Staging Repentance: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Framing of Mediated Confessions During the Chinese Cultural Revolution and Xi's First Five-year Term

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Abstract

Since Xi Jinping became the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, he has tightened ideological control on many fronts. Many refer to Xi as the 'new Mao' and some even claim that he creates a sense of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). This thesis investigates to what extent the official Chinese media has contributed to the formation of such sentiment through the under-studied area of mediated confessions. I argue that the latest resurgence of mediated confessions is an indication of regression towards Maoist social control. Through Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis, I analyse confession-related news from the *People's Daily* from 1966 to 1976, alongside three news clips (2014-2016) and an Anti-corruption Campaign documentary (2016) broadcast on China Central Television. The analysis reveals that through selectively and repeatedly appealing to traditional cultural values and adapting to the political agenda of particular Party leaders, the official media framing of both periods makes the individual, not the CCP, responsible for the pressing social issues. Xi not only revives the practice of Mao's self-criticism model, but also revamps the framing, which invokes the memory of the Cultural Revolution. The framing is often obsessed with individual leadership, linking Xi directly to Mao through certain historiography, and reinforces the distinction between the powerful CCP and the ordinary people while paying lip-service to their potential inter-dependence. The thesis contributes to understanding the revamped Party disciplinary technique. For those who know the cruel nature of mediated confessions, the practice sends a clear message of intimidation to those who are ready to publicly disagree with the CCP. For those who are oblivious to it, mediated confessions blend into ordinary crime news, which has been part of the CCP's effort to build a socialist society of 'rule of law with Chinese characteristics'.

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Abbreviations

CCP – Chinese Communist Party

CCRG – Central Cultural Revolution Group

CCTV – China Central Television

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CMP – China Media Project

CPD – Central Propaganda Department

CYL – Communist Youth League

GLF – Great Leap Forward

KMT – Kuomintang; the Nationalist Party

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NPC – National People’s Congress

PLA - People's Liberation Army

PRC – People’s Republic of China

SOE - Stated Owned Enterprises

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

Since Xi Jinping became the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, there have been debates about the existence of a sense of revival of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (Phillips, 2015). The Cultural Revolution unleashed by Chairman Mao Zedong was a social-political movement that caused huge damage to Chinese society in the name of ideological purification. The political and social chaos paralysed the government bureaucracy; ordinary people rebelled against the old form of hierarchy and attacked each other in the name of Mao and revolution. The country descended to near anarchy at one point. Thus, it seems odd to say that China today resembles anything from the chaotic decade. China is no longer struggling to feed its own population and has become the second largest economy in the World (*The World Bank In China: Overview*, 2019). The Chinese people, in spite of the current political restrictions, are freer to think and live the way they want compared to Mao's time. So, in what sense is there a sense of the Cultural Revolution revival? This thesis focuses on some of the most crucial elements that can invoke the memory of the decade, such as the personal power of political leaders and the social and political controls placed over the population. More specifically, through the lens of media, one may easily notice that President Xi's personality cult, concentration of power and style of mobilisation are reminiscent of Mao during the Cultural Revolution. Thus, it is highly insightful to study the role of the official media in China in promoting the CCP's legitimacy, maintaining social stability and gathering support for Xi.

Xi has amassed huge personal power and tightened ideological control across many fronts (Shirk, 2008; Minzner, 2015). He revamps a combination of discourses - Confucianism, socialist core values and national pride - in the legitimisation of himself and the CCP. However, meanwhile, there are recognisable Maoist practices of communication and governance that are in use today. Thus, there has been much academic debate in the study of Chinese politics on the degree to which Xi can be called the 'new Mao' (Lam, 2012; Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016; Buckley, 2017; Phillips, 2017; Sorace *et al.*, 2019). Most recently, some people have begun to believe China is going through an outright Maoist revival (Blanchette, 2019). However, more China observers tend to agree that Xi does not intend to make a full Maoist revival but only wishes to

rebuild legitimacy for the Party through exploiting some Maoist strategies, such as creating a personality cult, making ideological appeals and garnering support from the PLA (Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016; Zhao, 2016b; MacFarquhar, 2018; Minzner, 2018). Some have observed a recent rise in the number of television confessions (Fiskesjö, 2017; Gardner, 2018; Minzner, 2018; Safeguard Defenders, 2018). They often take the form of a news clip or a part of TV programmes in which oneself admits that he or she has done something wrong and now sincerely apologises for the mistake. Criticism and self-criticism, which I argue is the predecessor of the latest mediated confessions, used to be a weapon to promote the Cultural Revolution under Mao and has become one of the common ways to showcase the Party's domination under Xi. Therefore, it is instructive to study the resurgence of mediated confessions at this time when there is a sense of the Cultural Revolution revival.

1.1.1 Research questions

This thesis investigates:

To what extent is the framing of mediated confessions from Chinese official media in Xi's era a revival of that during Mao's Cultural Revolution?

Sub-question 1: how were the mediated confessions framed in the People's Daily *during the Cultural Revolution?*

Sub-question 2: how were the mediated confessions framed on television during Xi's first five-year term?

Sub-question 3: what are the ideological implications, if any, of the similarities and changes of the framing of mediated confessions between the two periods?

As the research questions show, I decide to examine the issue of the revival of a sense of the Cultural Revolution from the unique perspective of mediated confessions. As I will show in the literature review, mediated confessions are not an invention of Xi's era. Confession, or self-criticism, has been an intra-Party disciplinary technique since the early days of the CCP. It evolved into an iconic mass mobilisation tool and spread outside the Party during the Cultural Revolution (Dittmer, 1973). The post-1976 technocratic reform era saw the political use of self-criticism gradually fading out of ordinary people's daily lives.

Hence, the recent reappearance of confessions on TV, especially those featuring non-Party members, shows that the CCP once again regards this technique as being very useful in tackling the challenges that the Party is facing today.

1.1.2 Importance

Researching criticism and self-criticism in the Cultural Revolution and its contemporary version in Xi's era is important for three reasons. Firstly, mediated confessions remain an under-studied area both theoretically and empirically, considering the recent disturbing surge in their number and detrimental impact on confessants (Dahlin, 2018; Gardner, 2018). Mediated confessions have returned under a new particularly powerful Party leader and migrated onto fast-and-wide transmuting television and internet, yet most of the relevant literature still dwells on the practice of criticism and self-criticism from the 1950s. Gardner (2018) rightly argues that if the issue remains obscure, it carries the risk that mediated confessions are reported by media and received by the audience, both inside and outside China, at face value. Therefore, the first goal of my thesis is to draw more academic attention to the issue of mediated confessions in Xi's China through showcasing a few examples of how manipulative they can be under a seemingly harmless, or even righteous, surface.

Secondly, the thesis provides a glimpse into the intricate process of Mao's and Xi's ideological predilection. It is obvious that certain people, thoughts and terminologies have appeared more frequently today in the official documents and rhetoric. This is important because between language and society is a dialectic relationship: both shape and are shaped by each other (Fairclough, 2001). The dialectical relationship means that through a close examination of the discourse of mediated confessions, the thesis can show the specific social and political context that gives rise to the confession discourses. It can also demonstrate how the discourse of mediated confessions, in turn, shapes the social and political norms according to the Party's expectation.

The third reason is that understanding mediated confessions and the timing of the resurgence can establish a more nuanced understanding of the CCP's promotion of certain Chinese tradition. As the analysis will show, 'tradition' is an intricate part of the framing of mediated confessions. Such 'tradition'– seemingly constant and everlasting – is often far from a mere set of fixed neutral practices. Its pervasiveness and taken-for-granted nature means that in this day and age, it is

potentially subtler but more effective to get the message across than blasting political slogans at the public. As a result, it is harder to detect or resist, and thus deserves more attention.

For the rest of this chapter, I present a brief history of the Cultural Revolution as well as an overview of Xi's China today. I highlight the 'political-elite' approach to the history of the Cultural Revolution. This is due to my focus on the Chinese official media framing: naturally, political elites play an indispensable role in shaping the official media discourses, especially considering the role of Mao, his personality cult and rhetoric. Similar things apply to Xi as well. I also highlight the historical background of criticism and self-criticism before and during the Cultural Revolution. I sketch its evolutionary trajectory from an intra-Party disciplinary technique to a mass movement involving the whole society in the heydays of the chaotic decade. Almost half a century after the end of Mao's last revolution, it becomes increasingly difficult to talk about the decade openly. Meanwhile, in the wake of the rise of the New Left and the left-wing populism as a result of the unbalanced economic development, it is almost impossible to speak of equality without invoking the memory of Mao. It is against this social background that I end this chapter with a brief review of the televised confessions that Xi's era has witnessed.

In Chapter 2, I explain the Chinese media system in which mediated confessions are produced. Since the early days of the CCP, the core of the official media has been the so-called 'Party Principle', meaning the top task for the media is to serve the interest of the Party. Unsurprisingly, during the Cultural Revolution, official media such as the *People's Daily* were eventually in the firm control of Mao and the Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG), a radical group established in May 1966. The group had the mandate of Mao, replaced the Politburo Standing Committee and made the most important political decisions for a period of time (Dikötter, 2016). After an unsuccessful but exciting experiment with a more liberal style of journalism in the 1980s, one now finds a hybrid media system in China today. It means that both Party control and market forces are at work. However, I argue that, without negating the marketisation of the official media for the past two decades, a fundamentally unchanged political structure in China means a fundamentally unchanged purpose of the official Chinese media – to serve the Party. Despite the reality that the information monopoly of the CCP

has been irreversibly undermined by the economic reform, the notion that media should be at the service of the CCP still holds true, even more so since Xi ascended to the Party General Secretary.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the theoretical and methodological approach of the thesis. Taking into consideration the media system in China analysed in Chapter 2, I ground the thesis in the theoretical foundation of media framing theory. It underlines what has been made salient on purpose for the audience by the official media. I apply framing theory in a manner that emphasises the relatively stable cultural elements that are particularly relevant to Chinese culture and the influence of the CCP. I apply Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the way in which mediated confessions are framed to maintain the Party's rule. CDA explores the role of language in political struggles, inequality and domination (Breeze, 2011: 495). Such analysis can demonstrate the relationship between discourses and social orders. I conclude the chapter with a detailed account of the rationale behind and the process of data selection.

Chapter 4 begins the inquiry into the data mentioned in the previous chapter. For both Chapter 4 and 5, I lay out the same general structure of analysis as follows: textual, interpretive, explanatory, and a final discussion of ideological implications – how meaning is produced in the service of power. I analyse the framing process, from the linguistic level of wording and grammars to the production and interpretation of the confession news, then eventually to the active utilisation of cultural and political norms of the time. I select eight articles from the Cultural Revolution and explain how the relationship between confessants and confessors, confessants and Mao, and the masses and the enemies were carefully framed in this chapter. I conclude that the framing highlighted the role of traditional family values that were at play at the national level in the realm of political discourse, despite the CCP's high-profile crackdown on 'tradition' at the time. The use of the Dehumanisation Discourse and the healing metaphor constructed a clear hatred towards the enemies while allowing the CCP to maintain a façade of leniency. The reasoning device of the framing underlined individuals' subjective attitude and the lack of willpower as the cause of a confessant's political mistakes. The nature of the confessions mostly resembled

the confession towards deity rather than peers, confirming Mao's unmatched position during the Cultural Revolution.

