the ranks of Party members and cadres. As Jiang Zemin points out in a speech, “the building of party style and clean government and the struggle of anticorruption concerns the life and death of the Party and the state” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 3). Leading cadres are required to “consciously struggle against all kinds of corrupt phenomena” (Fu J. 1.1.2003 (2014), p. 10) and “every Party member has to struggle against behaviour breaching political discipline and ensure that every measure and policy of the Central Committee is implemented” (Chen P. 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 10).

The militarisation of language

The Party’s military tradition and the importance of a fighting spirit are more generally reflected in the Party’s use of military language. Link points out that military metaphors largely derived from guerrilla war terminology are common in official language in the PRC (Link 2013). Although more prominent in the Maoist period, militarised language is overall still a feature of Party ideology. For Party members and their social identity, it means that they are part of an organisation that still heroically fights for its goals. Additionally, military language still has the potential to create a “rally around the flag” effect (Baum 2002; Aday 2010), thereby strengthening the feeling of belonging to the Party as an organisation and rhetorically uniting a group against an outer enemy and in common hardship.

The most prominent military metaphor in Party language is probably—and not surprisingly—the one of struggle. As pointed out above, for example the efforts of the Party against corruption and other incorrect behaviour are portrayed as a battle that the Party has to fight (Chen Yun 15.07.1985 (2014); Zhongguo gongchandang quanguo daibiao dahui 11.10.1983 (2014)). The phrase that is repeatedly used to refer to this struggle is *dou zheng* (斗争), indicating the military nature of the task at hand. However, the struggle against corruption and lack of Party discipline is not the only context in which the phrase *douzheng* is used. *Douzheng* is an extremely common phrase in CCP ideological narratives and can describe a variety of tasks and goals. First and foremost, it obviously appears in the Chinese translation of the Marxist concept of ‘class struggle’ (*jieji douzheng* 阶级斗争) and hence has to be a common phrase for CCP ideology. Apart from this phrase, *douzheng* is also used to describe the struggle to achieve core political goals of the CCP. A verb that is commonly used for this as well is

*fendou* (奋斗 to fight). *Fendou* is used, for example, to refer to the struggle to “build a strong socialist country that is modernised and that has a high level of democracy and civilisation” (Hu Y. 01.01.1982 (2014), p. 18), “for ultimately building communism” (Yang H. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 11) or also for “building a moderately well-off society and innovate the undertaking of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (Shen 08.2003, p. 12). Through using military language, the Party signals to its members that close connections, loyalty and commonality—important for military organisations—are what characterises the Party as an organisation too.

In addition to the metaphors of struggle, the Party also weaponises its ideological constructs. They are thereby also included in the Party’s militarised language and usage of metaphors of war. For example, in an essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline*, Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the ‘Three Represents’ are presented as ideological weapons (*wuzhuang* 武装) in the Party’s struggle (Zhou S. 01.08.2003 (2014)). Elsewhere, it is argued that “the Chinese Communist Party that takes the scientific worldview of Marxism as its weapon is different from other revolutionary classes in history.” (Han G. 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 19) and “the Three Represents and Hu Jintao’s analysis of education on fighting corruption and building a clean government are an important weapon to carry out this task” (Zhang Y. 15.01.2006 (2014), p. 20). In other words, the Party sees its ideological constructs as weapons in a fight. This is not only in line with its tradition of struggle and the use of militarised language. It also sets the Party apart from other people and organisations because it has access to these special weapons, whereas others do not.

Table 3: Elements of the Party social identity

Elements of Party social identity	Examples
Willingness to keep up struggle and fight	<p>“We certainly have to raise the spirit of courage, dare to assume responsibility and not fear hardship. We have to overcome all kinds of obstructions and at the same time struggle against any kinds of unhealthy tendencies.” (N.N. 17.01.1981 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“When the economy has developed and the lives of the people have improved, we have to warn people including Party members that we have to maintain the tradition of arduous struggle. Even when the economy has improved, we have to promote arduous struggle. We have to hold on to education in hard work and plain living.” (Jiang Z. 01.10.1993 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“Comrade Deng Xiaoping pointed out that the question of Party discipline and honest and clean government is a question of life and death for</p>

	<p>the Party. We have to grasp with both hands and both hands have to be firm and fight corruption in the process of reform and opening up. We have to support and advance the Party's fine traditions and only in supporting the fine tradition of arduous struggle can the fight against corruption succeed." (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>"We have to rush to the front in situations of difficulty or danger. We have to train the spirit of sacrifice and tribute and in situations where national security and the wealth of the people are under threat, Party members should visibly take the lead and put themselves forward. We should go to the most dangerous and hardest posts and develop real political characteristics of a Party member in the new era." (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25)</p> <p>"From beginning to end, we have to maintain the spirit of struggle and of revolution. We have to dare to struggle and be good at struggling to achieve our goals in an era of large social changes." (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019)</p>
<p>Outstanding qualities of Party members</p>	<p>"We have to develop the spirit of marching forward courageously. We have to dare talking and dare doing things. We should not be afraid to talk and to do things, we should not be afraid of criminal behaviour and we should not be afraid of retaliation." (Hu 01.01.1982 (2014), p. 32)</p> <p>"Party members have to take the struggle for the interests of the people as their main mission. They have to arduously struggle and shed their blood in sacrifice. However, this is not for their personal interests but for the well-being of the people." (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 25.02.1982 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>"When entering the Party, every Party member has to swear an oath that we will struggle for communism all his life and that he will sacrifice everything for the interests of the people." (Wan L. 10.07.1982 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>"Every Party member has to have a bright organisational concept and be fully conscious of individual political responsibilities within the</p>

	<p>Party. Building on a strong basis of faith, he should be determined, begin now and with himself to throw himself in into the great struggle and fight for a satisfactory victory for the entire Party.” (N.N. 17.11.1983 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“What is the spirit of Yugong? To sum it up, it is the spirit of arduous struggle, being persistent and dauntless, of immersing oneself in solid work and of working with perseverance. It is the spirit of knowing that something is difficult and still doing it, of not fearing sufferance and of not giving up even if the goal is not within reach.” (N.N. 30.01.1986 (2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“A real Communist Party member has to remain clear-headed even in situations of achievement and victory. Under the conditions of setbacks and losses, he also has to be good at summarising experiences and lessons. Despite all setbacks he should keep trying and be persistent and dauntless in struggling for the improvement of socialism and ultimately the large goal of building a communist system.” (N.N. 28.02.1987 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“We have to know what things can and cannot be done, take the lead in honouring the law, discipline and virtue, be good at grabbing oneself, under all circumstances patiently bear hardship, be able to withstand temptation, defend character, administer small matters, withstand power, money and the tests of female beauty. Do not say anything not in line with Party principles, not do anything breaking organisation discipline, be worthy of the group, the family, earnestly do things and be a dignified person.” (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25)</p>
<p>Put one’s own interests last</p>	<p>“Of course, when we promote arduous struggle, this does not mean that our comrades like during the Long March climb snowy mountains and march over grassy plains and they do not have to starve either because the circumstances have changed. But being a Party organisation and a Party member certainly does not mean that they can ask for anything outside of Party and government regulations. On the contrary, they should have a spirit of being concerned about problems first and be the last to be satisfied with their solution and control their own behaviour.</p>

	<p>Then they can lead the people and obtain any victory in building socialism with Chinese characteristics.” (N.N. 15.05.1987 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Party members and particularly leading cadres at all levels have to develop the Party’s fine work style. They have to put the interests of the people in the first place and accept bitterness first and enjoyment later.” (Gao 15.10.1993 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“All party member and cadres should share in the joys and sorrows of the people, hardship comes first and enjoyment later, first support the people in getting rich and not only contemplate one’s own wealth and certainly not use one’s power for personal advantage.” (Cao 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“No matter how society develops, for Party members the principle of wholeheartedly serving the people will never change and the principles of bitterness first, enjoyment later will never change either. All leading cadres of the Party have to be honest in performing their official duties, arduously struggle, under all circumstances be loyal to the Party’s and the people’s cause and not change the original intention of the revolution.” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“Leading cadres have to support the principle of being diligent and thrifty and take the lead in building an enterprise through hard work. Leading cadres have to ‘be concerned about problems first and be the last to be satisfied with their solution’, accept bitterness first and enjoyment later and ‘deeply cherish loving the people’s heart’, scrupulously abide by their responsibility for the people, be good at working for the policy of making the people rich and do things that are beneficial for the people.” (Zhang Y. 15.03.2002 (2014), p. 15)</p> <p>“Only correct worldview, outlook on life and values can cause the concept of serving the people, arduously struggle, concept of bitterness first and enjoyment later and offering happiness as a tribute. Only then can Marxism-Leninism, Mao-Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the Three Represents serve as ideological</p>
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	<p>weapons and be firm communist ideals and principles.” (Zhou 01.08.2003 (2014), pp. 26f.)</p> <p>“Leading cadres should arduously struggle and not be luxurious, wasteful or pleasure-loving.” (Wu G. 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11)</p>
<p>The Party’s vanguard role</p>	<p>“Party style and Party discipline reflect the Party’s character as the vanguard of the proletariat.” (Li C. 31.12.1984 (2014), p. 19)</p> <p>“Party members and leading cadres are the backbone of the Party’s undertaking. Whether or not the vanguard role of the Party can be upheld does not only affect the honour or disgrace and image of the individual but also the Party’s perennial ruling status and the development of the Party’s undertaking. The vanguard role of Party members and the Party have to be preserved together.” (Yang 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“Party members and cadres should protect the Party constitution, honour Party discipline, thoroughly solve the problems arising in Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline and always keep up the vanguard nature and the pure spirit of the Party.” (Wu G. 15.03.2005 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“Leading cadres should be models. They should study important documents and get Party members and cadres to uphold the basic requirements of the vanguard spirit in the new era.” (N.N. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 18)</p> <p>“The vanguard role is a basic characteristic of Marxism, it is the destiny of the Party and the locus of its strength. It is a basic responsibility of a Marxist ruling party to build the vanguard role.” (N.N. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 17)</p> <p>“Honesty in performing one’s duties is among the characteristics of a vanguard proletarian party.”(Xu 01.04.2006 (2014), p. 14)</p> <p>“Our Party is a ruling Party. The vanguard status and the purity of the Party, the image and the prestige of the Party doe not only concern the destiny of the Party, but also the destiny of the country, the destiny of the people and the destiny of the nation.” (Xi 11.09.2021)</p>

*“Be better than average people”: The Party’s view of Party members*

The second part of the Party’s answer to the question “who are we now?” is one of greatness. The Party holds that its members occupy an outstanding position in relation to ordinary people. It has higher behavioural standards for them, expects them to have outstanding qualities and characteristics and to negate their own importance for the greater good, i.e. the organisation and the people. In other words, the Party’s social identity here suggests to Party members that they have to work harder and be overall better than ordinary people. In this sub-chapter, I will discuss three aspects with regard to the Party’s views of its members. Firstly, I will show how the Party holds that its members should have outstanding qualities and how this reflects on the Party. Secondly, I will explain how the Party believes that Party members, in being better than others, should de-emphasise their own importance and unite themselves with the interests of the organisation and the people. Thirdly, I briefly discuss how the Party’s particular behavioural standards for Party members result in a separate system of justice that underlines how Party members are supposed to be judged with different standards.

Firstly, the Party holds that Party members should have outstanding qualities and evince outstanding behaviour. As already discussed above, their task is to fight for the Party’s goals and overall engage in the Party’s struggle. Additionally, the Party points out that Party members and cadres’ characteristics and behaviour should be especially good and they should engage in behaviour that ordinary people might not engage in. For example, the Party holds that “a real Communist Party member has to remain clear-headed even in situations of achievement and victory. Under the conditions of setbacks and losses, he also has to be good at summarising experiences and lessons. Despite setbacks, he should keep trying and be persistent and dauntless in struggling for the improvement of socialism and ultimately the large goal of building a communist system.” (N.N. 28.02.1987 (2014), p. 4). As obvious in this quote, the Party holds that a good Party member should be able to do his work well in all situations, not waver even in case of setback or defeat and maintain the highest ideals and standards. This is also obvious when the Party demands that “we have to know what things can and cannot be done, take the lead in honouring the law, discipline and virtue, be good at disciplining oneself, under all circumstances patiently bear hardship, be able to withstand temptation, defend character, administer small matters, withstand power, money and the tests of female beauty. Do not say anything not in line with Party principles, not do anything that breaks organisation discipline, be worthy of the group, the family, earnestly do things and be a dignified person.” (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25). In other words, the message the Party sends to its members is “you are better than average people because you are a Party member”.

The demand to be better than others is closely connected to the Party’s self-understanding as a vanguard. Party members are expected to be more advanced and “until the end protect the advanced

character of Party members in ideology and virtue and fully bring out the vanguard model function of Party members” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 11). This advanced status of Party members and cadres can also be seen in the repeated appearance of the vanguard role together with the concept of purity (*chunjiexing* 纯洁性). The Party speaks of the “spiritual force of the vanguard status and purity of Party members” (Wu Guanzheng 15.03.2005 (2014), p. 2) and it points out how undisciplined and corrupt behaviour “greatly damages the vanguard status and purity of cadres” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianchabu 15.09.2000 (2014), p. 12). In other words, honesty in office and the fight against corruption are part of the outstanding self-understanding of the Party and its members as well. For example, the Party argues about itself that it is “the vanguard of the Chinese working class whose basic purpose is to wholeheartedly serve the people. The Party’s vanguard role determines the inevitability of the fight against corruption.” (J. Zhong 15.08.2001 (2014), p. 25). It points out that “one of the main manifestations of a proletarian ruling Party is honesty in performing one’s official duties”(Xu Jingye 01.04.2006 (2014), p. 14) and that “for preserving the vanguard role of party members, one has to preserve upright and clean hands and use noble personalities to gain the confidence of the people” (Yang H. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 12).

The Party transports this narrative to Party members and symbolically tries to commit them to it through the Party oath. Upon joining the Party, every Party member has to swear an oath on the Party that ritualistically includes him or her into the Party. The text of the current oath that new Party members take in front of the Party flag reads as follows:

*“It is my will to join the Communist Party of China, uphold the Party's program, observe the provisions of the Party constitution, fulfill a Party member's duties, carry out the Party's decisions, strictly observe Party discipline, guard Party secrets, be loyal to the Party, work hard, fight for communism throughout my life, be ready at all times to sacrifice my all for the Party and the people, and never betray the Party.”* (Communist Party of China n.d.).

Here as well, it is obvious that Party members are expected to display outstanding behaviour. They should work hard, be willing to fully submit to the Party’s leadership and be ready to sacrifice everything for the Party and its mission. By taking this oath, they become members of an organisation that in its own narrative has a history of heroism and that demands outstanding behaviour and commitment from its members. In order to remind Party members of their outstanding position anew, the Party recently encouraged them to retake their oath. General Secretary Xi Jinping and his six colleagues from the Politburo Standing Committee took the lead and renewed their Party oath at the site of the first CCP National Party Congress in Shanghai in front of the Party flag shortly after the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in October 2017 (‘CPC Leaders Takes Party Admission Oath at Site of First CPC National

Congress' 31.10.2017). The place is highly symbolic and retaking the Party oath there links the narrative of historic heroism and the element of outstandingness in the Party's social identity.

The second important aspect is that the Party expects its members to decrease their perception of their own centrality and self-importance. In other words, Party members have to put the interests of everyone else before their own. For example, the Party argues that "Party members, and particularly leading cadres at all levels, have to develop the Party's fine work style. They have to put the interests of the people in the first place and accept bitterness first and enjoyment later." (Gao 15.10.1993 (2014), p. 4). The theme that Party members and cadres should be willing to accept bitterness and hardship first and only strive for enjoyment later (吃苦在前, 享受在后 *chiku zai qian, xiangshou zai hou*) is common in Party ideological narratives. Party members and particularly leading cadres "should arduously struggle and not be luxurious, wasteful or pleasure-loving." (Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11). In the eyes of the Party, this characteristic sets Party members apart from ordinary people because they are advanced, work for and in the spirit of the Party's traditions and are willing to strive for the interests of the people before considering their own interests and desires.

Thirdly, the Party's own system of justice underlines that Party members are considered to be different and separate from ordinary people. The Party has its own behavioural standards for Party members that are codified in the Party's discipline regulations (Zhongguo Gongchangdang 01.10.2018) and the Party constitution (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017). According to the Party constitution, Party discipline includes political discipline, organisational discipline, discipline of honest behaviour, mass discipline, work discipline and lifestyle discipline. It argues that "Party members have to consciously accept the restrictions of Party discipline" (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017). Additionally and in line with the principles of democratic centralism, "individual Party members obey the Party organisation, the minority obeys the majority, lower-level organisations obey higher-level organisations and the entire Party and all Party members obey the Party Congress and the Central Committee." (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017).

The Party-internal system of justice, the commissions for discipline inspection, enforce the Party's behavioural requirements (T. Gong 2008; X. Guo 2014; L. Li 2016; 2017). According to the Party constitution, it is their task to protect Party rules and regulations as well as the implementation of the Party's policies. Additionally, they should ensure that the Party is "strictly governed, strengthen the building of Party style and organise and coordinate anticorruption work" (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017). To fulfil this mandate, the commissions should "investigate and handle rather important or complicated cases of Party organisations and Party members breaking the Party constitution and other inner-Party regulations" (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017). In other words, the Party's own

behavioural regulations that are valid only for Party members are enforced by an organisation that is also limited to handling behaviour of Party members, separating Party members from ordinary citizens.

Where do we go?

The third question of the Party social identity is the question of the future path. Next to ideas about where the Party comes from and what it is now, narratives in Party ideology also contain elements of the Party's ideas of the future. Like it is the case with past and present discussed above, ideas of the future here do not mean that the Party sketches out a detailed plan for the coming ten, twenty or thirty years. Rather, the future path in terms of the Party's social identity implies that Party ideology provides an understanding of how the Party sees itself in relation to the future it wants to move towards. More concretely, the Party portrays itself as an entity that guards the truth on good paths of development and future directions. For Party members, this means that the social identity of the Party as defined here includes an element of truth, correct knowledge and of being part of an organisation that knows where to go and how to go there. Importantly, this future to be reached under the leadership of the Party is expected to be positive. However, at the same time, the Party engages in a mythification of future goals that are not concretely defined and where the Party is engaged in an ongoing mission. The right to interpret this mission and to choose the correct path following from the guardianship of truth again includes Party members into an outstanding elite mission and strengthens the social identity of being part of a special organisation.

### *The guardian of truth*

The first element of the Party's understanding of the future and its position in it is that it sees itself as the guardian of truth. The Party argues that it holds the key to historic progress, development and renewal and thereby to the path of modernity. This claim to be the guardian of truth and of holding the key to the future is reflected in three main aspects. First, the Party underlines that it is the sole organisation that is capable of interpreting history correctly and of drawing correct conclusions from it. This leads to the second point: the Party's self-understanding as an organisation that, historically and ideologically, simply knows the correct path to the future. Thirdly, this future in the understanding of the Party is good and it is the responsibility of the Party to lead the Chinese people onto this path towards a bright future.

The first element of the Party's claim to be the guardian of truth is its alleged singular capability of interpreting history correctly. The Party holds that it alone is capable of understanding history and of drawing the right conclusions from it for future development. For example, in an article discussing the correct understanding of history in the era of economic construction, it is argued that "some people contradict and tear apart the history of the CCP. They say that the history of the Communist Party is one of 'incessantly committing mistakes' and even that the development of the economy was

'slow or even stagnant'. In their view, only the policy of reform and opening up is finally 'the right way'. Some people also say that the result that China achieved [with reforms] was to 'introduce capitalism'. These viewpoints are extremely absurd and contradict the facts of history." (Jiang C. 12.2002, p. 6). In other words, the Party argues that it knows how to interpret its history correctly and any alternative interpretations, particularly interpretations pointing to the flaws of the Party, are considered to be false. This claim to accurately interpreting history is also reflected in Xi Jinping's statement that "we should neither negate the pre-reform-and-opening-up phase in comparison with the post-reform-and-opening-up phase, nor the converse" (Xi 2014 (05.01.2013)). Additionally, it is also visible in Jiang Zemin's remarks on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CCP in 2001. Jiang argues that "eighty years of history of the CCP were eighty years of adapting Marxism to the Chinese situation and of innovation. Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the Three Represents are Marxism developed in the Chinese situation. They are the summary of correct principles and experiences from the Chinese revolution and construction. They are the crystallisation of the wisdom of the Party." (Wu D. 01.10.2001 (2014), p. 12). In other words, in the narrative of the Party, it knows how to interpret history. Additionally, the way it has interpreted it in the past is correct and the conclusions it is drawing from these interpretations are correct as well.

Following from the correct interpretation of history, the Party understands itself as holding the key to the future. In this narrative, the Party claims that it has access to exclusive ideological knowledge and thereby privileged access to understanding and reaching the future. For example, Han Guang, former governor of Heilongjiang province, argues that "our Party is a proletarian ruling party that represents the largest part of the people while knowing the course of history. It can guide its actions according to the laws of historical and dialectic materialism. It can therefore rely on its own strength to overcome inner-Party negative factors and dark sides and incessantly move forward" (Han G. 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 19). Because it claims to know the correct path to the future, the Party argues that "under the leadership of the Party, China will become a modern, highly civilised and democratic socialist state" (Bo 15.03.1984 (2014), p. 5) and it points out that "from beginning to end, we have to guarantee the leadership of our Party for the Chinese people in order to be this era's vanguard for the rejuvenation of the nation and be its backbone" (Tang 11.01.2018). To say this in the words of Xi Jinping: "only if there is socialism, we can rescue China and only if there is socialism with Chinese characteristics, we can develop China." (Xi 17.11.2012). In other words, the Party says that because it is the guardian of truth and knows the correct path into the future, it is necessary to follow it and submit to its leadership. "The Chinese Communist Party is the backbone of the people of the entire country to face all kinds of interior and exterior dangers and challenges. It is the strong leading core of persevering with and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics. The success or failure of the great

undertaking of Party building directly impacts upon whether the Party's vanguard role can be preserved and whether the Party can complete the historic mission it shoulders." (Tang 11.01.2018).

The future that the Party outlines under its leadership is necessarily a bright one, both in economic and in political terms. Economically, the Party wants to achieve robust development and it holds that under its leadership, this can be reached and living standards improved. Deng Xiaoping points out that "in constructing socialism, productive forces should be developed; poverty is not socialism. When we construct socialism that is superior to capitalism, we have to first overcome poverty." (Chen Yuhua 01.2003, p. 21). Elsewhere, the Party holds that "China's main goal is development and to liberate itself from backwardness. We should ensure that national strength develops and the livelihood of the people is improved" (Wan Q. and Huang 12.2002, p. 3). At the same time, the Party does not only want to overcome poverty and backwardness under its leadership. It wants to reach more than this. The Party argues that "reform should be beneficial for developing the productive forces of society, for building socialism with Chinese characteristics, for a thriving, powerful and prosperous country and for people's prosperity and well-being" (N.N. 15.01.1985 (2014), p. 4). In other words, it wants to develop a wealthy and developed socialist country that can "satisfy the growing material and cultural needs of the people" (N.N. 15.01.1985 (2014), p. 6).

Politically and socially, the Party claims that it is the only actor that is able to guarantee the modernisation and rejuvenation of China. It argues that "the basic content of the political line advanced by the Central Committee is to unite all people in the country, mobilise all active factors, be dedicated to the same cause, do one's best, aim high and better, cheaper and faster to build a modernised strong socialist country" (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 02.1980). The Party holds that a strong and powerful nation can only be built under its leadership. Xi Jinping points out that "the CPC is the central force for leading and bringing together people of all ethnic groups in advancing the great cause of Chinese socialism. It shoulders a historic mission and faces the tests of our times." (Xi 2014 (17.03.2013)). The concept of a strong and powerful nation under the Party's leadership is also embedded in Xi's slogans of the "Chinese Dream" (*Zhongguomeng* 中国梦) and "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people" (中华民族伟大复兴 *zhonghua minzu weida fuxing*). Xi promises an outstanding future and the resurrection of China under CCP rule to old strength and greatness. He argues that

*"our generation of Communists should draw on past progress and chart a new course for the future. We should strengthen Party building, rally all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation around us in a common effort to build our country and develop our nation, and continue to boldly advance towards the goal of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."* (Xi 2014 (29.11.2012), p. 38).

In other words, the Party does not only understand itself as the guardian of truth, but the result from its leadership is also supposed to be positive. This result will be an economically developed and politically strong country. To achieve this, the Party sees itself as being in a leading position and able to deliver a bright future. Party members—as members of this organisation—are included in the mythical narrative of the Party as the deliverer of leadership and future greatness.

### *The mythification of goals*

The mythification of goals is a strategy closely related to the Party's self-portrayal as the guardian of truth. The Party presents itself as being engaged in an ongoing yet not explicitly defined mission with lofty goals in the future. It is the right of the Party to define how this mission is advancing and where it will go. For Party members, this means that they are part of an organisation that claims to have the willingness and power to define and shape the future and that has interpretative power over this future.

First of all, the mythification of political goals is embedded in the Party's major ideological slogans. With regard to the reinterpretation of Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" under the Hu Jintao administration who started propagating the slogan of the "Three for the People", Holbig argues that "the key to the ongoing legitimation of party rule [...] is the party's skill in redefining this historical mission, creating a moving target that is always sufficiently far away to justify the CCP's long-term monopoly on leadership" (Holbig 2013, p. 72). Although Holbig's topic of research in this article is the role of ideology for the legitimation of the CCP's rule on a broader scale, the argument is still relevant to the Party's social identity. The mythification of the goals of Party ideological narratives and the ongoing work for these goals that lie in the future account for an important aspect of the myth of the Party. It underpins its claim to enlightened, innovative and continuous rulership.

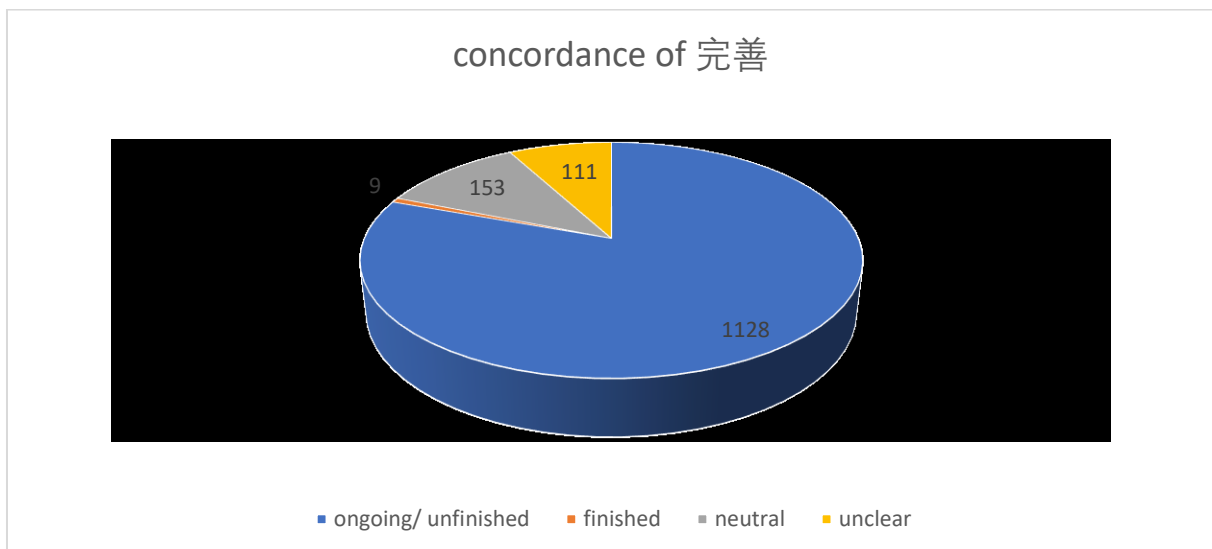
The ongoing and future-oriented character of the Party's mission is also reflected in the language used to describe the Party's work and tasks. Here, the Party frequently uses forward-pointing terminology such as *buduan* (不断 continuous, uninterrupted), *jinyibu* (进一步 further onwards), *chixu* (持续 continue, persist), *zhubu* (逐步 progressively) and *bugou wanshan* (不够完善 insufficiently refined). All these keywords indicate the necessity for progress and continuous work and improvement of a condition and hint at ongoing work towards a future goal. For example, in a speech to a discussion forum on strengthening the Party's governing ability in 2004, He Yong, at the time deputy secretary of the CCDI and minister of supervision, pointed out that "we have to see that the current construction of the Party's governing ability still faces some problems: For example, the Party's methods of governing and leadership and the leadership and work systems are not sufficiently refined" (He Y. 15.09.2004 (2014), p. 3). Similarly, in a speech to a leading cadres' work conference on incorruptibility and self-discipline, Liu Xirong, at the time deputy secretary of the CCDI, explains that "while we have



achieved certain results, we also have to face a number of problems and insufficiencies. Among these are mainly that some systemic regulations and policy measures have not been sufficiently developed and completed, some already existing systemic regulations have not yet been implemented effectively and the supervision, investigation and handling of some cases of breaching discipline and anticorruption regulations is not sufficient [...].” (Liu X. 01.09.2005 (2014), p. 5). Additionally, it is made clear in an essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline* that this ongoing mission and necessity for improvement is also relevant to core ideological and organisational aspects of the Party because it is argued that “the system of democratic centralism has to be supported and improved” (N.N. 01.01.2004 (2014), p. 16). Thus, the Party implies that it has a continuous future-oriented mission of further improving and refining its work and governing capacity.

The Party’s ongoing mission is also reflected in the way the Party describes the finalisation of projects. When using the term *wanshan* (完善 well-develop, excellent or also to refine, to improve), it is mostly used to describe an unfulfilled and ongoing mission. A concordance analysis of the term in Party documents reveals that in about 80% of the cases where the term was used (1128 out of 1401), it refers to an incomplete and ongoing process (see figure 2). In only 0.6% (9 out of 1401) of the cases, it clearly refers to a completed situation or a goal that was reached.

Figure 2: Concordance analysis of the term *wanshan* in CC and CCDI documents (in absolute numbers)



The use of the term *wanshan* together with other phrases indicating temporality refers to an ongoing mission of the Party. This mission is oriented towards goals in the future and, as Holbig argues, it can always be redefined. When the Party contends that a goal has not yet been reached, this reflects a future goal orientation. This kind of future goal orientation is also visible in the title of a corruption-related TV documentary broadcasted on Chinese television in 2016—*Yongyuan zai lushang* (永远在路上 Always on the Road). Together with the self-understanding of the Party as the guardian of truth,

this implies that the Party has a forward-looking orientation to a future for which it alone holds the key. For the social identity of Party members, this means that they are part of an exalted and particular organisation that offers for them to be part of this special mission and to be included in something greater. This element of social identity elevates Party members above ordinary people because they have access to this extraordinary organisation, its knowledge and mission. It thereby offers them a positive element of social identity that includes feelings of chosenness and elite status. It also gives them the feeling of being needed because there is always “one more job to do”—independent of what this “job” might look like. The definition of this mission is the right of the Party.

Who are we not?

An important part of a social identity, i.e. a group identity, is a narrative of who “we” are and who “we” are not. In other words, it is critical to define insiders and even more crucial to draw a boundary towards outsiders. The formation of ingroup-outgroup categories plays a core role in social identity and self-categorisation theory because it is the basis of both group formation and also the increase in salience of a particular social identity. As Turner points out, “[p]sychological group formation takes place to the degree that two or more people come to perceive and define themselves in terms of shared ingroup-outgroup categorization” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 51). Additionally, the distinction between ingroups and outgroups is also relevant to positive ingroup discrimination (Spears, Lea, and Lee 1990; Spears 2011). In the case of the Party, this ingroup-outgroup definition takes place on two levels. Firstly, the Party seeks to distinguish itself from non-Party members by underlining its elite status compared to average citizen. Secondly, and crucially important, it also distinguished itself from people who used to be part of the Party but through their incorrect behaviour disqualified themselves for Party membership. Because they are excluded from the ingroup that is the Party, they form an important outgroup from which the Party explicitly distinguishes itself.

The Party seeks to distinguish itself from people outside the Party by underlining its elite status that is embedded in its social identity. An important part of this is the self-perceived vanguard role of the Party. Because the Party sees itself as a vanguard with the responsibility of leading the people into a better future, it positively distinguishes itself from these people. This is reflected in the requirement that Party members should engage in rule by virtue (*dezhi* 德治) (Pang and Li 01.02.2001 (2014); Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014)) and “be models of building socialist spiritual civilization” (Huang S. 01.03.2005 (2014); Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianchabu 01.03.2005 (2014)). The Party holds that it is necessary to “uphold the vanguard role and purity of Party members and cadres” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019) and thereby underlines that Party members have a special position that distinguishes them from everyone

outside the Party. In other words, by perceiving itself as distinct from average citizens, the Party creates a positively connotated ingroup definition for Party members.

Additionally, the Party also creates an ingroup-outgroup distinction with Party members who do not fulfil Party standards and expectations anymore. This is firstly reflected in the way Party members are addressed. Of particular importance here is the address of “comrade” (*tongzhi* 同志). Although a widespread address in Maoist China, the term comrade is now mostly used to identify Party members and it appears in official documents<sup>10</sup>. For example, in titles of authoritative documents and references to speeches of high-ranking Party members, these are usually addressed as “comrade ...” who made an important speech (e.g. “Comrade Chen Yun” (Chen Yun 15.10.1985 (2014)), “Comrade He Yong” (He Y. 15.09.2004 (2014)) or “Comrade Wei Jianxing” (Wei 01.02.2002 (2014))). The address “comrade” can thereby create a sense of ingroup belonging because it is used for people who are affiliated with the Party. At the same time, the address of “comrade” can also be withdrawn when misdeeds of Party members and cadres are proven and they are punished and excluded from the ranks of the Party (X. Guo 2014). Furthermore, Kohlenberg points out that the address of “comrade” is not only used to denote ingroup membership, but can also be strategically used to emphasise or de-emphasise status differences among Party members and cadres (Kohlenberg 2016). Thus, the address of “comrade” can help denominate group boundaries and reflect who is and who is not part of the self-defined elite that is the Party.

The Party also relies on references to group sizes to delimitate the borders of ingroup-outgroup categories and symbolically exclude members from the ingroup. When describing who is “good” and thus a proper Party member and who is “bad” and therefore to be excluded from the group of the Party, it constantly describes the first group as large and the second one as small. For example, the Party argues that “within our Party, the largest part [绝大多数 *juedaduoshu*] of Party members and cadres is good. Punishing the very small number [极少数 *jishaoshu*] of corrupt elements also serves the goal of educating the large number.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 8). Similarly, it points out that “with regard to honouring Party discipline, the largest part [绝大多数 *juedaduoshu*] of Party members are good. But there are also some [一些 *yixie*] Party members and cadres whose concept of discipline has weakened and who even break law and discipline.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 10). As already briefly described in chapter 3, the Party thus uses phrases such as “the largest part” (绝大多数 *juedaduoshu*) to denote “good” Party members and expressions such as “a small part” (少数 *shaoshu*) or “the smallest part” (极少数 *jishaoshu*) as well as “a few” (一些 *yixie*) or “some” (有的 *youde*) to denote “bad” Party members. Thereby, Party members are, on the one hand, made aware

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<sup>10</sup> For the use of the term in the queer community in China see for example H. Bao 2018.

that they are part of a large group (Ji 2004; Link 2013) that has certain standards and expectations. On the other hand, they are also reminded that not complying with the Party's expectations can separate them from this group and turn them into outsiders. In other words, being part of a small group of Party members that behave badly means being separated from the Party. It implies the loss of elite status through membership in a group and it forfeits the ingroup address as a "comrade". In these ways, the Party draws and expresses boundaries not only towards non-Party members but importantly also towards disgraced Party members who thereby lose their special group membership.

### Summary

This chapter argues that the Party creates a political myth as a narrative of the Party's social identity. This political myth, the common narrative that Bottici and Challand speak of, consists of a narrative of where the Party comes from, i.e. Party history, who it wants to be in the present and where it wants to go in the future and how it positions itself in relation to the future. Additionally, it contains a narrative of insiders and outsiders, i.e. a narrative of who the Party is not and how it distinguishes itself from disgraced Party members. This political myth centres entirely on the Party and its self-understanding and experiences.

The political myth discussed in this chapter is supposed to provide Party members with a positive social identity. According to social identity and self-categorisation theory, members of a group strive for a social identity that distinguishes them positively from others. The political myth of the Party aims to do this. The core message of this myth is that the Party is an outstanding organisation and that this greatness of the Party is transferred to Party members because they are members of the organisation. The next question in relation to this social identity is how and why it should matter for Party members and cadres. This is the topic of the coming chapters.

## 5 Co-opting “rivals”: The relevance of Party social identity

Social identity has to be relevant. As a precondition for being successfully stimulated and made salient, a particular social identity has to occupy a central place among different social identities. This centrality of a social identity among other identity elements is what Oakes calls “accessibility” (Oakes 1987). She holds that “the relative centrality or importance of a particular group membership to an individual’s self-definition will be a major determinant of its relative accessibility for that individual” (Oakes 1987, p. 129). Simply speaking, accessibility means that a particular social identity is important for an individual. For example, national identity is generally more important for American citizens than it is for Germans. As Schildkraut points out, “Americans have been concerned with American national identity since the country’s founding” (Schildkraut 2011, p. 846) and they “are a highly patriotic group of people” (Schildkraut 2011, p. 847). The more important a social identity is for an individual, the more accessible it is. The more accessible a social identity is, the more easily it can be stimulated, i.e. the more easily it reacts to external signals. This chapter discusses the accessibility of Party identity, whereas the next chapter turns to the issue of stimulation.