After examining the historical data, in Chapter 5, I explore the contemporary mediated confessions selected from Xi's first five-year term. Xi's era has seen a transformation of the format of mediated confessions. They have largely migrated from print newspapers to the more widely and faster disseminated television programmes. In this chapter, I analyse 3 news clips and a documentary about Xi's anti-corruption campaign. The new era also brings new discourses which are more relevant to Xi's political agenda, such as the 'Rule of Law' and the National Security Discourses. However, certain discourses which could be found during the Cultural Revolution remain relevant today, such as the Family Values Discourse. The modern-day TV confessions of the non-Party cadres reveal the banality of mediated confessions, which blends into ordinary crimes news. Together, they feed into Xi's agenda of building a society of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics while sending chilling intimidation to those who realise the orchestrated nature of TV confessions. For the fallen Party cadre confessants, their treatment is often unclear to the public. Their TV confession is a showcase of the tight CCP control and total domination.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter. I take together the results from both Chapter 4 and 5 and revisit the research question that is posed here. I identify two confession discourses that have been used both during the Cultural Revolution, both of which relate to the relatively stable culture existing in both Mao's and Xi's China. Meanwhile, the changed discourses are linked to the different political agenda of the Party leaders. However, both leaders put enormous emphasis on blaming the individual subjective thoughts and attitudes as the root of the confessants' mistakes. The continuity in the practice and the framing shows that the CCP, despite decades of reform, the core Party Principle remains, and it has been further strengthened in Xi's era. It also shows that the CCP has been proficient in utilising the traditional cultural and moral values and the media for its legitimation and motivational purposes. Meanwhile, the change in both the confession technique and the framing demonstrate the CCP's adaptability to the social and technological changes. Taken together, the continuity and change leads me to the conclusion that, through the examination of the framing of confession news articles in the *People's Daily* during the Cultural Revolution and news clips

and anti-corruption campaign documentary in Xi's first five-year term, the thesis reveals that culture, law and moral values are often so deeply rooted that they are taken-for-granted. As a result, these elements constitute a primary form of social control. Apart from looking back at what I have analysed in the thesis, I also look beyond Xi's first five-year team. His continuation of power accumulation means that it is likely that the number of mediated confessions will keep growing. We are likely to continue to see media framing supporting the Party agenda in the name of tradition, discipline, law and order. I call for more academic attention on this topic as well as on audience-oriented research to shed light on the actual impact of mediated confessions on the general public. I end the thesis with a critical self-reflection, clarifying how my personal experience may have influenced the way that I interpret the framing of mediated confessions in Xi's era of political regression.

As stated earlier, the rest of this chapter is divided into two parts: in the first part, I briefly examine the history of the Cultural Revolution and underline the major events in the movement. The thesis adopts the elite-focused approach to the history of the Cultural Revolution. It pays particular attention to three characteristics – Mao's personality cult, the ritual of criticism and confession and the Cultural Revolution Rhetoric - in the role of legitimising and promoting the Cultural Revolution. The literature review summarises the inception, the rise and the eventual apex of Mao's personality cult. It highlights the importance of a leader's personality in the psyche of the CCP which, as I will later show, still has profound implications in China today. The review then delves into the practice of criticism and self-criticism and provides a roadmap of its transformation from an intra-Party disciplinary tool to a mass campaign strategy. In the second part, I review the important relevant political changes after the Cultural Revolution that are most relevant to Xi's era. The ever-increasing wealth gap and worsening environment created by three decades of economic development after the Cultural Revolution prompted the appearance of the New Left in China. They profoundly worry about the market economy and advocate for a fairer and environmentally friendlier society. However, the link to the Left means that their appeal often inadvertently touches the over-sensitive memory of Mao and his campaigns, including the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, an egalitarian society is not the only topic making a return to the political discussion which bears the mark of

Mao's era. I agree with some scholars that mediated confessions have also made a comeback in Xi's first five-year term and argue that there is a lack of academic attention on the recent phenomenon of the resurgent of mediated confessions.

1.2 The Cultural Revolution

As much as people are interested in predicting the future of China, a historical perspective is often very crucial in understanding what we are facing right now and what we may face in the future (Meng, 2018). The purpose of this section is to chart the history of the Cultural Revolution and the spread of criticism and self-criticism outside the CCP. I highlight the cultural-social-political background that was indispensable in understanding the framing of mediated confessions in the 1960s and the 1970s. Knowing the practice as well as the conditions of its occurrence provides a basic framework for the analysis and the comparison in the later chapters. This section begins with an overview of the important historical events during the Cultural Revolution through a 'default' route: focusing on the political elites instead of the more recently developed grassroots approach. Next, adopting the elite-focused approach, I pay attention to two characteristics in particular – Mao's personality cult and the time-and-space specific cultural background. The two characteristics have lasting implications in China. Lastly, I examine the ritual of criticism and self-criticism, track its evolution as the CCP expanding its control over China and discuss its role in legitimising and promoting the Cultural Revolution.

1.2.1 A Brief History of the Cultural Revolution

To understand the historical condition of the appearance of mediated confessions, it is necessary to study the period of the Cultural Revolution. This section provides a brief review of the history of the volatile decade from 1966 to 1976 in China. This introduction is not a comprehensive historical account of the event. Rather, the aim is to provide a general chronology of the decade and underline the uncertainty and the danger confronting almost everyone. It sets the scene for understanding the criticism and self-criticism at the time. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, commonly known as the Cultural Revolution, was a period of social, political and cultural chaos in China. It began with a political coup purging the Beijing leadership and ended with a military coup against the so-called 'Gang of Four' (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: 450). The movement consisted of a series of mass campaigns initiated by Mao, but

mostly supervised by the radicals from the CCRG (Lieberthal, 1995: 190). It aimed to not only remove certain political elites but also destroy the whole bureaucratic system modelled on the USSR (Walder, 2015: 82). 'Constant struggle' against cultural elites, intellectuals, politicians, students and different factions was at the core of the Cultural Revolution.

In the name of ideological purification, Mao encouraged young students in schools and universities to smash the 'Four Olds' – old culture, old ideas, old habits and old customs. The idea of what constituted 'Four Olds' and how they should be smashed was vague. Nonetheless, schools were shut and classes were suspended. Violence broke out against teachers, administers and 'counterrevolutionary students' as they were labelled the representatives of the old bureaucracy in schools and universities. In response to the spread of violence, then Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi attempted to reign in the radicals through the work teams which were dispatched to universities and schools. Dispatching work teams was a routine practice to assist the function of local Party organs during mass campaigns (Schram, 1963). However, the students who were under Mao's encouragement to have rebellious spirit clashed sharply with the work teams in this case. The work teams which were often full of undereducated cadres with a peasant background had few ideas about how to deal with issues in educational institutions (Dittmer, 1974).

Despite the resistance from the students against the work team, the upheaval only started spiralling out of control after the Eighth Central Committee 11th Plenary Session in August 1966 in which Mao expressed his dissatisfaction with the work teams' obstruction of the revolutionary students. He further implied that the enemies who followed the capitalist road were among not only the bourgeois intellectuals but also the CCP itself (Thurston, 1987: xvi). As a result, Mao appealed to the students in Beijing – the Red Guards – to 'smash the Headquarters'. The direct result was almost anarchy. Local authorities did not dare to stop the Red Guards, who were blessed by Mao's command. Students stormed the homes of citizens and foreign embassies alike in Beijing. Some Red Guards from various provinces also took the chance of free travel to 'exchange revolution experiences' and visit the capital and other revolutionary holy places such as Ruijin, Zunyi, Yan'an and Mao's birthplace, Shaoshan (Leese, 2011:138).

The ‘exchange of experiences’ spread the campaign of smashing the Four Olds and the growing personality cult of Mao to the rest of China.

By October 1966, the focus of the Cultural Revolution had focused on revealing the ‘power holders within the Party taking the capitalist road’ (Leese, 2011:143). That is to say, the target for struggle became the Party elites. Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping were criticised for suppressing the revolutionary masses and many cadres of different ranks also became the targets of criticism. As a result, the Red Guards and many work units split into different factions, supporting different cadres and fighting each other fiercely. Some of them even stole weapons from the PLA to crush their enemies (Dikötter, 2016: 148). Consequently, the PLA, headed by Lin Biao, had to intervene in the summer of 1967. However, it only brought the militarization of society and more retaliatory purges. Another campaign ensued a year later and spread the struggle to more people. The ‘Cleansing the Class Ranks’ campaign in 1968 aimed to get rid of ‘the enemies’ in society. This vague but violent campaign meant more retaliation and struggle, which saw the suicide rate rocket to the point that Xie Fuzhi, Minister of Public Security, had to suspend the campaign for a week in order to ‘quell the wind of suicide’ (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006: 256). At the same time, the Red Guards were disbanded and roughly a third of them (five to six million) were rusticated between 1968 and 1970. The number had doubled by 1975 and eventually rose to 17 million by 1980 (Bonnin, 2013). Educated urban adults suffered a similar fate, as they were sent to the countryside for hard labour in the name of ‘political re-education’.

Despite the government withholding the news of Lin Biao’s death and alleged betrayal for two months, his mysterious sudden death on 13 September 1971 meant that he and his associates eventually became the target of a new round of attacks. Some suspected that Lin had planned a coup against Mao but failed, which forced him and his family to escape to the Soviet Union by air (Hsu, 1983: 718; Cook, 2016). However, the flight crashed in Outer Mongolia, killing everyone on board. What really happened remains unclear to this day (Gentz, 2018). At that point, the country was on the brink of collapse. Mao’s health was deteriorating, and he had to summon back the purged Deng to work with Premier Zhou Enlai to stabilise the country. However, as Zhou’s health also declined, the ‘Gang of Four’ – Wang Wenhong, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Mao’s

then-wife Jiang Qing - launched another round of campaigns against Deng in the name of cutting 'the tails of the capitalism'.

The final moment of the Cultural Revolution was surprisingly bloodless. One month after Mao's death in September 1976, the ten-year of chaotic Cultural Revolution ended with a quiet coup removing the Gang of Four organized by Mao's then successor Hua Guofeng and a group of CCP senior military commanders (Foster, 1992; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006:445). The Gang of Four was arrested and put on trial. They were blamed for all the destruction during the Cultural Revolution and misleading Mao to make the wrong policy decisions. Hence, the decade of the Cultural Revolution was a series of physical and psychological struggles and retaliation in which almost nobody was safe and unaffected.

1.2.2 A 'Political Elite'- focused approach

There are two main ways to approach the history of the Cultural Revolution: a top-down 'political elite'-focused approach (Dittmer, 1974; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006; Dikötter, 2016; Spence, 2016) and a bottom-up 'the people'-focused approach (Yang, 1988; Wang, 2003). The brief review of the Cultural Revolution above is political-elite focused in that the review reads the situation through certain spearhead figures within the CCP. The assumption was that due to their leading roles and close involvement, such figures were the driving force behind the twists and turns in many campaigns. The top-down interpretation focuses on the top CCP leaders, such as Mao and other members of the CCRG, in pushing forward and changing the direction of the mass campaigns at that time.

By contrast, the bottom-up 'the people' – centred approach looks at the same period through the lens of the people. These tend to be memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of ordinary people[1], brought to light by families, friends, and

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[1] 'Ordinary people' here refers to a specific group of people. The authors of those publications refer to themselves as 'ordinary people'. However, the very fact that they are able to publish books recording their experience in the Cultural Revolution means that they are not the same kind of 'ordinary people' as those who have no way to recount their experience. The authors tend to be cultural social elites or those who eventually became elites after the Cultural Revolution. Most of the other kind of the ordinary people remained silent in public about their experience. One notable exception is Wang Youqin's *Victims of the Cultural Revolution* (2004). The stories in the book include some from people she knew personally as well as some from complete strangers to her. Their families and friends got in touch with Wang after learning about her project of documenting the life of 'ordinary people' during the chaotic decade, especially

in a few cases strangers (Wang, 2003). This approach argues that the top-down perspective neglects the experience and role of millions of people, assuming they were all powerless. Therefore, this is more than a perspective of the 'victims' who suffered both physically and mentally during the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, it shows the active resistance from the 'victims' (Cheng, 1986; Yang, 1988; Chang, 1991; Yang, 1997). On the other hand, the approach shows that the concept of the 'victim' can be problematic. In his study of the masses, Qian (2012) explains that 'victims' is hardly a neutral term. One group of 'victims' was sometimes the oppressors of another group of 'victims' and they exchanged retaliation when the opportunity came. Besides, grassroots sources have always been an alternative to the official account to expose the possible strategically omitted truth by the CCP (Thurston, 1987; Bonnin, 2013; Wu, 2014). After all, Mao hoped to seek the opinion of the masses directly without the hindrance of bureaucracy. Mao's expectation of how the Cultural Revolution would unfold was a bottom-up revolution and the dictatorship of the masses (Qian, 2012).

I use the elite-focused perspective because the focus of the thesis is the official framing. It examines the discourse produced by the CCP rather than its reception by the individual audience. The elite-focused top-down interpretation has dominated the academic discussion of the Cultural Revolution. It follows the logic that China is an authoritarian country, hence the ruling echelons of the CCP control the lives of ordinary Chinese people. However, this choice is not to negate the importance of the bottom-up perspective, but a result of taking into consideration of the CCP's obsession with Mao and the Party's usual emphasis on leadership in general. Some scholars, examining the Cultural Revolution from the CCP leaders' perspective, do not necessarily place specific emphasis on single individuals. Instead, they view the top CCP as a group and present the unfolding of the Cultural Revolution from their perspective (MacFarquhar, 1974; Esherick *et al.*, 2006; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006; Dikötter, 2016). The top leaders are the thread of the unfolding history. Others choose to focus on specific figures. 'Mao' was undoubtedly at the top of the list. As early as the 1930s, American journalist Edgar Snow's interview with Mao, collected in his book *Red Star Over China* (1937), provided the world with a glimpse of the Chinese Communist

those who had no resources to make their own stories known. The details of their life stories vary depending on how much is remembered by their respective families or friends.

leader. Mao's role in pushing forward the Cultural Revolution has been widely studied (Leese, 2011). Some scholars investigate Mao's personality and ambitions in the unfolding of the Cultural Revolution. The controversial work of Jung Chang and Jon Halliday (2005) is highly critical of Mao's personality, portraying him as a cunning demon. Some research conducted in Chinese places a huge emphasis on the writing of Mao. The work of Qian (2014) analyses Mao's thoughts and writings during the Cultural Revolution in hoping to make sense of the campaigns by examining the dynamic between Mao and the masses. When studying the Cultural Revolution, Mao was undoubtedly the unavoidable figure.

The political elite could, in reality, be either the winners or the losers of the political struggle. Some scholars examine the 'culprits' such as Mao's wife Jiang Qing, or the biggest 'victim' such as Liu Shaoqi. The Cultural Revolution was depicted as a stage for Jiang Qing to avenge herself for the tough days when the majority of the CCP elites objected to her marriage to Mao despite her being eight months pregnant (Terrill, 1992). Dittmer (1974) uses the fall of the 'biggest capitalist roader' Liu Shaoqi as a case study to investigate how the mass criticism and Liu's self-criticism were used against him. Once a student radical, trade union organiser and CCP underground organiser in the KMT-ruled 'white area', Vice Chairman Liu was the 'first Maoist' and Mao's 'heir apparent' prior to the Cultural Revolution (Dittmer, 1974: 20). With Liu's downfall during the Cultural Revolution came two dominant interpretations of the purpose of the Cultural Revolution. The first interpretation views the Cultural Revolution as the culmination of years of an intra-Party top-level power struggle between Mao and Liu. Thus, Liu's downfall was the result of Mao delivering his final blow. The second interpretation suggests that the Cultural Revolution was a mere experiment to remove the growing bureaucracy within the Party in order to revive socialist ideals. Overthrowing Liu was an unanticipated result. Regardless of the real reason, Mao expelled Liu from the CCP in 1968. Liu was also denied proper medical care for his diabetes and pneumonia and died on 12 November 1969 (Spence, 2016). Tracing the escalation of Liu's case, Dittmer attributed Liu's passive acceptance of the mass criticism to the differences of the personalities and ideologies between Liu and Mao. Such literature hopes to make sense of the Cultural Revolution, or certain aspects of it, from a selection of important Party individuals' personalities, ambitions and experiences. Since one of the most

important reasons for zooming in on individual political elites is that their personal power might have greatly influenced the historical event, I now discuss the single most important political elite during the Cultural Revolution – Chairman Mao, his personality cult and its profound impact on shaping the Cultural Revolution and even contemporary Chinese politics. Thus, the 'political elite'-focused approach provides a vantage point to inquire about the construction of the CCP framing and discourse.

Mao's cult before the Cultural Revolution

The idolatry of Mao was an iconic characteristic of the Cultural Revolution. However, Mao was an important but rather elusive character. He had a long political career – over six decades - working for the CCP. During the time, some believe that Mao was a brilliant military strategist but a less qualified governor (Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). As a person, Mao was multifaceted. He was capable of borrowing the wisdom of ancient Chinese saints while at the same time ruthlessly purging old tradition. There is no doubt that his tremendous influence was the driving force behind the Cultural Revolution. In the following paragraphs, I provide a definition of Mao's personality cult, trace the origin and the development of Mao's cult, which eventually reached its apex during the Cultural Revolution, and discuss its role in promoting and legitimising the CCP's rule.

Personality cults have always existed in China and, as I will show later in the thesis, their influence remains present today. Mao's personality cult, as this section demonstrates later, bore the characteristics of both the traditional and the modern cult. A historical definition of personality cult is to 'worship religious or secular leaders' (Leese, 2011: 4). In China, there was a long history of emperor worship which echoes the definition. Emperors were the 'Son of the Heaven' and their legitimacy to rule was from a widely accepted idea of 'the Mandate of Heaven, the worship of ancestors, and ritual offerings to various deities that restricted the glorification of the emperor himself' (*ibid.*). By contrast, the definition of modern personality cult is that 'godlike glorification of a modern political leader with mass media techniques…' (Plamper, 2004: 33). This definition differs from the previous one in its source of 'legitimacy', 'intensity' and 'reach' (Leese, 2011: 5). More precisely, modern leaders tend to build their legitimacy on the claim that they have the support of the people instead of

supernatural forces. The 'intensity' and 'reach' underline the promotional role of mass media in forging modern personality cults. With the assistance of mass media, modern leader cults tend to be more intensive and widespread. Mao was a leader at the time of rapid transition in China, thus his cult demonstrated a combination of both definitions.

The inception of Mao's cult was in the 1930s during the Long March when the Red Army was forced to take a yearlong strategic retreat to escape the KMT's pursuit. According to Edgar Snow (1937), Mao's cult did not exist in 1936 when he met with Mao for the first time in Shaanxi Province (Leese, 2011). At that time, people knew Mao and respected him, but there was '- as yet, at least - no ritual of hero-worship built up around him' (Snow, 1937: 83). Mao possessed no more important post than others who founded the CCP until the Zunyi Politburo meeting in January 1935. It was at that meeting when Mao was appointed a member of the Secretariat of the Politburo and the Military Council. He was en route to political supremacy. Initially, Mao's cult served the power struggle within the Party. During the power struggle in 1942 between Mao and Wang Ming, who was trained and supported by the Soviet Union, large-scale public display of a personality cult started to become a common strategy. According to Wylie (1980: 41), 'a woodcut portrait of Mao Zedong was published in the Communist party newspaper *Jiefang* (Liberation)...'. During the Rectification Campaign in 1942 and 1943, the rhetorical flattery and imagery became omnipresent. The campaign consisted of consecutive study sessions and self-criticism sessions on self-development and revolution in which Mao's work dominated the content. There was even a 'Zedong Day' on 8 February 1942 (Gao, 2000: 606).

The building of Mao's personality cult was developed by intertwined international and domestic factors. In 1943, the Third Comintern, which had backed the leadership of Wang Ming instead of Mao, dissolved after the Soviet Union declared its support for the Allies in facing the Nazis invasion. As a result, the coalition between the CCP and the KMT against the Japanese formed under the pressure from the Soviet Union collapsed. A civil war was about to break out. While fighting each other, both the CCP and the KMT also tried to present themselves to the Chinese people and the world as the only protector who could

give China a promising future. Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the KMT, published *China's Destiny* in 1943, championing himself as the saviour of the nation from years of war and foreign invasion. In reaction to the book and in order to attract new followers, the CCP boosted the status of Mao to compete with Chiang. Mao was thus portrayed as a powerful symbol of leadership and a Marxist Leninist theoretician. Snow's interview with Mao shows that Mao was aware of and agreed with the origin of his personality cult,

> In the past it has been [instrumental] to oppose Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-Shek]… They set up[2] Jiang Jieshi. Therefore, we had to set up someone as well. [Should be we] set up Chen Duxiu, impossible; set up Qu Qiubai, impossible; set up Li Lisan, impossible; set up Wang Ming, impossible as well. What to do? [One] had to set up someone to topple Wang Ming. If Wang Ming had not been toppled, the Chinese Revolution would not have been successful. How desperate, how difficult is she, our Party (Mao, 2002).

Mao's words also revealed that his personality cult was used for intra-Party struggle; to topple his leadership opponent Wang Ming. Time and again, Mao would use his cult to topple many of his comrades.

Thus, the promotion of Mao's cult was initially a planned propaganda strategy in a highly controlled manner. It was regulated to the very specific details as to what could or could not be done and how it should be done. For instance, all party buildings should display portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao (Leese, 2011: 38). The CCP also forbade people from naming cities and streets after political leaders (*ibid.*). Guards had been deployed to stop peasants from prostrating themselves in front of Chairman Mao during the anniversary parade in the previous years. Vice-ministers of foreign affairs Gong Peng and Qiao Guanhua attributed the highly regulated measures to the fact that the traditional peasant habit of worshipping emperors had deep roots and could not be eliminated overnight.

[2] This may be a translation issue. The meaning here should be 'put up' as in put up a political figure to stand for office.

However, with the liberalisation of the political atmosphere in the second half of 1956, Mao's personality cult was subject to much debate and criticism. The news temporarily replaced 'Chairman Mao' with 'Comrade Mao Zedong'. Collective leadership started to appear rather than merely 'Mao Zedong Thought' (Leese, 2011: 44). Meanwhile, other top CCP leaders also began to enjoy a similar reverent treatment in public. For instance, during the annual commemoration of the founding of the CCP on 1 July, portraits of vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi, Premier Zhou Enlai and Marshal Zhu De appeared together with that of Mao in all newspapers. In 1959, 'Chairman Liu', referring to Liu Shaoqi, appeared in tandem with 'Chairman Mao'. Liu's famous essay 'How to be a Good Communist' was also edited and published as a pamphlet in 1962. The *People's Daily* then made it into a series of articles and distributed it to audiences across the country. From 1959 to 1965, Liu's portrait continued to appear next to Mao's in the front page of the *People's Daily* on the 1 October National Day issues (Dittmer, 1974: 52) (see Picture 1). Hence, certain rituals relating to personality cults did not exclusively belong to Mao before the Cultural Revolution and the presentation of personality cult was under meticulous regulation.

Picture 1 The front pages of the *People's Daily* on the National Day (1 October) in 1959 and 1965. Pictures of Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi were placed side by side.

Mao's cult during the Cultural Revolution: a Mao-centred social structure

It was during the Cultural Revolution that Mao's cult rocketed to an unprecedented level and its power was fully unleashed (Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). It became a potent driving force behind all campaigns at the time (Calhoun, 1996). Mao was firstly listed alongside Marx and Lenin as a pioneer of the world revolution. Then, he was deified and reached a superhuman level; his teaching was reported to have successfully treated incurable ailments such as cancer and deafness (Leese, 2011: 192). The CCP eventually curbed the intensity of the cult with the demise of Lin Biao. Generally speaking, there are two ways to expound the cult – Mao-related objects and rituals and Maoist rhetoric, which I explain in turn below.

Mao-related objects are also known as loyalty objects, such as badges, statuettes, books, poems and portraits (Qian, 2012). People treated these objects as if they were their religious equivalents. Mao's pictures were often displayed at home and in public, and a whole set of routinised practices developed around them. For instance, during the 'Three loyalties and Four Boundless Love' (towards Mao) campaign promoted by the PLA from 1966 to 1968, factory workers were required to follow a series of rituals in everyday life. A typical day began with asking instructions from the Chairman in front of his portrait; in the factory where Mao's image was displayed in a prominent position, workers were expected to seek help from and be inspired by the Chairman and finish the day with a self-reflective report back to Mao's portrait. This quasi-religious ritual was selected for propaganda purposes and became a model for mass emulation during that campaign. There were also songs and dances dedicated to Mao. The most famous case was the epic song and dance performance *The East is Red (Dongfang Hong).* When Snow revisited China in 1965, he was invited to watch the epic show:

> Giant portraits of him [Mao] now hung in the streets, busts were in every chamber, his books and photographs were everywhere on display to the exclusion of others. In the four-hour revolutionary pageant of dance and song, The East is Red, Mao was the only hero. As a climax of that performance [...], I saw a portrait copied from a photograph taken by myself in 1936, blown up to about thirty feet high (1972: 68f).