For the Party, making Party social identity relevant to Party members and cadres is a challenging task. A core problem is that the Party’s social identity is not the only social identity that Party members might hold. A person can hold multiple social identities in parallel and activate them according to the situation he or she finds himself in. These can, for example, be a professional identity, but also a family identity or a cultural identity. In other words, the Party social identity has to “compete” with other social identity components in order to be central among an individual’s different social identity components. Only if this is the case, Party social identity can be activated when stimulated.

This chapter addresses the question of how the Party strives to make Party identity central and relevant to Party members. In order to achieve this, I argue that the Party broadens its social identity base and co-opts other possible social identity elements that Party members might hold. Potential alternative identity elements are rhetorically connected to the Party so that in this rhetoric they should ideally exist largely in tandem with the Party. In other words, by co-opting alternative identity elements, the Party seeks to eliminate “rival” social identity elements. It aims to send the message that the Party is the only option available for the construction of a positive personal identity. This strategy allows for increasing the centrality and thus accessibility of Party identity among its members’ social identity potpourri. Leaving as little room as possible for alternative social identity elements separate from the Party implies that, when stimulated, Party identity has a better chance of becoming salient.

In this chapter, I identify two main elements in Party ideology that can contribute to making Party identity relevant for Party members by co-opting potential alternative identity elements. The first one is paternalism. This is a form of family identity also found among Soviet communist parties. At the same time, it refers to traditional Confucian concepts of leadership as well. Paternalism allows

the Party in its relationship to individual Party members to assume both the family identity and at the same time also a form of cultural identity. By associating itself with these identity elements, the Party seeks to make Party-associated elements of identity more accessible for Party members.

The second element that contributes to making Party identity relevant are traditional models of leadership and role models. These are part of a potential cultural identity too, and, like in the paternalist narrative, the Party co-opts them as well. Through co-opting these traditional cultural elements, the Party limits the space for a cultural identity independent of the Party. Potential alternative social identities, like culture but also family identities, are reinterpreted to be linked to the Party.

Before discussing how the Party co-opts alternative identity elements, it is important to stress that increasing accessibility is only a first step of fostering the salience of a particular social identity. It is the precondition for a successful stimulation of a particular social identity. Only if a social identity is accessible, i.e. relevant and central, for an individual, it can be successfully stimulated. However, it is crucial to note that accessibility does not equal stimulation. Accessibility simply means that a social identity is relevant and “outranks” other social identity elements in centrality and importance. Stimulating a particular social identity to make it salient is a second step that depends on a highly accessible social identity but that takes place independently of it. Stimulation is context-specific and action-dependent and relies on but does not cause accessibility. In other words, accessibility and stimulation are two separate elements of the process of creating a salient social identity. This chapter addresses the first part of this process, i.e. accessibility of social identity. The stimulation of social identity is the topic of the next chapter.

Making it relevant: Cultural traditions and paternalism

#### *The resurrection of Confucianism*

Numerous scholars have observed the resurrection of Confucianism orchestrated by the CCP. The reappearance of Confucian elements in the official discourse of the CCP has been discussed in the literature both in the context of the Party’s relations with society as well as in the debates on international relations theory and China’s position in East Asia and the world, e.g. with the development of the concept of a harmonious world (see for example: Su 2009; Noesselt 2012; Qin 2007). Regarding domestic politics and the appearance of Confucian elements in the CCP’s political discourse, Zheng for example argues that the Party’s style of rulership toward Chinese society structurally resembles that of traditional emperorship in China (Zheng 2010; 2020b). Analysing official speeches of Xi Jinping, Noesselt deconstructs the role that such Confucian references play in CCP politics and comes to the conclusion that it serves as a means to relegitimate the Party-state and strengthen its grip on power rather than as a genuine turn to Confucian moral-philosophical principles (Noesselt 2015). Additionally, both Lin and Trevaskes (D. Lin and Trevaskes 2019) as well as Li et al. (P.

Li et al. 2004) study moral foundations of CCP governance and the introduction of concepts of morality into how the Party aims to govern. Furthermore, Nivison argued in the case of Maoist China that some of the Party's techniques of self-cultivation as well as criticism and self-criticism have roots in Confucian teachings (Nivison 1956). Thus, there is an increasing amount of scholarly work on the role of Confucianism for the CCP. However, this work is mostly focused on the relationship of the Party with Chinese society and also on the international realm. What is generally not researched is how traditional cultural elements reflect on the relationship of the Party with its members and cadres. This thesis offers an interpretation to fill this gap.

### *Paternalism*

The CCP's narrative of paternalism as it appears in Party ideology has two main sources. The first one is cultural. Traditional Confucian concepts of leadership contain a pronounced element of paternalism. This paternalism is embedded in the Confucian understanding of human relationships and the rights and duties attached to them. According to Confucian teachings, all human beings are embedded in the so-called five human relations between the emperor and his subordinate, between father and son, between husband and wife, between older brother and younger brother and between friends. All these relations are structured in a hierarchical manner and involve relations of authority. The superior person in such a relationship can rightfully demand respect and obedience from his subordinate. However, in addition to the hierarchical element, these relations are also structured in a manner of reciprocity, implying that the superior person also has a duty of care and nurturing for the subordinate. Additionally, the Confucian model of human relations is supposed to reflect these relations throughout the empire in an onion-like manner, with family relations at the centre and relations in public life and politics at the outer edge. This model implies that if family relations are in order, they can positively reflect on political relations between the emperor and his subordinates and allow for politics to be in order too. For political leadership, these Confucian teachings imply that the relationship between a political leader and a subordinate is supposed to mirror the relations inside a family. A political leader should act like a paternal figure who can rightfully expect respect and obedience from a subordinate but also has a duty of care.

The second source of Party paternalism is more contemporary and can be found in the Soviet Union. Students of Leninist political systems have repeatedly described the model of governing of the Soviet Union as paternalistic in nature. For example, Feher et al. point out that "the self-image of the state in the Soviet system is that of the father. [...] The state, not the subjects, makes all the decisions, but the implication is that all is being done for the subjects' benefit. The paternal authority metes out punishment to its naughty, disobedient and rebellious offspring; it approves or disapproves of its children's behaviour: those who behave well will be rewarded, even decorated." (Fehér, Heller, and

Márkus 1983, p. 180). Siegelbaum analyses the paternalist nature of the Soviet state in the countryside, discussing the use of rewards and attribution of goods to rural Soviet citizens (Siegelbaum 2000). In a similar vein, both Kornai and Verdery point to the paternalist nature of the Soviet state as an entity caring for its subordinates where “the Party would take care of everyone’s needs” (Verdery 1996, p. 24) and “the bureaucracy stands in loco parentis: all other strata, groups, or individuals in society are children, wards whose minds must be made up for them by their adult guardians” (Kornai 1992, p. 56). In other words, the paternalist narrative of the Party does not only have traditional cultural roots. It is also a heritage from the Soviet Union. However, it still fulfils the same function: Putting the Party at the core of an individual Party member’s social identity, not only because it co-opts other cultural identity elements but because it wants to create a family relationship with its members.

#### *Traditional leadership models*

Traditional leadership models are also a means of increasing the relevance of Party social identity. Here, the Party mainly relies on traditional cultural understandings of leadership and thereby includes cultural identity elements into its relationship with its members. Traditionally, good and appropriate leadership in China was characterised by Confucian narratives of the five human relations and of proper behaviour in relations of authority as well as the ideal of self-cultivation and the strive for becoming a person of noble character (*junzi* 君子). According to this understanding, a political leader—ultimately the emperor, but also his officials—was supposed to engage in the study of the Confucian classics and self-cultivation in order to improve their understanding of Confucian rites and the resulting proper behaviour in human relations. Understanding the Confucian rites and living accordingly was considered to be the highest moral goal to strive for. If humans could cultivate themselves through study and learning and live according to such Confucian principles, the relations between humans and the world would be in harmony.

In the Confucian understanding, leadership was closely connected with self-cultivation, virtue and leadership by example. A political leader was supposed to educate and improve his subordinates and lead them onto the right path of virtue. Because of this, political leaders—both the emperor and his officials—should be examples of virtuous behaviour. Because leadership is closely connected to self-cultivation and noble behaviour, it is also supposed to ideally function by good example only. Leadership understood in this sense is based on role models and personal outstanding behaviour of a leader that radiates and is supposed to have a positive effect on the behaviour of subordinates who should follow this good example and also engage in some kind of self-cultivation.

This understanding of role models and exemplary leadership can be found in Party narratives as well. Here, the Party refers to traditional concepts of leadership in its relations with its members, connecting them with the Party and preventing them from serving as independent alternative social



identity elements. Paternalism and traditional leadership models in Party ideology are supposed to turn the Party into the sole central social identity provider for Party members and cadres. Because both paternal and cultural identity elements are connected to the Party, they can increase the importance and centrality of the Party itself in social identities of Party members.

#### Paternalism in the Party

The Party portrays itself as a paternalistic figure for its members and cadres. It depicts itself as an entity that is responsible for the well-being and success of its members, that cares for and nurtures them. This involves being responsible for education and contributing to the overall personal improvement of Party members. Such a paternalistic understanding is in line with traditional cultural elements but also with the logic of a socialist system as was the case for example in the Soviet Union. At the same time, like a good parent, the Party expresses disappointment with erring Party members and conveys that trust and expectations that they had in Party members were not fulfilled. Additionally, equally like a paternal figure, the Party reserves the right to demand unconditional obedience and punish deviant and undesired behaviour. Thus, in all respects, it portrays itself as a parental figure that is responsible for the well-being of its members and cadres and that acts as a strict yet benevolent father.

The idea of traditional paternal leadership roles occupied by the Party is not limited to Party members and cadres. In a study on the representation of the Chinese state in relation to its citizens, Steinmüller argues that family metaphors for the Party-state in its relations with average Chinese citizens commonly occur both in Maoist and in post-Mao China (Steinmüller 2015). He suggests that “the Communist Revolution further intensified the emotional links to the party-state via family metaphors, promoting new radical ideas of popular sovereignty and mass representation” (Steinmüller 2015, p. 87). Steinmüller acknowledges that in the contemporary Chinese reality, the local experience of citizens with Party and state cadres might not reflect such a parental relationship. However, he points out that the bifurcation of the state with what is perceived to be parental leaders at the top and local officials not fulfilling this model help explain the ongoing importance of family metaphors (Steinmüller 2015, pp. 96f.). Thus, paternalism does play a role in the relations of the Party with average Chinese citizens as well. However, Steinmüller does not specifically study the relations between the Party and its members. I argue that paternalism plays a crucial role here, too.

Confession documents are an important source where Party paternalism for Party members and cadres is reflected. Particularly under Xi, public televised confessions of Party members and cadres (Juan Wang 2018) and political activists (Yuanyuan Liu 2018) have reappeared and can serve as an important source for understanding the Party’s ideological messaging. Although we cannot assume that these confessions are made voluntarily and that their content necessarily reflects the true

thoughts of the respective confessors<sup>11</sup>, the setup as well as the content of these confessions can provide a clear insight into the message the Party wants to send to its other members and cadres. This message depicts a paternal Party looking after its members, but being disappointed by their behaviour and punishing them for bad deeds. In the following, I discuss how the Party presents itself as a paternal figure both in confession documents and in additional Party material.

*The Party as a caring entity*

The narrative of the Party as a caring paternal entity consists of three elements. Firstly, it portrays itself as a caring and nurturing entity. Secondly, as part of this care and concern and in line with traditional Confucian understandings, the Party depicts itself as having a duty to educate and cultivate Party members. Thirdly, and closely aligned with this, the Party sees it as its duty to overall improve the quality of its members.

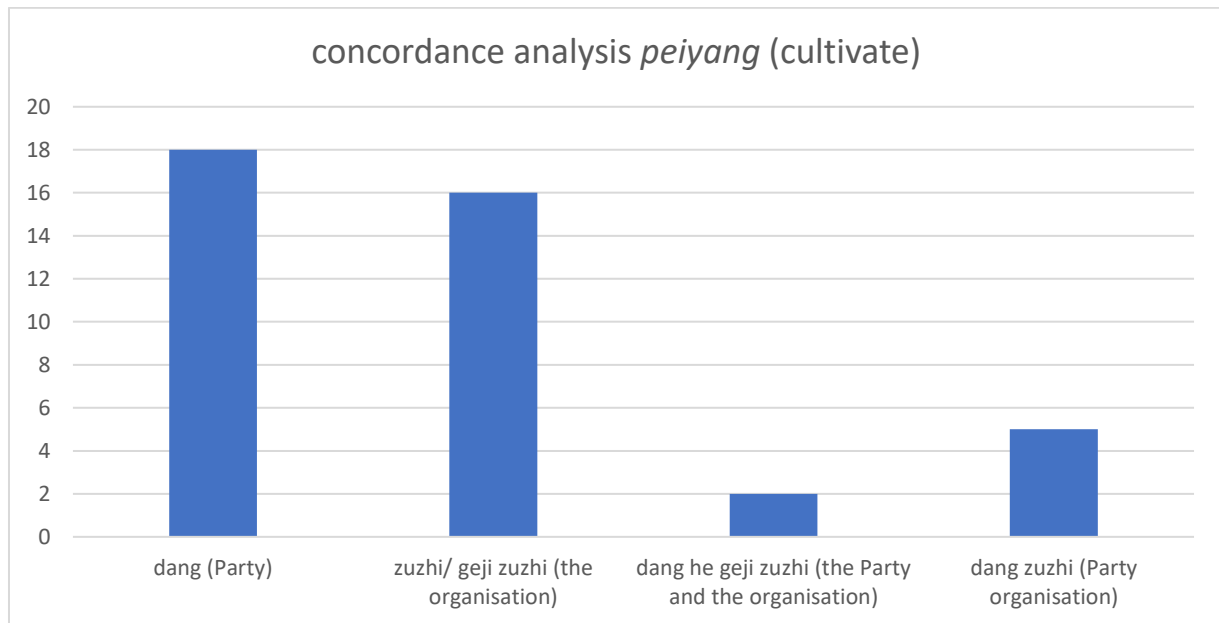
Care, concern and nurturing

The Party sends a powerful message of care and concern to its members. As a paternal entity, it portrays itself as being responsible for their well-being and also for their career and success in life. In confession documents, this message is mostly prominently visible in the use of the term *peiyang* (培养), which means “cultivate”, “foster” or “develop”. *Pei* (培) on its own means “foster” or “train” while *yang* (养) means “support”, “provide for” or also “raise”. It has a connotation of caring for someone or something and looking after their positive development and well-being (e.g. in *yang jia* 养家 “raise a family” or *yang hua* 养花 “grow flowers”). The term *peiyang* appears 41 times in 15 of the 19 confession documents analysed.

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<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of the circumstances of televised confessions of NGO activists and journalists see for example: Safeguard Defenders 2018.

Figure 3: Concordance analysis *peiyang* (培养, cultivate)



The nurturing relationship reflected in the use of *peiyang* is a relationship between the Party and its members. The confessors describe how they were looked after and cared for. Because in the Confucian concept of human relations the subordinate person receives care and is nurtured by the superior, this rhetoric implies that they are in an inferior position towards a paternal figure. This paternal figure that the confessors refer to when using the term “*peiyang*” is without exception the Party-state. The terms used to refer to the Party are “*dang*” (党 the Party), “*zuzhi*” (组织 organisation) or “*geji zuzhi*” (各级组织 all levels of the organisation), “*dang he geji zuzhi*” (党和各级组织 the Party and all levels of the organisation) or “*dang zuzhi*” (党组织 the Party organisation) (see figure 3). While the terms used vary slightly, they all allude to the Party-state and its organisational structures.

This nurturing role of the Party is also visible in the kind of support that confessors state they got from the Party. In their confessions they state that they received care and trust from the Party and were supported throughout their careers to reach a status that they would not have reached without the backing of the Party. For example, the former deputy mayor and member of the municipal standing committee of Kunming, Li Xi, stated that “if it had not been for the good policy of reform and opening up and the fostering and nurturing of all levels of the organisation, I would still be a villager in a fishers’ village at Lake Dianchi. If I recall those 30 years, the organisation gave me so much and during my whole life I cannot thank them enough.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 18.09.2016). The Party therefore aims to portray itself as a figure that ensures the well-being and career advancement of its members who would not otherwise have reached higher goals and the status they have. This is the case for the entire career of Party members from the very beginning to the high-ranking positions they eventually reach. In his

confession, former inspector of the provincial department of agriculture of Sichuan Province Hu Xiangquan describes how the Party looked after him from the beginning onwards. He states that “from 1968, when I started working, from the commune and Party committee organisations at county, prefectural and provincial level back to the county and municipal committee and the provincial department of agriculture, it was the Party who nurtured me from the son of a farmer and commune reporter to becoming an official at the provincial level.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 01.03.2017). The former deputy director of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region Reforestation Bureau, Peng Zhenhua, expresses this nurturing relationship even more clearly when saying that “my parents gave birth to me, but it was the Party who raised me” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 08.12.2016).

The importance of this caring and enabling role of the Party is particularly obvious in the way some of the confessors describe their early lives. They state that they come from humble family backgrounds. For example, Li Xi, former vice-mayor of Kunming describes that “For many generations, my ancestors were fishermen and farmers to make a living. When I was small, my family was poor and I had to eat a lot of bitterness. At that time, life was hard and I did not have a lot of options. Until today, this remains fresh in my memory.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 18.09.2016). Similarly, Chen Zhonghuai, former head of the geography bureau in Guangxi Autonomous Region “was born into a peasant household and he experienced a childhood where there was not enough to eat and not enough warm clothes.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 30.03.2017) and Jin Junjue, former Party secretary of the human resources and social security bureau in Ningbo “was born into a poor household and my father was a retired serviceman” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 19.11.2016). Former Party secretary of the people’s congress of Chengkou County in Chongqing, Yu Shaodong, even describes how as a child, towards the end of the month, he did not have enough to eat. He states that “The deepest of my childhood impressions is that, at the end of the month, we did not have enough to eat. My mother added not well-known wild herbs and other grains to the rice and during spring and autumn, the whole family went to the countryside to collect food from the fields that the production team had already harvested.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 20.05.2016). The contrast with their later careers and positions within the Party-state sends the message that these cadres have to thank the Party for its nurturing care and trust that allowed them to escape dire early life conditions and rise to the status they occupied within the Party-state. This message can increase the centrality of Party social identity for Party members because it strongly outlines that the Party is responsible for

everything in their lives, cares for and nurtures them and all good things that they experienced in life came from the Party. In other words, the Party capitalises on the importance of a family identity with a caring, nurturing and supporting paternal figure.

The Party as an educator

Another part of the Party's paternalistic position is its function as an educator. Like a benevolent father figure, the Party points out that it is its duty to educate its members and cadres to improve them and turn them into better persons. At the same time, the Party also holds that education serves as a means of correcting mistakes in a friendly and lenient manner, rather than directly meting out punishment. The importance the Party attaches to education was already pointed out with regard to the link between beliefs and behaviour. In addition to this, education and the Party's self-assigned function as an educator are also part of the Party's paternal narrative towards its members.

Firstly, the Party portrays itself as an educating entity that strives to improve its members and cadres. For example, like a benevolent paternal figure, the Party wants to educate its members because "only when undertaking study well and theoretical and scientific knowledge is mastered well, can one be firm in politics, ideological style can be correct, the state of the spirit can be raised and only then can power be exercised correctly and the occurrence of using public power for private gain can be prevented" (N.N. 01.03.2001 (2014), p. 21). In other words, only through the education of the Party can Party members become better persons and reach high political and behavioural standards. The Party argues that through education "the level of thought and political consciousness" (Wang Y. 17.11.1983 (2014), p. 23) can be raised. In a speech to the 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 15<sup>th</sup> Central Committee, Jiang Zemin even pointed out that education is the basis of building the Party's cadre corps. In *Party style and Party Discipline*, he is quoted as arguing that "No matter whether the goal is increasing the quality of the cadre corps or whether it is being on guard with regard to corruption problems and stopping and rectifying incorrect tendencies, education is the first means that has to be supported. The basis of dealing with both the causes and manifestations [of the Party's problems] has to be education. Only with the help of encompassing regular education, it is possible to build a firm political basis and political line of thought and the building of the cadre corps can become more advanced and better." (Fu 01.04.2002 (2014), p. 6). This means that the Party considers it a core organisational task to engage in education of its members and cadres. The Party's education regulations point out that "every Party member independent of his rank has to receive the education and management of the Party according to the Party constitution and these regulations. Every Party committee and organisation has to hold on to the great political responsibility of educating and managing Party members." (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019). In other words, education is among the parental tasks of the Party to raise the standard of its members and cadres and help them improve themselves and become good parts of the organisation.

The second function of education in the eyes of the Party is the correction of mistakes. Like a benevolent paternal figure, the Party holds that it can choose not to punish members for their mistakes, but rather engage in patient education to help them understand their wrongdoings and improve. This benign concept of education to deal with mistakes is often summed up in the Maoist slogan of “curing the disease to save the patient”. The Party takes up this Maoist concept after 1978 as well and assumes that “curing the disease to save the patient” is an important concept for dealing with errant Party members (Zhonggong zhongyang zhengdang gongzuo zhidao weiyuahui 04.03.1984; Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014)). To deal with mistakes, the Party holds that “we have to regularly conduct education of Party members in the areas of Party spirit and Party discipline as well as raise their consciousness of complying with and protecting Party discipline. Only by incessantly raising the political and ideological levels of all Party members and cadres will it be possible for them to overcome or avoid mistakes. Only then we can effectively eliminate the negative phenomena of decentralism and lack of obedience to Party discipline that exist among Party members and cadres.” (Zhu M. 12.2014, p. 14). Education is also supposed to help avoid mistakes in the first place, and the Party wants to “strengthen the education of leading cadres on anticorruption and building clean government, cause leaders to consciously reject corruption and have them take the lead in incorruptibility and self-discipline” (Yang Z. 01.06.2005 (2014), p. 6). In other words, as a benevolent paternal figure, the Party sees itself as having a responsibility for educating its members in order to allow for their cultivation and improvement. At the same time, it wants to use education as a benevolent and lenient way for handling mistakes of its members and cadres or prevent them in the first place, in order to allow them to be better persons and communist party members.

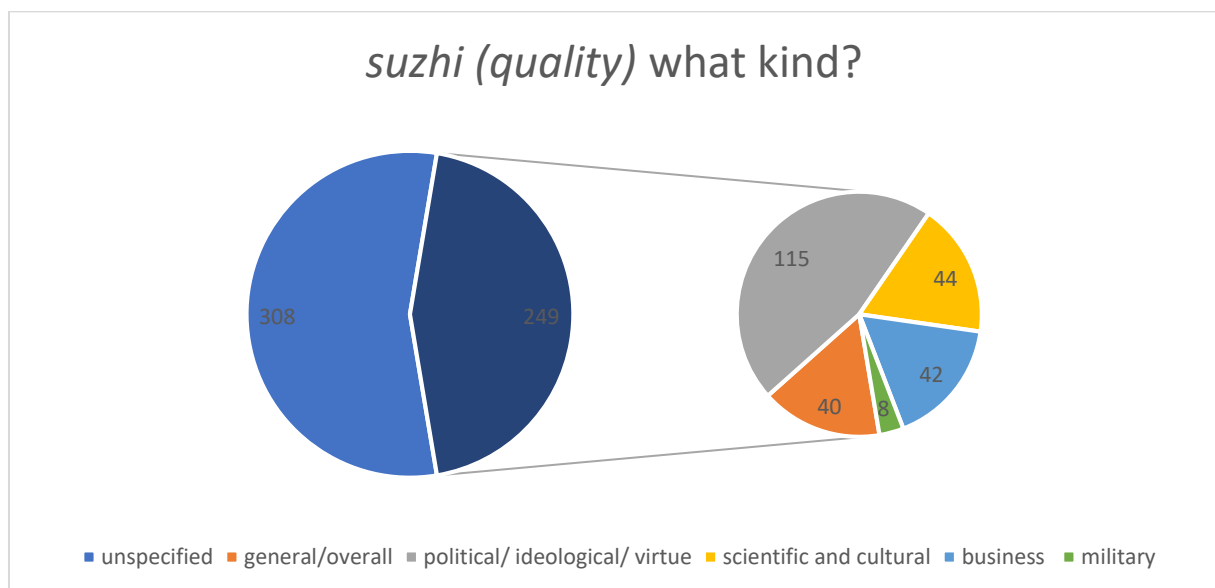
Improving the ‘quality’ of Party members

The Party’s role as an educator is closely related to its strive to improve the quality (*suzhi* 素质) of Party members. As Bakken points out, augmenting “human quality” is an encompassing undertaking of the Party that is linked to overall political goals of the Party, such as the advancement of socialism (Bakken 2000). It is also not limited only to Party members and cadres, but the Party seeks to improve the quality of everyone within China. Nevertheless, it is an important factor for the Party’s relations with its members and it regularly appears in Party documents. This narrative of *suzhi* can also be seen as a contribution to the overall self-portrayal as a paternal figure. It sends the message that the Party is responsible for improving and cultivating different qualities of its members and caring for their well-being.

In Party documents, the term *suzhi*—when specified—refers to a multitude of qualities that the Party feels responsible for. In my text sample of Central Committee and Central Commission for Discipline Inspection documents, the term appears 557 times in total. It is most frequent in the time

periods after the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, i.e. in the time between 1987 and 1997. In marginally more than half of the cases, it is not specified what kind of quality the Party talks about. It for example refers to the “the quality of cadres” (*ganbu suzhi* 干部素质), i.e. it is specified whose quality it talks about, but it does not provide an indication of what kind of quality it refers to. These are coded as “unspecified” here (see figure 4 below). However, in the other half of the cases, the character of *suzhi* is specified with regard to the kind of quality. Here, it is most commonly used to refer to ideological and political qualities and virtues, using terms such as *zhengzhi* (政治 political), *sixiang zhengzhi* (思想政治 ideological and political) or *sixiang daode* (思想道德 ideological and moral) to qualify *suzhi*. Additionally, *suzhi* is also used to describe scientific and cultural qualities<sup>12</sup>, business and professional work qualities<sup>13</sup> and also just overall *suzhi* in a general manner<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the Party sees itself as responsible for these varied kinds of qualities of Party members and cadres. Like in the caring and nurturing narrative discussed above, the message is that the Party is in charge of everything and wants to raise all these different qualities.

Figure 4: Results of concordance analysis of *suzhi* (素质 quality) regarding what kind of quality is referred to



The caring role of the Party is also visible in what is supposed to happen to Party members’ “quality”. It should to be raised and improved. Among the 557 times the term appears in the document sample, in 410 cases it is qualified with the verb *tigao* (提高 raise). Personal, ideological, moral and also professional qualities should therefore be raised. As Jiang Zemin pointed out in the speech quoted

<sup>12</sup> Frequent terms qualified *suzhi* here are: *kexue wenhua* (科学文化), *wenhua* (文化), *wenhua keji* (文化科技).

<sup>13</sup> Usually indicated by using the term *yewu* (业务) to qualify *suzhi*.

<sup>14</sup> Frequent terms qualified *suzhi* here are: *ge fangmian* (各方面), *zhengtǐ* (整体). In other words, Party documents here express that *suzhi* contains various different characteristics that the person or group in question should all possess.

above, a core element for this improvement to happen is the education of Party members by the Party. Thus, it is the task of the Party to fulfil its parental role as an educator and ensure that Party members and cadres have the possibility to improve their quality and cultivate themselves in all areas. By pushing itself into the breadth of Party members' lives and occupations, these narratives of the Party as a caring, educating and cultivating actor can increase the centrality of Party members' Party social identity. The message is: you can have everything with the Party, but few things (or even nothing) without it.

*Disappointment and apologies*

The Party is not only a caring and nurturing paternal actor. At the same time, it also sees itself as a paternal force that can expect appropriate behaviour from its members and reacts with disappointment if they do not behave accordingly. This reflects traditional cultural understandings of leadership and followership and of the duties of filial piety. Not complying with these duties of filial piety leads to disappointment of the paternal figure, i.e. the Party. In confession documents, confessors repeatedly stress how their behaviour disappointed, harmed and even betrayed the Party and that they feel unworthy of the care and nurturing they received.

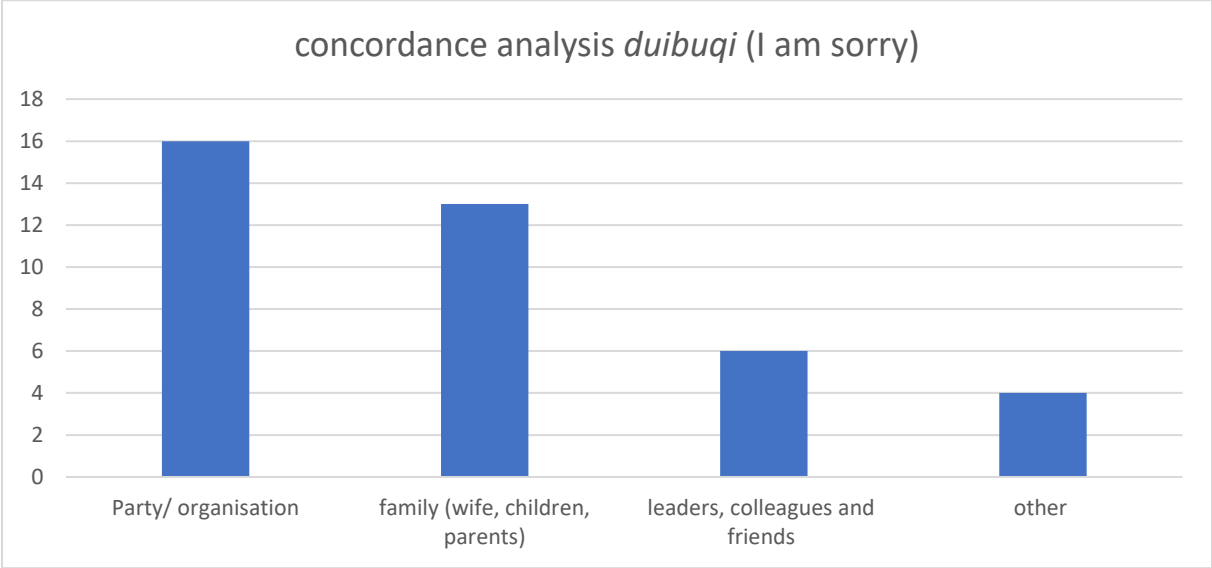
The first reflection of Party members' unfulfilled duties of filial piety can be found in their apologies in confession documents. The confessors apologise to different entities for their behaviour and the misdeeds they committed. The entity that the fallen Party members and cadres apologise most frequently to is the Party: in sixteen cases the apology is addressed to the Party and its organisations (see figure 5). The other apologies are most prominently directed at the official's family, i.e. wife, children and parents. Beyond the Party and the confessors' families, they also apologise to leaders, colleagues and friends. The remaining four apologies are addressed at other persons or groups of people. One is directed very generally at "a lot of people", while two express regret and an apology towards the fact of having received a prize for outstanding conduct. Interestingly, there is only one apology (categorised as "other" here too) that is directed at "the people" (*renmin* 人民). The majority of the apologies apparent in the confessions is therefore directed at the Party and it is thereby expressed that an official owes loyalty and obedience to the organisation that fostered and nurtured him<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> With the exception of one person, all the confessors are men.



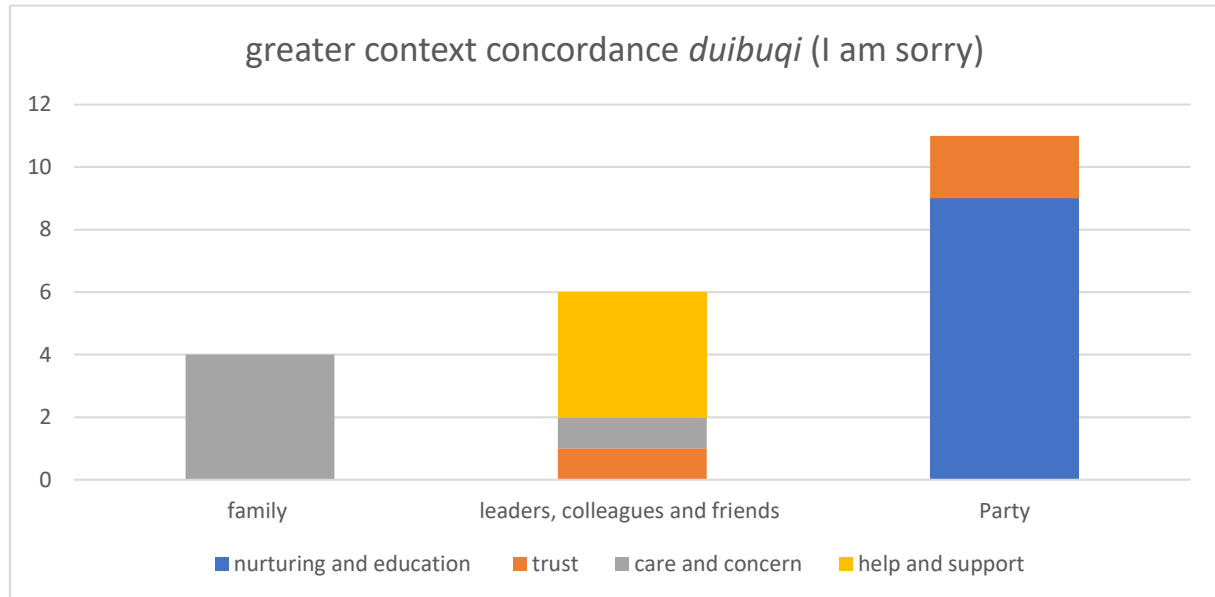
Figure 5: Concordance analysis *duibuqi* (对不起) (sorry toward whom?)



Regarding the issues the confessors are sorry for, they mostly apologise to the Party for the nurturing and education they received and for the Party’s trust they betrayed (for a detailed depiction of the reasons for apologies divided by topics see figure 6). This betrayal of trust and nurturing is expressed strongly by Li Ping, former head of the department for water conservancy in Guizhou Province. He states that “What I have to be most sorry about and have to apologise for most is the Party organisation that cultivated me and nurtured me to maturity. Along every step of the way of growing up, I did not leave the Party’s care. The value of my entire existence can only be incarnated on the stage of the undertaking given by the Party. The Party gave me too much, too much. But now I walked on a criminal path and I failed to live up to the Party nurturing and its eager expectations.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 25.03.2016). Similarly, Liu Ya, former deputy mayor of Bengbu city in Anhui Province, reflects that “The organisation nurtured me for so many years, from the Party school at municipal level to the Party school at provincial level and all the way to the central Party school, on temporary assignment to Suzhou and all kinds of training and nurturing. Regarding my academic qualifications, I advanced from vocational secondary school to junior college and from there even to undergraduate courses. The organisation gives a lot of thought to nurturing a cadre and invests a lot, but I utterly failed to live up to the organisation’s hopes and expectations and this led me to where I am now.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 14.10.2016). Wang Hongzhong, former district chief of Mengtougou district in Beijing summarises this feeling concisely when he states that “There is no time when I am not severely blaming myself, thinking that I am sorry for the many years of nurturing and expectations that the Party organisation had towards me.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin

Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 20.05.2017). The relevance of the Party as a caring paternal figure is clearly visible in these statements.

Figure 6: Greater context of the term *duibuqi* (对不起, I am sorry)



### *The Party as a strict father*

The paternalism of the Party does not only consist of the Party as a caring entity. The Party also portrays itself as a strict father figure that demands unconditional obedience and that can strictly punish misdeeds. The strictness of the paternal figure is also in line with traditional understandings of leadership where a ruler or literally a father can rightfully expect obedience in exchange for nurturing, care and education and also has the right to punish.

#### Unconditional obedience

In line with its self-understanding as a benevolent, yet strict, paternal figure, the Party expects unconditional obedience from its members. This requirement is embedded in its request for absolute submission to central authority. Since its foundation, the Party has demanded that “the individual must obey the organization, the minority must obey the majority, lower echelons must obey higher echelons, and the entire Party must obey the basic principles of the Central Committee” (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 01.07.1941 (1952), p. 159). This demand is repeatedly underlined throughout the history of the Party when essays on Party discipline argue that “the part has to obey the whole and the whole decides on the part” (Shen 08.2003, p. 3) and that “interests of the part have to obey the interests of the overall situation” (N.N. 25.09.1985, p. 19). Former Vice-Secretary of the Central Commission of Discipline Inspection, Li Zhengting, very clearly underscores this when he argues that

*“The standing committee of each level’s Party committee is the core of the Party’s leadership system. Whether the standing committees can support the principle of democratic centralism touches upon whether the Party can unite and lead the masses and assume the heavy responsibility of leadership building and reform. [...] When the standing committees decide on issues, they should follow the principle of the minority obeying the majority. After the minority’s suggestions have been voted down, they are allowed to retain their suggestions but have to obey in organisational matters and smoothly implement the standing committees’ decisions.”*  
(Fang 15.08.1989 (2014), p. 6).

This means that the Party demands unconditional obedience of its members and cadres to the Party’s organisational hierarchies and structures and their decisions. An essay in Party Style and Party Discipline underlines this further when stating that “at no point in time can the leadership of the Party be abandoned” (Han 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 20). It further explains that “the solution to all large problems has to be carried out under the leadership of the Party and the leadership of the Party’s Central Committee” (Han 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 20). Party leadership is thereby turned into a non-negotiable principle and it is Party leadership and only Party leadership that will allow for problems to be solved and development to take place. This is the case because “if the leadership of the Party is abandoned and people have their own ways, things will certainly be mismanaged and messed up” (Han 30.04.1986 (2014), p. 20).

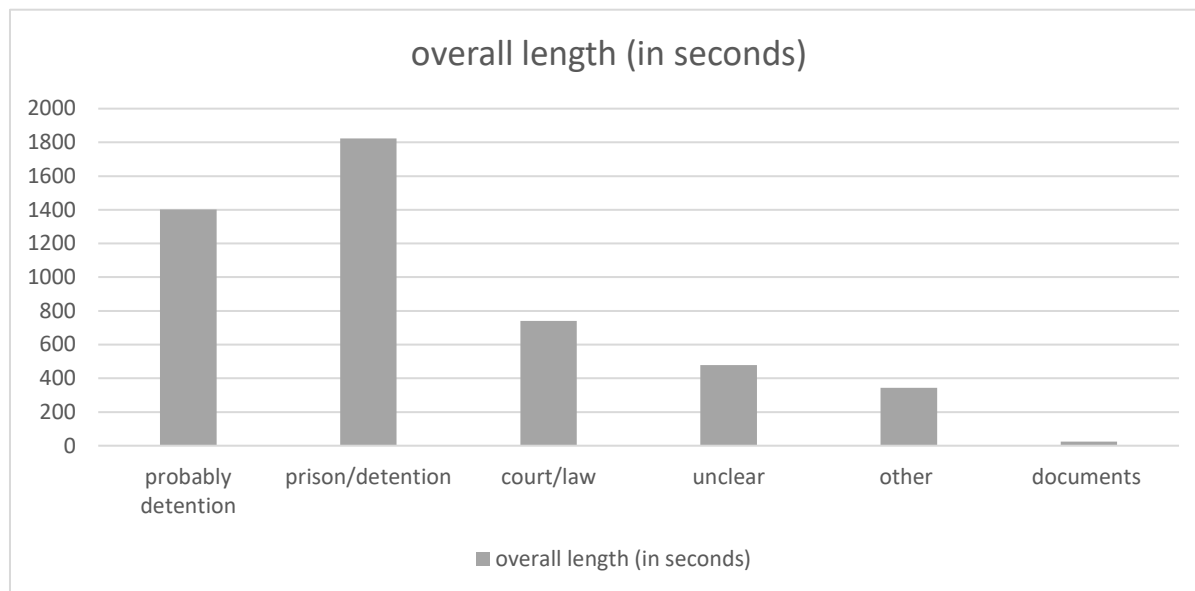
#### Punishment

As a paternal figure, the Party reserves the right to punish its members and cadres for bad deeds. The Party holds that while it can exercise leniency and rely on education as a benevolent means of handling mistakes, it also relies on punishment to deal with misbehaviour. This punitive element of the Party’s paternal role is prominently reflected in two aspects. First, the Party points out that strict punishment also through the legal system is always possible and can be enforced when dealing with errant Party members. Secondly, it hints that the decision how to punish rests entirely with the Party that is thereby exercising its discretion and right to choose appropriate punishment as a paternal figure.

Firstly, the Party outlines that it is not only a benevolent and caring, but also a punishing paternal figure. The Party argues that “strictly punishing corruption is an important reflection of the party’s governing capability” (N.N. 01.04.2005 (2014), p. 13) and “no matter which department or which cadre, if law or discipline are broken, it has to be severely dealt with and punishment has to be given according to the law” (N.N. 17.11.1993, p. 5). The Party believes that “Party members infringing on discipline should be punished according to administrative regulations; Party members breaking state law should be punished by the judiciary” (Zhongguo gongchandang quanguo daibiao dahui 11.10.1983 (2014)) and thus be given strict and appropriate punishment for their misdeeds. In

particular, “the small number of corrupt elements has to be punished according to the law” (N.N. 15.10.2000 (2014), p. 2).

Figure 7: Overall length of coded video sections according to code in the TV series *Yongyuan zai lushang* and *Da tie hai xu zishen ying*

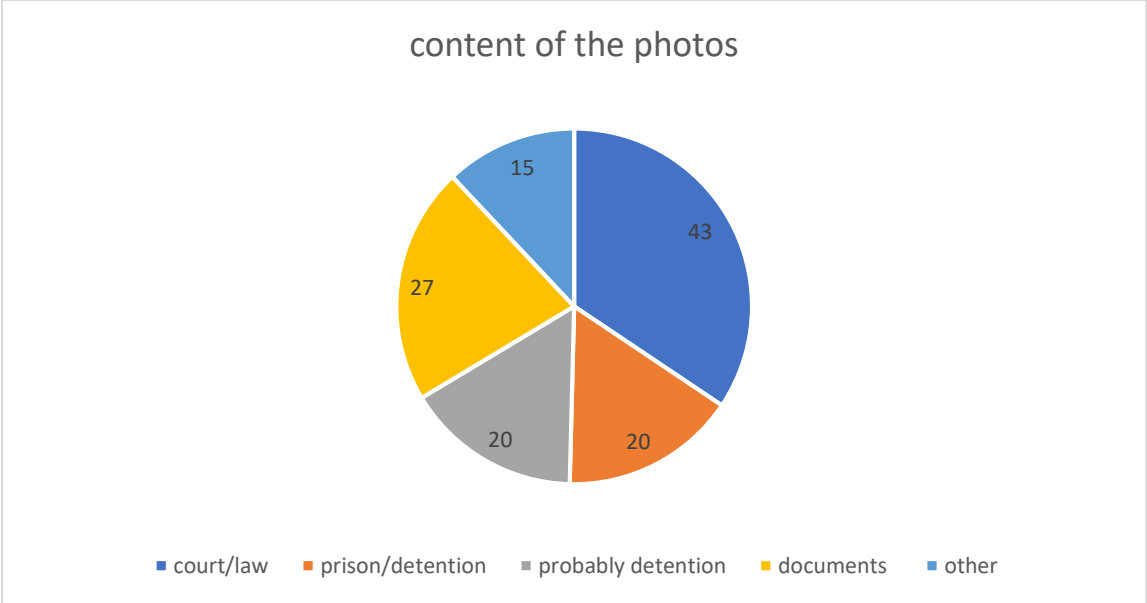


The message of punishment is also reflected in the confession documents. Although the confessions themselves contain a narrative of a caring, paternalist Party that looks after its members and nurtures them, there is also a pronounced indication of punishment. It is obvious in the surroundings that the confessors are presented in, sending the messages that in case of bad behaviour, the Party can also mete out severe punishment. In the confession documents, both televised and written, the confessors are mostly depicted in environments representing law enforcement or punishment. For the TV series *Always on the Road* and *To Forge Iron, One Must Be Strong*, figure 7 shows how long the respective video sequences filmed with the confessors in different environments are. By far the longest sequences are filmed in environments that are settings of detention or presumably detention<sup>16</sup> followed by scenes in a court setting. The same is true for photos of officials that accompany their written confessions. Here, roughly one third of the photos show the officials in court scenes and a third depicts them in an environment that is considered to be detention or presumably detention (see figure 8 below). Additionally, some scenes and photos also depict visual

<sup>16</sup> The category “detention” is used here to describe scenes where confessors are depicted in an obvious prison environment. This includes visual elements such as bars, handcuffs or prison vests. The category “presumably detention” contains photos that lack such obvious signs of detention. Confessors are here usually filmed or photographed in civilian clothing sitting in front of light grey walls sometimes with thin darker stripes. Even though clear detention-related evidence is missing in these photos, we know from confessions of civil rights activists who were interviewed on their prison experiences after release that this kind of background is a common situation for apparently neutral settings of confessions that are in reality taking place in detention facilities (Safeguard Defenders 2018).

evidence of written documents or folders of documents. While it is impossible to read any of the text because the images are blurred, images of documents refer to the procedural and documentative aspect of the legal system. However, the depiction of officials in prison and court environment still largely outweighs the prevalence of images of symbolic documents. In other words, the way confessors are depicted sends a powerful message of punishment. The paternal actor that is the Party is not only a caring and nurturing one, but severe punishment is also always possible.

Figure 8: Content of photos in written confessions on CCDI website



Secondly, punishment is supposed to be meted out entirely at the discretion of the paternal actor that is the Party. In the Party’s ideological narrative, punishment can be tailored according to the kind of bad deeds of Party members and is subject to the decision of the Party. For example, it is argued in the Party’s ideological narrative that “Party members who committed small mistakes should only be given education and criticism, Party members who committed large mistakes should [...] receive Party disciplinary treatment” (Ma 30.10.1983 (2014), p. 12). The Party holds that “Party members who committed small mistakes should receive criticism and education [...] and Party members who committed serious mistakes should, apart from criticism and education, also receive Party disciplinary treatment” (Zhongguo gongchandang quanguo daibiao dahui 11.10.1983 (2014)) and “big damage requires big struggle, whereas small damage requires small struggle” (Dai 10.2003, p. 28). In other words, punishment for Party members and cadres is entirely subject to the discretionary authority of the paternal actor that is the Party. Party members not only owe unconditional obedience to it, but with regard to punishment they are also dependent on the mercy of the strict father figure.

Summing up, the Party presents itself as a strict, yet benevolent father figure that nurtures and cares for its members and cadres and demands unconditional obedience in exchange. This self-

portrayal of the Party can contribute to increasing the relevance of the Party social identity for Party members in two ways. Firstly, it sends the signal to Party members that the Party looks after them. In this understanding, they can trust the Party and are a member of a caring organisation that they can rely on for all their needs. In other words, the Party is like a family that will look after them, thereby attributing family identity qualities to itself. Secondly, understanding the Party as a paternal figure closely relates it to traditional cultural concepts of leadership. It thus combines potentially different identity elements and allows for increasing the centrality of the Party social identity. Because traditional Confucian concepts of good leadership and paternalism are introduced into the Party, traditional cultural considerations that could form their own social identity are not separate from or opposed to the Party anymore. This co-optation of potential alternative identity elements allows for strengthening the centrality of Party identity among Party members and cadres.

#### Good leadership and role models

A second element of traditional leadership that appears in the Party's ideological narratives are role models. The elements of role models and good leadership in Party ideology refer to traditional Confucian understandings of leadership. These include, for example, the striving for positive exemplary behaviour and self-cultivation. The study and imitation of role models and their behaviour is crucial in this understanding. Additionally, traditional concepts of leadership also promote the idea of leadership by good example. The CCP also co-opts these ideas of traditional leadership that could potentially be alternative elements of social identity and attaches them to the Party.

The Party has used role models already in Maoist China to educate citizens on good behaviour. For example, the CCP has heavily relied on the figure of Lei Feng and propagated him and his exemplary behaviour in numerous campaigns throughout the Maoist period (Sterzel 2015). Lei Feng has also reappeared in post-Mao China and has been the topic of more recent education campaigns with the content of role model behaviour adapted to contemporary circumstances (Reed 1995; Jeffreys and Su 2016). For example, Reed argues that new role models in post-Mao China bolster characteristics such as “[s]erving the Party and the people, resisting the temptations of the new affluent society, discovering innovative ways to perform tasks, and sacrificing personal comforts” (Reed 1998, p. 365). Similarly, Jeffreys also holds that the Chinese government has rediscovered and revived Lei Feng to “promote national unity and pride by combining the themes of ‘commemoration’, ‘volunteering’ and ‘civic-mindedness’” (Jeffreys 2017, p. 12).

This chapter argues that role models are also an important element of the Party's ideological narratives. The Party promotes role models and role model behaviour also for Party members and cadres and relies on model education. In this chapter, I will discuss two points in relation to role models for Party members and cadres. Firstly, I point out that in line with traditional understandings of

leadership, the Party wants its members and cadres to serve as models of good behaviour and to lead by example. Secondly, the chapter provides evidence for the Party’s ideological narrative of education through role models. Party members and cadres are supposed to study both positive and negative behavioural examples to learn from them and adapt their behaviour accordingly.

*Party members as role models and leadership by example*

The Party expects its members to be models of good behaviour and make themselves an example. The phrase commonly used in Party ideology here is *yishenzuoze* (以身作则). It literally means “to take one’s own body/ life and turn it into a rule”, i.e. to set an example. This indicates that the Party requires its cadres to fulfil its leadership function by using good examples and thereby applying a traditional Confucian leadership technique. For example, CCDI secretary Wu Guanzheng stated that “leading cadres at all levels should take the lead in being incorruptible and self-disciplined and actively accept supervision. They should make the implementation of rules on being incorruptible and self-disciplined part of their democratic life meetings as well as of their reports on work and honesty and cleanliness” (Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2005 (2014), p. 3). The Party also argues that “for a good Party style, we have to particularly demand that all leading comrades make themselves an example. The Party is a model for the entire society and every leading comrade in the Party should be a model for the entire Party.” (N.N. 15.04.1985 (2014), p. 5). Generally, the Party expects its members and cadres to be models of good behaviour and holds that “Party members have to assume a model function in building a spiritual civilization. They have to become examples of ideals, virtue, culture and discipline.” (Han G. 15.11.1986 (2014), p. 23) (for further examples of expected role model behaviour see table 4).

*Table 4: Expected role model behaviour*

Role model behaviour	Examples
Make yourself an example ( <i>yishenzuoze</i> 以身作则)	<p>“For a good Party style, we have to particularly demand that all leading comrades make themselves an example. The Party is a model for the entire society and every leading comrade in the Party should be a model for the entire Party.”(N.N. 15.04.1985 (2014), p. 5)</p> <p>“Every leading cadre has to make himself an example and be a model of implementing this decision.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 30.06.1985 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Leading cadres have to have strict requirements for themselves and take the lead in being incorruptible and self-disciplined. Leading cadres should make themselves an example and be incorruptible and self-disciplined. They should</p>

	<p>not only enjoy high trust among the people but also lead their danwei to have a good atmosphere.” (Zhang 15.03.2002 (2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“We have to earnestly implement the responsibility system of building good Party style and clean government. Party and government leading cadres of all work units should make themselves an example and be strict in self-discipline. They also have to strengthen leadership and assume responsibility.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianchabu 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“Every leading cadre and particularly comrades with main responsibilities have to earnestly perform their duties, make themselves an example, dare to hold on and to manage and grab well the work of anticorruption and building clean government of their respective localities and institutions.” (Wen 01.04.2005 (2014), p. 7)</p> <p>“Party members and leading cadres have to make themselves an example and advance their exemplary function.” (N.N. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 18)</p> <p>“The Politburo issued the Eight Regulations and we have to take concrete actions, make ourselves an example and be a model.” (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lianzheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p> <p>“Xi Jinping stressed that in its specialised studies the Politburo has to take the lead and in studying the ‘Three Strict and Three Honest’ it fulfils this demand. Every comrade in the Politburo has to make himself an example and be a good model for the entire Party.” (Xi 11.09.2021)</p>
<p>Models of good behaviour</p>	<p>“Party members have to assume a model function in building a spiritual civilization. They have to become examples of ideals, virtue, culture and discipline.” (Han 15.11.1986 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“Every discipline inspection institution has to become a model of advancing the Party’s fine traditions and work style and of eagerly implementing these in the new era. Cadres engaged in disciplinary and petition work should advance these strong points and particularities</p>



	<p>even more and set a good example in this regard. They should embody good Party style in everyday work.” (Fu 15.09.2001 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“Party leading cadres need perfect morale and virtue, make themselves a model, eagerly become the model for the masses, have real actions win the support of the people and protect the realisation of the goal of the struggle to build a moderately well-off society.” (Zhou 01.08.2003 (2014), p. 26)</p>
<p>Taking the lead</p>	<p>“Leading cadres have to take the lead in rectifying Party style and be a model for Party members and cadres. This is of great importance for implementing an improvement of Party style.” (Wang H. 31.05.1984 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“Leading cadres have to engage in the ‘three taking the lead’: Firstly, they have to take the lead in studying the directives of the centre and grab the Party’s policies. They have to raise their capability to distinguish between right and wrong and stand at the forefront of the struggle against capitalist liberalisation. Secondly, they have to take the lead in participating in and supporting Party organisational life, be strict about Party regulations and make sure that under no circumstances their words and deeds diverge from the Party constitution and Party program. Thirdly, they have to take the lead in strongly developing the results of rectifying Party style, unwaveringly support the building of good Party style and let good Party style fight back the attacks on the Party carried out by advocates of capitalist liberalisation.” (Liu Yaqiang 15.04.1987 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“Leading institutions and leading cadres have to take the lead in building clean government.” (Chen X. 01.09.1993 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“Every leading cadre should take the lead in being incorruptible and self-disciplined, actively accept supervision and make the situation of the implementation of rules on being incorruptible and self-disciplined the main content of meetings on democratic life and the reports on work and on honesty and cleanliness” (Wu 15.01.2005 (2014), p. 3)</p>

	<p>“We have to strengthen the education of leading cadres on anticorruption and building clean government, cause leaders to consciously reject corruption and have them take the lead in incorruptibility and self-discipline” (Yang Z. 01.06.2005 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“We have to make cadres and staff self-consciously fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration and have them take the lead in honesty and self-discipline.” (Wang T. 2007, p. 32)</p> <p>“Party committees (Party groups) have the full leadership responsibility for building Party style and clean government in their areas of responsibility and the head of a Party committee has the primary responsibility. Party committees (Party groups) at all levels and particularly their heads have to firmly establish building Party style and clean government and the struggle against corruption. If they do not, it is a serious indication that they do not fulfil their responsibilities.” (Zhonggon fanfubai sifai yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p> <p>“General Secretary Xi Jinping recently stressed that leading cadres have to practice strict self-discipline and they have to pay attention to self-consciously struggle against the thought and phenomenon of special privileges. They have to start with themselves and those around them to build a protective network to resist and prevent privileges.” (Liu Yuan 2017)</p> <p>“Party members and leading cadres have to take the lead in receiving education and management.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 06.05.2019)</p>
<p>Leadership examples</p>	<p>“For the entire Party grabbing Party style, leading cadres are the key. We have to demand that leadership institutions and leading cadres at all levels advance their exemplary function. With the leadership function, the importance lies in persistence and the preciousness lies in consciousness. Assuming a model function once is not difficult; the difficulty lies in always being a model. But in the undertaking of building socialism, we demand that our leadership always assumes a model function.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.08.1986 (2014), p. 16)</p>

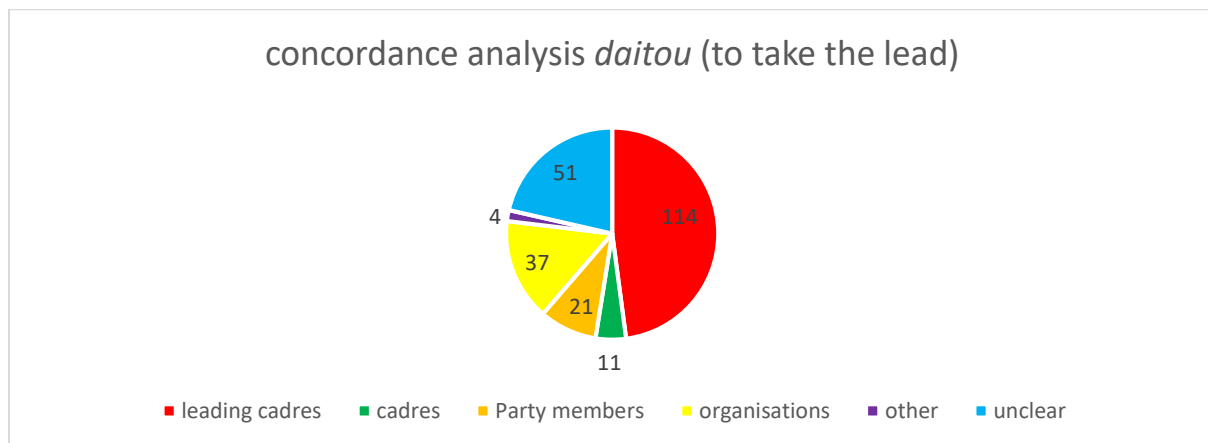
	<p>“We have to earnestly hold on to the exemplary function of leading cadres. Leading cadres at all levels have to support the Four Cardinal Principles and take the lead in protecting the Party’s political discipline.” (Liu Yaqiang 15.04.1987 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“Every leading cadre has to be an example in honouring Party discipline and the law, conduct oneself with dignity, examine his abilities, be alert of himself and encourage himself.” (Cao Q. 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“The Party centre and state institutions are leading institutions and should serve as models. But for developing this model function, we have to first study the important thought of the Three Represents and increase ideological knowledge of it. We have to unite ideological beliefs with the Party’s line and policies and with the Central Committee’s deployments on anticorruption work. Whether every department holds up the banner of building Party style and clean government is the reflection of whether they unite with the centre.” (Li Zhilun 01.11.2000 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“All leading elements and leading cadres, particularly the first in command, should start out from themselves and make themselves an example, assume their responsibilities, increase leadership strength and ensure the implementation of all deployments of the Central Committee on building Party style and clean government and anticorruption.” (Su R. 15.11.2000 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“Every leading cadre has to start out from himself, start from concrete things, be diligent in his actions on the requirements of the vanguard role, have his model behaviour influence Party members and the masses and raise the Party members’ vanguard spirit.” (Yang H. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“A solid and forceful leadership with a strong historic sense of responsibility, a deep feeling of suffering for the mission and a character with hard to defeat willpower will thoroughly push forward the struggle against corruption and</p>
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	firmly contain the momentum of spreading corruption.” (Sun X. 2017)
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Furthermore, the Party expects that its members take the lead and provide positive, virtuous examples, thereby engaging in a form of governing in line with traditional Confucian principles of leadership. For example, the Party argues that “we have to make cadres and staff self-consciously fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration and have them take the lead in honesty and self-discipline.” (Wang T. 2007, p. 32). In order to achieve this, “we have to earnestly hold on to the exemplary function of leading cadres. Leading cadres at all levels have to support the Four Cardinal Principles and take the lead in protecting the Party’s political discipline.” (Liu Yaqiang 15.04.1987 (2014), p. 9). To describe this leadership by example, the Party also speaks of virtuous leadership or virtuous rule (*dezhi* 德治) that Party members and particularly cadres should engage in. As Chen Peizhong points out, “for strictly governing the Party, we have to strengthen rule by virtue” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 10).

The leadership role expected from Party members and cadres is also obvious in the language used to describe it. The phrase commonly used here is *daitou* (带头), which can mean “taking the lead” but also “setting an example”. For example, the Party argues that “leading cadres have to take the lead in rectifying Party style and be a model for Party members and cadres. This is of great importance for implementing an improvement of Party style.” (Wang H. 31.05.1984 (2014), p. 12). In a significant number of cases, the term *daitou* is used to refer to leading cadres (see figure 9 below) who are supposed to set an example and take the lead with regard to various of the aspects discussed above. Apart from leading cadres, the term is also used to refer to “cadres” without the additional attribute of “leading” and also to “Party members” as a broader category. These two groups are referred to in about 15 percent of the cases where the term *daitou* is used, while organisational structures—both of the Party and the government—are invoked in about 16 percent of the cases. This means that, in the eyes of the Party, “setting an example” and “taking the lead” is very important, particularly for leading cadres. The Party wants Party members, and particularly cadres in leadership position, to fulfil an exemplary function and lead by example.

Figure 9: Concordance analysis of *daitou* (to take the lead) in CC and CCDI documents



### *The educational purpose of role models*

In the Party's narrative, role models are also supposed to fulfil educational purposes. In line with a Confucian understanding of model behaviour, the Party wants to use exemplary cases to educate its members in what kind of behaviour is expected from them. These cases involve both positive behaviour that should be imitated and negative behaviour that is to serve as a warning for Party members and cadres.

First of all, the Party provides large amounts of material that contains exemplary cases for Party members and cadres. In particular the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection publishes many such descriptions on its website. The Party argues that “we have to analyse exemplary cases and summarise experiences and lessons from them.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 52) (for more examples see table 5 below). For example, in a category called “Confession and Warning” (忏悔与警示 *chanhui yu jingshi*) on the website of the CCDI for the period between January 2013 and December 2018, we can find 339 case descriptions of cases of negative behaviour that are supposed to be studied and serve as negative examples (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 2013–2018). Similar case descriptions can also be found in the Party-internal magazine *Party Style and Party Discipline*. Furthermore, the CCDI also provides study material of positive examples of good behaviour that are supposed to have a model function and be emulated (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 2020). For example, there was a category entitled “Models of hard work and honesty” (勤廉楷模 *qinlian kaimo*) on the website of the CCDI, including role models of good behaviour. Although this category has been removed from the website, some cases can still be found in an abridged form (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 01.01.2014). The amount of role model material the Party provides and the repeated emphasis that cases should be analysed and used as role model material testify to the importance the Party attributes to models of behaviour for its members and cadres.

Table 5: Examples of role model education

Role model education	Examples
Model cases	<p>“In the process of investigating and handling cases, we should pay attention to exemplary cases that can have influence and meaning and be educational in character. They should be handled publicly and serve as a warning to others.” (N.N. 30.07.1989 (2014), p. 31)</p> <p>“We have to pay attention to choosing some exemplary cases and use this negative teaching material to conduct warning education for Party members and cadres. This should cause them to draw deep lessons and strengthen their capability to fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration.” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“We have to deeply analyse exemplary corruption cases and conduct warning education, thereby strengthening the capability of Party members and cadres to fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration.” (Wei 01.02.2002 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“We have to undertake deep education of studying model cases of advanced people.” (Li Zhuchao 01.06.2002 (2014), p. 29)</p> <p>“We have to fully use exemplary corruption cases that have already been investigated to conduct warning education for Party members and cadres.” (N.N. 01.02.2001(2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“We have to analyse exemplary cases and summarise experiences and lessons from it.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 52)</p> <p>“We have to publish important exemplary cases in a timely manner and profoundly show the severe harm of these wrongdoings and crimes.” (Cao J. 2011, p. 10)</p> <p>“We have to deeply analyse exemplary cases of investigation.” (Sun X. 2017)</p>
Model education	<p>“We have to use model cases to conduct education in Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline.” (Ma 30.10.1983 (2014), p. 17)</p> <p>“We have to use exemplary cases and deeply conduct education against corruption.” (Wang Y. 15.12.1983 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“We hope that every locality and every institution can concentrate its energy, grab a few cases of unhealthy trends and evil practices that harm the building of a socialist economy publish them in the newspaper and educate Party members and cadres.” (Wang H. 30.07.1985 (2014), p. 15)</p>

	<p>“We have to correctly understand the relationship between investigating cases and conducting education in Party spirit. The process of investigating cases becomes the process of conducting Party spirit education and of rectifying Party style. Dealing with cases and education are two sides of the same problem. Stressing Party spirit education certainly does not mean that we do not deal with cases. On the contrary, when discipline inspection departments conduct Party spirit education, they should do this with the help of handling large numbers of cases of breaching discipline. The ideological roots and dangers of these cases should be analysed to turn them into complete and lively model cases.” (N.N. 30.07.1985 (2014), p. 29)</p> <p>“We should grab model cases, analyse and dissect them, publish them to the entire Party and use them as lively examples in order to conduct education of Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline.” (N.N. 30.03.1986 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“We should use the strength of examples to conduct education of Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline. At the same time as using negative examples for conducting education, every battle line also established a couple of good examples of rectifying Party style.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.08.1986 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“To grab education, we have to be good at using two kinds of positive and negative examples. On the one hand, we have to propagate and establish advanced models of being diligent, honest and good at everything to develop a healthy atmosphere. On the other hand, we have to choose and deeply analyse exemplary cases to conduct warning education.” (Su R. 15.11.2000 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“The Central Committee decided that some large, influential cases should be turned into negative teaching material to conduct warning education for leading cadres. This is an important measure that can develop a function that other forms of propaganda and education cannot match.” (Wang L. 01.12.2000 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“We have to choose exemplary cases and publish them in a timely manner in an appropriate framework to conduct warning education for Party members and cadres.” (Huang 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“We have to pay attention to using exemplary cases for conducting warning education on anticorruption and clean government and fully develop the function of case investigation to get to the roots of the problem. It is both effective in preventing corruption and in educating a large</p>
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	<p>number of Party members and cadres.” (Zhu B. 01.10.2005 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“We should fully use positive and negative examples and actively conduct education on anticorruption and clean government. Model education is a method of education on anticorruption and clean government that stems from our long work practice. As practice proves, this educational method is effective.” (Yang A. 15.03.2006 (2014), p. 14)</p> <p>“We have to extensively conduct study of advanced model cases of honest and diligent politics as well as warning education activities, thereby developing the Party’s glorious tradition and fine work style.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 41)</p> <p>“We have to use model cases of good behaviour for propaganda and leadership, and cases of bad behaviour for warning education.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 45)</p>
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The reason why the Party considers role model material to be so important is educational in nature. The Party wants its members and cadres to study this material and learn from it. With regard to exemplary cases (*dianxing anjian* 典型案件) of incorrect behaviour, it is argued that “we have to select some representative cases and use this negative teaching material to conduct warning education for the largest part of Party members and cadres. Thereby we can cause them to derive profound lesson from it and strengthen the ability to fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 9). Party members and cadres should study confessions and negative examples of badly behaving Party members and cadres so that “every Party member should draw profound lessons from them and take them as a warning” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiancha Weiyuanhui 29.05.2016). The Party holds that it is important that they “pay attention to using representative cases to conduct warning education on the topic of combating corruption and maintaining clean government. Additionally, we have to develop the far-reaching function of investigating and handling cases. Only if we effectively punish corruption, we can educate the largest part of Party members.” (Zhu B. 01.10.2005 (2014), p. 10). At the same time, and in addition to cases of negative behaviour that is supposed to serve as a warning, the Party also points out that “we have to use exemplary cases to conduct education in Party spirit, Party style and Party discipline.” (Ma G. 30.10.1983 (2014), p. 17). In other words, the Party wants to use cases of both good and bad behaviour to educate Party members and cadres in the behaviour that is expected from them. This is in line with Confucian understandings of the purpose of role models.



## Summary

This chapter discusses how the CCP aims to increase the relevance of its social identity. Building on Oakes' (Oakes 1987) work on the prerequisites for making social identity salient, it argues that the Party has to make social identity relevant and thereby accessible for its members and cadres. Making a particular social identity relevant increases its centrality in the bundle of social identities that an individual may hold and thereby increases its accessibility.

I argue that the Party employs two interconnected strategies to increase the relevance of its social identity for Party members and cadres. Firstly, it incorporates elements of traditional cultural understandings of leadership, thereby co-opting an element of what would otherwise be a potential alternative social identity, i.e. a cultural identity. Secondly, and connected to the first point, the Party advances a narrative of patriarchy, portraying the Party as a caring and nurturing but also punishing entity. While this is a traditional cultural element as well, it is an element that was also part of the Soviet tradition of relating to its subordinates. In other words, the Party portrays itself as a caring paternal figure, thereby increasing its relevance and that of Party social identity for Party members and cadres. By co-opting elements of cultural and family identity, the Party seeks to lessen the importance of alternative social identity elements independent from the Party to make the Party social identity more accessible. How, based on increased accessibility, the stimulation of social identity works is the topic of the next chapter.

## 6 Creating a panopticon: Increasing the salience of social identity

Party social identity is not an automatic mechanism of influence for Party members. In order to function effectively and influence behaviour of individuals, a social identity has to be made salient. Salience of a social identity means that it is “activated” or in the words of Turner “switched on” (Turner et al. 1987, p. 44) at a particular moment. Social identities are not constantly salient. However, the more accessible they are and the stronger and more persistent the stimuli for a particular identity, the more probable this identity is to be salient. A stimulus of a social identity can be almost any event, symbol, statement, ritual or other form of interaction in a social context. In the example of national identity raised in the last chapter, a stimulus could for example be the signing of the national anthem or the raising of the national flag. A stimulus for a social identity is simply a symbolic reference to this identity that signals to the individual that he or she is part of this particular (psychological) group. Additionally, a social identity can also be made salient with the help of signals that de-emphasise individual identity elements and emphasise group identity elements. These deindividuation manipulations can also serve as a cue indicating to an individual that he or she is part of a particular (psychological) group.

To provide signals for making Party identity salient, the Party attempts to create a panopticon. This panopticon firstly consists of the impression of encompassing supervision of all kinds of behaviour of Party members and cadres by anyone and at any point in time. Secondly, it entails the prescription of formalised official Party language that Party members should use at least when making public statements. With a certain similarity to George Orwell’s dystopian novel *1984* (Orwell 1949), the Party through ideology attempts to build an encompassing network of stimuli that constantly reminds Party members of their membership in this special organisation that is the Party. Like Orwell’s hero Winston Smith, Party members are supposed to gain the impression that their entire behaviour can be seen by the Party and at least in public, they have to comply with linguistic expectations to express themselves in what is officially considered to be a “correct manner”.

More concretely, supervision in the Party relies on two mechanisms to make Party identity salient. Firstly, through the narrative of omnipresent supervision it constantly signals to Party members that they are part of the Party and that they should heed this at all times. Even if supervision does not result in the punishment of every act of misbehaviour, it creates the impression of an encompassing panopticon where Party members cannot escape the watchful gaze of the Party. By constantly sending signals of “the Party is everywhere”, Party social identity can be “switched on”. Secondly, the narrative of supervision also serves to underline the differences between Party identity and other social identity elements. Signals separating an ingroup from an outgroup can make a social identity salient. The social identity of the Party, its mythologised self-portrayal, contains the assumption that Party members are

special and they are expected to fulfil higher standards than others in their entire demeanour. Because constant and omnipresent supervision can serve as a reminder of behavioural expectations and requirements, it emphasises the differences between Party identity and other social identity elements.

The function of formalised language is to serve as a deindividuation manipulation. Similar to Orwell's concept of "Newspeak", the Party attempts to formalise a "correct" way of expression for Party members and cadres. This formalised language is not supposed to allow for individualised forms of expressions outside the officially sanctioned vocabulary and manner of speaking. Thereby, it serves as a deindividuation manipulation, limiting the expression of individual identity elements.

### "We are watching you": Supervision of Party members

Supervision is an important rectification method of the Party. At the same time, it is also an important tool of social identity manipulation for Party members. In terms of rectification methods, supervision features importantly in the Party's toolkit of dealing with non-desired and incorrect behaviour of Party members. However, more important for the argument in this thesis is the role of supervision for the manipulation of the social identity of Party members. I argue that the core function of the narrative of omnipresent supervision is to provide strong stimuli that remind Party members of their belongingness to the Party.

#### *The omnipresence of supervision*

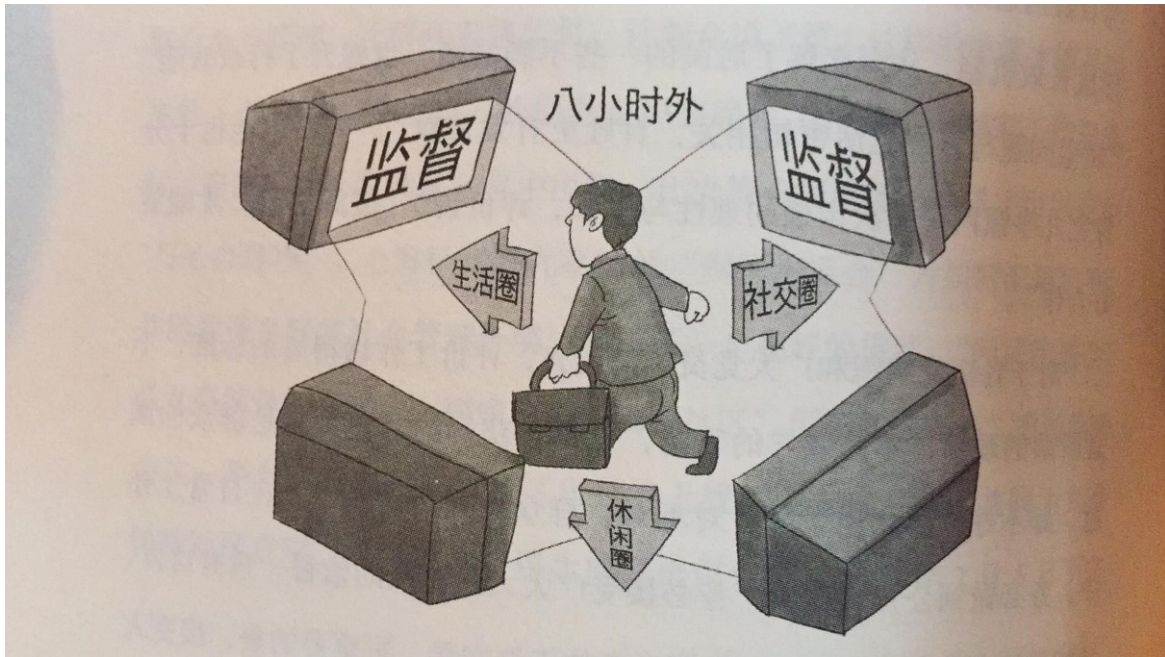
The Party creates a narrative of pervading supervision. Supervision is supposed to cover everyone and everything at all times. Additionally, in the eyes of the Party, everyone can act as a supervisor so that there is no escape from the—at least perceived—watchful eye of the Party. Whether the Party really sees everything in terms of behaviour of their members and cadres is not relevant. Rather, it is the narrative of constant supervision that reminds Party members of who they are and thereby provides strong stimuli for their Party social identity. In the following, I will elaborate on the supervision narrative of the Party, i.e. who and what is supposed to be supervised, before discussing the question of supervisors. The final aspect of omnipresent supervision is the more recent trend on the digitalisation of supervision. While in its basic logic, it does not differ from earlier supervision narratives, it introduces an additional element of technology that can make supervision even more encompassing.