These objects carry significant symbolic meanings that demonstrate a strong sense of the deification of Mao. As mentioned earlier, the meticulous details of the display arrangement showed the lengths to which the CCP would go to construct a sense of a united, positive, fervent and revolutionary political atmosphere. That was why from the detail of such displays one could infer the importance and the role of certain figures at a given moment. In terms of Mao, he was the one and the only 'red sun' – the one and the only supreme leader in China.

Apart from comparing Mao to the 'red sun' and propagating the myths of curing deafness and cancer with Mao Zedong Thought, Mao's god-like status was premised on the fact that as his personality cult grew, he became increasingly distant from the masses. During the eight parades of the Red Guards in Tiananmen Square from August to November 1966, Mao never addressed the masses except for uttering a few popular slogans. By contrast, Lin Biao, Chen Boda and Zhou Enlai all gave long tedious speeches. This distance – one could only look at Mao from afar but no interaction was allowed - further eroded any human quality of Mao and added a touch of mystery and aloofness, contributing to Mao's deification (Leese, 2011: 134). Meanwhile, the distance also reinforced the sacredness of loyal objects, such as the well-known mangos. Originally, they were among the exotic gifts from Pakistan's Foreign minister's visit in 1968. Mao gave the mangos to the propaganda worker team at Qinghua University to show Mao's support for their work (Li, 1994; Leese, 2011). The demand for mango as a sign of Chairman Mao's appreciation and approval quickly prompted the production of the replica of the mango to a fanatic level[3].

Aside from the Mao-related objects and rituals, Mao's rhetoric was also an essential part of his personality cult. Schoenhals (1992: 135) argues that this kind of discourse during the Cultural Revolution was a 'formalised political language' (*tifa*). A close reading reveals that this style of political discourse had at least three characteristics. Firstly, words often indicated performances. As we shall see in the Methodology Chapter, certain verbs indicate the willingness to take action (Austin, 1975; Halliday, 1994). In the field of politics, more often than not, 'to say is to do' (Bourdieu, 1991: 190), meaning that politicians must make their

[3] See Leese's *Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China's Cultural Revolution* (2011) for more information about Mao's mango story.

commitment attractive to the people and convince them of the party's ability to deliver the promise. During the Cultural Revolution, instead of politicians spilling out promises, it was the masses and the news that chanted the 'performative' phrases. This phenomenon had its root in the Rectification Campaign in the 1940s (Apter and Saich, 1994). For example, by chanting 'Long Live Chairman Mao', one actually performed the act of wishing Mao good health from both his and other people's point of views. In this sense, the function of words during the Cultural Revolution was not only transmissive but also performative.

The second characteristic was that the 'language [during the Cultural Revolution] was most separated from meaning' (Mitter, 2004: 209). That is to say, in order to recreate a revolutionary reality for Chinese people, the discourse commonly used during the Cultural Revolution often appeared to be out-of-place semantically and contextually. Be it official notices or private letters, the start was often Mao's quotations. This 'new norm' lasted at least five years during the Cultural Revolution (Wang, 2004). Another phenomenon was the overuse of quotation marks to denote the important words for the purpose of the ideological indoctrination. Popular inspirational words such as 'application', 'selfishness' and 'loyalty' were deliberately placed in quotation marks to emphasise their special import in the Communist revolutionary world. These phenomena appeared very different from how language was used in normal daily conversation. As I will show in the analysis chapters, the data I collected for the thesis also reflect this norm.

The third characteristic was that the language was monotonous and repetitive (Lu, 2004: 87). One might think of the news during the Cultural Revolution as being full of revolutionary passion, enthusiasm and activism if one only skimmed through a random article. However, the more articles one reads, the more one senses that the emotions were fabricated. Certain words and set phrases appeared repeatedly in various texts and contexts, rendering the style highly repetitive, monotonous and boring. The news was reduced to only a handful of themes and all had to be framed within the broad context of class struggle and justified through Maoist Thoughts. For instance, the expression of 'boundless hot love' for Mao appeared to be a direct expression of an absolute passion for the Chairman. However, with farmers working hard to express their 'boundless hot

love' for Mao, with local production teams overcoming technical difficulties to show their 'boundless hot love' for Mao and with China's third world friends reading the translated *Little Red Book* to demonstrate their 'boundless hot love' for Mao, people were constantly bombarded with the same hyperbole and the result was desensitisation.

All three characteristics of Mao's rhetoric - the performative words, unconventional expressions and monotonous hyperbole - were common in news articles, wall posters and other popular forms of communication during the Cultural Revolution, as the thesis will show in the later analysis chapters. The intensity of Mao's rhetoric reinforced itself by creating fear that one could be in trouble if he or she did not conform to such rhetoric. However, it was worth distinguishing that Mao's own writing was not the same as the Maoist rhetoric due to the classic education Mao had received. Pye (1976) argues that Mao's writing and speeches could easily reach and resonate with the ordinary Chinese people because Mao used many well-known historical allegories. Mao's writing was rarely obscure; nor was it full of formalised expressions. One possible explanation of the obscurity of Maoist rhetoric, as my analysis later emphasises, is that Mao's work or ideas were cited out of context and presented in a formalised language by the masses on posters or by Party journalists and ideologues in newspapers.

Having discussed Mao's rhetorical strategies, I now examine the typical forms of communication in which the aforementioned three main characteristics manifested themselves. They often took the form of political slogans and catchphrases in speeches, posters and newspapers which were omnipresent during the Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2004: 93). Political slogans and catchphrases are generally understood as 'a means of focusing attention and exhorting to action' (Urdan and Robbins, 1984: 17). They are useful both in war and in peacetime. During wartime, slogans are often an effective propaganda tool. In fact, the word 'slogan' was derived from a word meaning 'war cry' (Shalom, 1984). Therefore, the initial purpose of slogans was to inspire clan members to fight bravely for the clan and its glory. During peacetime, slogans serve a persuasion function in advertisements and political campaigns. The advantage of slogans is that they can convey considerable information within a concise term, which facilitates the

dissemination and usage of the slogans and catchphrases (Lu and Simons, 2006). The slogans and catchphrases which were widely circulated during the Cultural Revolution had four major themes and purposes: radicalisation, alienation, negation and mythmaking.

'Radicalisation' describes the political slogans and catchphrases that functioned to polarise people's political opinions during the Cultural Revolution. For example, since the May Fourth and the New Culture Movement (1919), many Chinese deemed the traditional Chinese culture as backward and repressive. During the Cultural Revolution, slogans such as 'To Rebel is Justified' reflected the anti-tradition radical thinking and captured a sense of standing up to the oppressive old system in China. As Lu explains, 'these slogans simplified theories related to social change, polarised reality into good and evil, and radicalised one's understanding of the old and the new. They provoked intense emotional responses and violent actions against anyone or anything considered as a threat to the new communist order' (Lu, 2004: 67). Thus, radical slogans and catchphrases typically had war connotations and combative language style, comparing one group to the enemies against whom one should have a life-or-death struggle.

'Alienation' underlines the result of the radicalisation-themed language. Burke (1969) contends human actions are based on one's conscious intentions and choices. During the Cultural Revolution, class background was the criterion as to whether a person was a friend or a foe, and Mao's rhetoric often alienated people from different class backgrounds. By uniting those who were from poor and 'revolutionary' backgrounds under a common cause of fighting for the 'proletarian dictatorship', the rhetoric naturally excluded the rest of the population, consequently creating alienation among the people. The alienated group was harshly treated, which in turn incited the fear of exclusion among those who came from a good class background. The alienation became a measure of deterrence to discourage people from questioning the criterion (Burke, 1969). In this sense, slogans such as 'Never forget the class struggle' could facilitate the popularisation of class awareness among the people. In the face of fear of being excluded from the 'good' class, control was exerted through the strategy of uniting through alienation.

‘Negation’ refers to the information that is absent, muted or opposed by the CCP in the official media (Wander, 1983). Overall, negation meant blocking the alternative views that disagreed with Mao’s and discrediting those who held the views. The first thing on the list of negation during the Cultural Revolution was alternative ideological views. Students at the time were not taught Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism or any other traditional Chinese philosophy. Instead, narrowly interpreted Marxism and Maoism dominated the whole society. Alternative views would alienate and banish the individual to the side of the enemies. Maoism and ‘class struggle’ were the only correct political views at the time. The second aspect of negation is the dehumanisation of ‘the enemy’ (Wander, 1983). ‘The enemies’ were often portrayed as less worthy than human beings, thus it was justified to use violence against them. Common dehumanising labels included ‘parasites,’ ‘bloodsuckers,’ ‘vermin’ and ‘stumbling blocks’. As I will show later, these labels of negation can be found in the sample newspaper articles that I collected from the period.

‘Mythmaking’ in slogans and catchphrases was used to facilitate the creation of Mao’s personality cult through linguistic techniques. Traditional Chinese thought believes that the legitimacy and the absolute power to rule as an emperor came from heaven, known as the ‘Mandate of Heaven’. As mentioned before, there were still plenty of Chinese people who viewed Mao as imperial emperor at the time, and as such venerated Mao in the same fashion as emperors by prostrating themselves in front of Mao or his images. Meanwhile, many slogans eulogising Mao tended to use superlatives (‘the most respectable Chairman Mao’), parallel structures (‘smashing the Four Olds and establishing the Four News’), and number abbreviations (the ‘Three Loyalties’ and ‘Four Boundlessnesses’ Campaign) (Lu, 2004: 71). These linguistic features were perfect for group-chanting, which intensified the mythical atmosphere and fuelled collective hysteria.

Mao’s rhetorical slogans and catchphrases were an essential tool to promote Mao’s cult. They are also where a particular framing can be identified and located, as I will show in Chapter 3. Radicalisation, alienation, negation and mythmaking helped garner mass support, discredit enemies and legitimise violence through the use of language (Lu, 2004). I further argue in the later chapters that they not only reflected but also shaped people’s thoughts and actions

during the Cultural Revolution. Hence, they were where particular framing could be located in the data. These elements continue to remind people of the specific kind of rhetoric and discourse associated with Mao and the era. They still have influence in China today, as the analysis will demonstrate.

Having reviewed the literature on the 'political elite'-focused approach to the Cultural Revolution and the formation of Mao's personality cult, this section summarises the role of the personality cult. For those who participate in the creation and demonstration of personality cults, the cult has two major functions: to demonstrate true loyalty and to foster a patron-client relationship through performance (Márquez, 2018: 26). The form is linked to the social origin of the leader's cult and the latter to the political purpose of Mao's supreme position. Meisner (1982: 183) rightly argues that Mao's cult has a social origin and function, but meanwhile is a direct result of politics. It was true that Mao was a respected revolutionary hero in the hearts of many peasants. In this sense, Mao's cult was not manufactured out of nothing because Mao did have a popular base. However, it was equally true that Mao's personal charisma was designed particularly for political purposes at the same time. The Communist regimes inherently lacked an established system of leadership succession. Hence, Mao's personality cult functioned to foster a patron-client relationship among the CCP members. From this perspective, the demonstration of loyalty towards Mao served the purpose of publicly displaying personal loyalty towards leaders and readiness to take on responsibilities (Leese, 2011). Therefore, Mao's cult was both a result of the social tradition and a well-thought out rational choice.

However, the two ways of interpretation of the function of Mao's personality cult are not mutually exclusive, especially during the Cultural Revolution. During the chaotic decade, Mao's cult was initially used to motivate the masses to fight the bureaucratic system, which caused many social grievances at the time. The ordinary people followed Mao's call due to his revolutionary credentials. Mao's revolutionary credentials, in turn, became a crucial safety net during campaigns when the CCP only gave very ambiguous instructions as to who the enemies were and how to carry out the campaign. The name of Mao boosted the participants' sense of righteousness. Meanwhile, its use was also politically strategic in that when the CCP decided to put an end to the factional infighting, it

declared that it was establishing Mao Zedong Thought Study Classes at all levels of society and selecting model soldiers from 'Study the Works of Chairman Mao Activist Congresses'. By using a highly ritualised and organised method, the CCP aimed to reduce deliberate misinterpretations of Mao's cult for ulterior factional motives. Despite the fact that Mao's personality cult could not be reduced to a pure instrument manufactured by the Party (Meisner, 1982: 14), at the later stage of the Cultural Revolution, the instrumentalisation became more dominant.