#### The Party's supervision narrative

The supervision narrative as it is embedded in Party ideology encompasses everything. It covers all kinds of behaviour and everyone within the Party. The omnipresence of supervision is strongly visualised in a cartoon depicted below (illustration 1) that was taken from a book discussing how to be a good branch Party secretary in the era under Xi Jinping (Gu and Dong 2018, p. 22). It shows a person carrying a briefcase who is being supervised by four TV screens that are watching the person's life,

social interactions and leisure activities, all “outside the eight hours” that make up a person’s working time. Private activities such as personal life, leisure activities and private social interactions are not exempt from supervision. This means that the Party reserves the right to supervise even private activities of Party members and cadres and judge acceptable and moral behaviour here too.

*Illustration 1: Cartoon on omnipresent supervision of lower-level Party cadres*



The message of this cartoon is not an exaggerated political caricature. Rather, the narrative of supervision in Party ideology is indeed as encompassing as the cartoon describes. In an article entitled “Earnestly strengthen inner-Party supervision” in *Party Style and Party Discipline*, the author argues that “Party members and leading cadres at all times and under all circumstances have to be aware that they are members of the Communist Party; they are Party members within their daily eight working hours and outside of those eight hours they are still members of the Party.” (Ma Shichang 马世昌 2000, p. 15). He points out that “Apart from leading cadres having to accept supervision with regard to their work activities, we also have to strengthen supervision for their activities outside of work.” (Ma Shichang 马世昌 2000, p. 13). Here the message is exactly the same as it is depicted in the cartoon above. At every moment of their life, Party members are indeed Party members and they have to keep their special position in mind. The Party argues that “we have to strengthen daily management and supervision of Party members and cadres. We have to perfect the system of work and plug any management loopholes.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui and Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jianchabu 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 20). According to this narrative, Party members through supervision should constantly be reminded of their Party membership and feel that the Party could control them if it wants to.

Omnipresent supervision is also reflected in the kinds of behaviour the Party wants to supervise. Firstly, supervision is claimed to control the exercise of power. The Party very broadly states that “we have to supervise the exercise of power of Party members and leading cadres” (Wu 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 10). This is because “strengthening supervision work will be an important guarantee for the correct exercise of power of leading cadres” (N.N. 01.01.2004 (2014), p. 16). Closely connected to this is the second kind of behaviour that is to be supervised: the control of corruption. The Party believes that “strengthening supervision and moving the gateway [of control] forward is the key to effectively preventing corruption” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 46). It wants to “comprehensively develop the function of supervision and investigation and integrate supervision and investigation into every aspect and sector of the work of anticorruption and clean government” (N.N. 01.03.2002 (2014), p. 16). Thirdly, the Party also wants to strengthen political supervision. It argues that “strengthening political supervision offers a disciplinary guarantee of implementing the centre’s major policies and of protecting the authority of the Central Committee and of unified and centralised leadership” (Wang B. 2018). Thus, the behaviour to be supervised among Party members and cadres is very broad. It covers more “classic” examples such as the exercise of power and the preventing of corruption, but it also extends to political behaviour, submission and loyalty to the Party.

In terms of who is to be supervised, the Party emphasises the particular importance of leading cadres. Although all Party members and cadres are supposed to be subject to the watchful eye of the Party, leading cadres are especially important. The Party argues that “we have to earnestly implement the rules of inner-Party supervision and conscientiously strengthen supervision of leading cadres, in particular the main leading cadres” (Wu 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 14). Such main leading cadres can for example be the local “first in command” (*yibashou* 一把手). “The ‘first in command’ have a core status among leading cadres and they assume the main responsibility in a locality or department. The most important point about strengthening the supervision of leading cadres is to strengthen the supervision of the ‘first in command’” (N.N. 15.05.2002 (2014), p. 6).

The supervisors

The answer to the question who is a supervisor in the Party’s idea of supervision is as broad as who and what is supervised. In short, in the eyes of the Party everyone can act as a supervisor (see table 6). Every person and every institution can theoretically be a supervisor while also at the same time being supervised by everyone else. This broad understanding is summed up well in a contribution to *Party Style and Party Discipline* that is worth quoting at length:

*“In building an encompassing system of supervising and managing cadres, we have to pay attention to the following aspects: Firstly, we have to do well inner-Party supervision. The most*

*important aspect is that we support the Party's system of democratic centralism and strictly honour all institutions related to it. We have to highlight the aspect of supervision of leading cadres and pay particular attention to the 'first in command' [yibashao 一把手]. Secondly, we have to increase the supervisory force of the participation of the masses. We have to draw lessons from the results of the 'three stresses' and extend the degree of participation of the masses. We have to combine the examinations of the organization with democratic discussions and allow democratic discussions to extend and to be systematized. Third, we have to strengthen the supervisory function of public opinion, the people's congresses, the law, social organisations and the democratic parties and thereby eagerly ensure the combination of [all structures of] supervision." (Li X. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 25).*

This piece reflects well that both institutions and persons within the Party as well as people and institutions outside the Party are considered to be appropriate supervisors. The Party believes that "inner-Party supervision and supervision from outside the Party have to be combined" (N.N. 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 4). As outlined in the piece quoted above, this means that the Party wants to combine "inner-Party supervision with supervision by the National People's Congress, specialised institutions of the government, government democratic institutions, legal supervision, supervision by the masses and public opinion" (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 47). In short, the Party lists literally everyone as being a potential supervisor for the behaviour of Party members and cadres.

In addition to referring to "everyone" in a list as the one quoted above, the Party also repeatedly mentions single actors or groups of actors who are supposed to act as supervisors. Inner-Party supervision through other Party members and the discipline inspection system plays an important role. Here, the Party often simply speaks of "inner-Party supervision" (*dangnei jian du* 党内监督). More precisely, the Party also mentions that discipline inspection commissions are the Party institution responsible for supervising the behaviour of Party members and cadres. Additionally, it also points out that this equally the task of average Party members as well. However, at the same time, the Party also creates the impression that actors outside the Party should act as supervisors as well. While these might in reality only play a supplementary role for carrying out supervision, their rhetoric inclusion as supervisors broadens the perceived range of supervision and enlarges the panopticon. In terms of actors outside the Party that are repeatedly mentioned, the most important group are "the people" (referred to as *qunzhong* 群众 or *renmin qunzhong* 人民群众 and sometimes also as *shehui* 社会).

Table 6: Different entities that the Party considers to be supervisors for Party members and cadres

The supervisors	Examples
The masses/ the people	<p>“We have to develop the function of supervision through the masses.” (N.N. 17.01.1981 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“The critique and supervision by the people and the masses is a strong weapon in our struggle against unhealthy tendencies. The supervision and criticism of Party organisations and Party members is a fine tradition that our Party formed in its long revolutionary struggle where it was leading the people.” (Wang H. 31.05.1984 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“Now more and more people dare to stand up and resist unhealthy tendencies. This is a good thing. We have to guide this along its course and encourage the people to speak up. We have to accept the supervision and criticism coming from the people, fully rely on the people to rectify unhealthy tendencies and ensure that Party style ultimately develops for the better.” (Qiang 30.06.1986 (2014), p. 30)</p> <p>“We have to comprehensively develop the function of inner-Party supervision, supervision through the National People’s Congress and the CPPCC<sup>17</sup>, supervision through the masses and supervision of public opinion.” (Liu C. 2008, p. 41)</p> <p>“We have to attach importance to the supervision of investigation institutions through the National People’s Congress and we have to strengthen the consciousness of accepting the supervision of public opinion, the masses and society. We have to deepen the reform of the system of supervision by the people.” (Lu 2009, p. 50)</p> <p>“We have to fully develop the function of supervision by the masses. We have to combine inner-Party supervision and supervision from outside the Party, the supervision by specialised institutions and the masses. We have to broaden the channels for supervision by the masses, set up a robust system for supervision by the masses and emphasise developing the active function of supervision through public opinion.” (He 2012, p. 8)</p>
Inner-Party supervision	<p>“We have to adhere to the system of Party organisational life and strengthen Party supervision. Under the new circumstances, we have to protect the Party’s political discipline and strictly implement the Party’s system of organisational life. We have to go through the traditions of Party organisational life such as Party meetings, thought reports and Party education to administer and educate Party members. In particular, we have to conduct Party life meetings, engage in criticism and self-criticism and strengthen inner-Party supervision.” (Liu Y. 15.04.1987 (2014), p. 9)</p>

<sup>17</sup> Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference

	<p>“We have to attentively implement the preventive function of inner-Party supervision, solve problems of unhealthy tendencies at their roots and prevent corruption. Inner-Party supervision is an active measure for self-improvement and it can happen in advance or during an affair.” (N.N. 15.09.1989 (2014), p. 7)</p> <p>“We have to complete all aspects of a system of supervision. Strengthening inner-Party supervision protects inner-Party democracy and protects important elements of Party members’ rights.” (Cai 01.01.2005 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“We have to earnestly implement the regulations for inner-Party supervision. We have to strengthen limitations on and supervision of power and ensure that power is exercised correctly.” (N.N. 01.01.2006 (2014), p. 21)</p> <p>“We have to persist in developing democracy, strengthen supervision and eagerly work towards not committing mistakes or commit few mistakes. Democracy and supervision are strong weapons for preventing corruption. Inner-Party supervision is the life of the Party and it is the most important form of supervision.”(Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 44)</p> <p>“Building on the system of inner-Party supervision, we should complete the inspection and investigation system, the inner-Party discussion system, the cadre inspection and examination system, the system of duty and incorruptibility and the individual report system. We should explore constructing a daily life supervision system that covers everything, is intensive and links everything.” (Gong M. and Wang 24.02.2018)</p>
<p>Higher-up discipline commissions</p>	<p>“Higher-up discipline inspection commissions have to strengthen supervision and investigation for the organisations of lower discipline inspection commissions and ruthlessly implement it.” (N.N. 15.02.1985 (2014), p. 29)</p> <p>“Every discipline inspection commission at all levels should adapt to the needs of supervision. They have to strengthen study and grab the knowledge and skills of supervision.” (Ma 15.09.2000 (2014), p. 14)</p> <p>“We have to raise and focus on five capabilities of discipline inspection commissions. They have to strictly educate, strictly administer and strictly supervise. We have to build an effective system of administering and supervising cadres.” (Xia 01.01.2006 (2014), p. 13)</p> <p>“Commissions for discipline inspection are the specialised institution for inner-Party supervision and they are an</p>



	important force for administrating and governing the Party.” (Sun X. 2017)
Average party members	<p>“All Party members should supervise the Party’s leading institutions and leading cadres. Strengthening this kind of supervision is the mass base of democratic centralism.” (Fang 15.08.1989 (2014), p. 5)</p> <p>“We have to fully develop the supervising function of all Party members and the masses and earnestly do well the work of receiving complaints and accusations.” (N.N. 30.08.1989 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“Leading cadres at all levels, particularly leading cadres who are Party members should participate in Party branch and small group activities together with average Party members and they should self-consciously accept that they are supervised by Party members and average cadres.” (Cao 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 5)</p>

The broad supervision is also reflected in supervision means. For actors outside the Party, the Party refers to its petition system as well as the initiative of open and public government. Firstly, it points out that supervision by the people can and should be conducted through the petition system. It argues that “the petition system is an important channel for the Party to contact the masses, understand the overall situation and obtain all kinds of information. It is an effective way for the people to exercise their democratic rights and supervise Party members and cadres.” (Li Z. 15.11.1983 (2014), p. 3). The Party also pointed out that in addition to the traditional petition system, more potential channels for people to contact Party institutions should be opened up. Specifically, it mentions that “we have to build a website for making suggestions on clean government and anticorruption and a means for electronically conducting government affairs. Additionally, we have to build a public supervision website.” (Fu 1.1.2003 (2014), p. 9). Although digitalised supervision was only strongly implemented under Xi Jinping (see below), the intention is clear: the Party wants to rely on as many channels as possible, including the petition system, to include the people in supervising Party members and cadres.

Secondly, this intention is also reflected in the Party’s reliance on a system of public and open government. The Party argues that the publication of government information is a prerequisite for the people to exercise their supervising power. The Party points out that Gaochengshi city in Hebei Province implemented a policy called “two publications, one supervision” where it published “the structure of doing things and the results of it while accepting the supervision of the people” and this scheme was “clearly successful” (Hebeisheng jiwei yanjiushi 01.09.1993 (2014), p. 11). Additionally, the Party argues that “we have to thoroughly and broadly publish information of government activities to the people, let people know what is going on and have them supervise it. At the same time, we have

to strengthen the internal supervision of local government institutions to ensure that the published information is accurate, impartial and trustworthy.” (N.N. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 9), thereby allowing the people to supervise the government and Party actors.

It is important to note here that what the Party means with extensive and omnipresent supervision is not equivalent to democratic checks and balances. Even when it wants literally everyone, including the people, to act as supervisors of Party members and cadres, this does not mean that the Party wants to submit itself to independent outside control. Omnipresent supervision with everyone inside and outside the Party acting as potential supervisors can serve as a powerful stimulus to remind Party members that they are part of this organisation and activate their Party social identity. What it is not supposed to achieve, however, is to subject the Party to independent control. Since all transgressions of Party members and cadres should still be reported to the Party, it does not abandon its ultimate control function.

The digitalisation of supervision

Particularly under Xi Jinping, the Party engages in encompassing digitalisation of supervision. On a broader level and affecting all levels of Chinese society, the newly introduced social credit system if rolled out completely and on a nationwide scale can serve as a digital means of supervising and influencing people’s behaviour (Creemers 09.05.2018; X. Dai 10.06.2018; Hoffman 2018; F. Liang et al. 2018; C. S. Lee 2019; Kostka 2019). Additionally, for Party members and cadres, the Xi administration introduced multiple tools for digital supervision of their study behaviour but also for digital reporting of cadre misbehaviour. Digitalised supervision can thereby significantly contribute to Party members’ impression that they are watched at all times.

The supervision of study

The first area where the Party now relies on digitalised supervision of its members and cadres is the area of study. Under the Xi administration, the Party now applies digitalised methods to supervise how and what Party members study and how they perform in their study. Particularly noteworthy for the supervision of study is the study app *Xuexi Qiangguo* (学习强国 Study a Strong Country). Connected to the website of the same name, it is propagating CCP ideology, mainly Xi Jinping Thought. The app primarily targets Party members and cadres, aims to provide them with daily study material and also tracks their study behaviour and performance. This makes it possible for the Party to trace how often Party members use the app, how much they study and how they perform in enclosed quizzes and other tests of their understanding of Party ideology (Z. Huang 14.02.2019). The QR code for downloading the app is posted prominently on the homepage of *Xuexi Qiangguo* (see illustration 2) together with service telephone numbers so that downloading the app is made as easy as possible. The use of the app is supposed to be compulsory for Party members and cadres and they are expected to study

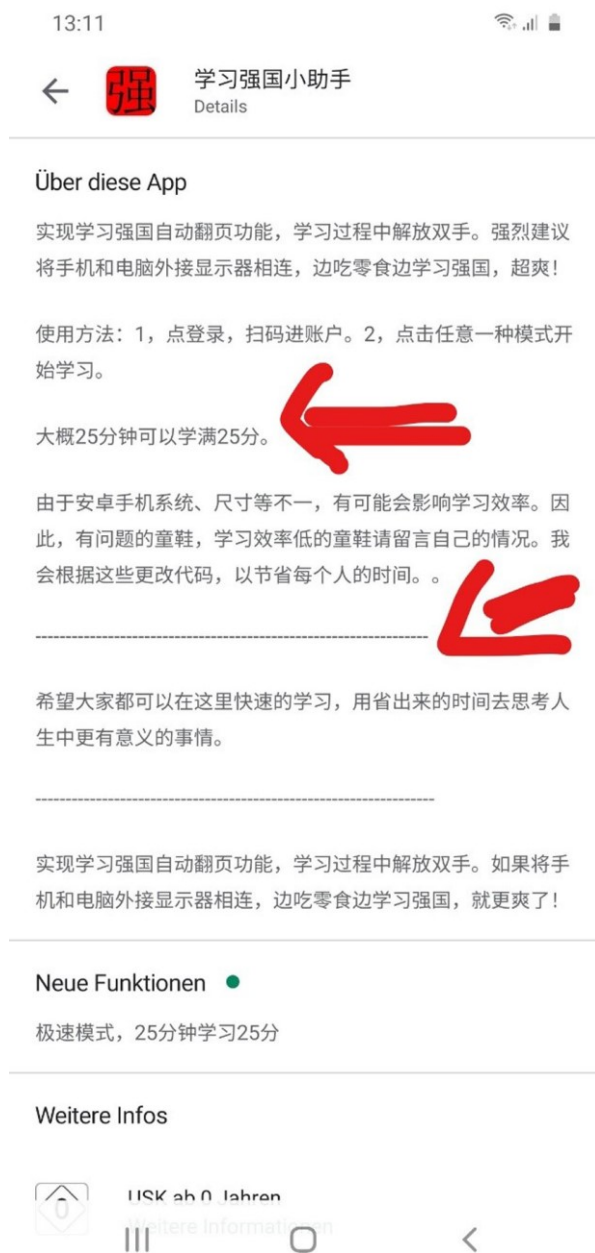
regularly—preferably daily—and achieve good results on respective online tests under the watchful gaze of the Party.

Illustration 2: Screenshot of the website Xuexi Qiangguo with the arrow indicating the QR code for downloading the app



Sceptics might point out, though, that it is possible to automate logins and apparent daily study sessions in the *Xuexi Qiangguo* app. For this, there is, for example, an app called *Xuexi Qiangguo Little Helper* (*Xuexi Qiangguo xiaozhushou* 学习强国小助手) that was found in the Google Playstore on an Android smartphone (see illustration 3). It claims to provide an automation of use in the app and to generate 25 study points in about 25 minutes so that “the time that was saved can be used to think about things that are more meaningful in life” (Laowang 06.06.2020). Even though such apps to circumvent the control and supervision of the Party seem to contradict the ability of the Party to exercise control over its members and successfully supervise their behaviour, the existence of such an app at the same time indicates the importance that is assigned to at least officially complying with the Party’s wishes and directives. If the control function of the Party was entirely ineffective, Party members would not feel the need to comply with official requirements and at least pretend to regularly study via the *Xuexi Qiangguo* app.

Illustration 3: Screenshot of the app description of the app Xuexi Qiangguo Little Helper in the Google Playstore



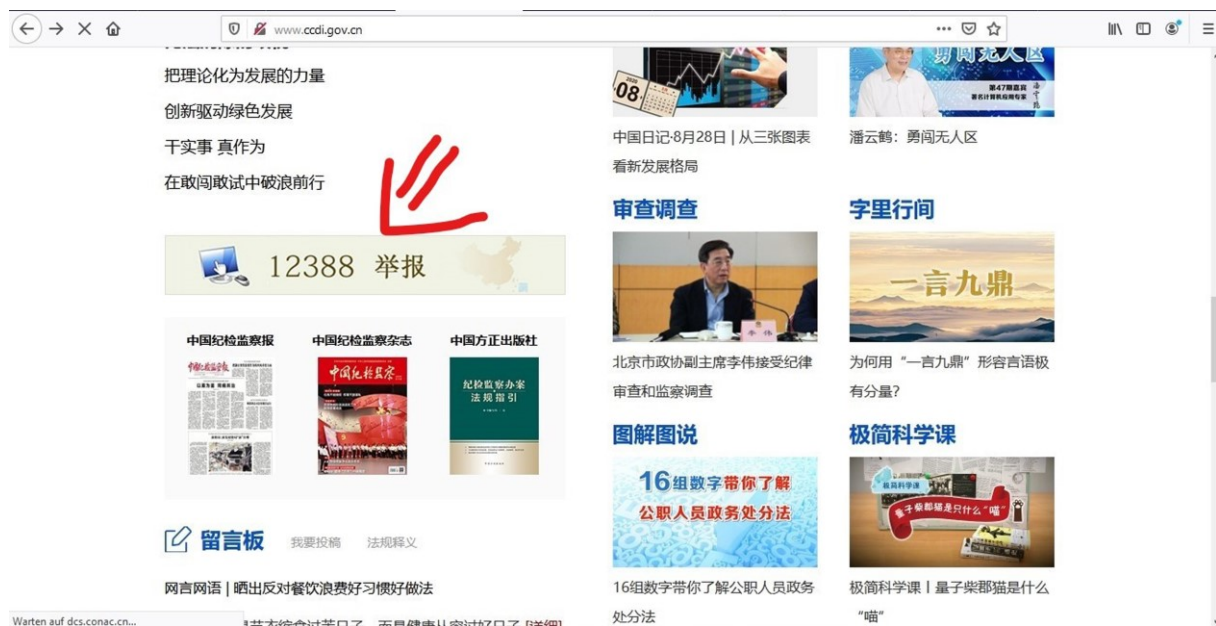
### Reporting Party members' behaviour

The second area of digitalised supervision that the Party relies on concerns the reporting of Party members' behaviour. More precisely, these reporting formats address others witnessing Party members' wrongdoings rather than Party members themselves reporting on their behaviour. As discussed above, the Party has a very broad understanding of who can and is supposed to engage in supervision of Party members and cadres. Among these supervisors are also average citizens. Although there have always been possibilities for citizens to complain about and report bad behaviour of Party members and particularly cadres, for example through the petition system, the digitalisation of reporting behaviour has simplified procedures and allows for anyone to report on behaviour of Party

members and cadres. Because it increases the number of potential supervisors, it can contribute strongly to the feeling of omnipresent supervision.

The main reporting function for Party members' and cadres' behaviour can be found on the website of the CCDI (see illustration 4) and also in the CCDI app (Geng 18.06.2015; A. Wan 19.06.2015). The reporting function is provided for anyone wanting to report malfeasance of cadres to the Party, including breaches of Party discipline, criminal corrupt behaviour but also non-compliance with

Illustration 4: Screenshot of the CCDI website with the arrow indicating the function for reporting officials



disciplinary punishments. In order to submit a report, the reporting person has to select the respective local discipline commission responsible for dealing with the case in question by selecting first a province, then a city-level commission and then the respective commission for the district in question. Eventually, the reporting person is directed to a form where they have to enter their personal details including ID number and contact details, information on the person they want to report on and a description of the case in question. Additionally, they can also add supplementary evidence such as, for example, photos (for the reporting form see illustration 5).

Illustration 5: Screenshots of the form to report cadre malfeasance on the website of the CCDI



The second reporting tool can be found on the website of the Party Organisation Department. Compared with the CCDI’s tool, it covers slightly different kinds of behaviour and groups of people. In terms of who can be reported, it allows for reporting on misbehaviour of individual people but also of work units (单位 *danwei*), i.e. institutions (Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu n.d.). In terms of behaviour that can be reported, the Organisation Department states that only cases of breaching rules and regulations regarding personnel appointment as well as problems regarding the “self-discipline of leading cadres in the area of politics, ideology, work style and honesty” (see underlined part in the screenshot in illustration 6) should be reported via its online tool.

Illustration 6: Screenshot of the reporting instructions on the reporting website of the Organisation Department



The different reporting tools and the apparent different coverage of them underlines the argument of omnipresent supervision serving to remind Party members of their status in the Party, thereby stimulating their Party social identity. Whereas the Organisation Department seems to have a narrower limit on the cases it investigates, the lines of sharing responsibility between the two organisations are not clearly outlined. The possibility of reporting misbehaviour to either organisation and the supervisory function of both of them underline the impression of omnipresent supervision that the Party seeks to create. While it is not clear who precisely is supervising whom at which point in time, the impression is clear that somebody will see what a Party member is doing. Therefore, the digitalisation of supervision is a new and digital tool that allows the Party to strengthen the feeling of ubiquity of supervision.

### “You say what we want”: Formalised language in the Party

In social identity theory, deindividuation serves as a stimulus for increasing the relevance of social identity. Deindividuation means stimulating group elements of an individual’s identity at the expense of individual elements of his or her identity. In the words of Reicher et al. “deindividuation manipulations may work through their effects upon the level of self-categorization and the salience of particular social identities” (Reicher, Spears, and Postmes 1995, p. 178). This means that social identity can be made salient by ensuring that an individual strongly perceives him- or herself as a member of a group at a particular point in time, rather than an individual distinct from this group. This can for example be achieved with the help of uniform-like clothing or through computer-mediated forms of communication where an individual is only perceived to be communicating as part of a group and is not perceived as an individual (Spears, Lea, and Lee 1990; Reicher, Spears, and Postmes 1995).

It is important to keep in mind that deindividuation does not imply totalitarian control. While it can obviously be a feature of totalitarianism, it is a common phenomenon of social identity manipulations and in group contexts. This is the case because deindividuation does not imply the complete loss of an individual identity. Reicher et al. point out that “once the self may be defined at more than the personal level then loss of the personal is not to be equated with loss of self” (Reicher, Spears, and Postmes 1995, p. 177). In other words, an individual has multiple identity elements and the temporary prioritisation of social identity elements at the expense of personal identity elements does not imply that an individual’s personality is lost. It simply means that deindividuation manipulations can lead to a shift in prioritisation of different identity elements.

Formalised language is a form of deindividuation manipulation. This is the case because formalised language limits the personalised options of expression that an individual has and forces him or her to speak in a prescribed and constrained manner. In the words of Bloch, “formalisation of speech [...] dramatically restricts what can be said so the speech acts are either all alike or all of a kind and thus if this mode of communication is adopted there is hardly any *choice* of what can be said” (Bloch 1974, p. 62, emphasis in original). Limiting choices of expression reminds an individual that he or she is part of a group and has to speak like this group.

In this understanding, formalised language can serve both as a political and as a social ritual. As Spears points out, “the experience of the physical, sensual, and embodied aspects of being in the group (chanting, rituals, and other coordinated group actions) are likely to bolster the sense of group identity and of oneness with others” (Spears 2011, p. 218). Like any ritual in a religious context, e.g. common singing in church or the ritual of the communion in Christian congregations, these common and symbolic group activities serve to include a person in a social group that surpasses his or her own level of individuality. Any group experience, be it religious or political, can thus serve as a



deindividuation manipulation because it emphasises the group at the expense of individual identity. This is also the case for a common and prescribed way of speaking.

It is important to clarify here that formalised language focuses on form rather than on content. As Bloch points out, formalised language works like a tunnel. In this linguistic tunnel, “since there is no possibility of turning either to right or left, the only thing to do is to follow” (Bloch 1974, p. 76). The limiting function and social power of formalised language stems from “the initial decision to enter the tunnel” (Bloch 1975, p. 24). This tunnel prescribes the way of speaking for an individual and it is most important not to leave the tunnel, even if content of formalised language changes or is vague and ambiguous. In the case that individuals might hold varying interpretations of the concrete content of formalised language, their main task is still to comply with the form and accept its limitations on their individual options for expression.

The core argument of this sub-chapter is that the Party’s official language is highly formalised, thereby serving as a deindividuation manipulation for Party members and cadres. The Party uses highly prescribed language and terminology in its official documents that Party members and cadres, when speaking officially, have to rely on. Already for the Maoist period, Schoenhals points out that the Party used Party circulars to proscribe terminology and let Party members and cadres know what the correct way of expression was (Schoenhals 1992). Language is not supposed to be an individual expression of whatever a Party member would like to say, but it is official, formalised and limited.

In the following, I discuss how Party language is formalised. Firstly, this is the case with regard to ideological concepts. The Party prescribes a limited and repetitive set of vocabulary in official documents and in relation to Party ideology. I first discuss the changed contents of Party ideology with regard to the role of Marxism-Leninism for the Party before pointing out the linguistic features of ideological concepts in Party documents and how they are formalised. The second element of formalised language is the role of self-referencing in Party language. Here, I outline how the Party restricts language by using a limited amount of repetitive and self-referential points of comparison to restrict the use of official language.

### *Ideology in Party language*

Ideology is an important factor in formalising Party language. A first ideological element relevant to formalised Party language is Marxist ideology. After fierce internal ideological debates particularly throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the Party sidelined some elements of Marxist ideology, e.g. the concept of class struggle. Nevertheless, other Marxist concepts still appear in Party ideology and prescribe how social problems can be analysed and how the Party itself can be understood. In the following, I briefly discuss the role of Marxist ideology in formalised language and elaborate on the

examples of Marxist dialectics in Party ideology as well as the rhetoric of the Leninist vanguard party. In a second step, I describe the characteristics of Party language more broadly and point out how politicised language, repetition and restricted argumentative patterns contribute to the formalisation of Party language.

Marxism-Leninism and CCP ideology

Marxism-Leninism officially still forms the ideological basis of the CCP. It is cited in the Party constitution as the Party's guiding ideology and as a communist party, the CCP claims to be the heir to these ideological concepts. However, the Party has an ambiguous relationship with Marxist-Leninist ideology. Although Marxism-Leninism as an ideological concept is still part of Party language, some of its core elements were renegotiated or sidelined by the CCP. In this chapter, I briefly discuss this renegotiation of Party ideology<sup>18</sup> and point to examples how the CCP still applies concepts from Marxist-Leninist theory in its official language and argumentative patterns.

Marxism-Leninism and its role for the CCP were the topic of heated debates especially throughout the 1980s. This period in particular witnessed an "explosion of a deep-seated conflict between the so-called conservative and radical reformers over the nature of socialism" (Sun 1995, p. 5). These inner-Party debates led to an adaptation of the CCP's ideological basis and a sidelining of some elements of Marxist-Leninist theory. In particular, Marxist economic theory as well as the concept of class and class struggle underwent significant re-evaluation.

The first ideological revision in post-Mao China concerns Marxist economic theory. In contrast to the assumption that the means of production in a socialist society should be common property, or in practice, state property, the CCP has broadly allowed the existence of private property in China. Additionally, it has additionally also allowed private entrepreneurs to join the Party and thereby co-opted them closely within the Party (Dickson 2003; Tsai 2005). In other words, the CCP has permitted the Chinese economic system to develop in a manner that is fundamentally different from the basic assumptions of Marxist ideology.

Following from this, the CCP has also reevaluated the concept of class and class struggle. As Misra points out, the CCP had difficulties grappling with the question of defining the concept of "class" after the end of the Cultural Revolution. These discussions centred on the use of ideological, political and economic criteria for defining class and they are closely linked to the question of class struggle (Misra 1998). After the Maoist emphasis on class struggle had been abandoned, Misra discusses the ongoing shift as one "from class struggle to social struggle" (Misra 1998, p. 136). The de-emphasising

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<sup>18</sup> For excellent extensive analysis of ideological debates within the Party until the early 1990s see for example the work of Misra (1998) and Sun (1995).

of the concept of class does not mean, however, that the notion of “struggle” has disappeared from CCP terminology. As discussed with regard to the myth of the Party, struggle is still an important element in CCP ideology and has it been re-emphasised under Xi Jinping.

Moreover, other aspects of Marxist-Leninist theory are still important for the CCP and prevalent in contemporary Party language. Even though it can be debated in how far their use is orthodox in a Marxist sense, they still play an important role in the CCP’s argumentative patterns and official formal language. Theoretically, any element of Marxist rhetoric could serve this function of formalised language for the Party because in formalised language, form is more important than content. As long as a formalised argumentative pattern with prescribed vocabulary is used, it fulfils the function of formalised language. In the following, I point out two elements of Marxist theory that still importantly appear in the Party’s ideological rhetoric. These are elements of Marxist dialectics as well as the Leninist concept of the Party itself.

Firstly, the Party still relies on argumentative patterns that follow the logic of Marxist dialectics. After sidelining the concept of class and class struggle after the end of the Maoist era, the CCP re-defined what it called the “principal contradiction”. It did no longer understand it as a contradiction between production relations and production forces as is the case in Marxist orthodoxy and it criticised the Maoist assumption of “class struggle as the key link” (Sun 1995, p. 41f.). Rather, the Party pointed out that the principal contradiction to be dissolved should be seen as the contradiction “between the low level of production forces and the increasing material and cultural needs of the people” (Sun 1995, p. 45). This redefinition of the main contradiction in official Party language provided a justification for the necessity of economic reforms and development. Recently, the officially identified “main contradiction” in official Party language underwent a further redefinition. It is now understood to be “the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life” (*Xinhua* 20.10.2017). This redefinition of the “principal contradiction” can allow the Party to underpin a policy shift in order to deal with negative externalities of its economic reform and development policy. What is important for the argument here, however, is that the Party still relies on the argumentative pattern of dialectics and its “principal contradiction” to legitimise its policies in Marxist terminology. Instead of abandoning this terminology altogether, the Party still incorporates it in its official language.

A second example of the ongoing importance of Marxist rhetoric for the Party is the concept of a disciplined vanguard Party. This is the concept of a small disciplined organisation or in the words of Riegel “the Leninist body of discipline, the party of professional revolutionaries” (Riegel 2005, p. 102). In the context of the Russian revolutionary experience, Lenin concluded that a small and highly disciplined organisation was necessary to achieve revolutionary victory and to seize power in the name

of the working class (Wallerstein 1990). Although it is a party in power, the CCP still emphasises the Leninist idea of a highly disciplined Party as one of its core organisational principles. It argues that “thoroughly governing the Party and strengthening Party discipline are correct measures to implement the Party’s line and policies and protect the Party’s unity in political questions as well as improve the Party’s fighting spirit” (Lin and Zeng 15.10.2000 (2014), p. 26) and that “political, organisational and economic discipline and discipline in working with the masses should be upheld at all times” (Jiang 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 15). In terms of the kind of discipline that is to be upheld, the Party points out that “for upholding political discipline, it is mainly important to uphold the Party constitution and honour the rules on inner-Party political life, self-consciously uphold unity with the Central Committee and protect the unity of the Party and protect the authority of the Central Committee and the image of the Party and the government among the people” (Chen 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 10). In other words, the Party still retains the rhetoric of a disciplined vanguard organisation, thereby defining and formalising a self-understanding of the Party.

In conclusion, Marxist-Leninist ideology plays an ambiguous role for the CCP. As a keyword, it is still part of the Party’s official language and the Party still sees itself in the general tradition of this ideological concept. While some of the ideological elements of Marxism have been sidelined after vigorous debates within the Party, other elements are still prevalent in official Party language. Like argumentative patterns borrowing from Marxist dialectics, they serve as a form of ideological justification for current policies and define a common way of speaking.

#### Characteristics of Party language

Official Party language and ideology as it appears in Party documents is formalised and restricted in multiple regards. It is hierarchically organised, politicised, repetitive and argumentatively restricted. In this sense, it is clearly a form of formalized language where a speech act is not a matter of personal expression but of conforming with politically prescribed formats. The Party relies on documentary hierarchies, politicised vocabulary directly related to the Party and its mission, the frequent and repetitive use of ideological formulations and the restriction of sayable and thinkable argumentative structures. It thereby limits the language options available to its members and reduces their linguistic choices in the official sphere to the politicised language and ideological language patterns of the Party.

Firstly, the way official, formalised language is transmitted to Party members and cadres is through a hierarchy of documents. Documentary hierarchy offers indications on different levels of authority of formalisation and it outlines what is the most authoritative way of speaking. In other words, such a hierarchy of documents establishes a sort of expressive pecking order emanating from the centre and unfolding downwards through the Party-state hierarchy. At the central level, documents are hierarchically ranked according to the kind of document in question. Hillman names

“‘decisions’ (决定 *jueding*), ‘stipulations’ (规定 *guiding*), or ‘notifications’ (通知 *tongzhi*), in descending order of importance.” (Hillman 2014, p. 90). Party documents are then distributed through the Party hierarchy, starting from the issuing authority and moving further down. For example, a 1985 notification of the Central Organisation Department was ordered to be distributed to “the Party committees of all provinces, autonomous regions and directly administered cities, of all central ministries and commissions and state institutions, and of all mass organisations; the governments of all provinces, autonomous regions and directly administered cities, to all central ministries and commissions, all institutions of the State Council, all directly subordinated institutions and all mass organisations” (Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu and Laodong renshibu 1985). In other words, there is a distinct formalisation of the importance and distribution of Party documents in the Party-state hierarchy. Party members and cadres receive clear indications of the degree of authority of a document and what this means for them in terms of the importance of language in the document for their own expression.

Secondly, Party language is politicised and the core vocabulary revolves around the Party itself and the Party’s political concepts and goals. It thereby formalises and restricts the vocabulary that can be used. For example, Ding and Thompson-Brusstar analyse how the term “bureaucratism” – a commonly criticised form of misbehaviour among Party members – is used in Party language (I. Ding and Thompson-Brusstar 2021). Their analysis shows how the term is commonly used in the context of distinct political vocabulary. Additionally, the politicisation of Party language is visible more broadly in the vocabulary the Party uses. Figure 10 represents a word cloud of these most frequently used words. The larger the word appears in the word cloud, the more recurrent it is in Party documents. Most of these words are politicised and somehow related to the Party and its political mission. These are for example the Party itself (*dang* 党), the people (*renmin* 人民), cadres (*ganbu* 干部), politics (*zhengzhi* 政治) and development (*fazhan* 发展), but also China (*zhongguo* 中国), new (*xin* 新), thought (*sixiang* 思想), leadership (*lingdao* 领导) and socialism (*shehuizhuyi* 社会主义). There is obviously much more politicised terminology in the Party’s official way of speaking, but here I mainly cite the most frequent words as they appear in my analysed text corpus. The recurrent use of this and other vocabulary from the ideological repertoire of the Party prescribes a certain way of expression. What is expressed in official “Party speak” should be expressed with politicised vocabulary.

Figure 10: Word cloud of word frequencies in Party documents (stopword list applied)



A third way of describing formalised language is to determine which phrases are most commonly used and whether they depict a pattern. In the case of the Party, the most commonly used phrases that consist of three or more words are mostly ideological and politicised in nature (see table 7 below). Among the 15 most frequent phrases in CC and CCDI documents analysed here, 10 are directly related to Party ideology and ideological work. The most common phrase is “socialism with Chinese characteristics” appearing 756 times in total. Other ideological phrases that can be found among the 15 most common phrases in Party documents are for example the “Four Cardinal Principles”, “building a socialist spiritual civilisation” or the “Important Thought of the Three Represents”. The fact that among the most common phrases two thirds of them are ideological expressions points to formalising and consistently repeating a set of ideological concepts in a pre-determined manner.

Table 7: 15 most common phrases in CC and CCDI documents (phrases of 3 and more words; stopword list applied)

phrases	number of appearances
中国 特色 社会主义	756
思想 政治 工作	523
社会主义 现代化 建设	483
四项 基本 原则	398
社会主义 市场 经济体制	325
坚持 四项 基本 原则	261
党员 领导 干部	251

中国 特色 社会主义 理论	212
社会主义 精神文明 建设	203
各级 领导 干部	179
建立 社会主义 市场 经济体制	174
三个 代表 重要 思想	155
各级 纪检 监察 机关	135
邓小平 同志 建设	135
领导 干部 廉洁 自律	130
违纪 违法 案件	127

Fourthly, the repetitive character of official language is also reflected in the Party’s continuous use of campaign phrases. As Link points out, it is a typical characteristic of these phrases that the contents of political slogans are numbered (Link 2013). For example, at the beginning of his Party discipline campaign Xi Jinping prominently introduced the “Eight Regulations” (*ba xiang guiding* 八项规定) for Party members and cadres. Another example of a numbered slogan is Xi’s undertaking of the “Three Strict and Three Honest” (*san yan san shi* 三严三实) demanding that Party members and cadres “be strict in cultivating their moral characters, be strict in their use of power, be strict with themselves, be honest in seeking jobs, be honest in major undertakings and be honest in their own conduct” (*Xinhua* 09.03.2021). As Link points out, this formalised form of official slogans serves as a form of repetition and underlines the authority of the statements, “draw[ing] attention away from content and toward the form of phrases – and form alone, as we have seen, can deliver a sense of correctness” (Link 2013, p. 267).

Fifthly, official Party language serves to restrict argumentative patterns. When vocabulary is politicised and restricted and ideological phrases are used in a repetitive manner, it is obvious that linguistic expression and argumentation can only take place in a restricted and formalised manner. As Bloch describes in this analysis of formalised language, form and content of language are closely connected because “with increased formalisation [speech act] A predicts to an even greater extent [speech act] B.” (Bloch 1974, p. 63). In the case of the Party, this restriction of argumentative patterns is for example visible in the way the Party analyses problems within the Party and what kind of solutions it proposes for them. As indicated in chapter 3, when analysing the problem of corruption, the Party most importantly identifies factors outside the Party that cause corruption. While the exact nature of who or what precisely is responsible changes over time, the Party mainly sees issues outside the Party at work. For example, in the 2000s, the Party argued that insufficient reforms and development are responsible for corruption. It pointed out that “the undisciplined and illegal problems of embezzlement and bribery, inviting and gift-giving and wasteful and free spending and private small coffers have a

close relationship with the imperfect management of funds” (Cao 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 7). In order to solve such issues, the Party argued that “systemic construction is a requirement of anticorruption under the new circumstances” (N.N. 15.07.2003 (2014), p. 8). Independent of the precise reasons the Party cites for corruption, these arguments exemplify restrictive argumentative patterns as a form of formalising language.

#### *The self-referencing of the Party*

Limited possibilities of referencing (Bloch 1975) are another form of formalising language. Working in the field of anthropology, Bloch studies the use of language as a form of exercising authority in different societies. More concretely, he studies political authority mainly in traditional societies and the way language can serve to underpin this authority. Bloch points out that in formalised language “cross-references become[...] more and more restricted to a body of suitable illustrations, often proverbs or scriptures” (Bloch 1975, p. 15). In other words, in formalised language, a speaker cannot freely choose illustrations, references to events and exemplary descriptions. Bloch argues that this leads to an authoritative limitation of language because “always comparing particular events to the same general illustrations reduces the specificity of utterances” (Bloch 1975, p. 15). For example, in terms of historic references, the Party commonly refers to the importance of its formative years in Yan’an or also the importance of the original base camp in the area surrounding Jinggangshan<sup>19</sup>. They are considered to be suitable illustrative references to the successes of Party history, thereby serving as appropriate examples in formalised language.

Here I show how self-referencing of the Party is an important means of formalising language in Party ideology. In official “Party speak”, particularly self-references to Party ideology, Party history and inner-Party events are common and required. For being officially recognised as “correct” language, “Party speak” for example has to refer to ideological concepts, Party meetings and decisions or speeches of Party leaders and reference these as illustrations of an argument.

The first element of Party self-referencing refers to ideological concepts. The Party cites ideological concepts in an officially determined manner with fixed vocabulary and order. For Party members, it is not acceptable to refer to these concepts at will. For example, Party ideological concepts in the Party constitution are listed as “Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of the Three Represents, the Scientific Outlook on Development and Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era” (Communist Party of China 24.10.2017). The order, the content and the exact phrasing of these concepts is thereby fixed and they have to be listed in this way in major authoritative Party documents. Divergence from this form of self-referencing to

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<sup>19</sup> In both areas, the Party established special cadre academies for Party members and cadres to study the Party’s revolutionary history and “spirit” of these places (C. Lee 2015; Cheng Li 2016).



authoritative ideological concepts would signal a lack of acceptance of the official rules of expressing oneself.

Formalised language in self-referencing also restricts the way ideological concepts are argumentatively linked. Party documents do not only list them in a specific order, but their roles in relation to each other is fixed as well. This is for example visible in Xi Jinping's speech at a Politburo study meeting in 2012. He argues that

*"We have to eternally engrave in our memory the historic contributions for socialism with Chinese characteristics that three central leadership generations and the central leadership surrounding General Secretary Comrade Hu Jintao have made. The first central leadership generation with Comrade Mao Zedong as its core contributed value experience, preparatory theory and a material basis to the new period of initiating socialism with Chinese characteristics. The second central leadership generation with Comrade Deng Xiaoping as its core successfully initiated socialism with Chinese characteristics. The third central leadership generation with Comrade Jiang Zemin as its core succeeded in pushing socialism with Chinese characteristics into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the new century and on a new level, the Party centre with Comrade Hu Jintao as the General Secretary at a new historic starting point succeeded in persevering with developing socialism with Chinese characteristics."* (Xi 17.11.2012).

What we can see in Xi's statement is that ideological concepts are interlinked with each other in a specific manner. Mao Zedong Theory is said to provide preparation and a material basis for following developments. Deng Xiaoping is cited as initiating socialism with Chinese characteristics that his two successors developed further. In a similar manner, the summary of a Politburo study meeting points out that "the system of the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the newest result of the sinicisation of Marxism. It includes Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Important Thought of the Three Represents and the Scientific Outlook on Development. It supports, develops and carries on innovation of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought." (Xi 17.11.2012). Here too, official "Party speak" formalises the manner ideological concepts are interlinked with each other and how they should be interpreted in relation to each other. In this way of referring to ideological concepts, it is not possible to simply discard one or multiple concepts or change their role in relation to each other.

A second example of self-referencing and the limitation of illustrations in Party language is the referencing of Party events and decisions. Party documents repeatedly and regularly refer to Party Congresses and Central Committee plenary sessions as well as to particular decisions taken at these events. For example, the Party repeatedly refers to the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress held in 1997 that is portrayed as a bridging event for advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new century

(see for example: Li Q. 15.01.2002 (2014); Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui, Renshibu, and Jianchabu 15.02.2002 (2014); Fu 01.04.2002 (2014); Peng 01.10.2004 (2014); Hu 15.10.2004 (2014)). Another example of self-referencing with regard to Party events and decisions is the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee that dealt with questions of enhancing the CCP's governing ability. References to this Party event and the decisions taken at it also regularly appear in Party documents (e.g. Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2004 (2014); Tao 01.08.2005 (2014); Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2005 (2014)). The Party holds that "the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Party is a meeting of immense meaning conducted in a crucial period for the reform and development of our country." (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2004 (2014), p. 2). With regard to these self-references in Party documents, it is important to remember that the concrete content of the respective meetings and decisions is not of primary importance for the argument made here. Rather, it is important that these self-references repeatedly appear in Party documents, irrespective of the concrete contents. By referring to Party events and decisions, the Party establishes acceptable and "correct" points of reference in Party language that Party members and cadres should refer to in official speech.

Thirdly, Party language also uses core utterances and speeches of Party leaders as a form of self-referencing. In Party documents, the Party regularly references what are called "important speeches" (*zhongyao jianghua* 重要讲话) of Party leaders. They are supposed to contain important insights and Party members and cadres are expected to be aware of their contents. Mentioning them is part of the self-referencing typical of Party language. For example, Party documents repeatedly refer to an important speech that Jiang Zemin gave at the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the CCDI in 2002. The speech addressed topics of good governance of the Party and how to successfully engage in Party building and the selection and training of Party cadres (Zhou Y. 01.05.2002 (2014)) and Party documents habitually refer to it (see for example: N.N. 15.02.2002 (2014); Fu 01.04.2002 (2014); Jin 15.05.2002 (2014)). Other important speeches that Party documents repeatedly refer to are for example a speech Hu Jintao gave at the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 16<sup>th</sup> Central Committee (N.N. 01.10.2004 (2014); Wu Guanzheng 01.07.2005 (2014); 15.08.2005 (2014)) or "important speeches" that Xi Jinping gave for example at the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (Sun X. 2017; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lianzheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017). Like with Party events and documents, it is not primarily the content of the respective speeches that matters, but the fact that the Party considers it necessary to repeatedly refer to what it considers "important speeches" of its leaders.

Formalised language in official Party language and ideology is transmitted to Party members with the help of significant amounts of study material. Particularly under Xi Jinping, the number of documents for Party members to read and study available online is enormous. There are many

websites on different topics of Party ideology that contain authoritative material for Party members to read and study. These include for example websites for commemorating three of China's most prominent and well-known leaders – Mao Zedong (Renmin Ribao n.d.), Zhou Enlai (Renmin Ribao n.d.), and Deng Xiaoping (Renmin Ribao n.d.). The websites provide information on their lives and deeds, but also material on their thoughts and ideological contributions. Additionally, there are two websites explicitly addressed at Party members and supposed to be educational in character. The first one focusses on a recent slogan introduced under Xi Jinping: “do not forget the original aspirations, remember the mission” (不忘初心, 牢记使命 *Bu wang chuxin, laoji shiming*) (Renmin Ribao n.d.). It is supposed to provide information and study material for Party members and cadres on Party theory and its application in current-day China. The second one is the Communist Party members website (Zhonggong Zhongyang Zuzhibu n.d.). It provides material in the categories of “thought and theory”, “Party constitution and Party regulations”, “organisational work”, “education of Party members”, “advanced models”, “demonstration and training” (*shifan peixun* 示范培训), “study of examples and exchange” (*guanmo jiaoliu* 观摩交流), “collection on pioneers” (*xianfeng wenhui* 先锋文汇) and “questions and answers on Party affairs”. Through such websites and study material for Party members and cadres, Party language can be transmitted.

## Summary

This chapter discusses the stimulation of the Party social identity of Party members. It argues that the Party employs two main strategies to stimulate its social identity among Party members. These strategies build on constantly reminding Party members of their Party membership and thereby providing strong cues that can “switch on” Party identity. Firstly, this chapter identifies a narrative of all-encompassing supervision. Both through online and offline means, the Party attempts to signal its members that they are constantly observed, thereby reminding them of their membership and status in the Party. This alleged continuous gaze of the Party can serve as a strong stimulation of Party social identity. Secondly, I argue that, as a deindividuation manipulation, formalised language in Party ideology also serves as a form of social identity stimulation. In official Party speak, it is still required to use a specific politicised language with a prescribed set of vocabulary and references that remind Party members of their Party membership. Official expression for Party members and cadres is not free, but language follows certain linguistic patterns that are prescribed and formalised. This restriction of language options thereby limits individual options of expression and deindividuates Party members.

In social identity theory, a social identity that is made accessible and stimulated should impact on the behaviour of the people who hold this particular social identity. For the case of the Party, I so far outlined the social identity of the Party, how it is made accessible and how it can be stimulated and thereby made salient. The coming chapter will focus on the question of defining behavioural

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expectations in the Party's social identity. It explores how the strategic vagueness of ideological norms, behavioural expectations and rectification and punishment impact on the social identity construction of the Party.

## 7 The Party's ultimate interpreting authority: Vagueness of behavioural expectations

The core goal of self-categorisation theory is to explain behaviour. More precisely, it aims to elucidate group behaviour. For example, Reicher analyses crowd conduct through the lens of self-categorisation theory. He argues that with the help of this theory, it is possible to understand commonly orchestrated actions of people who do not know each other and have never met before, but who are able to behave together as a group in particular situations (Reicher 1987). In this understanding, group behaviour can be explained with the analytical approach of identifying shared and salient social identities.

Explaining group behaviour relies on the assumption that salient social identities influence individual demeanour. Self-categorisation theory postulates that a positive and salient social identity leads to behaviour in line with group norms and behavioural expectations. In this argument, individual action "is driven either by social or personal identity processes" (Treppe and Loy 2017, p. 1). This means that an individual has certain behavioural options in various situations. He or she is most likely to choose the one which is in line with the salient identity element that is important in a particular situation.

The direct and explicit explanation of behaviour is not the core focus of this thesis. Rather, this chapter analyses how the Party through ideology constructs and defines behavioural norms for its members. This means that I do not analyse why Party members act in a certain manner and in how far this is in line with the norms and requirements of the CCP. In other words, I do not discuss why Party members and cadres engage in corruption and other undisciplined behaviour. On the contrary, like in previous chapters, I consider the "sender's" end of the message and analyse how Party ideology serves as a means of defining behavioural requirements.

In this chapter, I argue that the Party's ideological narratives serve to postulate behavioural expectations and group norms for Party members. These behavioural expectations, both in terms of behaviour and ideological concepts as well as regarding methods of rectification and punishment, are vague and ambiguous in nature. This strategic vagueness of behavioural expectations and rectification methods can serve two important functions. Firstly, it can mitigate cognitive dissonances that arise for Party members between certain ideological concepts that they do not believe in anymore and the social realities surrounding them. Secondly, it serves to establish the Party as the ultimate arbiter of the behaviour of Party members and cadres.

The first purpose of strategic vagueness in behavioural rules and particularly in ideological concepts is to mitigate cognitive dissonances<sup>20</sup>. The Party does not clearly prescribe how Party members should behave and what they should believe in. Because most Party members do not believe in orthodox Marxism anymore, formulating related ideological concepts in a vague and ambiguous manner provides a range of interpretational leeway. Party members and cadres can interpret these concepts in line with their own beliefs and social situations thereby allowing for mitigating potential cognitive dissonances that arise from a divergence in ideological concepts and surrounding social realities. Similar to the argument that vague policy formulations can allow for implementation according to local circumstances (Heilmann and Perry 2011; Heilmann 2018), strategic vagueness in ideological concepts and behavioural expectations can serve as a similar form of belief and behaviour management for Party members and cadres.

However, with regard to individual interpretational leeway, it is important to underline that this does not imply unlimited space. As outlined in the last chapter, Party members and cadres are expected to comply with formalised language and use a certain politicised terminology and ideological references when making public utterances. Even if there is interpretational space regarding the content of these concepts, the form is still fixed and prescribed in formalised language.

The second purpose of strategic vagueness is to establish the Party as the ultimate arbiter of behaviour. Particularly because ideological concepts, behavioural expectations and rectification methods are vague and can be interpreted by Party members in different manners, Party members at the same time have to accept that the decision on the “correct” interpretation ultimately rests with the Party. In other words, if the Party wants to enforce the rules it defines through ideological narratives, it can do so in an omnipotent, and to a certain extent arbitrary, manner. As Mertha points out for the use of rectification campaigns, they “underscore[...] the extraordinary power asymmetries of an individual cadre participating in them [rectification campaigns] vis-à-vis the dominating Party apparatus [...]. This places the cadre in an uncomfortably intimate degree of affective proximity to the CCP, and leaves that official vulnerable to Party dictates.” (Mertha 2017, p. 82). In this chapter, I argue that strategic vagueness of behavioural expectations, ideological concepts and rectifications methods fulfils a similar function: while leaving interpretational leeway for individual Party members to mitigate cognitive dissonances, it does at the same time create power asymmetries of interpretation and turns the Party into the ultimate arbiter of behaviour.

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<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion of the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance see Festinger 1957.

### The concept of ambiguity

Vagueness or ambiguity are concepts that are not per se new to the social sciences. On the contrary, they have been studied in the context of different organisations as a means of communication. In a study on ambiguity as a means of communication in organisational contexts, Eisenberg contends that “people in organizations confront multiple situational requirements, develop multiple and often conflicting goals, and respond with communicative strategies which do not always minimize ambiguity, but may nonetheless be effective” (Eisenberg 1984, p. 228). In defining such ambiguity, Eisenberg argues that it is a concept that exists in communication and only in the context of communication, i.e. in the relationship between a message sent by a speaker or writer and the message received by a reader or listener. He holds that “clarity [...] is a continuum which reflects the degree to which a source has narrowed the possible interpretations of a message and succeeded in achieving a correspondence between his or her intentions and the interpretation of the receiver” (Eisenberg 1984, pp. 229f.). In this concept of ambiguity that Eisenberg suggests, messages themselves cannot be called ambiguous, but they only become ambiguous in the process of communication where the interpretation of the receiver diverges from the intention of the sender.

Taking a slightly different approach, Jarzabkowski et al. analyse ambiguity as a rhetorical strategy for enabling multiple interests within an organisation (Jarzabkowski, Sillince, and Shaw 2010). They identify the dimensions of goals authority and technology as prone to ambiguity within an organisation. Regarding the goals of using ambiguous rhetoric in an organisation, they argue that “if organizations are considered as ambiguous, then the role of rhetoric, as a process of persuasion, is to set up a sense of commonality and thus to induce identification with the organization and its goals, values and actions” (Jarzabkowski, Sillince, and Shaw 2010, p. 223). Such an identification with an organization becomes possible because “organizational actors use identification rhetoric ambiguously so that it can be interpreted by others in different ways that are beneficial for the source organization” (Jarzabkowski, Sillince, and Shaw 2010, p. 223). In this understanding of ambiguity, Jarzabowski et al. do not see ambiguity as something that can only be localised in the process of communication as Eisenberg does. On the contrary, they allow for the ambiguity of rhetoric in itself and therefore for the analysis of messages without explicitly accounting for both the intention of the sender and the interpretation of the receiver in a communicative relationship.

### *Strategic vagueness in Party rhetoric*

The concept of strategic vagueness that is used here builds on Jarzabowski et al. I understand vagueness to be embedded in rhetoric and therefore as an inherent characteristic of a message. A message is vague when it allows for multiple interpretations of a message, depending on the situation. I do not follow Eisenberg’s understanding of ambiguity here because he sees it as embedded in a process of communication, i.e. the intention of the sender of a message versus the interpretation of

the receiver, rather than the message itself. Since I do not study communicative processes, this definition of ambiguity is not helpful for my analysis. Therefore, following Jarzabkowski et al., I argue that the message in itself is ambiguous and open to interpretation.

A certain degree of ambiguity in official rhetoric in China has already been diagnosed by other scholars. For example, Link argues that ambiguity fulfils multiple functions for officials, who can thereby escape taking position among contradictory viewpoints. Additionally, such ambiguity can, according to him, create an air of authority even though the actual meaning of a statement remains vague (Link 2013, pp. 247f.). Similarly, in a study of the terminology used to describe “class enemies” and separate them from “the people” in the Maoist era, Schoenhals argues that the terminology used by the Party was vague and only provided an ambiguous and changing understanding of who belongs to “the people” and can enjoy the rights and privileges that come with it (Schoenhals 1994). Beyond such rhetoric use of ambiguity, Heilmann and Perry also argue for practical implications of broad policy directives for the successful reform process in China. According to them, policy making is characterised by a “guerrilla-style” approach with diverse local policy experiments (Heilmann and Perry 2011). Additionally, Heilmann more generally argues that such an experiment-based policy approach in China with local experiments that, in case of success, are expanded to the national level, is responsible for the adaptability and resilience of the Chinese Party-state (Heilmann 2018). Beyond these occurrences of ambiguity, vagueness also manifests itself in Party ideology. In the following, I outline how ideological concepts, behavioural expectations and methods of rectification are inherently vague and thereby help the Party mitigate the issue of behavioural requirements for Party members and establish itself as the ultimate interpreting authority.

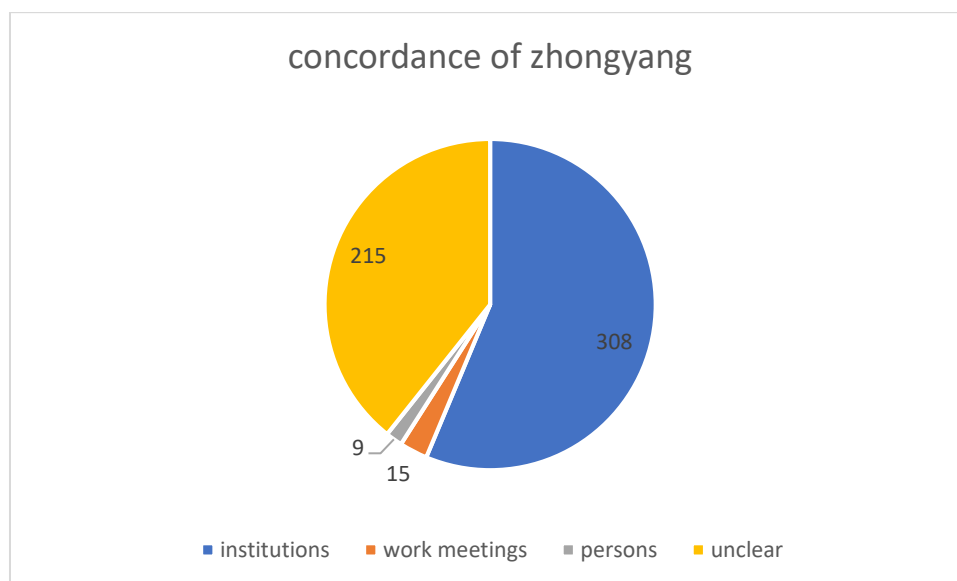
Whom to be loyal to: Zhongyang

The first element of vagueness concerns the question of who is in charge. Party documents quite regularly refer to the “centre” (*zhongyang* 中央) as the core authority. It is the “centre” that issues directives that have to be complied with, that unity should be maintained with and that has to be reported to. For example, it is argued that “the Party centre takes the lead and when everyone presses on, we can reach achievements in the entire country.” (Chen Yun 04.01.1979). In addition to taking the lead, reports also have to be made to the centre. For example, “the Party committees of all provinces, autonomous regions, self-administrated municipalities and work committees of all central and state institutions have to integrate the concrete implementation of the plans for their respective localities. After the work is finished, they have to write a report to the centre.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 12.07.1990). The “centre” thus appears as the core of Party organisation, of decision-making and of loyalty.



Even though the centre features importantly in Party rhetoric, it is often not clarified what precisely the “centre” is. Because there are multiple central Party organisations such as the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Politburo Standing Committee—and particularly under Xi Jinping also the position of a strong general secretary—it is often unclear who the “centre” relates to in an institutional sense. A concordance analysis of the term in Party documents reveals that when the term appears, its direct reference is frequently unclear. In about 56% of the cases where the term appears, it is used in the name of institutions such as the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (*Zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhua* 中央纪律检查委员会) or the Central Organisation Department (*Zhongyang zuzhibu* 中央组织部) (see figure 11) and here it is obviously clear which organisation it refers to. However, in about 40% the term is used on its own without direct institutional reference and in these cases, it is uncertain what central structure it refers to. Similar to the argument in previous chapters that the Party is at the core of the social identity for Party members, there is a vague “centre” of the Party that appears in Party documents and that is supposed to occupy the focus and attention of Party members.

Figure 11 Concordance analysis of the term “centre” (*zhongyang* 中央) in CC and CCDI documents



The Party “centre” as an overarching and encompassing entity is also reflected in the requirement to preserve unity with the centre. Party documents require that Party members maintain unity (*baochi yizhi* 保持一致) or a “high level of unity” (*baochi gaodu yizhi* 保持高度一致) with the Party centre. At the same time, Party documents also request that Party members should protect “the authority and centralised and unified leadership” (*quanwei he jizhong tongyi lingdao* 权威和集中统一领导) of the centre. Thus, Party rhetoric underlines the strict leadership role of the “centre”, and points out that it is this “centre” that has ultimate interpreting and decision-making authority.

However, this “centre” is often vague and unspecified, thereby requesting Party members to just put their faith (and fate) with the Party.

#### Ideological concepts

Ideological concepts of the Party are often not clearly defined. This strategic vagueness in ideology can fulfil two functions. First, they allow for Party members to ameliorate any cognitive dissonance they may have because they have to publicly state compliance with ideological concepts that they do privately not believe in. Because ideological concepts can be reinterpreted and are often sufficiently vague to allow for different understandings, it is possible to interpret such concepts in a manner that allows for them to fit in with outward circumstances and one’s own worldview. A well-known example of such reinterpretation of ideological concepts to conform with outward circumstances is the Party’s interpretation of the meaning of socialism. In line with Deng’s famous dictum that “some are allowed to get rich first”, it is argued in an article discussing the origin and development of the “primary stage of socialism” that “getting rich together does not mean getting equally rich and it does not mean getting rich at the same time.” (Chen Yuhua 01.2003, p. 22). It does not imply either to “commonly pay the price of living in poverty” (Chen Yuhua 01.2003, p. 23). Following Jarzabkowski et al.’s understanding of ambiguous goals, ideological concepts that are employed in a strategically vague manner can therefore “have multiple, indistinct, incoherent or fragmented meanings, in which no single meaning is the ‘best’ or most coherent interpretation” (Jarzabkowski, Sillince, and Shaw 2010, p. 220).

The second function of strategic vagueness of ideological concepts is to establish the Party as the ultimate interpreting authority. This is the most important behavioural requirement that the Party outlines for Party members and cadres. Most of the time, Party members can believe whatever they want and interpret ideological concepts according to their own needs. However, they also have to ultimately accept that the only “correct” interpretation comes from the Party.

#### *Party spirit and its manifestations*

Party spirit is probably one of the most elusive ideological concepts of the CCP. While it regularly appears in the Party’s ideological narratives in the context of Party discipline discussions, it is rarely explained or defined in a specific manner. In his article on revolutionary tourism and the attempt to create a communist civil religion, Pieke also discusses the concept of Party spirit and argues that Party spirit is “an undifferentiated and almost abstract quality without concrete form or specific characteristics entailing the absolute dedication to the Party and its ideology” (Pieke 2018, p. 721). Elsewhere, he even contends that “[d]angxing is a transcendental quality that is inherent in the party without having a specific origin or source. *Dangxing* makes the party and its mission sacred and above ordinary human experience and affairs” (Pieke 2020, p. 110). Understanding Party spirit as a

transcendental quality that is sacred yet intangible, Pieke argues that it can be manifested and deployed with the help of a second force, *jingshen* (精神 “party ‘essence’ or ‘efficacy’”) (Pieke 2020, p. 100), “a spiritual force and commodity that can be deployed in the commercial and political arenas. It can be transferred to ordinary humans, thus turning them into communist believers, and to ideas, policies, choices and actions, rendering them sacred and beyond doubt” (Pieke 2020, p. 110). According to Pieke, such transfer, as well as the fostering of Party spirit, particularly among Party cadres and members but also among ordinary Chinese, takes place, for example, in the form of religious tourism and the commodification of the historic revolutionary experience (Pieke 2018; 2020).

This understanding of Party spirit allows moving beyond seeing CCP ideology only as an outgrowth of Marxist orthodoxy. It understands the fostering of Party spirit as a form of quasi-religious undertaking that removes it from the sole context of Marxism-Leninism and into a different sphere where it functions as a sacred quality of the Party. Party spirit, and with it the Party’s whole ideological construct, becomes an element that can be redefined and function as a new means of creating attachment to the Party.

Beyond creating a form of “communist religion”, in the words of Pieke, I would like to argue for a second function of Party spirit. This function is the vagueness of the concept that allows for diverse interpretations and applications to a concrete context. Similar to what Jarzabkowski et al. argue in their study of ambiguity, Party spirit is a concept that is vague enough to be understood differently by different people and hence allows for creating a common group identity without providing concrete meaning to the concept that all Party members have to agree on. In line with Pieke’s understanding of the concept as part of a quasi-religious undertaking, this means that Party members are required to adhere to and believe in Party spirit, but they do not all have to believe the same thing. At the same time, the ultimate interpretation of what Party spirit should be in a concrete situation rests with the Party.

The definition of Party spirit

The vagueness in the concept of Party spirit can, first of all, be seen in the way the Party discusses and defines the concept of Party spirit. For example, the Party at the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CCP published what they called the “first grade of great spirits among the pedigree of spirits of Communist Party members” (*Zhongguo gongchandangren jingshen puxi diyipi weida jingshen zhengshi fabu* 29.09.2021). This “pedigree of Communist Party members’ spirits” (*zhongguo gongchandangren jingshen puxi* 中国共产党人精神谱系) is defined in a lengthy list of “spirits” that the Party identifies. These include, for example, the “spirit of Party building”, the “spirit of Jinggangshan”, the “spirit of Yan’an” but also the “spirit of scientists” or the “spirit of entrepreneurs” (*Zhongguo gongchandangren jingshen puxi diyipi weida jingshen zhengshi fabu* 29.09.2021).

Although the Party names many different spirits in this list that all refer to historic and contemporary achievements, none of these point to concrete beliefs or behavioural expectations.

Additionally, in Party documents, Party spirit is generally not defined by substance, but rather by function. Defining only the function of a concept does not contribute to linguistic clarity. Generally speaking, a definition can be understood as “an explanation of the meaning of a word, phrase, etc.” (‘Definition’ n.d.). As Kirkness outlines, the understanding of a term that does not only have a linguistic function requires extralinguistic information (Kirkness 2004). For this, it is necessary to “extract[...] meanings and uses from authentic texts and explain[...] them clearly and fully” (Kirkness 2004, p. 56). Not defining the core meaning of a central concept like Party spirit allows for understanding it in multiple different manners. Because functions can be achieved in various ways, only defining the function of Party spirit provides indications of what it is supposed to accomplish but not of what it is.

For the Party, Party spirit should generally fulfil the function of fostering good behaviour. At the same time, this means that the concept can be used as a basis for punishment for lack of Party spirit when the behaviour is not in line with the Party’s wishes and expectations. For example, in a speech at a Party rectification conference in 1986, Wang Heshou, at the time member of the Central Committee, argues that “in a case where the state has not yet set any regulations or where policy is not yet clear, the standard for judgement should be Party spirit. It should be seen whether a decision corresponds with Party spirit and the aim of serving the people and whether it is advantageous for the building of socialism.” (Wang H. 30.06.1986 (2014), p. 7). Similarly, in another essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline*, it is argued that “a Party member only has to have strong Party spirit and he will be able to use willpower that is a hundred times stronger to struggle for the mission of the Party, no matter when and in the face of complicated situations and obstacles. [...] When a Party member has a certain cultivation of Party spirit, he will self-consciously be able to observe Party discipline and political discipline, place himself among the masses and lead them to struggle against all kinds of words and deeds that run counter to the ideals and virtues of communism.” (N.N. 30.07.1985 (2014), p. 28). In the eyes of the Party, the function of Party spirit is to offer guidance on what is correct behaviour and how the Party expects its members to behave. In situations where the Party is not able to provide clear rules and regulations, it is Party spirit that is supposed to equip Party members with this knowledge.

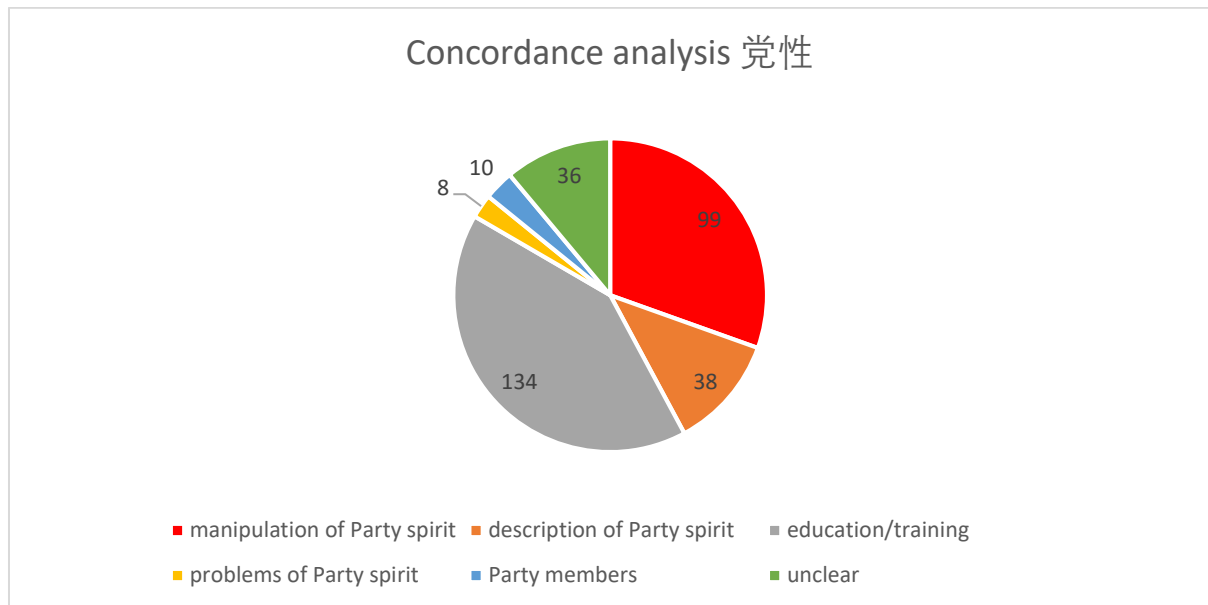
Party spirit is also responsible for whether good Party style and Party discipline can be upheld. In a contribution to *Party Style and Party Discipline* Chen Junsheng, at the time Party secretary of Heilongjiang province, argued that “at the very basis, the question of Party style is a problem of Party spirit. Within the Party, Party rules and regulations that have mandatory and limiting character are indispensable. However, the more important and proactive factor is to rely on the inner quality of the

numerous Party members, i.e. Party spirit. This is a very motive force [*dongli* 动力]. Therefore, to do Party style and Party discipline well, we have to rely on Party spirit to protect them.” (Chen Junsheng 15.04.1982 (2014), p. 21). Party spirit is portrayed here as an inherent quality that Party members possess and that is the basis for the improvement of Party style and Party discipline, two slightly more tangible elements of the Party’s ideological elements that will be discussed below. Because Party members are supposed to be equipped with the inherent quality of Party spirit and this inherent quality is per definition supposed to make them do the “right thing”, they have significant leeway to interpret how this “right thing” can look like. However, on the other hand, it also implies that whenever a decision or action is taken that does not appeal to Party authorities, such a mistake can be attributed to a lack of Party spirit, which is a significant issue in the eyes of the Party and should lead to disciplinary measures.

The manipulation of Party spirit

Regarding how Party spirit can be handled, it is obvious that the concept is a positive, yet rather passive, one. Party spirit is manipulated, handled and can be improved or achieved. However, while it is obvious what it can do, it is not clearly specified what it is. This is visible when looking at the immediate context in which the term is used and the grammatical structures it is embedded into. Figure 12 below depicts a basic concordance analysis of the term *dangxing*. Most obviously, in the largest part of the cases, the term is used in a context of education or training (roughly 40% of the results). Party spirit should be the object of training and can be acquired through sufficient education and self-cultivation. The terms used here to qualify Party spirit are *jiaoyu* (education 教育), *duanlian* (training 锻炼) and *xiuyang* (training, self-cultivation 修养). An important characteristic of Party spirit is hence that it is a characteristic or a skill that can be strived for and acquired. A similar passive function, rather than a definition, is also visible in the two categories entitled “manipulation of Party spirit” and “description of Party spirit”. Grammatically, these two collect verbs and adjectives, respectively, that are used to describe and contextualise Party spirit that go beyond study and education. Particularly with regard to the manipulation of Party spirit, it has to be noted that Party spirit, when combined with a verb, rarely has an agency of its own. It has to be “strengthened” (增强 *zengqiang*), “persisted in” (*jianchi* 坚持), “emphasised” (*jiang* 讲) or “corrected” (*jiuzheng* 纠正), but it is usually not combined with verbs that indicate an active influence of Party spirit. Party spirit is therefore a passive concept that fulfils its function of improving the behaviour of Party members through its mere existence as a characteristic that has to be acted on. Party spirit has to be strived for and requires activity from Party members, but what precisely the goal of this activity is, i.e. what Party spirit means, is left undefined.