1.2.3 Cultural Revolution & traditional Chinese culture

Having explained my approach to the Cultural Revolution in the thesis, I now shift my attention to the cultural background in which mediated confessions should be understood. The reason for examining the traditional Chinese culture in the context of the Cultural Revolution is that the traditional culture has been a part of an inescapable source of influence on the society, regardless of the campaigns of renouncing and destroying it after Mao's calling for 'smashing the Four Olds'. As I will also explain in Chapter 2, 'cultural resonance' - the relatively constant socio-cultural background of a specific society at a specific moment - matters gravely in the understanding of the framing of an event (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989: 5).

By 1949, Mao had set out to convert China to a new ideology from the 'outdated' Confucianism. Marxism-Leninism was set to replace Confucianism as the dominant ideology in China. Lenin had believed that the communist ideological conversion required the awakening of class consciousness (Yu, 1972). Mao might have agreed with Lenin's belief about ideological indoctrination, but he had a very different view on the role of traditional culture in this process. Lenin argued for building socialism on tradition, whereas Mao aimed to eliminate tradition because it was in essence bourgeois (*ibid*). Confucianism was deemed a 'feudal' system in which the exploiting class oppressed the proletariat and was thus the root of the backwardness of China.

On the surface, it seemed to be odd how Confucianism became bourgeois and exploitative. *Ren* (humanness, benevolence, virtue and love) and *li* (ritual, rules, etiquette, and custom) were the core concepts in this traditional teaching. They manifested in a Confucian political system as such: the rulers enjoyed the absolute authority; an elite bureaucracy was necessary and indispensable to rule

the country. Running through the whole system was *ren*, suggesting a moral idealism in that how the emperor treated his people determined the rise and fall of the dynasty. While enjoying exclusive and absolute authority, the emperor was expected to rule with benevolence, morality and righteousness in order to be the example for the masses to emulate (Confucius and Leys, 1997: 58). Otherwise, the dynasty would be either overthrown or destroyed by natural disasters, epidemics or wars (Mencius and Li, 1992: 153). The means for the ruler to control the masses was *li* (Knoblock, 1988: 153). By supervising and implementing social and political customs and rituals, the ruler reinforced the existing hierarchy, order and belief. Historically, Confucian thinking dominated most of the dynasties in China. However, the reality often meant that some emperors only enjoyed the boundless privileges yet took on little responsibility towards the nation. The imperialist aggression and the Qing dynasty's corruption and incompetence in the late nineteenth-century prompted many young people who had spent time living and studying abroad to reflect on the failure of China. Thus, their conclusion was that Confucianism and traditional culture were to blame for China's backwardness. In an era of burgeoning science and technology, believing in the 'Mandate of Heaven' seemed old-fashioned and out-of-date.

Nevertheless, the anti-traditional sentiment could not wipe out the influence of traditional thinking from Chinese society. Even the CCP itself who were vocal about eliminating the tradition could not escape from its influence. The Party claimed that they followed the Marxist-Leninist ideology to pursue the Communist Revolution. Thus, Marxist-Leninist terminology and political jargons permeated the society. However, in reality, what they really did was '*Sin*ification' of these ideas from abroad. Chinese indigenous culture seeped into the dominating ideology. For instance, the CCP could not escape from the Confucian thinking of *zhengming* (rectification of names). According to Confucius, the correct designation of names was the premise for any righteous moral behaviour changes (Dittmer, 1973; Lu, 2004). The logic ran as follows:

> When names are not correct, speech will not be appropriate; when speech is not appropriate, tasks will not be accomplished; when tasks cannot be accomplished, rites and music will not flourish; when rites and music do not flourish, punishment will not justify the crimes;

> when punishment does not justify the crimes, the common people will not know where to put their hands and feet (Guo and Li, 1992: 132).

This passage suggests that ‘names’ were the catalyst to facilitate the transformation of individual behaviours and society in general. The misuse of names would potentially cause chaos and moral decline, so the legitimacy of actions needed the support from *zhengming*. Therefore, it was important for the rulers to have *zhengming* before taking any actions. When examining the discourse surrounding Mao, popular expressions during the Cultural Revolution included ‘Long Live Chairman Mao’ and ‘wishing Chairman Mao a Long Long Life’. They were exactly the same worshipping phrases which the imperial emperors had enjoyed (Lu, 2002: 104). Moreover, in the summer of 1966, the Party further restricted the title of ‘chairman’ (*zhuxi*) to Mao. The rest of the ‘chairmen’ were renamed as ‘directors’ or ‘heads’ (Leese, 2011: 136). ‘Confucian political thought accredited the ruler with moral attributes; his legitimacy is mandated by Heaven. Legalists granted the ruler with the absolute power and authority over his people’(Lu, 2002: 104). In this sense, Mao, like an emperor with the correct name, was granted the absolute power and the exclusive authority to lead the Chinese people in building a socialist society.

There was also a series of chain reactions in the quote above about the importance of having the correct name. The chain reactions suggested the importance of communication in promoting existing social orders. It potentially explained the logic behind the enormous effort that the CCP put into disseminating the official discourse and shaping the way in which the masses thought and expressed themselves. The CCP devised specific discourses that in fact invoked tradition to control the masses during the Cultural Revolution. Lu (2002) identified four enduring characteristics of discourse related closely to the traditional culture – ruler/cultism, moral/ethics appeals, ritualistic practices and the use of metaphors so that the people were encouraged to have private morality and be obedient in performing public rituals. These characteristics are identifiable in many Party-led campaigns and practices, including mediated confessions. Therefore, I briefly review these characteristics in order to inform the analysis of the framing of mediated confessions in later chapters.

Moral and ethical appeals were a common theme in Confucianism and classic Chinese moral rhetoric in general. Therefore, it was regarded as the universal norm in public and private persuasion (Lu, 2002: 105). Even during the time when Mao was fiercely denouncing some aspects of Confucianism as the root of the people's repression, he simultaneously encouraged people to live up to some others, such as altruism and the willingness to sacrifice for the collective and the nation. The specific criterion of morality that the CCP endorses has changed over time but the moral absoluteness has been constant. During the Cultural Revolution, leaders' words were the 'moral guidance' and 'ethical standard for action (*zheng ming*)' (Lu, 2002: 106). In other words, quotations from Mao were the standard often used to distinguish the enemy from the people.

Rituals are 'a structured sequence of actions the correct performance of which pays homage to a sacred object' (Philipson, 1992: 113), as exemplified in the previous section in the case of reporting to and asking for advice from Mao. According to Lu (2004), ritualised practices are more than private ceremonies. It is also a way to reaffirm the social hierarchy, consolidate social unity and promote common values. During the Cultural Revolution, a range of practices resembled such rituals, such as the 'loyalty dance', 'self-reflection in front of Mao's portrait', attending political study groups (reading leaders' speeches or key articles in newspapers. These individual rituals together formed strict top-down information dissemination actions, reinforcing the CCP hierarchy in which Mao and his ideology were supreme.

Lastly, the use of metaphors was ubiquitous in classical Chinese writings. Among various metaphors, war metaphors and animal metaphors were two very common forms in Chinese classics. Some argue that such metaphors are linked to Chinese folk mythology and Buddhist religion. This was often reflected in the aforementioned 'Sin-inification' of Marxist-Leninist ideology. In her work on the Anyuan coal mine strike, Perry (2012) shows the Party's attempt to combine the Western communist revolution ideas with the Chinese traditional myths in order to increase the party's appeal in the early days of the communist movement. When talking to the coal mine workers, Li Lisan referred to Karl Marx as his master who lived in the faraway West and was over a hundred years old. This analogy resembled traditional Chinese mythology in which long-living masters

who had superpowers would answer their devout believers' call for help. Such a story sounded familiar to the workers and thus provided a better understanding of the role Marx played than merely teaching them Marx's theory. During the Cultural Revolution, ter Haar (2002) argues that the CCP's deployment of a similar strategy represents a continuation of this tradition. For instance, the dehumanisation of enemies and the war-related terms used in the Cultural Revolution were reflections of such a strategy. Dehumanisation meant that the enemies were not truly regarded as humans (Cook, 2016). They were 'ox, ghosts, snakes, and demons' and 'running dogs' in speeches, newspapers and daily conversations. Liu Shaoqi's wife, Wang Guangmei, was labelled a 'monster', 'alluring woman', 'filthy miss' and 'snake' in wall posters (Tan and Zhao, 1996: 239). Lin Biao was the 'dog-headed General' and Jiang Qing was the 'white-boned demon'(Cook, 2016: 88). Consequently, the masses should 'us[e] pen[s] as knives and guns', keep 'fir[ing] at' the class enemies and 'pledge to fight to the death in defending Chairman Mao in defending the proletarian headquarter' (Liu, 1992: 411). The portrait of enemies as inimical, dangerous and less than human provided justification for the physical and verbal abuse directed at them.

As the analysis chapters will show, the traditional culture and its related discourse characteristics were clearly visible in the framing of mediated confessions, serving the purposes of promoting Mao and his revolution and political agenda, despite the outright clampdown on tradition. More crucially, these characteristics prevalent during the Cultural Revolution lived on long after the end of the decade. Having explained the importance of the general historical and cultural background of the Cultural Revolution, now I begin my review of the practice of confession.

1.2.4 Criticism and self-criticism during the Cultural Revolution

Despite the traditional Chinese cultural elements reviewed above, the procedure of criticism and self-criticism during the Cultural Revolution was originally influenced by the Soviet Union and modelled on the legacy of the Yan'an era. In this sense, Lu (2004: 44) argues that criticism and self-criticism have never been part of Chinese tradition. This section reviews the transformation that the practice of criticism and self-criticism went through before becoming a mass campaign tool during the Cultural Revolution.

Criticism and self-criticism had been a means of inner-Party disciplinary measures since the thought-reform movement in the 1920s when the CCP tried to persuade the captured KMT or potential members to join the CCP. Before 1949, criticism and self-criticism were mainly used among the CCP members. For those who went through criticism and self-criticism, the process meant these cadres were not beyond help. However, there was a gradual shift in the practice from the 1940s to the 1960s: the practice spread to be used outside the CCP cadres. Its approach also turned increasingly unforgiving. The Cultural Revolution saw the spread of the practice to the whole of society. Yang (2013) wrote in the opening of his book *Tombstone* that people living under the repressive Chinese imperial emperor at least had the right to remain silent. By contrast, during the Cultural Revolution, everyone was required to 'confess', 'talk', 'criticise', 'reveal' and 'expose'. Remaining silent was equal to an act of defiance. This section briefly reviews the transition of criticism and self-criticism and examines the ways in which the confessional practices functioned during the decade.

The evolution of confession within the CCP

As stated before, criticism and self-criticism has been in use within the CCP since its early days prior to 1949. The practice was rather standardised. It usually began with a collective criticism within a group. One individual would often be singled out from the group due to incorrect political ideology, low productivity or any other unsatisfactory performance. This person was subject to criticism not only from the group but also from oneself by confessing the 'mistake' and showing the determination to repent. In most cases, the individual would be re-integrated into the group after the criticism and self-criticism (Wu, 1979). With assistance from the use of alienation-themed rhetoric mentioned before, this process effectively generated fear of being alienated while enhancing group unity and cohesion (Schurmann, 1959).