Figure 12: Concordance analysis of the term “Party spirit” (*dangxing* 党性) in CC and CCDI documents



The importance of such action manipulating Party spirit is underlined by how the term *dangxing* is described in Party documents. In about three quarters of the cases where, grammatically, the term is combined with an adjective to describe the inherent qualities of Party spirit, it is described positively, combined with terms such as “strong” (*qiang* 强, *jianqiang* 坚强), “good” (*hao* 好) or “high, lofty” (*chonggao* 崇高). Even in the cases where it is described negatively, often the negated form of a positive adjective is used, e.g. “not strong” (*bu qiang* 不强) or “impure” (*bu chun* 不纯). This creates the impression of Party spirit being a superior, even outstanding, quality that is perceived in a positive manner and that is therefore part of the Party’s ideological core principles.

Based on this characterisation of Party spirit in the Party’s discipline narratives, we can therefore draw multiple conclusions on Party spirit and its role in the disciplinary regime of the Party. First, Party spirit is portrayed as an inherently positive characteristic. It appears as a good example and a desirable quality. Second, Party spirit, while being inherently positive, does not have an agency on its own but has to be strengthened, strived for, improved or achieved in the process of study and education. It is therefore a quality that is manipulable and attainable that is located above Party members and that is the ultimate goal of ideological requirements. Third, at the same time, Party spirit as it is described in Party discipline narratives does not have concrete and clearly defined content, but rather a function that it is supposed to fulfil. This function is to automatically cause Party members to do “the right thing” without actually defining what this “right thing” looks like in a concrete situation. But because Party spirit is a positive, yet manipulable, concept that has to be strived for through study and education, not doing “the right thing” can automatically be attributed to insufficient Party spirit, i.e. an individual fault of a Party member.

Value concepts in ideological narratives of Party discipline

In addition to the concept of Party spirit and its manifestations in and connection to Party style and Party discipline, there are further belief concepts in the Party's ideological narrative on Party discipline. They are what I call "value concepts" because they refer to what Party members are supposed to believe and the values they are supposed to hold in order to guide their behaviour. Such value concepts are embedded in the use of six phrases appearing in Party discipline narratives: worldview (*shijieguan* 世界观), outlook on life (*renshengguan* 人生观), value system (*jiazhiquan* 价值观), concept of interests (*liyiguan* 利益观), concept of power (*quanliguan* 权力观) and concept of status (*diweiguan* 地位观). These phrases are obviously not universal to CCP ideology and they do appear in ethical discourses in other countries too. However, what is distinct about their use in CCP rhetoric is their lack of concrete content or definition. Like it was discussed above for Party spirit and its manifestation, these six concepts are used in a vague and sometimes contradictory manner without providing clear guidance or easy implementation.

In Party documents, these value concepts largely appear in two categories, one with a focus more on behaviour in office and the other one with a more ideological focus. The first group, consisting of the terms *liyiguan*, *quanliguan* and *diweiguan*, does not appear as frequently as the other three and is supposed to refer to how Party members holding some kind of Party or government offices are expected to handle their relation with power, status and their personal interests in the exercise of power. However, while we can assume that these concepts are supposed to refer to the prevention of monetary misbehaviour and the abuse of public power for private gain, the only contextual information that is given for these three concepts in Party documents is that they have to be "correct" (*zhengque* 正确). This is obviously neither precise enough to provide clear behavioural expectations nor serve as a basis for rule enforcement. Rather, it can be interpreted on an individual basis by both Party members and rule enforcement institutions.

Such vagueness is even more obvious with regard to the second group of value concepts: the concepts of belief system. These include the terms *shijieguan*, *renshengguan* and *jiazhiquan*. Like the other three phrases referring to power, status and interests, these three also frequently appear together in a row separated only by an enumeration comma so that it is obvious that they have to be considered together. Similar to the other set of phrases, they can be correct or incorrect although it is not defined what correctness means in this case. Additionally, they can be modified by different ideological elements from the CCP's Marxist-Leninist fundus so that there can, for example, be a "proletarian worldview" (*wuchan jieji shijieguan* 无产阶级世界观) or a "revolutionary outlook on life" (*geming de renshengguan* 革命的人生观), although it is not discussed what precisely this means and what kind of behavioural expectations follow from it.

The deliberate and strategic vagueness attributed to these concepts is most obvious in the case of the term *jiazhiguan*. Similar to its two partners, the *jiazhiguan* of a Party member or cadre can be correct or incorrect and the phrase can also be modified with a reference to the CCP's ideological foundations, e.g. a "Marxist" value system. Additionally, *jiazhiguan* is the only one among the phrases that is also used to describe what is considered "incorrect", "capitalist", "Western" or "American" value systems. While these references are not necessarily more or less vague than the references to "Marxist" value systems, *jiazhiguan* can also occasionally be used to describe what is called a "value system beneficial to modernisation and the policy of reform and opening up" (see for example: Zhao Z. 25.10.1987; Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui 28.05.1995; Li R. 13.03.1996; Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui 17.03.1996). Because this obviously refers to economic reform and development, the Party linguistically draws a very fine line between what can be considered a 'capitalist' value system and one "beneficial to economic reform". Similar to what Ji and Liu argue with regard to the Maoist period (Ji 2004; Yu Liu 2010), the Party therefore uses vague and partially contradictory ideological concepts that allow for different interpretations and can be applied with significant discretion.

#### *Party style and Party discipline*

If Party spirit is a vague ideological concept that Party members are supposed to strive for and study in order to do "the right thing", this "right thing" is embedded in two other concepts closely connected with Party spirit: Party style (*dangfeng* 党风) and Party discipline (*dangji* 党纪). While Party spirit has an almost transcendental character that is supposed to foster correct behaviour among Party members, Party style and Party discipline are the reflection of this behaviour. However, similar to Party spirit, neither Party style nor Party discipline are defined in a clear and concrete manner. They can be "done well" (*gaohao* 搞好), "advanced" (*cujin* 促进), "rectified" (*duanzheng* 端正) or "infringed upon" (*weifan* 违反) and therefore manipulated similar to Party spirit. Yet, in contrast to Party spirit, they are more a reflection of ideological concepts and good Party spirit and refer to actual behaviour. The term Party style, for example, quite often appears together with the phrase "honest and clean politics" (*lianzheng* 廉政) (e.g. Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014); Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014); Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014); Mou and Cao 08.2008; Wang X. 08.2014). *Dangfeng* is therefore the non-corruption related equivalent of "clean politics", i.e. the fulfilment of the Party's high behavioural standards and the reflection thereof in good governance both of the Party and also the Party's relation with Chinese society.

The term Party discipline is more strongly associated with rules. Apart from frequently appearing together with the phrases Party spirit and Party style, it is also used together with legal references, e.g. in the combinations *dangji guofa* (党纪国法 Party discipline and state law) (e.g. Teng



15.07.2004 (2014); Pang and Li 01.02.2001 (2014); Ye 2006; Li G. 05.2016) or *danggui dangji* (党规党纪 Party regulations and Party discipline) (e.g. Hu 2010; Li 05.2016). It is also used to indicate the enforcement of the Party's behavioural rules and the punishment of misbehaving Party members, for example, when these have to be given "Party disciplinary treatment" (*dangji chufen* 党纪处分) (see for example: Zhongguo gongchandang quanguo daibiao dahui 11.10.1983 (2014); Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 11.05.1995; Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017; Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 13.01.2019). However, even though Party style and Party discipline may appear slightly less elusive than Party spirit, they are still not filled with concrete content that can be translated into clear behavioural expectations. Following from good Party spirit, they serve more as behavioural phrases that can be executed differently depending on how they are perceived by individual Party members and on what the situation requires. Similar to Party spirit, where Party members have to believe in and have Party spirit, but not necessarily believe and have the same thing, Party members also have to have some kind of good Party style and Party discipline, but that does not mean that they all behave in the same way.

#### Behavioural expectations

The second area where strategic vagueness is applied in ideological narratives are behavioural expectations for Party members. Strategic vagueness of behavioural expectations is directly connected to the vagueness in ideological concepts because these concepts are part of the Party's demands for correct behaviour among its members. They are also closely related to the strategic vagueness of rectification methods and punishment discussed below because vagueness in behavioural expectations can obviously not result in explicit criteria for the evaluation of such behaviour and clear and undisputable methods of rectifying and punishing certain behaviours. The vagueness of behavioural requirements is therefore at least as important for the Party for handling its relationship with its members as is the vagueness of ideological concepts because it allows for situational punishment or leniency.

The vagueness of behavioural requirements for Party members has persisted throughout the history of the Party and has been applied to different areas. For the Maoist era, Liu argues with regard to the definition of problematic ideological beliefs that "the 'problems' were so extensive as to cover any direction of thinking. In the Yan'an Rectification movement, thought problems were deliberately made symmetrical: you were a 'dogmatist' if you relied on orthodox Marxism and you were an 'empiricist' if you did not" (Y. Liu 2010, p. 347). While behavioural requirements in the period of reform and opening up are usually not contradictory anymore in the sense of what Liu describes here, they are still kept vague and not clearly defined. Analysing the implementation of anticorruption laws, Birney argues that corruption control in the PRC is a difficult undertaking for the Party because they

do not rely on the rule of law but rather on a “rule of mandates”. These “mandates” give Party cadres significant discretion in their implementation of policies in order to achieve the core political goals of the CCP (Birney 2014). Birney holds that this discretion makes it difficult for the Party to enforce anti-corruption laws because it would have to be able to distinguish between policy divergence because of corrupt motives and policy divergence to help implement higher-ranked policy goals, adding to the vagueness of standards for judging behaviour.

A core document where to find a reflection of strategic vagueness in behavioural requirements are the Party’s discipline regulations, most recently updated in 2018 (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018). The second chapter on punishable behaviour and appropriate punishments reflects the strategic vagueness of discipline rules most clearly. This chapter discusses “political discipline” (*zhengzhi jilü* 政治纪律), “organisational discipline” (*zuzhi jilü* 组织纪律), “incorruptibility” (*lianjie jilü* 廉洁纪律), “discipline in dealing with the masses” (*qunzhong jilü* 群众纪律), “work discipline” (*gongzuo jilü* 工作纪律) and “discipline of lifestyle” (*shenghuo jilü* 生活纪律). Whereas particularly the chapter on incorruptibility is relatively concrete—like most regulations dealing with material corruption—other chapters dealing with political or moral questions are sufficiently vague to give the Party significant discretion in enforcing behavioural expectations. For example, the chapter on political discipline names behaviours such as the formation of secret inner-Party organisations, damaging the unity of the Party or acting in contrast to the Party’s line as punishable behaviours (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018). The chapter on organisational discipline identifies behaviour such as breaking the principles of democratic centralism or, very generally, the breaking of the Party constitution and Party rules as punishable. Additionally, the chapter on lifestyle issues, for example, points out an “extravagant life” or “improper sexual relations” as incorrect behaviour. Particularly from issues of organisational and political discipline, we can thus see that behavioural expectations are rather vague. Almost any behaviour can be considered correct or incorrect depending on how the Party wants to interpret it.

In addition to behavioural requirements in Party discipline regulations, the Xi administration recently also introduced the concept of “political customs” (*zhengzhi guiju* 政治规矩). In an article in *Seeking Truth*, it appears together with “political discipline” (*zhengzhi jilü* 政治纪律) and, similar to other concepts describing behavioural expectations, it is not clearly defined. According to the article, “political customs are fine traditions and work conventions formed in long political practice of the Party. They passed the test of practice, are a customary convention and are effective. It is necessary that the entire Party in thought and behavioural norms persists in and consciously follows these customs.” (Sun L. 05.06.2020). While political customs are here connected to the Party’s historic achievements and experiences, their precise content is left undefined.

In addition to what is regulated in Party disciplinary regulations, the Party's ideological narrative also broadly reflects behavioural requirements for Party members. A major behavioural requirement is compliance with the Party's ideological concepts. However, because these are not precisely defined, the demand to comply with them does not result in clear behavioural expectations. In addition to these ideological concepts, the Party has multiple further—albeit vague—behavioural expectations for its members. Although, at first sight, it seems like these behavioural categories are relatively clear and correct behaviour as expected from Party members can easily be defined, it becomes obvious that this is not the case, when looking more closely at what exactly is required from Party members and how these kinds of correct behaviour are represented.

The behavioural expectations of the Party are not exclusive and it is not sufficient for Party members to comply with one or several of these behavioural categories and not with others. Under ideal circumstances, a Party member is supposed to adhere to all of them and act in line with every single one of these requirements. This overlap is also visible in some of the examples provided in the tables where Party members are for example requested to be “models of innovation” (Wang Yong 04.09.2002, p. 33). This requirement falls both into the category of being a model of a certain positive behaviour and of making positive contributions to the policy of reform. The behavioural categories are overlapping and interlocked and describe the extremely high behavioural demands made upon Party members.

#### *Correct and incorrect behaviours*

The Party has a lot of behavioural requirements for Party members and cadres, but they are generally not clearly defined. Categories of behavioural expectations and examples of how the Party describes them are listed in table 8 below. Some of these requirements follow from the ideological concepts of the Party and seem to serve as a form of operationalisation of these, e.g. the requirement to serve the people or be brave, struggle for the Party and not fear any hardship. With the underlying ideological concepts already vague and ambiguous, behavioural expectations based on them cannot be any more concrete, so that particularly ideological and organisational behavioural requirements are rather imprecise.

The problem of vague behavioural requirements can at least partially be resolved with regard to policy implementation. In order to solve the Party's principal-agent problem, Minzner argues that the responsibility systems of the Party are supposed to address such issues. He holds that it is precisely the task of such responsibility systems to operationalise vague policies and political requirements emanating from the centre to ensure their implementation at the local level (Minzner 2009). This kind of operationalisation through a responsibility system might be possible for such behavioural requirements as “doing reform well” that mainly demand from cadres to work for the implementation

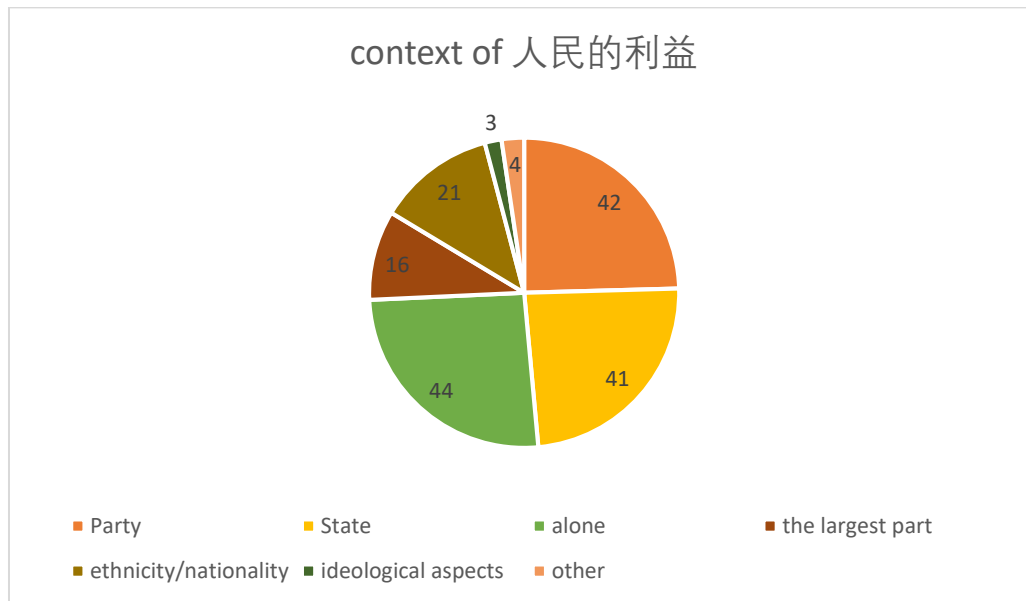
of the policies of reform and opening up or being “free from material corruption” because these requirements can be turned into quantifiable and measurable targets. However, this is significantly more difficult for other behavioural requirements that are more closely related to the Party’s ideological and organisational discipline because these cannot be quantified and therefore would need to be defined in a very detailed manner to be made enforceable. Because this is not the case, behavioural expectations can be applied strategically to create a basis for discretionary punishment but also for fostering Party cohesion. Below, I will discuss three exemplary aspects of ideological and organisational discipline to outline the vagueness of these behavioural requirements for Party members and cadres.

What Party members are supposed to accomplish

Two important, yet vague, behavioural requirements for Party members are to work for the people and to take the big picture into consideration. Firstly, serving the people is a crucial task for Party members because it is embedded in the self-understanding of the CCP. While other political systems should ideally serve the interests of their people as well, it is particularly important for the CCP because it deems itself to be an enlightened vanguard whose task it is to lead the people into a bright future, thereby serving what the Party considers to be the people’s interests. Secondly, the Party demands that Party members and cadres in everything they do consider the “big picture” (*daju* 大局). Such considerations should guide their behaviour and actions.

Firstly, serving the people and working for their interests and advantages is an important behavioural demand for Party members. For example, the Party argues that “for being a leading cadre, one has to embrace whole-hearted devotion to the people, eternally protect deep feelings for the people, love the people from the bottom of one’s heart and genuinely and sincerely serve the people” (Liang Q. 01.01.2004 (2014), p. 8). Furthermore, it points out that it is the task of Party members to “wholeheartedly serve the people” (*quanxin quanyi wei renmin fuwu* 全心全意为人民服务) (e.g. Pang and Li 01.02.2001 (2014); Shen 08.2003). While this seems to be a relatively clear behavioural demand, in practice it is not specified what precisely the interests of the people look like. Following from this, it is therefore obviously also unclear how they can best be served.

Figure 13: Concordance analysis of “the people’s interests” (*renmin de liyi* 人民的利益) in CC and CCDI documents and Party rectification documents of the Xi era



Regarding the question of what exactly the interests of the people are, I conducted a concordance analysis of the term “the people’s interests” (*renmin de liyi* 人民的利益) the results of which are presented in figure 13 above. While the context of the phrase only allows for very limited conclusions on the concrete meaning of the phrase, the importance of it as well as its inclusive character become apparent. In the pie chart above, we can see that in about a quarter of the cases, the phrase is used on its own without any other phrases in its immediate vicinity that allow for its qualification. However, equally in about a quarter of the cases, the phrase is used together with a term referring to either the state or the Party, usually *dang* (党) or *guojia* (国家) in phrases such as *dang he renmin de liyi* (党和人民的利益 “the Party’s and the people’s interests”). These cases account for half of the uses of the phrase “the people’s interests”. It is therefore evident that, while it is still unclear what precisely “the people’s interests” are, they are closely connected to, or even congruent with, the interests of the Party and the state. This certainly underlines the importance of Party members working for their realisation. It also means that by failing to support “the people’s interests”, Party members directly infringe upon the interests of the Party and the state. While raising the stakes of noncompliance for Party members with this behavioural requirement, it does still not provide them with a concrete idea of what exactly is expected of them.

This is also the case for the demand for taking the “big picture” (*daju* 大局) into consideration. Behaving in line with the demands of the “big picture” is an important behavioural expectation for Party members and cadres. The Party requires Party members to “pay attention to” (*gu* 顾), “protect” (*weihu* 维护) and “stabilise” (*wending* 稳定) the “big picture”. Party members should also “attach

importance to the big picture" (*yi daju weizhong* 以大局为重), "take it as the starting point" of their work (*cong daju chufa* 从大局出发), and "obey" (*fucong* 服从) it. However, the Party does not provide a definition of what the "big picture" is exactly and what follows from it in terms of concrete behavioural requirements. Party members and cadres are told that the "big picture" is important and they have to consider it in their work and behaviour. Its concrete content, however, is subject to the interpreting authority of the Party.

#### Maintain Party unity

The category of "unity" is a second example of how behavioural requirements are kept vague so that Party members are not provided with clear guidelines on how to behave. Unity with an also vague "Party centre" is an important requirement for Party members. As discussed in chapter 3, the Party is aware of loyalty issues and problems of organisational coherence. It is thus part of its ideology and behavioural expectations that Party members and cadres should maintain unity with the Party. For example, in an essay in *Party Style and Party Discipline* in 2005, it is argued that it is necessary that "in all situations, there is no decline in thought and ideals are not shaken under any circumstances. From the beginning to the end, unity of views has to be maintained with the Party Central Committee, Party members have to be of one heart and one mind with the Party, listen to the Party's words and look after its affairs" (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25).

One aspect of the unity that the Party demands from its members is thus ideological unity. It demands that Party members publicly commit to the Party's ideological concepts and obey the Party under all circumstances. However, in light of what was discussed above with regard to the vagueness in ideological concepts, this seems difficult to achieve at best because there is no clearly defined belief system that Party members could unite behind. Even if the Party defines what Party members should not believe in, as it did for example with the infamous Document No. 9 that, for example, banned discussions of "Western values" such as Western-style democracy or "universal values" (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China 22.04.2013)<sup>21</sup>, this amounts to a "negative belief system". It defines what Party members should not believe in, but it does not offer them an alternative in the form of a clearly outlined common belief system. Therefore, it is particularly the vagueness both in the underlying ideological belief system and in the very broad demand for unity that allows for Party members to be bound to the Party and for the Party to enforce its respective expectations. Firstly, Party members can interpret ideological unity as they choose to and can give the underlying belief system a personal twist that is not at odds with their personal beliefs and experiences. They can still use the language propagated by the Party and thereby be officially united with the Party even though

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<sup>21</sup> For a Chinese-language version of the document in traditional characters see: 《Mingjing Magazine》 dujia quanwen kanfa zhonggong 9 hao wenjian' 20.08.2013.

the underlying belief systems and personal motivations may differ significantly. Secondly, the actual content of this unity in belief is less important and can be kept vague because the core point is to “listen to the Party’s words and look after its affairs”. It is the Party itself that is at the core of unity. Unity means submission to and attachment to the Party while the concrete form of what this entails in terms of behaviour is not of prime importance. Behavioural requirements can be kept vague as long as the core object of affiliation, i.e. the Party organisation, is clear.

A similar vagueness in terms of what unity means is also visible in the second aspect of it: unity in work and leadership. The Party argues that “Party committee members have to act according to the principle of collective decision-making and division of work. They have to earnestly fulfil their responsibilities while at the same time paying attention to the work of the overall situation, actively participate in collective leadership, actively protect the system of combining collective leadership and individual work responsibility and fully mobilise the active participation of all leading members in supervision” (Hu Z. 2010, p. 33). What the Party demands here is that its members and cadres work together in a united manner, consult with each other and comply with the principles of collective leadership and decision-making. While at first sight this seems to be a clear requirement, it is neither clearly outlined what “work of the overall situation” (*quanju gongzuo* 全局工作) is referring to nor how the “system of combining collective leadership and individual work responsibility” (*jiti lingdao he geren fengong fuze xiang jiehe zhidu* 集体领导和个人分工负责相结合制度) is supposed to work in practice. Similar to the vagueness in ideological unity, the demand for unity in work therefore provides Party cadres with substantial interpretational leeway for how to carry out their daily work, while it also allows for the Party to flexibly adopt its own rules. Whether concrete behaviour relies too much on collective leadership or overemphasises individual work responsibility is then very much a question of context and interpretation.

Table 8: Behavioural categories of correct and incorrect behaviour

Behavioural category	Definition correct behaviour	Examples correct behaviour	Definition incorrect behaviour	Example incorrect behaviour
Ideology	Have correct ideological beliefs and knowledge; work on fostering, improving and spreading such knowledge and beliefs	<p>“Cadres of the Party and in particular leading cadres have to study the arguments of Lenin and Comrade Mao Zedong. They have to strictly and firmly protect the character of our Party as a vanguard party of the working class and protect the purity of [the concepts of] communism of Communist Party members. Under no circumstances should they allow for the decline of the levels of thought and political consciousness of Party members or their moral degeneration.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui and Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 26.04.1982 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“For educating and guiding Party members and cadres, especially leading cadres, we have to firmly establish a correct worldview, outlook on life and value system and establish a correct understanding of</p>	Not have correct beliefs, lack of interest in ideological matters	<p>“People who engage in serious bureaucratism have one thing in common: their style of thought [<i>sixiang zuofeng</i> 思想作风] is not correct and they abandoned the ideological path of liberating one’s thought and seeking truth from facts. Their objective and subjective concepts are separated and theory and practice have come apart.”(Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 21)</p> <p>“Some leading cadres have not understood the basic line of the Party and they have not deeply understood the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics of Comrade Xiaoping. They set the building of material civilisation against the building of spiritual civilisation and the task of building the economy against the task of clean government. They mistakenly think that the task of developing the</p>



		<p>power, status and personal advantages. We have to build a party serving the interests of the people, governing for the people and strengthening the consciousness of a public servant.” (Liang Z. 26.06.2002, p. 32)</p> <p>“Party discipline cadres have to stress politics, Party spirit, the large picture [<i>daju</i> 大局] and self-consciously protect the Party’s image.” (Wu Guanzheng 01.02.2006 (2014), p. 13)</p>		<p>economy is big, whereas the task of clean government is small.” (Cao C. 15.12.1993 (2014), p. 24)</p>
Commitment and bravery	Be brave, willing to suffer hardships and put one’s own interests last	<p>“Our Party continuously demands that all Party members and leading cadres of all levels have to put the interests of the Party and the people above everything else. Their individual interests have to obey the interests of the Party and the people, bearing hardships has to come before personal enjoyment [<i>chiku zai qian, xiangshou zai hou</i> 吃苦在前, 享受在后] and the abuse of public power for private gain is strictly forbidden.” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 8)</p>	Loss or lack of organisational spirit and commitment, loss of willingness to fight and suffer for the Party, weakness, joy of material enjoyment	<p>“There is a small number of weak Party members and cadres. Under the new circumstances, they are not able to withstand challenges, their extreme evil individualism spreads, they seek a life of pleasure and are blinded by their desire for profit.” (N.N. 28.05.1982 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Some Party members have lost the fine tradition of arduous struggle.” (Wang C. 05.2003, p. 15)</p>

		<p>"[Leading cadres] should arduously struggle, not engage in luxuriousness and waste and not seek a life of pleasure." (Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11)</p>		
Unity	Maintain the unity of the Party and comply with organisational hierarchies (democratic centralism)	<p>"We have to strengthen Party discipline and the Party's political discipline and ensure that Party members do not only in behaviour but also in beliefs maintain unity with the Central Committee [<i>baochi yizhi</i> 保持一致]." (Liu L. 30.07.1989 (2014), p. 14)</p> <p>"Party members and cadres have to be of one mind with the Party [<i>tongxin tongde</i> 同心同德], in every word and deed protect the Party's image and prestige and even be filled with confidence for the Party's undertaking." (N.N. 06.03.2002, p. 4)</p>	Party members do not care for Party unity and do not comply with Party directives, laxity	<p>"One problem is liberalism in politics. Some leading cadres turn a blind eye on incorrect tendencies and the breaking of Party discipline and the law and they adopt a liberalist attitude. Even for issues that arise right in front of their eyes, they do not ask questions and let things slide." (Qiang 28.02.1986 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>"The knowledge on supervision of some cadres is thin or some do not care for it. Some just want to be left alone and not be supervised. Some are seeking good relations with all at the expense of principle and do not dare to supervise and some strongly oppose supervision and think it is a sign of the organisation not trusting them." (Liu Fengfu 15.07.2003 (2014), p. 12)</p>

<p>Serve the people</p>	<p>Work for the interests and advantages of the people</p>	<p>“All Party members and cadres have to be educated to self-consciously use their power for the people, emotionally connect with the people and seek the fulfilment of the interests of the people.” (N.N. 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 4)</p> <p>“We have to insist on building the Party for the collective and governing for the people. We have to take a good Party spirit to advance good politics and a good spirit among the people. From beginning to end, maintaining a blood and flesh relationship with the people is the core issue of building Party style and political style.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 43)</p>		
<p>Role models and leadership</p>	<p>Be a model of good behaviour and lead others in following suit</p>	<p>“We have to educate all Party members and cadres in the aim of wholeheartedly serving the people, make themselves an example [yishenzuoze 以身作则], strictly observe law and discipline, take the lead in rectifying Party style and fulfil an exemplary function in building a socialist spiritual civilisation.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha</p>	<p>Failing to be a good example, not engage in leadership duties, engage in slack behaviour</p>	<p>“There are some municipal committees that are dispirited and listless. They hide in the office all day long, do not interact with cadres nor with the masses, they do not promote anything, nor criticise anything. When they encounter difficulties, they call in sick and only come back when the situation has</p>

		<p>weiyuanhui 30.04.1986 (2014), pp. 30f.)</p> <p>“The lifestyle of leading cadres is not a small affair and many cadres commit mistakes that often have to do with issues in their lifestyles. They have to alert, urge and supervise themselves and be models in honouring social morality and family virtue. They should make their good virtuous sentiments and their noble character an example for the masses.” (Luo 15.07.2005 (2014), p. 4)</p>		<p>ameliorated.” (Hu Y. 22.06.1981 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“There are still some serious issues in the Party’s ideological style, work style, leadership style, style of study and lifestyle of cadres. One issue is ongoing severe bureaucratism. Some leading cadres engage in a grandfatherly style of leadership. They do not care for the production and the lives of the masses.” (Fu J. 15.09.2001 (2014), p. 5)</p>
<p>Monetary misbehaviour/corruption</p>	<p>No abuse of public power for private gain or waste of state resources</p>	<p>“During the last years, our enterprises have increasingly engaged with other danweis or with external commercial entities and these have sometimes brought along gifts. The respective leaders of the enterprises have either politely refused these gifts or accepted them and handed them over to the public.” (Panzhuhua gangtie gongxi dangwei 30.10.1983 (2014), p. 23)</p> <p>“Under all circumstances patiently endure poverty, face temptation,</p>	<p>Abuse of public power for private gain, waste of state resources, engage in undesired economic activities</p>	<p>“It is certainly not allowed to use public power or one’s office for private gain or spend public funds for private purposes.” (N.N. 01.03.2001 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“Some people seek easy and comfortable lives and enjoyments. They fear hardship and tiredness and put enjoyment first. When they encounter the least bit of grievances, they retreat. Some people transfer state funds into their own pockets and for their</p>

		uphold one’s inner qualities and take care of minor matters, endure the trials of money, power and beauty.” (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25)		private wealth do not hesitate to engage in corruption and embezzlement. Again and again, they touch on the red line of Party discipline and state law.” (Yu H. 25.04.2017)
Rules	Comply with formalised, written rules (e.g. state laws, but also Party rules)	<p>“Every Party member has to constantly rely on the Party constitution to inspect his own behaviour. He has to make honouring the Party constitution a demand on himself and make carrying out the Party constitution a lifelong mission for himself.” (Chen P. 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“First and foremost, Party discipline and state law have to be guarded. You have to know what thing should and should not be done, take the lead in strictly guarding the three lines of defense of ‘law, Party discipline and morality’ and be good at controlling oneself.” (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25)</p>	Lack of compliance with and open breaking of formal rules	<p>“Infringing upon the Party constitution, particularly upon the general principles of the Party constitution and engaging in capitalist liberalism means breaking the Party’s political discipline and is certainly not allowed.” (N.N. 30.01.1987 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“Engaging in capitalist liberalism contradicts the socialist system and advocates a capitalist system. It violates the Party’s Constitution and the Party’s programme and it also violates the constitution of the state.” (N.N. 28.02.1987 (2014), p. 2)</p>
Do reform well	Actively engage in implementing and advancing policies of economic reform	“Only if Party members and cadres never forget the mission of wholeheartedly serving the people and implement the four		

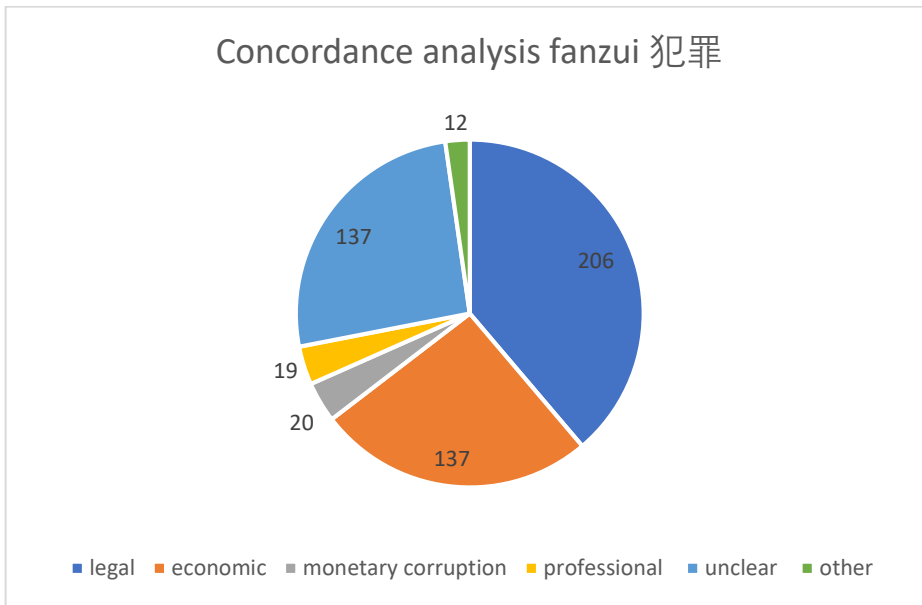
		<p>modernisations, we can reach the grand goal of doubling the output value in industry and agriculture.” (N.N. 30.06.1985 (2014), p. 28)</p> <p>“Be a model of innovation. For conceptual innovation, one has to earnestly study modern economics, finance, management and technology, get to know new ideas and broaden one’s vision. Through such innovation, one should develop clear modes of thinking about work, enrich management methods and raise the outcome of work.”(Wang Yong 04.09.2002, p. 33)</p>		
Family	Education and supervision of family members	<p>“All leading cadres, especially high-ranking leading cadres have to make it their inescapable duty to educate their children.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 18.05.1982 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“Manage well one’s spouse, children and co-workers and do not allow them to use one’s influence for private interests.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11)</p>	Tolerate incorrect behaviour among family members and lack of commitment to strictly governing family members	“The children and spouses of some leading cadres use the power and influence of these leading cadres, intervene in government affairs to obtain private advantages or break law and discipline to seek private business interests. Leading cadres sometimes do not prevent this or even support it and are fully responsible for their own behaviour and those of their spouses and children, thereby engaging in illegal

				<p>behaviour themselves.” (Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“Leading cadres at all levels are not allowed to accept cash or stocks and bonds. Children and spouses of cadres are not allowed to make use of the power of that cadre to gain illegal or illicit advantages.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.03.2005 (2014), p. 3)</p>
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*Infringement on disciplinary rules*

Vagueness does not only concern the behavioural requirements of the Party: it is also an issue regarding how incorrect behaviour is described. The Party generally uses two phrases to describe infringements on discipline rules: mistake (*cuowu* 错误) and crime (*fanzui* 犯罪). These two phrases refer to different kinds of behaviour although this does not add to the clarity of behavioural standards. Rather, the language associated with these two terms, particularly the term *cuowu*, further obscures instead of clarifies behavioural standards.

Figure 14: Concordance analysis of the term “crime” (*fanzui* 犯罪) in CC and CCDI documents

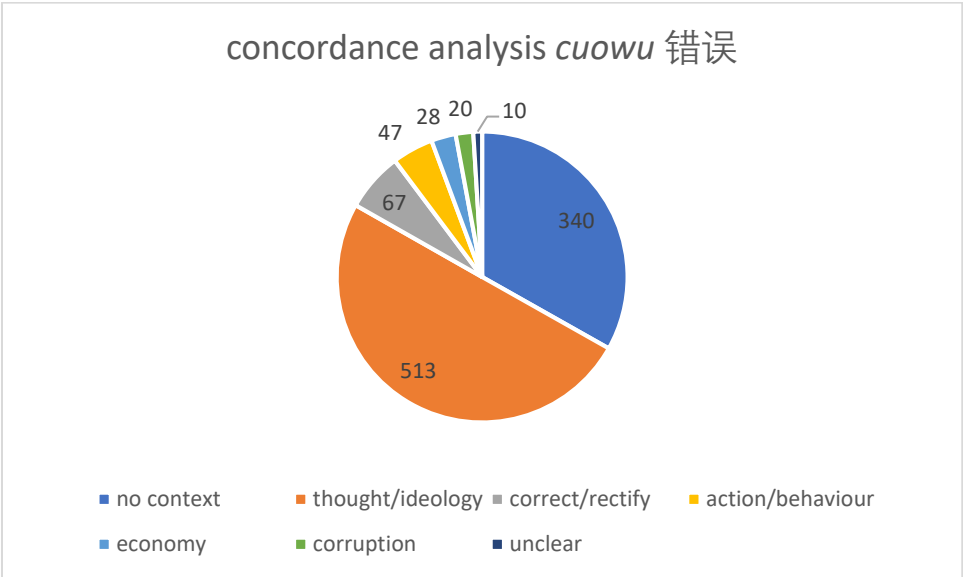


In comparison, *fanzui* (crime) is the term that outlines more clearly the infringements on behavioural standards. As is to be expected, in about 40% of the cases the term is used in a context referring to infringement on law (see figure 14). However, in these cases it is not outlined what kind of criminal behaviour the term indicates. Because many activities can infringe upon state law, simply stating that an action is a crime and breaks the law provides only very limited information on what kind of activities it refers to. This is also the case for a frequent combination of *fanzui* that in about 25% of the cases invokes “economic” crimes, usually in the combination *jingji fanzui* (经济犯罪 “economic crimes”). Although this phrase is generally supposed to refer to crimes of corruption, it does not provide any additional information as to what kind of economic crimes are referred to. Since even the penal code on corrupt behaviour is rather extensive and covers crimes of varying severity, we cannot draw any conclusions on the severity of the crime nor on any behavioural expectations that are infringed upon. To a certain degree, this lack of clarity is remedied in the cases where *fanzui* is combined with direct references to corrupt behaviour rather than a very general phrase indicating “economic crimes”. In these cases that make up about 4% of all usages of *fanzui* in the sample, *fanzui*



is, for example, combined with phrases such as *zousi loushui* (走私漏税 "smuggling and tax evasion"), *toujidaoba* (投机倒把 "speculation and profiteering") or *xinghui shouhui* (行贿受贿 "giving and accepting of bribes"). These phrases provide the clearest indication of behavioural standards for Party members and of behaviour that is considered to be a crime in Party documents on rectification. However, the other categories of what is deemed "crimes" do not provide any additional clarity as to what the Party sees as criminal behaviour. In about 4% of the cases, Party documents speak of "professional" crimes (usually *zhiwu fazui* 职务犯罪) that probably also refer to corruption although there is usually no such clarification in the immediate context. Additionally, in about a quarter of the cases where the phrase *fanzui* appears in the sample, they context remains unclear. Therefore, we can generally assume that the phrase *fanzui* mostly refers to law infringements and probably often to corrupt behaviour of Party members. However, the way the Party describes incorrect behaviour here is not clear enough to deduce concrete behavioural expectations from it.