Dittmer (1973) distinguishes two methods of criticism and self-criticism within the CCP: the one mentioned above originated from the 'white'[4] enemy-controlled area under the leadership of Liu Shaoqi. The second is the one developed under Mao in the 'red' Yan'an revolutionary base. Due to the highly dangerous work environment, Liu advocated for a concise, concrete, structured

[4] 'White' enemy-controlled area: the description 'white' derives from the White Terror, which refers to the violent purge of the CCP members in many cities in China, notably in Shanghai where Liu Shaoqi was based, by the KMT in 1927.

and rationalised 'principled redemptive struggle' (Dittmer, 1973: 710). In other words, the goal of the inner-Party struggle to bridge the hiatus of 'incorrect' and 'correct' thoughts. Liu's 'principled struggle' made clear that criticism must 'submit to reason' and concern the issue itself rather than attack the person. Once the decision was made, everyone must follow. However, individuals were allowed to reserve their opinions for the possibility that they might be proven right in the future. By contrast, Mao prioritised the correct substance in the debate. For example, Mao stressed the distinction between 'antagonistic' and 'non-antagonistic' struggles – if the criticism questioned the leadership of the CCP, then it was simply 'antagonistic' and there was nothing to debate. There was a politically correct answer that was not subject to debate. Instead, one could only express support. Later, Mao extended this form of inner-party struggle to the wider population, maximising the participation of the ordinary masses. Thus, criticism and self-criticism had a secondary function: make use of the ensuing redemption of the confessant as a case study to educate the masses and garner their support. By criticising the targeted person, the masses were brought closer to the normative, turning grievances into drives for political changes. This was how 'remembering the bitterness' was designed to win the poor peasants over.

From the 1940s to the 1960s, Mao's model gradually trumped Liu's (Dittmer, 1973). From 1942 to 1949, a thought-reform movement in Yan'an called the Rectification Campaign took place in order to abolish 'subjectivism', 'factionalism' and the rigid 'eight-legged writing'[5] within the CCP (Apter and Saich, 1994: 26). Criticism and self-criticism gradually turned into vicious personal attacks and a witch hunt for counterrevolutionaries during the so-called Rescue Movement led by Kang Sheng who was in charge of the intra-Party security. Self-criticism was often not accepted, leading to execution or suicide of a large number of cadres. Eventually, Mao had to intervene before the CCP as a party was structurally destroyed as losing too many cadres in key positions. Mass movements such as the Rectification Campaign forewarned of the kind of deadly personal attacks in the form of criticism and self-criticism that characterised many of the post-1949 political campaigns. After 1949, the CCP obtained the monopoly over the 'instruments of violence', 'state patronage' and 'mass communications' which were essential resources for top-down dissemination of identical messages

[5] The 'eight-legged writing' refers to the form of structured writing that people used to pass the imperial examinations in order to join the ruling government.

among the masses (Dittmer, 1973: 715). Meanwhile, it was the time when criticism and self-criticism spread outside the Party (Lu, 2004: 43). During the Land Reform (1950-1952), in order to justify the seizure of land from landlords and smash the repressive class, the peasants were encouraged to engage in 'spitting bitter water' – speaking out loud against the ill-treatment and exploitation from the landlord. Landlords, on the other hand, were humiliated verbally, paraded through streets and forced to confess the 'crimes' of how they had exploited the peasants. Soon after the Land Reform, the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-1959) ensued and saw not only the CCP members but also intellectuals and some members of the decorative parties humiliating themselves and attacking each other for being anti-CCP and anti-Mao. Some of the criticism and self-criticism was even published in national newspapers for wider circulation. A series of Mao's failed policies in the 1950s, represented by the Great Leap Forward (GLF), meant that Mao was not only questioned by critical-thinking intellectuals, but also his own comrades. There was a wider inner-Party disagreement on Mao's judgement. Consequently, Mao and his followers at the top level increasingly reserved opinions in the face of disagreement, which led to a less frank deliberation. Meanwhile, Mao and his supporters consolidated their power by establishing extra-Party resources, such as the PLA and Mao's alliance with Lin Biao (Dittmer, 1973: 720; Chang, 1970). Such defensive and self-preserving reactions meant that Mao's way of criticism and self-criticism rather than Liu's had become dominant both inside and outside the CCP.

Criticism during the Cultural Revolution: criticising for the sake of criticising

As the transformation above shows, the purpose of criticism and self-criticism changed. The domination of Mao's model of criticism and self-criticism meant that its purpose was to ensure the successful implementation of Mao's orders. It also moved away from purely educating the masses to making use of the masses. By the time of the Cultural Revolution, on the one hand, the confessors needed to encourage and generate reactions from the masses through the rectification of the confessant to push the revolution forward. The people who were encouraged to participate in the criticism needed to see that what they were doing was beneficial and transformative to the confessant. However, on the other hand, the gap between the 'correct' and the 'incorrect' must exist in order to

sustain the masses' support and participation of the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, false accusations were common. What a person had actually done usually formed the basis of made-up accusations while the false part of the accusation often reflected the interests of those who demanded the self-criticism. Combining the true and the untrue parts, the 'crimes' eventually became framed so severely that sanctions at an institutional level were indisputably necessary. For example, Liu was wrongly accused of opposing proletarian dictatorship, class struggle and the policies related to Party-building (Dittmer, 1974). All three were the CCP's primary advocacy at the time. By forcing Liu to admit to such accusations, criticising himself [6] and eventually expelling him regardless of his self-criticism, the authority demonstrated and reaffirmed its commitment to the masses. Hence, this contradictory yet symbiotic process of constantly needing confessants yet never accepting the apology caused substantial distortion of events and made-up accusations simply to maintain the momentum of the campaign. Criticism and self-criticism became catalysts for the violence within the whole of China during the Cultural Revolution.

In 1980, four years after the end of the Cultural Revolution, Deng restored Liu's vilified name in the 'Resolution on the Rehabilitation of Comrade Liu Shaoqi' in the Fifth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee (Dittmer, 1981: 467). Many wronged Party cadres had their names cleared, though many ordinary people did not. With the Party's self-verdict on the Cultural Revolution as a disaster in which Mao was misled by the Gang of Four, the Party was eager to move on from the chaotic decade of political struggle. However, the memory of violence, disorder, retaliation and public naming and shaming never truly left; it remains to haunt China. The anniversary of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution still strikes the nerves of the Party. Many would agree that since Xi came to power in 2012, there has been a sense of the Cultural Revolution resurfacing in China. The rest of this chapter reviews the social and the political environment that has cultivated this sense and the way in which mediated confessions have returned in Xi's China.

[6] Liu was accused of a long list of misconducts, but he did not confess to all the accusations. There is limited reliable data as to what Liu actually admitted to, but, according to Dittmer (1973: 304), he never confessed that he was 'Anti-Mao'.

1.3 Xi’s first five-year term (2013-2018)

1.3.1 Cultural Revolution: 50 years on

16 May 2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. During the days leading up to the anniversary, new books studying the period were published, interviews with ex-Red Guards appeared in newspapers and reflective articles flourished across social media outside China (Dikötter, 2016; Ramzy, 2016; Vasilogambros, 2016; Yu, 2016). However, many news and social media noted that the majority of the commemoration articles and activities happened outside mainland China (McDonell, 2016; Mitchell, 2016a; Phillips, 2016b). ‘Silence’, ‘amnesia’, ‘unmarked’ and ‘forgotten’ were popular words found in the headlines describing the fact that no major commemoration of this anniversary happened officially or unofficially in China. Only at midnight on the 17th of May did the *People’s Daily* – the mouthpiece of the CCP – publish a commentary reaffirming the official verdict on the period. The Cultural Revolution was a mistake; Mao was misled, and it would never happen again. To make sure that people remember the correct version of history, the framing of the Cultural Revolution in the official media has been tightly controlled and the relevant academic research limited. History taught in schools and universities in China strictly follows the Party’s sanctioned lines (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, 2006:179). Therefore, it is not surprising that the official media kept the anniversary low-key for fear of inducing unnecessary attention and dissent.

Looking at the neon lights in the concrete jungle of any megacity in China today, few would consider the slightest chance of the Cultural Revolution’s return. However, as Santayana’s dictum goes: *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*. The younger generation does not have the opportunity or interest to know the non-official history of Mao’s time, including the Cultural Revolution. However inconceivable it seems, Nobel-prize winning author Gao Xingjian warns sharply:

> ..., it is very likely that when people have forgotten about it, it will make a comeback, and people who have never gone crazy will go crazy, and people who have never been oppressed will oppress or be oppressed. This is because madness has existed since the birth of

> humanity, and it is simply a question of when it will flare up again (2002: 195).

Gao's concern with the possible legacies of the Cultural Revolution has been shared among many scholars since the end of the revolution in 1976. For instance, MacFarquhar and Schoenhals believe that the use of military force on 4th June 1989 ordered by Deng was a manifestation of the fear of returning to the kind of widespread anarchy during the Cultural Revolution (2006: 461). In recent years, the CCP has had even more reasons to keep silent on the topic. Upon the 50th anniversary of the start of the Cultural Revolution, the rise of the New Left and President Xi the 'strongman' became two prominent factors for the reticence.

1.3.2 The Rise of the New Left

After the Cultural Revolution, China gradually began experimenting with a controlled market economy. Deng Xiaoping's opening-up policy meant that China gradually moved away from the endless ideological struggle. Consequently, the control over people's thoughts and behaviours was loosened. Media flourished and the CCP was more tolerant towards what could be discussed in public. Although eventually shut down by the CCP, the Democracy Wall in Beijing was once a public focal point where people like Wei Jingsheng and Bei Dao voiced their alternative political visions for China. This was unthinkable in the 1960s. These rapid social, political and economic changes in the 1980s and 1990s led to growing social inequality, environmental degradation and corruption. These issues made a group of thinkers and politicians increasingly sceptical and critical about the political and economic reform at that time. Some of them had opposed Deng's plan at the start as they regarded the controlled market economy as the equivalent of the abandonment of the socialist road. This school of thinking gave rise to the New Left (Shi *et al.*, 2018).

In the mid-1990s, there were many factions among the New Left but they shared the fundamental advocacy of social equality and justice in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Crackdown and the collapse of the USSR (Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). The social inequality made the New Left question a series of notions that the Party was championing at the time, such as China's peaceful development and market. Instead, they called for continuing the socialism experiments, world struggle and a reassessment of the collapse of the Soviet

Union (Xia, 2010). It is easy to link all these beliefs upheld by the New Leftists to what Mao once more or less endorsed. As a result, the New Left is often associated with Neo-Maoism (Li, 2008).

Many of the New Leftists were sensitive towards the term's negative association with the Cultural Revolution and believed that such a label was too simplistic (Xu, 2003: 6; Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016). Many rejected the title of the 'New Left'. After all, the official culprits of the Cultural Revolution – the Gang of Four and Lin Biao – were labelled 'ultra-Leftists' by the CCP. The danger of the left-leaning worldview during the Cultural Revolution was deeply rooted in the mind of Deng and those who experienced it in person (Meng, 2018). During the highly symbolic pro-reform Southern Tour in 1992, Deng warned of the dangers of Leftism in particular,

> At present, Rightist tendencies are affecting us, as are 'Leftist' ones. But it is the 'Leftist' tendencies that are deep-seated. Some theorists and politicians try to scare the public with political labels. That is not Rightist, but 'Leftist.' 'Leftism' carries a revolutionary colour, giving the impression that the more 'Left,' the more revolutionary. 'Leftist' tendencies led to dire consequences in the history of the Party. Some fine things were destroyed overnight. Rightism may ruin socialism, so can 'Leftism'. China should maintain vigilance against the 'Right' but should primarily guard against the 'Left' (1994:13).

It was very clear that Deng's real concern was about the Left, despite his mention of the Right at the same time. However, as social inequality, environmental degradation and corruption continued to worsen, a gradual left shift of policy eventually began in Hu Jintao's era (2003-2013). Under Hu's call to build a 'harmonious society', some policies that had been promoted by the New Left intellectuals such as inner-Party democracy and elections at the local level were finally trialled in certain areas in China (Yu, 2006: 57). Nevertheless, it is also true that the old form of Leftism that Deng warned about seems to have resurfaced quietly, as I will show later in the case of Bo Xilai (Leonard, 2008). The CCP cannot afford to negate their advocacy for socialism but equally cannot afford to fall back to political anarchy or economic stagnation. This task is further complicated by the presence of Xi as the supreme leader of China.