Figure 15: Concordance analysis of the term "mistake" (*cuowu* 错误) in CC and CCDI documents



The vagueness of denouncing what is incorrect behaviour is even more pronounced in the use of the term *cuowu* (错误 "mistake"). Generally speaking, the term *cuowu* appears about twice as often in the sample as the term *fanzui*. This indicates that more infringements on behavioural expectations are considered to be "mistakes" rather than "crimes". In light of this, it would be even more crucial to have a clear understanding of what "mistakes" are in order to provide behavioural requirements for Party members and cadres.

However, the opposite is the case: the meaning of *cuowu* for describing behaviour is very vague and not spelt out clearly. In half of the cases where the term *cuowu* is used to describe some kind of incorrect behaviour, it refers to incorrect ideological concepts or beliefs (see figure 15). Because

of the strategic vagueness of ideological concepts that was already discussed above, it is obvious that incorrect behaviour or infringing on vague ideological concepts cannot be measured against clear behavioural requirements. Because such mistakes are, for example, described as holding incorrect “ideals” (理想 *lixiang*) or “viewpoints” (看法 *kanfa*), almost any kind of behaviour could be labelled *cuowu* without a clear definition of what the respective behavioural expectations are. Additionally, *cuowu* can also refer to more general, albeit not clearly defined mistakes (7%), economic mistakes (3%), corruption (2%) or mistaken “behaviour” (行为 *xingwei*, 5%). None of these are delineated in a way that clear behavioural expectations could be deduced from them.

*Cuowu* is also qualified to describe the severity of mistakes, albeit in a similarly vague manner. In 33% percent of the cases where *cuowu* appears in the sample, no context is given at all on what the mistake in question looks like. In these cases, there is usually a reference to the severity of the mistake, such as, for example, *da* (大 “big”), *xiao* (小 “small”), *yibanxing* (一般性 “general”), *yanzhong* (严重 “severe”) or *qingwei* (轻微 “slight”). While these phrases modify the kind of mistake in question, they do not provide any information on what kind of mistakes they refer nor how it can be judged whether a mistake is *yanzhong* or *qingwei*. Additionally, the phrase *gezhong cuowu* (各种错误 “all kinds of mistakes”) appears regularly in Party documents and it does equally not provide any information on the nature of the mistake in question. The question of big and small mistakes is taken up again below in the section on the vagueness of punishment.

For the Party, vague ideological and behavioural expectations can be used strategically to make use of significant room for discretionary interpretation in judging the behaviour of Party members. Both correct ideological concepts and behavioural requirements have to be interpreted and applied to concrete situations. This is the task of the Party or an ominous “Party centre”. Therefore, as much as the social identity of Party members is about the Party at its core, behavioural and ideological expectations are primarily about the interpretative power of the Party. The main point is not to make clear what is correct and what is not: it is about accepting the Party as the ultimate decision-maker and interpreter.

Concerning these vague behavioural expectations and their function of keeping Party members on their toes, it could be argued, however, that Party members simply know how to behave. This could be the case because they are members of an organisation that may use a secret language code that outside observers do not understand. In this argument, such requirements would not be difficult to understand for Party members because they are socialised into the Party and have an insiders’ understanding of what is expected of them. While this may to a certain extent be the case, it nevertheless does not contradict the argument that vague behavioural requirements can be applied

strategically and interpreted differently in different situations. Even if there is a form of secret inner code among Party members and they generally have an idea what is expected from them in spite of vague requirements, this perceived shared understanding does not protect them from a reinterpretation of behavioural requirements in a concrete situation. There is no guarantee that a perceived shared understanding that has been valid in the past is still valid in the present or even in the future. Vagueness of behavioural requirements allows for the re-adaptation and reinterpretation without warning and therefore introduces an element of arbitrariness even in the face of an alleged common understanding of what they are usually supposed to mean.

#### Rectification methods

Rectification methods for incorrect behaviour are also vague and not clearly defined. The basic message of the Party is that some kind of undefined punishment can sanction some kind of—equally undefined—incorrect behaviour. The most important function of strategic vagueness with regard to rectification methods is the discretionary applicability or the threat of it in order to keep Party members on their toes and signal the ultimate dominance of the Party. The basic message is that ideological beliefs and behavioural requirements can be interpreted differently and, due to their inherent vagueness, Party members can ultimately interpret these to their liking, but in the end, it is still the Party's discretionary decision to decide when something is considered to be wrong and therefore deemed punishable. Even more important, it is also the discretionary decision of the Party to decide “how wrong” a certain kind of behaviour is, i.e. how it should be dealt with and what kind of punishment is appropriate.

#### *Determining appropriate punishment*

The first issue of punishment is to determine what kind of punishment is appropriate for what kind of behaviour. Here, the Party rhetorically relies significantly on making punishment dependant on the circumstances of the misdeed and the severity of the behaviour in question. The kinds of punishment that the Party can mete out are still the same as they were in earlier periods<sup>22</sup> and most of these punishments can be given for to the largest part of the disciplinary infringements listed in the *Disciplinary Regulations of the Chinese Communist Party*. This way of regulating punishment gives the Party great interpretational leeway and discretion to decide on how to punish bad behaviour among its members.

The circumstances of the misdeed are the main factor determining what kind of punishment is appropriate for what kind of behaviour. The decision on appropriate punishment depends on whether “the circumstances are rather light” (*qingjie jiao qing* 情节较轻), “the circumstances are

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<sup>22</sup> Warning, serious warning, revoking of inner-Party posts and duties, probationary Party membership, expulsion from the Party

rather severe” (*qingjie jiao zhong* 情节较重) or “the circumstances are severe” (*qingjie yanzhong* 情节严重) (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018). Because no clear criteria are defined on how to make this judgement, the rules for meting out punishment and therefore rectifying incorrect behaviour are vague and can be applied strategically.

Furthermore, the Party claims that the effects of a misdeed have to be taken into consideration as well when determining punishment. In other words, the judgement of behaviour is supposed to be at least partially based on whether it creates a “harmful” (*buliang* 不良) or an “evil” (*elie* 恶劣) influence or brings about “grave consequences” (*yanzhong houguo* 严重后果). Whether these criteria are fulfilled and behaviour should be punished—possibly even in a severe manner—is not defined and therefore provides discretionary room for interpretation on how to handle punishment of misbehaving Party members.

#### *Party-internal punishment*

A lot of misbehaviours of Party members are handled with Party-internal measures of punishment. These are regulated in the Party’s own discipline regulations (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018) and administered by the Party’s own disciplinary system that consists of the commissions for discipline inspection (T. Gong 2008; X. Guo 2014; L. Li 2016). Some kinds of misbehaviour that also break state law, mainly corruption, can additionally be punished within the legal system. Nevertheless, Party-internal punishment is also crucially important as a sanctioning method and it covers a wide and vague field of incorrect behaviours that were already discussed above.

Very generally, Party discipline measures are not clearly outlined. On the contrary, the Party vaguely and rather broadly refers to means of “disciplinary” or “organisational” punishment. For example, in his work report to the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the CCDI in 2006, Wu Guangzheng, at the time head of the CCDI, argued that “for the very small number of cadres whose image is not good and about whom the masses strongly complain, we have to adopt organisational measures of handling this [*zuzhi chuli cuoshi* 组织处理措施]” (Wu Guanzheng 01.02.2006 (2014), p. 8). Similarly, the Party uses the phrase “give disciplinary punishment (*geiyu jilü chufen* 给予纪律处分)” (Liu G. and Ling 06.2009, p. 64) or also Party and political disciplinary treatment (*dangji, zhengji chufen* 党纪、政纪处分) to describe Party-internal punishment and it argues that it is necessary to “strictly investigate all kinds of cases of breaking law and discipline” (Zhang X. 2012, p. 77). In these statements of the Party on disciplinary investigation and punishment, it is visible that the Party uses very general and generic language to describe methods of rectifying the Party and enforcing Party discipline. Although Party disciplinary

punishment does not necessarily imply legal measures, it is still left open whether the disciplinary punishment in a concrete case entails only a simple warning or the expulsion from the Party<sup>23</sup>.

In addition to rectification methods and means of disciplinary punishment, the Party does not concretely define the object of investigation either. For example, to describe the object of investigation, it often uses vague terms such as “problem” (*wenti* 问题) or “facts” (*shishi* 事实). This terminology does not provide indications whether what is investigated is a severe crime or simply a slight transgression of a Party member. Additionally, regarding punishable actions, the Party also speaks of behaviour that is “not up to standard” (*bu hege* 不合格). Like in the case of a “problem”, this does not provide a clear indication of punishable behaviour and how it should be dealt with, thereby creating significant behavioural insecurity for Party members. Additionally, such vague delineations also leave space for the discretionary application of punishments because under changing outward circumstances, any behaviour could be investigated as a “problem” or not deemed “up to standard”.

#### *Education and study*

Next to the Party-internal methods of punishment, education and study are important means of rectification for the Party as well. As discussed at length in the chapter on the link between beliefs and behaviour, education and study is one of the Party’s preferred methods for dealing with incorrect behaviour among Party members. When discussing these as means of rectification, the Party usually refers to *jiaoyu* (教育 “education”), *xuexi* (学习 “study”) or *sixiang gongzuo* (思想工作 “thought work”). For example, it is argued that “we have to support using education as the basis and strengthen the capability of fighting corruption and forestalling moral degeneration” (Zhou M. 11.2007, p. 28). Similarly, in an article in *Party Style and Party Discipline*, the author contends that “we have to stress the education of honouring and implementing the system among Party members and leading cadres and thereby ensure that they firmly develop a concept of doing things according to systemic structures.” (N.N. 15.04.2005 (2014), p. 23). A goal of such study and education measures is outlined in another article where the author holds that “we have to strengthen study and education, establish a consciousness of ruling in accordance with law [*fazhi* 法治] and build a defensive line of thought that includes not wanting to be corrupt” (Li G. 05.2016, p. 21). Similar to what was discussed above with regard to investigation and punishment, these quotes already provide the impression that education and study as means of Party rectification are used in a similarly vague manner.

Three questions arise on how study and education should function concretely as a means of dealing with incorrect behaviour of Party members and cadres: what is supposed to be studied? How

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<sup>23</sup> These means of disciplinary treatments refer to the two extreme ends of possible inner-Party disciplinary punishment.

should this study and education take place? What is the purpose that the Party aims to reach with this method? The answer to these questions is far from specifically outlined and underlines the circular and mutually reinforcing character of strategic vagueness in Party discipline. On the first question what the Party wants its members and cadres to study and in what they have to be educated, the answer is quite often some ideological concepts and worldviews that are considered to be correct. These can be Marxist-Leninist ideological concepts and ideological elements from the CCP's adaption of it (see for example: Yang Z. 01.06.2005 (2014); Wu Guanzheng 01.02.2006 (2014); Zhang Y. 01.06.2006 (2014)), but also simply a correct attitude (see for example: Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014); Li W. 01.05.2005 (2014); Liu G. and Ling 06.2009) or just the Party's line and vanguard role (see for example: Zhong L. and Wu 09.2007; Lin Y. and Yue 03.2016). The problem with this mostly ideological content of study is that these ideological concepts themselves are not precisely defined. If the content of study and education is supposed to be precisely these vague ideological concepts, a circle of imprecision is created.

The purpose of studying ideological concepts is the indoctrination of Party members and cadres, not knowledge transfer. Party members are not supposed to simply know the core elements of the Party's ideological concepts and be able to repeat the main elements, for example, of Marxism or Xi Jinping Thought. Ideally, they are supposed to embody these theories and have them influence their daily lives and actions. With the help of study, the Party wants to uphold a correct ideological line (e.g. Cao Q. 01.08.2000 (2014); Xu Jingyue 20.11.2002; Lin Y. and Yue 03.2016), foster correct behaviour among Party members and cadres (see for example: Wei 15.09.1993 (2014); Cai Y. 01.08.2000 (2014); Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014); N.N. 01.09.2001 (2014)) and strengthen their Party spirit and Party style (e.g. N.N. 01.09.1993 (2014); Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014); Wei 01.02.2002 (2014); Zhu M. 12.2014). In order to reach this goal, Party members are supposed to study not only the content of a particular ideological concept or important Party meeting, but its spirit (精神 *jingshen*) (see for example: Li Q. 15.01.2002 (2014); Wu 15.10.2004 (2014); N.N. 01.09.2005 (2014)). For example, the Party requests that "all Party committees have to organise Party members and leading cadres to continuously study the spirit of the important speech of Comrade Jiang Zemin on July 1<sup>st</sup> and the spirit of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session" (Wei 01.02.2002 (2014), p. 10). In addition to studying their spirit, the Party requires Party members and cadres to take ideological concepts and Party policy decisions as a guidance (*wei zhidao* 为指导). For example, the Party stipulates that "in investigating and handling cases, we have to persist in taking Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents as a guidance" (Zhang H. 15.08.2005 (2014), p. 8). This means that Party members and cadres should not only know about ideological concepts. They should internalise them and act accordingly. However, what it means concretely to study the spirit of an ideological concept or a Party policy and take it as a guidance is subject to interpretation.

The last issue is the method of education and indoctrination. Here, criticism and self-criticism plays an important role. Although criticism and self-criticism is obviously very clear and specific when executed, the Party's rhetoric surrounding this indoctrination method is rather vague. For example, the Party's five-year plan on training suggests that "we have to persist in democratic life meetings and organisational life meetings, discuss and appraise Party members in a democratic manner and have a system of heart-to-heart talks. We have to earnestly conduct criticism and self-criticism, nip people in the ear and pull their sleeves and make them blush and sweat. This lets the Party's organisational life have a motivating effect on raising Party members' education." (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019). None of these strategies or goals are clearly defined. The phrase of heart-to-heart talks can be understood very broadly and it is also unclear what concrete methods entail "nipping people in the ear" or "making them blush and sweat". The degree of coercion involved in a method like criticism and self-criticism is largely left open to interpretation and this vagueness carries a degree of threat. The message is that it can be uncomfortable, but it is impossible to know this for certain and it is up to the Party organisation to define how uncomfortable it is going to become.

#### Summary

The strategic vagueness of the "centre" of loyalty, ideological concepts, behavioural expectations and methods of rectification closes a gap in the social identity approach proposed here. It outlines the connection between Party social identity and behavioural expectations for Party members as well as the Party's role in it. Social identity theory assumes that people who have a strong and salient social identity will behave in line with the behavioural requirements of that particular group. This chapter argues that ideology serves to define these behavioural expectations for Party members and cadres. However, ideological concepts and behavioural requirements as defined in Party ideology are generally vague and ambiguous. This vague rhetoric serves two functions. Firstly, it allows Party members to interpret behavioural requirements and ideological concepts according to their own personal situation and beliefs and thereby mitigate potential cognitive dissonance. Secondly and even more importantly, such vague rhetoric helps establish the most crucial behavioural requirement for Party members and cadres: it is to accept and submit to the overall omnipotent interpreting authority of the Party.

## 8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I offer a multidisciplinary approach to analysing Party ideology. I discuss how Party ideology has the purpose of constructing a social identity for Party members and for making it relevant and salient. This can offer a fresh perspective on why ideology matters for the Party and how it aims to create an ideological system that Party members can still believe in. However, because social identity and self-categorisation have scarcely been applied to the field of China studies in general and analysing the CCP in particular, this approach cannot be encompassing. On the contrary, it can only be a starting point for further research on how the Chinese Communist Party functions. In this conclusion, I summarise the main findings of the thesis and point out in how far they can contribute to our understanding of the Chinese Communist Party in general and Party ideology in particular. Afterwards, I will discuss the issue of change and permanency in the importance of ideology and the question of policy changes under Xi Jinping. Finally, I enlarge the perspective and explain how far theoretical approaches to social identity and self-categorisation theory can have further explanatory power for analysing other aspects of the CCP, in particular inner-Party group formation, and point to further potential areas of research.

What can be explained

*The main findings of the thesis*

This thesis argues that ideology matters. It matters because, for the Party, there is a close connection between beliefs and behaviour. Additionally, it also matters because it serves the purpose of constructing a social identity for Party members and making this identity relevant and salient. Thereby, it can help the Party to construct a belief system beyond communism that the Party wants its members to identify with. In this social identity, the Party itself is the core and Party members are required to subject to and believe in the Party. In the following, I summarise the main arguments from this thesis. I point out both the purposes of Party ideology and how the Party finds itself at the centre of these purposes.

For the Party, ideology matters because it believes that beliefs shape behaviour. At the beginning of this thesis, I discussed the link between beliefs and behaviour and pointed out how the Party holds that individual beliefs and actions are connected. This link is reflected in the Party's argument that both the reasons for incorrect behaviour and the appropriate remedies for it are connected to Party members' thoughts. In the Party's view, incorrect beliefs lead to incorrect behaviour and challenge the loyalty of Party members to the Party. At the same time, the Party holds that the remedy for incorrect behaviour has to be found in study and education. Because of this close connection between beliefs, behaviour and loyalty to the Party, I argue that ideology still matters significantly to the Party.



Related to the question why ideology matters is the issue of how it matters and how the Party aims to create a belief system that its members are supposed to believe in. To answer this question, I argue that Party ideology reflects a Party social identity and attempts to make it relevant and salient. The entire process of Party social identity creation and its alleged salience for Party members focusses on the Party itself. It does not require Party members to believe in the realisation of communism—it only requires them to believe in the Party. In other words, Party social identity is a central point for answering the question how ideology matters and how it should offer a belief system that Party members can believe in. It is the decontested meaning that the Party offers to its members as a redefined version of its ideology.

The social identity that the Party creates for its members focusses on the Party's greatness. It is what I call the myth of the Party. This myth includes the Party's understanding of its past, its role in the present and for the future. The core narrative of the Party's myth is that its past achievements and rise to power were characterised by heroic deeds and political and military successes. Its narrative of itself in the present contains an ongoing importance of struggle and the willingness to suffer hardships as well as the idea that Party members are supposed to be better than average people. Regarding its role for the future, the Party holds that it is in the position of guarding the truth and has correct knowledge for guiding the Party and the country towards a bright future.

In order to make this social identity relevant and accessible for Party members, this thesis argues that the Party seeks to broaden its social identity base. In other words, it increases the centrality of the Party in Party members' lives and co-opts other social identity elements to eliminate them as alternatives independent of the Party. Concretely, the Party promotes a narrative of itself as a paternal figure that underlines the importance of the Party for individual Party members as a caring and nurturing entity. Additionally, it portrays the role of the Party and Party members as leadership figures leading by good example. It thereby refers to traditional Confucian elements of understanding leadership and can tie cultural elements of social identity to the Party. In other words, the Party creates a central role for itself in relation to its members and it connects alternative identity elements, such as elements of a cultural identity, to itself.

Increasing the accessibility of a social identity is the precondition for making this particular identity salient. The salience of the Party social identity for Party members can be increased by offering stimuli that foster Party members' self-understanding of being part of a group that is the Party and by constantly reminding them of this group membership. I argue that Party ideology can serve this purpose with the help of a narrative of constant supervision and a set of formalised language. The message that the Party sends to its members is that they are constantly observed and that at least in

official contexts, they only have limited options for expressing themselves in correct and required manners.

Lastly, a salient social identity is supposed to lead to behaviour in line with group norms. Ideology serves to define these behavioural norms and expectations for Party members and cadres. In the case of the Party, the core group norm that Party members are supposed to comply with is to submit to the absolute interpreting authority of the Party. This is reflected in the concept of strategic vagueness that I introduced in this thesis. Strategic vagueness entails that ideological concepts, behavioural expectations for Party members and methods of rectification are deliberately vague and ambiguous. Whether beliefs and behaviour are correct and how they should be rectified if they are incorrect is entirely subject to the decision of the Party.

Summing up, the core finding of this thesis is that Party ideology is crucial for the Party because its purpose is to create and stimulate a social identity for Party members. All steps of the identity process in self-categorisation theory are reflected in Party ideology. The Party creates a social identity, increases its relevance, makes the identity salient and identifies itself as the centre of related behavioural rules and methods of rectification. Therefore, self-categorisation theory can offer a powerful lens to analyse the purposes of CCP ideology.

#### *The explanatory power of the findings*

The findings of this thesis offer an explanation why ideology matters for the Party. It thereby contributes to the ongoing scholarly discussion of whether ideology is still relevant to the CCP or whether it has died in the post-Mao era. It explains why the Party believes that ideology is still important and it analyses the purposes of ideology from the point of view of the CCP. With this analysis, it can help explain a result of Pieke's work, who, in his interviews in Party schools, found that Party cadres do not believe in communism anymore, but nevertheless still think that ideology matters (Pieke 2009). This thesis can offer a more detailed understanding why ideology still matters and what its purposes are for the CCP. In other words, it points to a way of understanding Party ideology beyond communism.

This thesis' understanding of ideology is made possible with the help of a multidisciplinary approach that has only rarely been used in the study of ideology in China. The combination of concepts from political science and social psychology is a novel and underused approach to analysing Chinese politics. Although some scholars have used theoretical concepts grounded in social psychology (e.g. Ji 2004) and have analysed, for example, the role of emotions in mass mobilisation in Maoist China (e.g. Perry 2002; Liu 2010), the application of social psychology concepts in studying Chinese politics is still rare. By enlarging this conceptual framework and applying social identity and self-categorisation theory to the question of CCP ideology, this thesis can provide a new angle for studying ideology.

## The past, present and future of ideology

A relevant question this thesis has not discussed is the issue of the temporal development of ideology. An important body of scholarly work has focussed on the issue of the redefinition of CCP ideological concepts (e.g. Dittmer 1993; Dickson 2006; Lam 2006; 2015). It has discussed respective new ideological contributions of CCP leaders and how they are interlinked and connected to the greater ideological heritage of the CCP that is Marxism-Leninism. Additionally, it has analysed new additions to CCP ideology stemming from more traditional Chinese narratives (e.g. Delury 2008; Noesselt 2015; Noesselt and Senghaas 2016). This scholarly work is an important contribution to our understanding of the ideological concepts of the CCP. It provides us with insights into how the Party struggles to maintain a form of path dependency of its ideological underpinnings and how it aims to create a communist party's ideology without communism.

However, what this scholarly work does not primarily discuss is the purpose of ideology for the Party's engagement with its members. In terms of ideology's purpose for the CCP's relations with the greater Chinese public, some scholars suggest a legitimating function of ideology (Holbig 2013; S. Zhao 2016a). For ideology's purpose in the Party's relations with its members, I suggest that there is a significant degree of continuity in the purposes of ideology. It is to create a Party social identity for Party members to associate with and to become one with the Party.

## The continuity of ideological narratives

Based on my analysis in this thesis, I offer an interpretation of continuity in Party ideological narratives. This continuity does not refer to the content of ideological concepts, but to the purpose of ideology. While ideological concepts and phrases can and do change, I propose that the purpose of Party ideology in creating a social identity for Party members remains largely constant. This interpretation of Party ideology triggers two related conclusions: the first one is that Party ideology was never only about communism. The second one is that Party ideology was never really dead.

Assuming that Party ideology was never only focussed on believing in communism implies that ideology has always also had an organisational function. Already in the Party's earliest years in its wartime bases in Yan'an, ideology was supposed to fulfil the function of binding Party members to the Party. It was expected to provide a common point of reference and of guidance to action in a situation where—for spatial reasons—the Party was unable to control individual Party members directly (Compton 1952; Selden 1969; 1971). Although under Mao, ideology was certainly supposed to strongly function as a belief system, ideological slogans and campaigns also had the goal of mobilising people and connecting them to the Party (Ji 2004; Yu Liu 2010). For the time period since 1978, this thesis shows how ideology fulfils an organisational function for the Party and how—through social identity manipulation—it is supposed to bind Party members to the Party. Even though communist

terminology has not vanished from the Party's way of speaking and ideological redefinitions still take place, they are not the only defining element of Party ideology. In other words, Party ideology has always somehow been about communism—but communism is not its only defining feature.

The second conclusion that ideology was never really dead is linked to the definition of ideology. The scholarly argument that ideology died in the PRC primarily focusses on the role of communism for the CCP. For example, when Misra diagnoses a shift from “post-Maoism to post-Marxism” (Misra 1998) or Ding speaks of the “decline of communism in China” (X. Ding 1994), they discuss ideology as a communist belief system. I do not intend to challenge the argument that communism as a belief system does not play a crucial role in China anymore. Additionally, I do not want to call into question the argument that the content and slogans of Party ideology have changed. When understanding ideology in this sense, it is possible to argue that ideology is indeed dead. However, if we understand ideology more broadly as a linguistic system in Freedren's sense and not only as a belief system, then ideology is not dead. Moreover, it never died. Rather, as my analysed material from the early 1980s to recent Party documents shows, ideology still plays an important role for the CCP and it has continuously served as a means of social identity creation. In this sense, ideology has never died: rather, it is alive and functioning.

This continuity amid change is a defining feature of the CCP's development. As Perry argues with regard to campaigns, these have developed from Maoist mass campaigns to what she calls managed campaigns (E. Perry 2011). She argues that campaigns as an important policy tool of the CCP have survived the end of the Maoist era and have been adapted to the needs of the Party after 1978. Similar to her argument, I suggest that the centrality of ideology is an ongoing continuity in CCP history. While the role of ideology as a belief system may have been downgraded after 1978, its organisational purpose of social identity creation guarantees ideology's continuous importance throughout the entire post-Mao era and until now.

What about Xi Jinping?

More recently, Xi Jinping appears to re-emphasise and redefine the role of ideology for the CCP. As part of Xi's apparent overall policy shift, scholars have analysed Xi's far-reaching anticorruption and Party discipline campaign and its effects on the Party (e.g. Keliher and Wu 2016; Manion 2016; Wedeman 2017; J. Zhu, Zhang, and Liu 2017; Y. Sun 2017; S. Li 2017; Juan Wang 2018; J. Zhu and Li 2020). Brown, for example, argued that the campaign serves as a means of “rescuing” the Party from centrifugal forces (Brown 2018c). Additionally, as part of and following this campaign, scholars have also diagnosed an increasing emphasis on ideological education and study activities of Party organisations (e.g. Xuelian Chen 2018; Dotson 31.12.2019; 29.01.2020). Generally speaking, they often see Xi's rule as a new age of importance for Party ideology with Xi's ideological contributions

functioning as a new hegemony (Mulvad 2019). Furthermore, scholars also analyse practices such as televised confessions (Sorace 2019) or revolutionary tourism (Pieke 2018; 2020) as expressions of a re-emphasised importance of ideology and CCP historical narratives in China.

However, the apparent re-emphasis of ideology under Xi depends on the point of comparison. Some scholars argue that Xi is a Mao-like ruler who does not only revive Maoist indoctrination practices, but who also centralises power onto himself and is in the process of turning himself into a Mao-style one-person ruler (e.g. Zhao 2016; Lam 2016; S. Lee 2017; Pei 2018). They make this assessment against the background of institutionalised mechanisms of power sharing, rules for political succession and the technocratisation of leadership in the post-Mao reform era (e.g. Lee 1991; A. Nathan 2003; Li 2016). Similarly, the judgement of the comeback of ideology is made to the background of assuming that ideology was largely irrelevant and merely served as window dressing prior to Xi Jinping. The argument that Xi Jinping's actions—also regarding ideology—are qualitatively different from his predecessors except Mao therefore depends significantly on the assumption that the entire Chinese political system before Xi Jinping had taken a path of greater institutionalisation and regularisation where Party ideology did not play a significant role anymore.

Yet, the major argument of this thesis is that ideology has always been important even before Xi Jinping—albeit not as a system of beliefs in communism. To the background of the argument made here, the alleged shift in importance of ideology under Xi appears slightly different. Ideology has not been newly revived under Xi since it was largely irrelevant beforehand. Rather, as a means of social identity manipulation, ideology has also before Xi played a role for the CCP. This means that the point of comparison for Xi's actions—the death of ideology before him—appears different. Therefore, the argument of a profound qualitative shift in the role of ideology under Xi can at least partially be qualified.

Yet, I do not dispute that major changes have taken place under Xi Jinping. Significant institutional changes such as, for example, the abolishment of the term limit for the state presidency or the strengthening of the role of the Party in the state constitution (Holbig 2018) have changed the character of the Party's and Xi's personal rule. Also, regarding ideology, he has emphasised extensive study and indoctrination activities of Party members and cadres and underlined the importance of criticism and self-criticism. Yet, because none of these activities had disappeared or were irrelevant beforehand, this shift, at least in the area of ideology, appears to be more a shift in degree rather than a profound shift in kind. This shift in degree is underlined, among others, by a number of supervision measures that were implemented under Xi, such as, for example, the expansive supervision of study of Party cadres via apps or websites where anyone can report on the misbehaviour of Party members and cadres. These technological advances testify to capabilities that Xi's predecessors did not have,

but the underlying narrative of supervision as a means to trigger Party social identity is not new to the Xi era. Therefore, even though Xi might have re-emphasised certain aspects of ideological indoctrination and certainly commands new capabilities thanks to technological development, we can already find the basic concepts and purposes of this ideological indoctrination under all his predecessors.

Where to from now?: Agendas for future research

In addition to offering a new perspective on the relevance and purpose of ideology, this thesis provides various opportunities for additional future research. Some of these opportunities are due to the methodological limitations of the thesis that were already referred to in the introduction. However, further opportunities also arise from the theoretical framework of social identity theory. It offers the potential to be fruitfully applied in other contexts as well.

*What this thesis does not explain*

As indicated in the introduction, I only rely on written primary source material. For reasons of access, I did not conduct field work in China and I did not interview any Party members and cadres on their views and experiences regarding Party ideology. This approach naturally comes with limitations that, under the condition that access becomes possible again, offer opportunities for future research.

The decision not to conduct field work in China limits the analysis to the officially propagated perspective of the Party. All documents analysed here were issued through the official Party hierarchy and generally emanated from central institutions, such as the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the Central Committee or the Central Organisation Department. Therefore, my analysis focuses on the centralised, top-down distribution of political directives and ideological discussion papers and the messages that are embedded in them. This means that divergent perspectives, either from outside the Party or also from lower levels of the Party hierarchy, were largely excluded.

In particular, my documentary analysis excludes two important aspects of understanding the Party's relations with its members. Firstly, it does not answer the question why individuals choose to join the Party. Analysing only official Party documents cannot cover individual personal motivations and it cannot cover the role that ideology does play in this decision to apply for joining the Party. However, while these individual motivations and pull factors of the Party are important for understanding the Party's relations with its members more generally, they are not important for my analysis of the role of ideology. The purpose of ideology as analysed here is only relevant after a person has joined the Party, therefore excluding the motivations for joining the Party.

The second—and more crucial—limitation concerns the “recipient side” of ideology. In this thesis, I proposed an approach for understanding the purposes of Party ideology from the Party's point of view.

However, this does not say anything about how the social identity mechanisms I identified affect Party members in practice. What do Party members believe in? How strongly are they affected by the social identity that the Party offers? In how far and in what areas do they consider their Party membership to be relevant for their daily lives? These are questions that I cannot answer with the methodological approach of this thesis.

Based on this, the next important and logical step would be to analyse the “recipient side” of ideology. This step would allow us to gain an encompassing picture of the full function of ideology. Based on the fact that the Party is still in power and governing, we can assume that its efforts to create a group identity and bind Party members to the Party are at least successful enough. However, we cannot know with certainty whether the Party is really successful in creating and fostering a social identity for its members as I propose here. While studying this “recipient side” of ideology is an additional step to complete the understanding of ideology from a social psychology perspective, it does, like the question of why Party members join the Party, require fieldwork in China and interviews with Party members and cadres. In the meantime, and while access is difficult due to a tightened political environment, analysing the official narrative and the “supplier side” of ideology allows to get a first understanding of the purpose of Party ideology that can form the basis of further research.

#### *Enlarging the theoretical lens*

In addition to opportunities for future research arising from the methodological limitations of this thesis, I also offer an opportunity to enlarge the field of China studies from a theoretical point of view. Social identity and self-categorisation theory can be applied to numerous other topics directly and indirectly related to the Party. To illustrate this explanatory potential, I point out two examples: factionalism and nationalism.

In my study of the CCP, I made the analytical choice of understanding the Party as one big and largely coherent organisation. In other words, I ignore the diversity within the Party itself and do not consider sub-groups and divergent interests and opinions within the Party. This is obviously not in line with the realities of the CCP. As the rich literature on factionalism testifies to (e.g. Nathan 1973; Tsou 1976; Pye 1980; Huang Jing 2000; Keller 2016), inner-Party politics is characterised by different personal and political ties and networks that represent different policy lines and interests. This means that there is a significant area of research that offers space for enlarging the analysis undertaken here.

Social identity theory as a multidisciplinary approach can provide a fresh approach to analysing these inner-Party dynamics. Because social identity and self-categorisation theory assume that individuals have a variety of identity elements, both individual and social, it is possible that individual Party members do not only hold a Party social identity that is offered to them by the Party seen as a largely coherent organisation. Additionally, it is also possible that they have additional social identity

elements that characterise them, for example, as members of a certain interest group within the Party or a particular faction. In other words, the diversity within the Party can also be reflected in and explained with social identity and self-categorisation theory. What is necessary here is to acknowledge the diversity of identity elements in individuals, to understand what these identity elements are and, most importantly, how they can be made salient. The analysis of social identities does not have to limit itself to an organisational meta-level, i.e. the Party understood as a largely coherent organisation. On the contrary, it offers the potential for opening the “black box” of the Party and for attempting to understand inner-Party group structures as well.

A second aspect at least indirectly related to the Party is the question of the Party’s relation with broader Chinese society and, in particular, the issue of nationalism. The Party has increasingly fostered nationalism as a form of legitimation strategy (S. Zhao 1998; 2005; Weatherley and Zhang 2017) and attempted to establish itself as the saviour of China (Schell and Delury 2013; Brown 2018b; Mühlhahn 2019). Similar to Anderson’s understanding of nationalism as a form of imagined communities (Anderson 1983), it is possible to analyse nationalism and the CCP’s deliberate fostering of it as a form of social identity construction beyond the limited realm of the Party. This analysis could focus on the contents of the national social identity as it is constructed by the Party, the triggers that stimulate it and make it salient and also the behaviour that results from this social identity. As these two examples show, social identity and self-categorisation theory can be broadly applied to other fields of research beyond Party ideology. As a theoretical approach so far underutilised in Chinese studies, it has the potential to bring fresh perspectives to numerous questions in this field of research.