1.3.3 Xi: the New Mao?

New Left scholars once argued that the 'strongmen politics' exemplified by Mao and Deng was gone and that policy-making was now increasingly in the hands of 'experts, the media and even public opinion'(Leonard, 2008: 76). However, President Xi has given China observers plenty of reasons to feel that the 'strongmen politics' has returned, and with it even a flavour of the Cultural Revolution. Media in the West have picked up on it quickly (see Picture 2). As one can see, either it is Xi's figure in Mao-style uniform or feudal emperor dragon robe, or the words and phrases such as 'cult', '*must* be obeyed' and 'mini-Mao'; these magazine covers send out a clear message that there is something in Xi that reminds one of Mao. A close examination of Xi reveals that Xi's 'princeling' background, cult-like clout and rapid amassing of personal power and inclination to use coercive forces distinguish him from his immediate previous predecessors. Moreover, it conjures in many people's memory or imagination echoes of Chairman Mao and his last revolution.

Picture 2: Front pages of Western magazines suggesting that Xi resembles Mao and the feudal emperors.

'Princeling'

Xi comes from a so-called 'red' family and is known as having a 'princeling' background. Xi's mother, Qi Xin, was a cadre working in the Marxism-Leninism Institution and as such she was always away from the family. Xi's father Xi Zhongxun was a communist revolutionary who had a distinguished military career in the Sino-Japanese War and the Civil War. In the 1950s, Xi Zhongxun worked in the Ministry of Propaganda. Xi Zhongxun, like many other high-ranking CCP revolutionaries, was purged in Mao's various campaigns in the 1960s, including the Cultural Revolution. After Mao's death, Xi Zhongxun was rehabilitated and ascended to become one of the 'Eight Immortals' who were high-ranking veteran Party revolutionaries and enjoyed paramount power in China after Mao's death. As a close ally of Deng, Xi Zhongxun was appointed to lead the economic reform in Guangzhou Province and later pushed through the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. Xi Zhongxun thus became a symbol of reform and the opening-up policy (Barmé, 2015). Moreover, compared with other 'Immortals', Xi Zhongxun had a 'clean' history: as a fallen official, he did not implicate any other colleagues during the Cultural Revolution; nor did he approve of the use of military force in dealing with the student movement in 1989. These become intangible but invaluable assets for his son, Xi Jinping. Thanks to his father's counterrevolutionary label in the 1960s, Xi was not qualified to join the Red Guard, who were infamous for physically and verbally abusing those they deemed as enemies during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, Xi was sent to the Shaanxi countryside to do hard manual labour in 1969. In 1974, Xi was finally allowed to join the CCP after over 10 attempts. Since then, Xi worked at various levels of the government, which is celebrated by the Party media as valuable experience for leading the country (StudyTimes, 2016). The 'princeling' background may arguably also encourage the self-belief of Xi that it is his mission to consolidate the CCP's rule and save China in the face of social and economic challenges (Barmé, 2015). Sociologist Yang Guobin agrees that the first generation of the princelings firmly believe that they are the rightful owner of China who will lead nation, like the imperial hereditary system (Osnos, 2015).

Personality cult?

Xi's princeling background and the speed of amassing personal power since he took office reminds many people of Mao. Like Mao in the Cultural

Revolution, Xi's leadership saw the erosion of collective leadership in tandem with the rise of the leader's personality cult (Luqiu, 2016). The zealous deity worship of top leaders seems to have died with Mao, but the leader idolising mentality lives on. Many post-Mao top leaders all had their particular titles. For instance, Deng was named the 'architect of Chinese economic reform'. He also secured Jiang Zemin 'the core of leadership' when Jiang had lacked authority among the political elites in post-Tiananmen China. Jiang's predecessor Hu Jintao never achieved the 'core' title officially. However, on 27 October 2016, the title had a new owner - Xi became the latest 'core' of the leadership at the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee (Bai, 2016). There has always been an emphasis on the special characteristics and absolute authority of the leader, though some leaders receive more than others. Their titles are widely distributed through the official media. Xi has amassed more titles than any other leader since the 1940s, including Mao (Barmé, 2015). In titular terms, Xi's concentration of power reflects the number of official posts he is holding: Party Secretary-General and Chair of the Central Military Commission since November 2012; China's State President since 14 March 2013; Commander in Chief of the Military's Joint Operations Command Centre since 21 April 2016; and the 'core' of the CCP Central Committee since October 2016 (Bai, 2016). Not surprisingly, Xi also has many unofficial titles given by China scholars, journalists and China observers: Xi dada (uncle/father Xi), Chairman of Everything, the New Mao, the New Helmsman (Wong and Lam, 2018), Emperor Xi (Beech, 2014). These titles are symbolic in terms of how Xi is packaged and presented to people inside and outside of China. The supremacy of Xi is easily decoded from the titles.

There has been a noticeable difference in how the media packages Xi compared to his predecessors. The frequency of Xi's appearance on the front page of the *People's Daily* within the first 18 months after he came to power is higher than Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, and almost as high as Mao (see Figure 1 below). The official media also deploy subtler and more social-media-friendly framing techniques. For instance, there is a mobile phone app called 'Study China', which deconstructs the 'wisdom' in Xi's official speeches. Xi's idolatry also manifests itself in the humanisation of the General Secretary. It is something that the CCP already experimented with ex-Premier Wen Jiabao, portraying him as compassionate 'man of the people' ('Profile: Wen Jiabao,' 2013). In a similar vein,

Xi has been shown as a caring husband, frequently featured in photos visiting ordinary workers and soldiers, eating at local cheap restaurants and receiving successful athletes. The reactions from the masses interacting with Xi are shown as positive, earnest and even exaggerated, like the reactions to Mao fifty years ago. Many who had the chance to shake hands with Xi, according to news sources, excitedly claimed that they would not wash their hands anymore (Linder, 2018). Nevertheless, just like his predecessors, what Xi is really like as a person remains a mystery. The real Xi is still very little known (and probably will never be known to the public) despite the media's efforts to build a humanised charismatic leadership (Batke and Ohlberg, 2016).

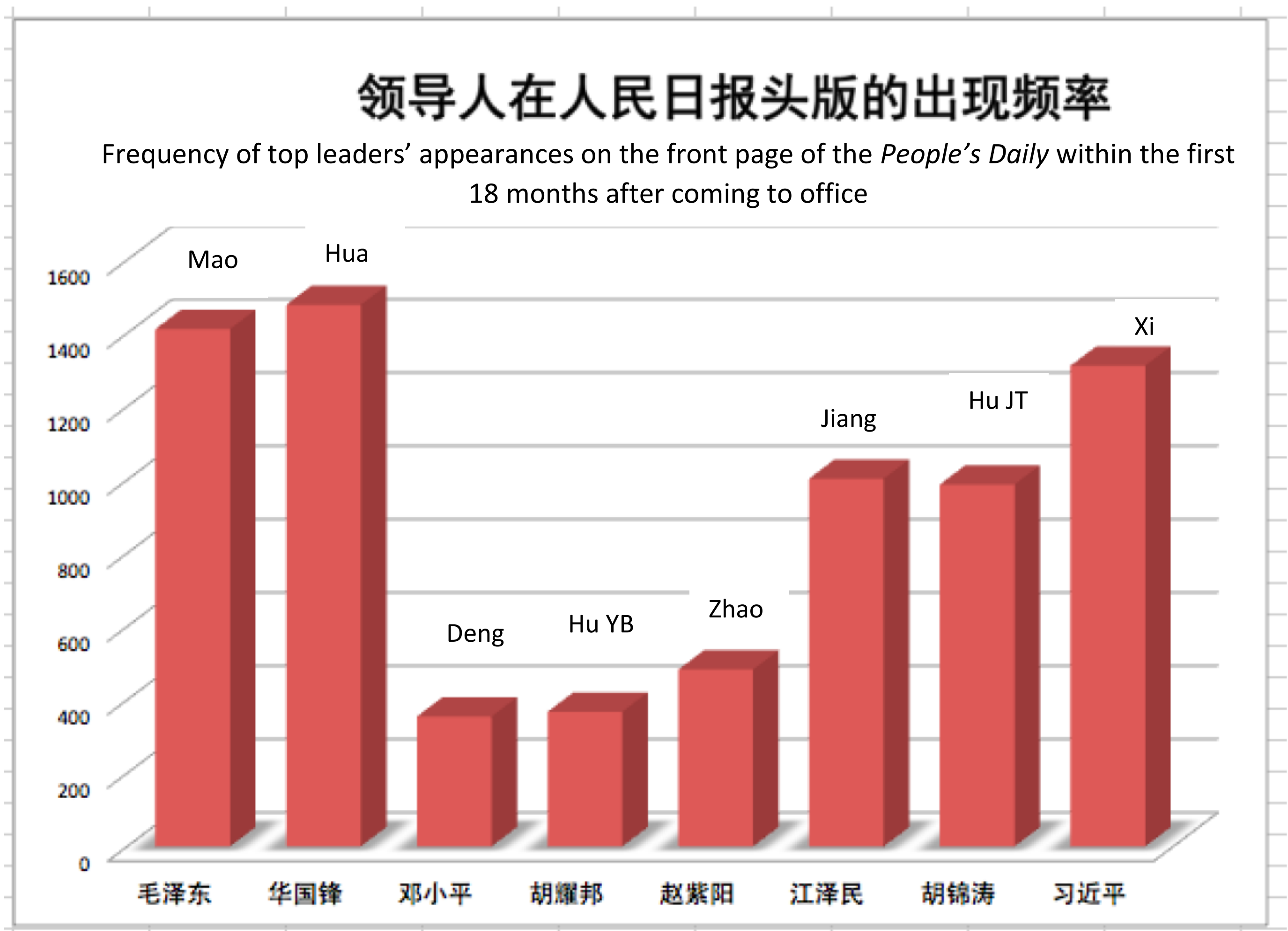

Figure 1 Qian (2014): the frequency of leaders appearing on the front page of the People's Daily *within 18 months of coming to power.*

However, Batke and Ohlberg (2016) argue that what Xi has today in China is not a personality cult. Compared with the cult Mao received in the 1960s, Xi's lacks the sheer quantity of the hysteria and adulation. Instead, there is an

increasing feeling of *Führerprinzip* (leader principle, a concept often describing the rule of the Third Reich) (Barmé, 2015: xxii) – a conviction that some gifted people are born to rule and therefore should enjoy absolute loyalty. As the next section shows, Xi's strongman image showcased in his flagship anti-corruption campaign, together with his princeling background, does demonstrate a sense that Xi is *the* one to realise the rejuvenation of the Middle Kingdom.

Xi the Strongman

There has been a clear rise of political repression through the use of coercive force in Xi's era (Brown and Van Nieuwenhuizen, 2016; Brown, 2016: 180). The crackdown on dissidents is said to be the harshest for decades (Makinen, 2016: para 3). Civil activists and legal workers are facing increasing pressure, with around 280 detained in the summer of 2015 alone (*China: Events of 2015*, 2016). Some of them were convicted under the crime of 'inciting subversion of state power' or 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' (Wu, 2015). The media in China is also under tighter control. During Xi's visit to China Central Television (CCTV) in February 2016, a slogan in bright red declaring that 'CCTV's surname is "The Party". [We the institution are] absolutely loyal. Ready for your inspection' appeared prominently featured in the background (Zhuang, 2016). The famous liberal magazine *Yanhuang Chunqiu* was forced to close in order to resist the state institution takeover (Yu, 2016). Some people, such as foreign NGO workers, Hong Kong booksellers and online public intellectuals, were put on show trials or forced to confess on TV. Another group of people facing clampdown are corrupt officials. According to a Pew survey in 2015, corruption is the biggest concern for Chinese people (Wike and Parker, 2015). The survey also shows that 63 per cent of people believe that corruption will decrease in the next five years. This optimism coinciding with Xi's anti-corruption campaign has become a familiar topic inside and outside China. Xi has vowed to crush both high-level Party officials, known as 'tigers', and low-level cadres, known as 'flies'.