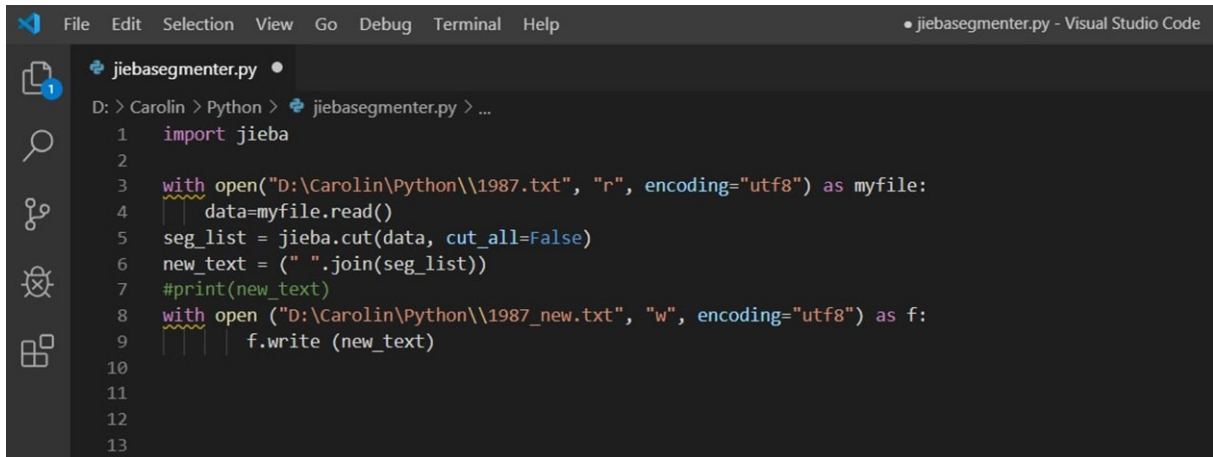


## Appendix I Stopword list

按; 按照; 俺; 俺们; 阿; 别; 别人; 别处; 别是; 别的; 别管; 别说; 不; 不仅; 不但; 不光; 不单; 不只; 不外乎; 不如; 不妨; 不尽; 不尽然; 不得; 不怕; 不惟; 不成; 不拘; 不料; 不是; 不比; 不然; 不特; 不独; 不管; 不至于; 不若; 不论; 不过; 不问; 比方; 比如; 比及; 比; 本身; 本着; 本地; 本人; 本; 巴巴; 巴; 并; 并且; 非; 彼; 彼时; 彼此; 便于; 把; 边; 鄙人; 罢了; 被; 般的; 此间; 此次; 此时; 此外; 此处; 此地; 此; 才; 才能; 朝; 朝着; 从; 从此; 从而; 除非; 除此之外; 除开; 除外; 除了; 除; 诚然; 诚如; 出来; 出于; 曾; 趁着; 趁; 处在; 乘; 冲; 等等; 等到; 等; 第; 当着; 当然; 当地; 当; 多; 多么; 多少; 对; 对于; 对待; 对方; 对比; 得; 得了; 打; 打从; 的; 的确; 的话; 但; 但凡; 但是; 大家; 大; 地; 待; 都; 到; 叮咚; 而言; 而是; 而已; 而外; 而后; 而况; 而且; 而; 尔尔; 尔后; 尔; 二来; 非独; 非特; 非徒; 非但; 否则; 反过来说; 反过来; 反而; 反之; 分别; 凡是; 凡; 个; 个别; 固然; 故; 故此; 故而; 果然; 果真; 各; 各个; 各位; 各种; 各自; 关于具体地说; 归齐; 归; 根据; 管; 赶; 跟; 过; 该; 给; 光是; 或者; 或曰; 或是; 或则; 或; 何; 何以; 何况; 何处; 何时; 还要; 还有; 还是; 还; 后者; 很; 换言之; 换句话说; 好; 后; 和; 即; 即令; 即使; 即便; 即如; 即或; 即若; 继而; 继后; 继之; 既然; 既是; 既往; 既; 尽管如此; 尽管; 尽; 就要; 就算; 就是说; 就是了; 就是; 就; 据; 据此; 接着; 经; 经过; 结果; 及; 及其; 及至; 加以; 加之; 例如; 介于; 几时; 几; 截至; 极了; 简言之; 竟而; 紧接着; 距; 较之; 较; 进而; 鉴于; 基于; 具体说来; 兼之; 借倏然; 今; 叫; 将; 可; 可以; 可是; 可见; 开始; 开外; 况且; 靠; 看; 来说; 来自; 来着; 来; 两者; 临; 类如; 论; 赖以; 连; 连同; 离; 莫若; 莫如; 莫不然; 假使; 假如; 假若; 某; 某个; 某些; 某某; 漫说; 没奈何; 每当; 每; 慢说; 冒; 哪个; 哪些; 哪儿; 哪天; 哪年; 哪怕; 哪样; 哪边; 哪里; 那里; 那边; 那般; 那样; 那时; 那儿; 那会儿; 那些; 那么样; 那么些; 那么; 那个; 那; 乃; 乃至; 乃至于; 宁肯; 宁愿; 宁可; 宁; 能; 能否; 你; 你们; 您; 拿; 难道说; 内; 哪; 凭借; 凭; 旁人; 譬如; 譬喻; 且; 且不说; 且说; 其; 其一; 其中; 其二; 其他; 其余; 其它; 其次; 前后; 前此; 前者; 起见; 起; 全部; 全体; 恰恰相反; 岂但; 却; 去; 若非; 若果; 若是; 若夫; 若; 另; 另一方面; 另外; 另悉; 如若; 如此; 如果; 如是; 如同; 如其; 如何; 如下; 如上所述; 如上; 如; 然则; 然后; 然而; 任; 任何; 任凭; 仍; 仍旧; 人家; 人们; 人; 让; 甚至于; 甚至; 甚而; 甚或; 甚么; 甚且; 什么; 什么样; 上; 上下; 虽说; 虽然; 虽则; 虽; 孰知; 孰料; 始而; 所; 所以; 所在; 所幸; 所有; 是; 是以; 是的; 设使; 设或; 设若; 谁; 谁人; 谁料; 谁知; 随着; 随时; 随后; 随; 顺着; 顺; 受到; 使得; 使; 似的; 尚且; 庶几; 庶乎; 时候; 省得; 说来; 首先; 倘; 倘使; 倘或; 倘然; 倘若; 同; 同时; 他; 他人; 他们; 她们; 她; 它们; 它; 替代; 替; 通过; 腾; 这里; 这边; 这般; 这次; 这样; 这时; 这就是说; 这儿; 这会儿; 这些; 这么点儿; 这么样; 这么些; 这么; 这个; 这一来; 这; 正是; 正巧; 正如; 正值; 万一; 为; 为了; 为什么; 为何; 为止; 为此; 为着; 无论; 无宁; 无; 我们; 我; 往; 望; 惟其; 唯有; 下; 向着; 向使; 向; 先不先; 相对而言; 许多; 像; 小; 些; 一; 一些; 一何; 一切; 一则; 一方面; 一旦; 一来; 一样; 一般; 一转眼; 由此可见; 由此; 由是; 由于; 由; 用来; 因而; 因着; 因此; 因了; 因为; 因; 要是; 要么; 要不然; 要不是; 要不; 要; 与; 与其; 与其说; 与否; 与此同时; 以; 以上; 以为; 以便; 以免; 以及; 以故; 以期; 以来; 以至; 以至于; 以致; 己; 已; 已矣; 有; 有些; 有关; 有及; 有时; 有的; 沿; 沿着; 于; 于是; 于是乎; 云云; 云尔; 依照; 依据; 依; 余外; 也罢; 也好; 也; 又及; 又; 抑或; 犹自; 犹且; 用; 越是; 只当; 只怕; 只是; 只有; 只消; 只要;

只限；再；再其次；再则；再有；再者；再者说；再说；自身；自打；自己；自家；自后；自各儿；自从；自个儿；自；怎样；怎奈；怎么样；怎么办；怎么；怎；至若；至今；至于；至；纵然；纵使；纵令；纵；之；之一；之所以；之类；着呢；着；眨眼；总而言之；总的说来；总的来说；总的来看；总之；在于；在下；在；诸；诸位；诸如；咱们；咱；作为；只；最；照着；照；直到；综上所述；贼死；逐步；遵照；遵循；针对；致；者；则甚；则；咳；哇；哈；哈哈；哉，哎；哎呀；哎哟；哎；哟；哦；哩；矣哉；矣乎；矣；焉；毋宁；欤；嘿；嘿；嘿；嘻；嘛；嘘；嘎登；嘎；暖；嗯；嗒；嗡嗡；嗡；喽；喔唷；喏；喂；啷当；啪达；啦；啥；啐；啊；唉；哼唷；哼；咧；咦；咚；咋；呼哧；呸；呵呵；呵；呢；呜呼；呜；呗；呕；呃；呀；吱；吧哒；吧；吗；吓；兮；儿；亦；了；乎；学习强国；责任编辑；来源；学习平台；新华社；习近平日志；年；月；日；，；。；《；》；（；）；；；？；中

## Appendix II Python Code jieba segmenter



```
File Edit Selection View Go Debug Terminal Help • jiebasegmenter.py - Visual Studio Code
jiebasegmenter.py
D: > Carolin > Python > jiebasegmenter.py > ...
1 import jieba
2
3 with open("D:\Carolin\Python\1987.txt", "r", encoding="utf8") as myfile:
4     data=myfile.read()
5     seg_list = jieba.cut(data, cut_all=False)
6     new_text = (" ".join(seg_list))
7     #print(new_text)
8     with open ("D:\Carolin\Python\1987_new.txt", "w", encoding="utf8") as f:
9         f.write (new_text)
10
11
12
13
```

## Appendix III Code book

Code	Definition	Coding example
<b>Problematic situation</b>	Problems as they are diagnosed by the Party separated by kinds of problems	
<i>Material corruption</i>	Prevalence of different forms of corruption among Party members and cadres; corruption harms the interests of the Party	<p>“Even in the light of certain results, we still have to clearly see: the phenomenon of corruption in some localities and departments has not been sufficiently limited and sometimes it is still quite severe. In some departments and localities, when investigating one case, a number of attached cases are exposed as well.” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 8)</p> <p>“Giving and receiving red envelopes and cash gifts does not only corrupt Party members and leading cadres as well as government employees and fosters the exchange of money for power, it also harms the image of the Party and the government and poisons societal atmosphere.” (Pan 01.04.2005 (2014), p. 25)</p>
<i>Ideological issues</i>	Damaging and incorrect ideological concepts persist in the Party	<p>“Spiritual pollution harms Party style, it harms societal atmosphere and it is a disaster for the country and the people. Purifying spiritual pollution is an important undertaking for ideological and political unity of our Party with the Central Committee.” (Zhongwen Chubanwu Fuwu Zhongxin 30.04.1984 (2014), p. 7)</p> <p>“Some leaders still have incorrect understandings and in some localities and departments the problem of ‘one soft hand and one strict hand’ has not yet been solved very well. This is a large obstruction to the work of building Party spirit and clean government and</p>

		anticorruption.” (Cao Q. 01.09.2001 (2014), p. 11)
<i>Economic harm</i>	Behaviour of Party members and cadres harms economic reform and development	<p>“Corruption destroys the normal economic system of society and it destroys the development of productive forces.” (Zhou Z. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“Corruption can turn the great renaissance of the Chinese people into an illusion. Corruption is the big enemy of socialist economic development. Corrupt elements only act in their own interest and use the power in their hands to obstruct the reform of the system of economic development and obstruct the rational flow of capital.” (Shao 2010, p. 35)</p>
<i>Societal climate</i>	Behaviour of Party members and cadres harms the overall societal climate	<p>“The problem of corruption degenerates cadres, dampens the relations between the Party and the masses, deteriorates the economic environment, poisons societal atmosphere and not only blocks the development of societal productive forces and influences the prospering of advanced culture, but also harms the basic interests of the largest part of the people.” (Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“The phenomenon of corruption seriously corrodes the thoughts of people, destroys societal atmosphere and goes in the opposite direction of developing advanced culture.” (Liu Fengfu 15.07.2003 (2014), p. 10)</p>
<i>Behaviour of family members</i>	Family members of Party members and cadres behaving incorrectly and abusing Party members’ and cadres’ power for personal	“The criminal behaviour of children of leading cadres, in particular of high leading cadres has a very strong influence, even though there are only a few of them. If we do not strictly handle this, it will damage the Party’s relations with the masses and tarnish the Party’s

	gain, thereby causing severe problems for the Party	reputation.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 18.05.1982 (2014), p. 2)  “In some localities, there is the problem of spouses, children and staff members of leading cadres abusing the authority and influence of these cadres to obtain private gain.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2004 (2014), p. 8)
<i>Organisational issues</i>	Breaking of organisational rules harms the Party, e.g. lack of compliance with democratic centralism and central directives, insufficient handling of cases of incorrect behaviour, breaking of organisational principles (e.g. mass line, Party's governing ability)	“Factionalism is still a major obstacle to rectifying the Party and its harmful impact should certainly not be underestimated.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.10.1984 (2014), p. 2)  “Currently in the implementation of disciplinary treatment, there are still some problems that deserve attention, for example: After a disciplinary decision was handed down, some <i>danweis</i> treat these as ordinary documents to pass around, or they replace the propagation among the entire Party meeting with just having it signed off by a leading cadre, or they put it aside and neglect it and basically have no method of implementation. After receiving a disciplinary decision, some units do not complete the handling of it within one month as required but they procrastinate and wait.” (Qian and Ye 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 23)
<b>Results of rectification</b>	Results/achievements of rectification in the eyes of the Party	“Under the correct leadership of the Central Committee, the struggle of building Party style and clean government and anticorruption incessantly produces new and clear results. The work of leading cadres being incorruptible and self-disciplined is constantly deepening, the awareness of self-discipline of Party members and

		<p>leading cadres is constantly strengthened and incorruptibility in political and administrative work has been further standardised. The capability to examine and handle cases of lack of discipline and illegal behaviour is becoming stronger. A number of influential large and important cases were investigated and the corrupt elements punished, the Party organisation was cleaned and the hearts of the Party and the people were stimulated.” (N.N. 15.01.2002 (2014), p. 5)</p> <p>“From the investigation and handing of corruption cases, the people can get the feeling that our Party is genuine and sincere, firm and reliable in fighting corruption and that it is conscientiously cleaning and innovating itself.” (Zhonggon fanfubai sifai yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p>
<p><b>Ideological core principles</b></p>	<p>Core ideational principles that are part of or related to the Party’s ideological system</p>	<p>“We have to take Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents as a guide and implement the spirit of the 15<sup>th</sup> Party Congress and the 5<sup>th</sup> plenum of the 15<sup>th</sup> Central Committee.” (Cao Q. 01.02.2001 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“The important thought of the Three Represents is the origin of Party building, the basis of the Party’s governing and the source of its strength. It is also the guidance of the construction of Party style, clean government and the fight against corruption.” (Liu Fengfu 15.07.2003 (2014), p. 10)</p>
<p><b>Core organisational principles</b></p>	<p>Core principles outlining how the Party organisation should function</p>	<p>“In the long process of revolution, construction and reform, we have to support and develop the fine traditions of theory meeting practice, maintaining</p>

		<p>close connection with the masses and criticism and self-criticism.” (N.N. 01.10.2001 (2014), p. 17)</p> <p>“Political discipline is the most important kind of discipline. It entails upholding the Party constitution and the rules on inner-Party political life, maintaining unity with the Central Committee and protect the unity of the Party, protect the authority of the Central Committee and the image of the Party and the government among the people.” (Chen P. 15.08.2004 (2014), p. 10)</p>
<p><b>Core political goals</b></p>	<p>Concrete goals to be achieved in the policy process</p>	<p>“Under the principle of taking planned economy as the core and the general situation of the country, we have to continue to delegate powers to localities and give enterprises encompassing rights to take their own decisions. We should continue to push forward the responsibility system for enterprises and the production responsibility system for agricultural business. Additionally, we should strengthen material exchange between urban and rural areas and the series of effective policies of prosperous rural and urban markets.” (Zhongguo Gongchandang Zhongyang Weiyuanhui and Zhonghuoa Renmin Gongheguo Guowuyuan 26.04.1982 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“The construction of the economy is the core task of the entire country and Party. The fight against corruption and the development of honest and clean behaviour are tasks surrounding this core task.” (J. Zhong 15.08.2001 (2014), p. 27)</p>
<p><b>Non-desired/incorrect behaviour</b></p>	<p>The Party’s perception of what constitutes non-desired or incorrect</p>	



	behaviour separated by kinds of behaviour	
<i>Loss of commitment</i>	Loss or lack of organisational spirit and commitment, loss of willingness to fight and suffer for the party, weakness, joys of material enjoyment	<p>“Many Party members and cadres have lost the fine tradition of arduous struggle.” (Wang C. 05.2003, p. 15)</p> <p>“There are some Party members and cadres who cannot stand up to challenges under the new circumstances. The evilness of extreme individualism is spreading, they are seeking pleasure, they are blinded by the lust for profit and they even abandon their communist ideals.” (N.N. 28.05.1982 (2014), p. 3)</p>
<i>Lack of compliance with rules</i>	Lack of compliance with and open breaking of formal rules	<p>“Infringing upon the Party constitution, particularly upon the general principles of the Party constitution, and engaging in capitalist liberalism means breaking the Party’s political discipline and is certainly not allowed.” (N.N. 30.01.1987 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“Engaging in capitalist liberalism contradicts the socialist system and advocates a capitalist system. It violates the Party’s constitution and the Party’s programme and it also violates the constitution of the state.” (N.N. 28.02.1987 (2014), p. 2)</p>
<i>Incorrect behaviour among family members</i>	Party members and cadres do not prevent family members from behaving incorrectly and using Party members’ and cadres’ powers for personal gain	<p>“Some children and spouses of leading cadres use the influence and power of these leading cadres for private purposes and personal gain. Leading cadres sometimes do not prevent this or even support it and are fully responsible for their own behaviour and the behaviour of their spouses and children.”(Zhao C. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“Party cadres ignore and connive at their spouses, children and staff members using their [the Party cadres’] authority and influence of their position to seek illegal benefits and use occasions of</p>

		marriage and funeral to accept money and accumulate wealth.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 42)
<i>Incorrect organisational behaviour</i>	Party members do not care for Party unity and do not comply with Party directives, laxity	<p>“The situation in all localities shows that the practice of fraud, superficial reports and only reporting good things and hiding bad things is widespread. It does not only appear in the army but also in Party and government departments and sometimes it is rather severe.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 15.12.1984 (2014), p. 3)</p> <p>“All kinds of people among Party members do not honour the Party’s principles, they damage Party style and they do not implement the Party’s policies.” (N.N. 15.01.1985 (2014), p. 6)</p>
<i>Incorrect ideological beliefs</i>	Not have correct beliefs, lack of interest in ideological matters and behaviour resulting from it	<p>“Cadres and Party members engaging in bureaucratism had their ideals shaken, their determination failed, they forgot that the Party wholeheartedly serves the people and the Party’s mass line, misconstruct the relationship between themselves and the masses and do not interact and consult with the masses. They are not willing to take responsibility for the people or to suffer for their interests.” (Zhang Y. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 21)</p> <p>“Some Party members and cadres have not established a genuine Marxist worldview. They are unable to bear the challenges of money, power and beauty.” (Shao 2010, p. 36)</p>
<i>Leadership issues</i>	Failing to be a good example, fail to engage in leadership, engage in slack behaviour	“Party members should not confuse themselves with the ordinary masses or mix up with elements that have fallen behind. One should put leadership spirit first and be a model for the entire

		<p>society.” (Yang H. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 12)</p> <p>“Some leaders produce superficial texts and slogans; some only speak empty words and do not dare to address facts; some only announce good news and not bad news; some cover up contradictions and problems.” (N.N. 15.12.2000 (2014), p. 14)</p>
<i>Incorrect economic behaviour</i>	<p>Abuse of public power for private gain, waste of state resources, engage in undesired economic activities</p>	<p>“Some Party members and cadres engage in waste, use public funds for banqueting or abuse public power for private gain and engage in unhealthy tendencies. Some have a dejected spirit, only seek enjoyment without offering tributes and some even walk on the path of outright criminal behaviour.” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 13)</p> <p>“At occasions like New Year’s Day, the spring festival, mid-autumn festival or national day, discipline inspection institutions actively target behaviour like using public money for feasting, for giving presents and for travel, using official cars for private purposes and other corrupt unhealthy tendencies.” (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lian Zheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p>
<b>Correct/ desired behaviour</b>	<p>The Party’s perception of what constitutes desired or correct behaviour separated by kinds of behaviour</p>	
<i>Role model and taking the lead</i>	<p>Be a model of good behaviour and lead others in following suit</p>	<p>“Every Party leader has to be an example in honouring Party discipline and the law, conduct oneself with dignity, examine his abilities, be alert of himself and encourage himself. What he requires his subordinates to do, he has to do himself first; what the masses should not do, he</p>

		<p>cannot do either.” (Cao Q. 01.08.2000 (2014), p. 6)</p> <p>“Every discipline inspection institution has to become a model of advancing the Party’s fine traditions and work style and of eagerly implementing these in the new era. Cadres engaged in disciplinary and petition work should advance these strong points and particularities even more and set a good example in this regard.” (Fu J. 15.09.2001 (2014), p. 6)</p>
<i>Free from material corruption</i>	No abuse of public power for private gain or waste of state resources	<p>“It is strictly forbidden to use public power for personal advantages and use public office for private gain.” (N.N. 01.03.2001 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“With regard to building Party spirit and clean government, leading cadres have to thoroughly implement the regulations of the Central Committee on incorruptibility and self-discipline and should particularly comply with the following demands: [...] exercise power according to law, not abuse one’s power or neglect one’s duties; be honest in performing one’s official duties, not receive any advantages that influence the fair exercise of public power; [...] and be fair and upright in dealing with personnel, do not appoint people by favouritism or practice graft [...].” (Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11)</p>
<i>Family</i>	Party members and cadres engage in education and supervision of family members	<p>“Cadres have to properly manage spouses, children and their staff members. They should not allow them to use their powers for private gain.”(Wu Guanzheng 15.01.2004 (2014), p. 11)</p> <p>“The family and social life of Party cadres has to be submitted to the inner-Party norms on political life. These demand that Party cadres pay attention to their</p>

		families, education among family members and household style [jiafeng 家风]. They should consciously purify their social contacts, surroundings and friends and forever protect their political qualities as members of the Communist Party.” (Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zhongguo lianzheng yanjiu zhongxin 2017)
<i>Serve the people</i>	Work for the interests and advantages of the people	<p>“We have to train Party members and leading cadres at the base level in villages that they have to be firm about the political standpoint and attitude that ‘among the interests of the people, there are no small affairs’. They have to support the mission of wholeheartedly serving the people, use their power for the people, connect their emotions to the people and seek the advantages of the people.” (N.N. 15.10.2005 (2014), p. 20)</p> <p>“From the beginning to the end, we have to persist in putting the people’s interests above everything. We have to closely rely on the people, wholeheartedly serve the people, honour the creative spirit of the people and extensively mobilise and organise that the people invest themselves in the great undertaking under the leadership of the Party.” (Xi 25.06.2013)</p>
<i>Unity</i>	Maintain the unity of the Party and comply with organisational hierarchies (democratic centralism)	<p>“We have to self-consciously unite our thoughts and behaviour with the strategic decisions of the Central Committee and have a clear-cut stance when talking about politics.” (Zhonggong zhongyang jilü jiancha weiyuanhui 24.01.2021)</p> <p>“Party members obey the Party group, the minority obeys the majority, the lower-level organisation obeys the higher-level organisation and all Party</p>

		organisations and Party members obey the National Party Congress and the Central Committee.” (Zhongguo gongchandang 24.10.2017)
<i>Bravery, hardship, struggle</i>	Be brave, willing to suffer hardships and put one’s own interests last	<p>“We have to train the spirit of sacrifice and tribute. In situations where national security and the wealth of the people are under threat, Party members should visibly take the lead and put themselves forward. They should go to the most dangerous and hardest posts and develop their real political characteristics of a Party member in the new era.” (Zhang G. 15.05.2005 (2014), p. 25)</p> <p>“From the beginning to the end, we have to maintain the spirit of struggle and revolution. We have to dare to struggle and be good at struggling in order to achieve our goals in an era of momentous social change.” (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019)</p>
<i>Ideology</i>	Have correct ideological beliefs and knowledge; work on fostering, improving and spreading such knowledge and beliefs	<p>“Party members and cadres should make study a political responsibility, a spiritual pursuit and a way of knowing and approaching the boundaries of thought and ideology. They should thoroughly study Marxism-Leninism, Mao-Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thought of the Three Represents. They should incessantly increase their political awareness and quality, strengthen their political discernment and immunity and improve the ideological basis of honest and clean self-discipline.” (Cao X. 01.03.2006 (2014), p. 27)</p> <p>“Party organisations and Party members have to firmly establish political consciousness, consciousness of the overall situation, consciousness of the core and consciousness of following</p>

		examples.” (Zhongguo Gonchangdang 01.10.2018)
<i>Do reform well</i>	Actively engage in implementing and advancing policies of economic reform	<p>“Under the new circumstances, the spirit of arduous struggle should be invested in the greater area of reform and opening up and the market economy.” (Zhang Y. 15.03.2002 (2014), p. 14)</p> <p>“In thought, support and make use of the scientific development concept containing the idea of faster and better development. Eagerly conform to the needs of the socialist market economy, surround and develop this major duty that rejuvenates the country ruled by the Party and implement scientific development and make it an important standard of judging the results of anticorruption work.” (Xia 01.01.2006 (2014), p. 3)</p>
<b>Institutions</b>	Involvement of institutions in rectification; tasks, procedures and functions of institutions	<p>“It is the prime responsibility of discipline inspection committees to protect the political discipline of the Party.” (N.N. 15.09.2001 (2014), p. 9)</p> <p>“The petitioning system is the party’s and government’s most direct and closest link and bridge with the people and the masses. It is a way of understanding the situation of the people and of relieving their worries and helping solve their problems. It is an important element of improving and strengthening work style.” (Liang Q. 01.01.2004 (2014), p. 9)</p>
<b>Solution to problematic situation</b>	Approaches that the Party believes will solve the problems that it diagnosed	“If on the one hand cases are investigated to eradicate incorrect tendencies and on the other hand ideological education work follows and Party members and cadres strictly honour Party discipline, the result of rectifying Party style can be stabilized.” (Han G. 15.02.1986 (2014), p. 28)

		<p>“In order to solve the corruption problem from the very basis, one has to go through deepening reform, strengthen the legal system, built and perfect the system of socialist market economy and solve it progressively, treat the disease by examining its cause and symptoms and tackle the problem in a comprehensive way.” (Li Changchun 15.10.1993 (2014), p. 3)</p>
<p><b>Reasons for problematic situation</b></p>	<p>Reasons why the Party believes the problems it diagnoses occur</p>	<p>“The main reason for this [undisciplined and illegal behaviour] is that on a thought level, there has been insufficient resolution of the problems of concepts of power, the masses and personal advantages.” (Cao K. 15.08.2001 (2014), p. 16)</p> <p>“The phenomenon of corruption is a phenomenon of the exploiting class and the exploiting system. Socialism builds a new system that is different from the exploiting system and abolishes the conditions for corruption. Because China is still in the early phase of socialism with development of a planned economy to a market economy, the level of development of the productive forces and the level of science and culture are not high yet, the legal system and all other systemic elements have not been perfected yet and remains of feudal thought from Chinese history still exist.” (Jiang Z. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 3)</p>
<p><b>Rectification methods/ measures</b></p>	<p>Methods of how to improve the diagnosed problem and deal with misbehaving Party members and cadres separated by method</p>	



<p><i>Support and rescue</i></p>	<p>Support and rescue erring cadres, take circumstances of the breach of discipline/ crime into consideration</p>	<p>“We also have to pay attention to the social, political and economic effects and the implementation of the law cannot be overly simplistic. We have to take into consideration the historic situation of the cadre, his past work situation and so on. All these factors have to be considered and thought about.” (N.N. 29.05.2002, p. 4)</p> <p>“We have to persist in punishing mistakes to prevent them from happening again and treat the disease to save the patient.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)</p>
<p><i>Education</i></p>	<p>Education, study, thought work, strengthen ideological beliefs</p>	<p>“When education is grabbed well and the rule of virtue strengthened, the ideological quality and spiritual level of cadres is increased. Engaging in education makes it possible to strongly be on guard against and decrease the occurrence of undisciplined behaviour.” (Chen P. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 10)</p> <p>“Regarding the problem of cadre education, Jiang Zemin in his speech made an important analysis. He pointed out that the basis of building the cadre corps is education. No matter whether the goal is increasing the quality of the cadre corps or whether it is being on guard with regard to corruption problems and stopping and rectifying incorrect tendencies, education as the first means has to be supported.” (Fu J. 01.04.2002 (2014), p. 6)</p>
<p><i>Investigation and punishment</i></p>	<p>Investigate and handle cases, mete out punishment for misbehaviour</p>	<p>“We have to maintain the work of investigating and handling cases. Investigating and handling cases of breaching discipline is the important responsibility of discipline inspection institutions. It is the policy to implement strictly governing the Party and the important mission of pushing forward the</p>

		<p>fight against corruption and advocating probity.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 47)</p> <p>“We have to maintain the situation of high pressure of punishment.” (Sun X. 2017)</p>
<i>Rely on organisational principles</i>	Hold high organisational principles and Party doctrines to deal with problems	<p>“To strengthen the work of building Party style and clean government and anticorruption in state-owned enterprises, we have to genuinely and sincerely mobilise and rely on the working masses and fully bring into play the function of workers’ representatives assemblies and union organisations.” (N.N. 15.10.2000 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“We have to insist on the Party’s unconditional leadership authority in the fight against corruption and ensure that the fight against corruption follows a correct political direction.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)</p>
<i>Criticism and self-criticism</i>	Criticism and self-criticism as a means of dealing with diagnosed problems	<p>“If it is discovered that a comrade has shortcomings or engages in dishonest behaviour, we have to point this out to him in time, engage in criticism and self-criticism and help him improve his behaviour.” (Li X. 15.08.2000 (2014), p. 26)</p> <p>“For average mistakes, we should apply criticism and self-criticism.” (Zhong J. 01.11.2001 (2014), p. 26)</p>
<i>Supervision</i>	Supervision of Party members and cadres	<p>“We have to earnestly implement the regulations of inner-Party supervision, strengthen the supervision and limitation of the exercise of power and ensure the correct use of power.” (N.N. 01.01.2006 (2014), p. 21)</p>

		<p>“Discipline inspection commissions are the institution with the specific responsibility of inner-Party supervision. It is an important power of managing and governing the Party.” (Sun X. 2017)</p>
<i>Role models</i>	<p>Build up and propagate positive and negative models, have leading cadres take the lead and show good behaviour</p>	<p>“We should select exemplary cases and publish them in a certain realm and in a timely manner in order to conduct warning education for Party members and cadres.” (Huang S. 01.03.2005 (2014), p. 2)</p> <p>“We should pay attention to using exemplary cases for warning education on anticorruption and clean government. This will enhance the function of getting to the roots of case investigations. It both effectively punishes corruption and also educates the largest part of Party members and cadres.” (Zhu B. 01.10.2005 (2014), p. 10)</p>
<i>Institutional hierarchy</i>	<p>Hierarchical control layer by layer downwards, leadership by higher organisations for rectification</p>	<p>“Party committees have to strengthen leadership, all concerned departments have to closely cooperate and they all have to jointly managed the large picture.” (Gan 15.06.1984 (2014), p. 22)</p> <p>“We have to raise understanding and enlarge the leadership strength of discipline inspection commissions in petition work.” (Fu J. 15.09.2001 (2014), p. 4)</p>
<b>Goal of rectification</b>	<p>Goals that the Party wants to reach with Party rectification, separated by different goals</p>	
<i>Strengthen organisational structures</i>	<p>Strengthen structures of command and supervision, strengthen compliance with central orders and</p>	<p>“We have to earnestly conduct supervision and investigation and thereby resolutely protect the authority of the centre.” (Wu Guanzheng 15.10.2004 (2014), p. 3)</p>

	democratic centralism, strengthen the Party and its governing ability	“The goal of the struggle against corruption is not only to punish a small minority of undisciplined people who were already suspected of breaking the law. The goal is even more to protect the vigour and vitality of the Party and forever protect its true qualities of political brightness.” (Wang C. 07.12.2017)
<i>Unity</i>	Preserve unity of the Party	<p>“In politics, thought and actions, we have to preserve a high level of unity with the Party Central Committee under comrade General Secretary Hu Jintao.” (He G. 2012, p. 8)</p> <p>“Under the leadership of Xi Jinping’s thought of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, we have to unite our willpower and actions and, united in action, strive forward.” (Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting 11.2019)</p>
<i>Ensure service for the people</i>	Service for the people, solve problems of the people and issues that they raise/ are opposed to, petition work	<p>“We have to protect the basic interests of the people and solve the problems that the people are most concerned about, most opposed to and that are most real for them. We have to build an effective system that robustly coordinates their benefits, offers room for expressing appeal, that mediates contradictions and guarantees their rights and benefits.” (Central Commission for Discipline Inspection 2007, p. 44)</p> <p>“We have to invest the greatest strength to solve the negative problem of corruption and ensure that the Party has a heart to heart relationship with the people, breathe with them and have a shared destiny.” (Zhonggon fanfubai sifai yanjiu zhongxin 2017)</p>

<p><i>Ensure smooth work and reform</i></p>	<p>Rectify Party work in order to ensure the smooth implementation of reform policies</p>	<p>“We have to hold on to the struggle against criminal activities in the economic sphere in order to guarantee the smooth implementation of reform.” (N.N. 30.10.1984 (2014), p. 15)</p> <p>“We have to adhere to the governing idea of taking people as the root in order to solve the problems and contradictions that influence the stability of reform and development.” (Xia 01.01.2006 (2014), p. 3)</p>
<p><i>Prevent material corruption</i></p>	<p>Prevent, investigate and punish material corruption</p>	<p>“We have to firmly investigate the cases of abuse of power, corruption and bribery, of decay and of negligence in work occurring in leading institutions and among leading cadres. We have to seriously investigate the cases of collaboration of cadres and businesspeople, of the trade of power and money and of severely harming the people’s interests. From beginning to end we have to maintain the strength and power of punishing corruption.” (He Y. 2008, p. 22)</p> <p>“We have to accomplish that the vigour of punishing corruption does not weaken and that the zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption does not change. We have to resolutely fight and win the righteous struggle against corruption.” (Sun X. 2017)</p>
<p><i>Protect the ideological line</i></p>	<p>Foster correct ideological beliefs, ensure behaviour to allow implementation of ideological goals</p>	<p>“We have to push leading cadres to constantly reform their thoughts and establish a scientific worldview, outlook on life and value system. We have to support their purity in ideology and virtue and raise their ability to fight corruption and forestall moral degeneration.” (Zhou Z. 01.10.2000 (2014), p. 4)</p>

		<p>“In 2013, when we conducted collective studies for the eleventh time, we scheduled the study topic of the principles and methods of historic materialism. In these two study sessions, the goal was to complete and integrate our understanding of Marxist philosophy.” (Xi 23.01.2015)</p>
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## Appendix IV Selection of primary source material

### Qualitative Analysis

Phase	Source material	Selection criteria	Length of the corpus
1978 - 2006	Inner-Party material from NLA collection (mainly Party journal <i>Party Style and Party Discipline (Dangfeng Yu Dangji 党风与党纪)</i> and <i>Selected Restricted Documents (Neican Xuanbian 内参选编)</i> )	Documents gathered from print archives based on tables of contents	869 articles for the entire time period between 1978 and 2006 (circa 3000 pages)
2006 – 2019	Articles from the Party magazines <i>Qiushi (求是 Seeking Truth)</i> and <i>Hongqi Wengao (红旗文稿 Red Flag)</i>	Documents gathered from online archive using search terms <i>fubai (腐败 corruption)</i> and <i>dangji (党纪 Party discipline)</i> as appearing in headlines	28 articles, 82 pages
2012 –	Confession documents: Website CCDI; confession sequences in TV series <i>Always on the Road (Yongyuan zai lushing 永远在路上)</i> and <i>To Forge Iron, One must be Strong (Datie hai xu zishen ying 打铁还需自身硬)</i> (transcribed)		Circa 86 minutes of video footage resulting in 18 pages of transcribed text; 19 written confessions, in total 21 pages
2012 – 2021	Reports of study meetings under Xi Jinping	Documents with titles coded as related to ideology	14 documents, 30 pages
2012 –	Current Party regulations	Snowball sampling	7 documents, 93 pages

Quantitative analysis

*Selected documents for quantitative analysis*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Source material</b>	<b>Selection criteria</b>	<b>Length of the corpus</b>
2012 -	<i>Chanhui yu jingshi</i> (忏悔与警示 Confessions and warning) (document category CCDI website)	All documents	339 articles, in total 988 pages
2012 -	<i>Xuexi Qiangguo</i> (学习强国 Study a strong country) documents	All documents with keywords <i>fubai</i> (腐败 corruption) and <i>dangji</i> (党纪 Party discipline) (via search function of website)	785 articles, in total 2620 pages
09.1997 – 01.2019	CCDI work reports (CCDI website)	All work reports	66 documents, 336 pages
1978 - 1997	Work reports and speeches at CCDI meetings (among documents from NLA archives)	All available documents	10 articles (see table below for full overview of these documents)
1979 - 1997	CCDI publications in online archive of Chinese government documents (Oripobe)	All available documents in the sub-category CCDI in the online archive for the period in question	25 documents, 43 pages
1979 – 1997	CCDI publications in online archive of CCP documents (Oripobe)	All documents with search terms 纪律检查委员会 or 中央纪委 in their title	8 documents, 20 pages
1978 – 1997	CC documents from online archive of CCP documents (Oripobe)	All documents with search terms 腐败 and 党纪 (appearing in full text)	275 documents, 1526 pages



*Work reports and speeches at CCDI meetings in NLA archival documents for quantitative analysis*

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
中央纪律检查委员会向党的第十二次全国代表大会的工作报告	20.09.1982
中国共产党中央纪律检查委员会第一次全体会议公报	20.09.1982
中共中央纪律检查委员会第四次全体会议公报	30.11.1984
中国共产党中央纪律检查委员会第六次全体会议公报	15.10.1985
中共中央纪律检查委员会第八次全体会议公报	30.10.1986
中国共产党中央纪律检查委员会第四次全体会议公报	30.07.1989
陈云同志在中央纪律检查委员会第一次全体会议上的讲话	20.09.1982
陈云通同志在中央纪律检查委员会第六次全体会议上的讲话	15.10.1985
王鹤寿同志在中央纪律检查委员会第六次全体会议上的讲话	15.10.1985
陈云同志在见中央纪律检查委员会时的讲话	30.10.1986

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