The campaign began with the dramatic downfall of Bo Xilai. Being a princeling like Xi, Bo was a charismatic, powerful and ambitious Party chief of

Chongqing and a Politburo member. He was once a promising candidate to take over the position of Party General Secretary from Hu. He was famous for his socialist development strategy called the 'Chongqing Model', echoing largely what the aforementioned New Left appeals for (Zhao, 2012a: para 2). He brutally clamped down on local gangs and criminals, increased social welfare and strengthened the public sector. However, some of his campaigns were on the more controversial side of the Left. He turned Chongqing Satellite TV into a 'public service broadcast' by prohibiting commercials (Meng, 2018: 4). He also organised events such as 'singing red and reclaiming the revolution' and recounted revolutionary stories which were direct tributes to Maoist pursuits (Meng, 2018). However, Bo's right-hand man - the police chief of Chongqing - Wang Lijun escaped to the US consulate on 2 February 2012 to seek political asylum. It marked the beginning of Bo's public downfall. A month later, hinting on Bo's case and his iconic policies, the then Premier Wen Jiabao urged the Party and the people not to let China go through 'historical tragedies' such as the Cultural Revolution during an NPC press conference (Branigan, 2012). Bo's case became more eye-catching after his wife admitted the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood who was deeply linked to Bo's family and their enormous wealth.

Bo thus became the first 'tiger' captured by Xi's anti-corruption campaign (Moore, 2013). In a public show trial, despite his self-defence, Bo was found guilty of accepting bribes and abusing power and sentenced to life imprisonment. Four years into this campaign, it has come to be known as one of the most far-reaching campaigns since Mao's death (Lockett, 2016: para 2). Since its inception, the campaign has been producing an ever-growing blacklist of corrupt officials. According to ChinaFile's data, by July 2018, there were 254 'tigers' and 2193 'flies' who were either under investigation or arrested and sentenced (Barreda *et al.*, 2018). They were from various sectors, ranging from the State-owned Enterprises (SOE), military and law to mining, education and media. The campaign continues to grow and spread at the time of writing.

While exposing and disciplining 'tigers' and 'flies', Xi's anti-corruption campaign also raises concerns about a Mao-style political purge. News reports, such as the scale-down of the Communist Youth League (CYL), keep giving rise

to the suspicion that Xi's anti-corruption campaign is actually a political purge against his rivals (Hornby, 2016). This was a technique Mao often used to remould the CCP, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Scaling down the size of the CYL has been widely regarded as a huge blow to the powerful faction which includes the current Premier Li Keqiang and the former President Hu Jintao. This elite power struggle attracts considerable attention and many China observers and journalists interpret it as Xi's grander plan to become a more powerful leader. Before the 19th Party Congress in 2017, there was wide speculation that Xi was probably going to defy the unwritten leadership retirement rule (Mitchell, 2016). Instead of retiring in 2022 after a decade of being the top leader in China, Xi may remain in power. Therefore, the anti-corruption campaign could be Xi's opportunity to replace anyone who is capable of challenging him from staying longer in power with those Xi can trust. The campaign so far has relied heavily on the party disciplinary mechanism rather than law and regulation. This opaque process has led to dozens of cases of suicide and death from unnatural causes by 'excessive work pressure and mental stress'. Scholars such as Yuen (2014) express their concern that without the rule of law during the anti-corruption campaign, other forms of power abuse will spread. Some are concerned that the campaign may backfire in the future after too many corruption cases are revealed and people start to blame the central government. For now, a familiar form of power abuse has already surfaced: before someone is tried by the court, the person is put on TV to confess their wrongdoings.

1.3.4 A resurgence of mediated confessions

Xi's era has witnessed the resurgence of mediated confessions. The recent phenomenon featuring a person apologising for his or her wrongdoing on TV is known as 'televised confession' (*dianshi chanhui* or *dianshi bigong*). As mentioned before, confession is neither uniquely Chinese nor an invention of Xi's era. It has a long history in religious practice both within and outside China (Tentler, 1977; Wu, 1979). Outside the realm of religion, it has taken many forms over the years, such as autobiographies, psychoanalytical therapies, legal confessions, governance strategies and political show trials (Foucault, 1998; Payne, 2007; Taylor, 2009; Hu, 2012). With the development of technology, media has also revamped confession, blurring the public-private boundary, thereby altering its function and transforming its power (Burkart, 2010; Liu,

2018). However, mediated confessions in China have so far received very little attention from academics. Most of the existing literature remains focusing on the Mao era (Dittmer, 1973; Hu, 2012; Sun, 2013). In this section, I review the limited literature on the mediated confessions in Xi's era.

Fiskesjö is one of the few scholars who has directed their attention to the recent TV confessions. From the perspective of Soviet show trials and 'clean torture', he argues that TV confessions, as a form of staged conformity, show the domination and gross violation of human rights (Fiskesjö, 2017: 18). In early 2018, the rights group Safeguard Defenders pioneered the publication of a book which summarises the characteristics of recent TV confessions. Selective as it may be, the book reveals the coercive measures behind the seemingly voluntary acts between 2013 and 2018. The interviews with 45 confessants show that they were pressured, threatened or even tortured into conducting TV confessions. The confessants revealed that they were either told exactly what to say or given general scripts of the confession. The directors of TV confessions turned out to be security agents rather than staff from the CCTV. The report highlights the purpose of TV confessions as three 'Ds': deny, denounce and defend (Gardner, 2018; Safeguard Defenders, 2018). 'Deny' means that the confession often includes lines rebutting criticism towards the Party. 'Denounce' is that the confessant is ordered to attack certain people, organisations, or even a nation in his or her confession. The last task for the confessant is to 'defend'. Not only does the confessant have to reject the criticism against the Party, but he or she also has to praise the government, the security agents, the legal system or even the crackdown on him or herself.

Despite the hitherto limited academic attention, the aforementioned researchers and their teams have provided an invaluable account of the story behind some mediated confessions and insightful interpretation of such practices. This thesis will demonstrate later that the three 'Ds' are indeed present in the sample confession. Moreover, while making use of the limited amount of information about contemporary mediated confessions, I will further argue that instead of viewing TV confessions as a media spectacle on the same scale as a show trial, the framing of the TV confession bears greater resemblance to ordinary crime news.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter briefly reviews the history of the Cultural Revolution and presents the rationale for choosing a top-down elite-focused approach to study the decade in which Mao and his followers almost destroyed the very patriarchal political system that he and other colleagues had built. Grounded in the cultural history and political situation of the time, Mao's personality and the rhetoric, as well as the practice of criticism and self-criticism, played an indispensable role in promoting and intensifying Mao's movements. Initially, Mao's cult was built in order to counter the clout of Chiang Kai-shek, who was promoted as the only saviour for China by the KMT. However, it was transformed into a social structure where Mao was the centre and eventually became an immensely powerful figurehead for the promotion and legitimisation of the Cultural Revolution. The rhetoric during the Cultural Revolution actively made use of the seemingly rejected traditional Chinese thinking. By fusing Marxist revolutionary ideas with traditional Chinese rituals, analogies and myths, the CCP managed to convert China to a communist revolutionary base which followed only Mao's teaching. Meanwhile, by condemning Confucianism as the symbol of repression and using a highly thought-stifling language, the CCP encouraged the masses to rebel and incite fear among any potential challengers. The Cultural Revolution rhetoric alienated 'the enemies' from 'the people', while the former served as a symbolic target to strengthen the bond between the latter and the Party.

Confessional practices have also been used as an inner-Party disciplinary mechanism to deal with disagreements, represented by Liu Shaoqi's model of criticism and self-criticism (Sun, 2013). However, Mao's way of criticism formed during the Yan'an time eventually became the prototype of the criticism sessions characterised by personal attacks during the Cultural Revolution. The confessional practices mutated into an institutionalised mass educational mobilisation strategy. The distinction between the correct ideology and the 'incorrect thoughts' was often 'artificially polarised' in order to sustain the legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution (Dittmer, 1973: 314). The death of Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four drew a conclusion to the Cultural Revolution. As the thesis later shows, the mediated confession seemed to have disappeared from people's daily lives as well. Yet, the strong leadership of Xi after the rise of the New Left draws people's attention back to Mao; the resurgence of the confessions on TV invokes the

people's memories of the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, although Mao died in 1976 and the Cultural Revolution concluded shortly later, the leadership cult exemplified by Mao and the Cultural-Revolutionary-style movements still haunt China to this day. Both the self-criticism during Mao's time and the televised confession that have resurfaced today in Xi's era rely on Chinese official media to disseminate the message and spread influence. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the official media in China and underline the socio-political system that defines the process of mediation of the self-criticism and confession.

Chapter 2. Chinese Official Media

As suggested in Chapter 1, the popularisation of the practice of self-criticism and confession was facilitated by the official Chinese media. In order to understand the facilitating role of the official media in China in the creation of a sense of revival of the Cultural Revolution today, it is essential to scrutinise how it functioned during the Cultural Revolution and trace its broad progression and regression on the road of reform. Media in China generally has the reputation of being a propaganda machine, which is very different from its counterpart's expected watchdog function in a liberal democracy (Zhao, 1998; He, 2008; Young, 2013). While there is no denying that Chinese media has been widely used for CCP ideological indoctrination, one will undoubtedly oversimplify the wider picture if they reduce the official media in China to pure 'propaganda'. This is due to the fact that the complexity of the media's function has increased since the economic reform after the Cultural Revolution.

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the official media in China in terms of the 'Party Principle' and the reform with 'Chinese characteristics'. In doing so, I highlight the major contradictions between political control and information diversity brought by the economic reform. These contradictions shape the role of official media in China at different times and ultimately have an impact on the understanding of the appearance of self-criticism and confession in media throughout the past century. This chapter begins with a clarification of the definition of 'official media' and then examines three impactful factors that affect the function of the official media: the Party Principle (*dangxing yuanze*), western media values and commercialisation. I conclude the chapter by arguing that, despite the fact that western media values and media commercialisation have challenged the CCP's monopoly over information, a fundamentally unchanged political system in China largely means fundamentally unchanged Party journalism.

2.1 'Official media' in China

Chinese 'official media' is a term that many scholars often use without giving a clear definition, assuming everyone more or less knows what 'official media' includes. Some highlight its special relationship with and ownership by the CCP or the state (Nyíri, 2006: 88; Kennedy, 2009: 533; Shirk, 2010: 5, 105).

Some suggest that official media are those under heavy censorship (Lee *et al.*, 2006: 582; Qiang, 2011: 49). Others omit any elaboration at all (Hurst, 2004: 104; Gill and Huang, 2006: 27; Hoddie, 2006: 27; Yan, 2010: 495). Among those who give a clear definition, Peng and Winfield (2005: 261) describe 'official mainstream media' as a 'media organisation directly owned and operated by the government at central level', including Xinhua News Agency, the *People's Daily*, the *Global Times*, CCTV, to name just a few. This definition is the closest to the 'official media' used in this thesis: those which are state-owned or CCP-owned, circulating nationwide *plus* having a history extending before the reform in the late 1970s. It thus includes the *People's Daily*, CCTV and Xinhua News Agency. It is a definition tailored for this research and is explained below.

To be an 'official' media organisation is to directly represent the CCP, who has been the most dominant arbiter in China since 1949. The characterisation of the 'official model' of broadcasting from Luo (1983) captures the core characteristics of the 'official media' in this thesis. The duty of the media to the CCP often overrides everything else. They are structured similar to government organisations so that they are easy to coordinate. Their media products are usually propagandistic, doctrinaire and pedantic; hence their relationship with the audience is primarily top-down and one-directional. 'Circulating nationwide' means that the media has a wide reach, which is often an indication of importance. This criterion makes sure that it is the most important affairs for the Party collectively that are under scrutiny. Similarly, 'to have existed before the reform' is to enable a more consistent data collection process. Moreover, its continuous existence signals the importance of the media. As this chapter explains, media in China has been through cyclical processes of expansion and proliferation to restriction and reduction. Those media which survived all the turmoil are the most crucial for the Party, the most susceptible to its influence and the most successful in adapting to the rapidly changing political and economic climate. Having defined the 'official media in China' used in this thesis, I now turn my attention to the key aspects of the pendulum-like development of the media system in China since the Cultural Revolution.

The concept and the structure of news reporting in the early days of the PRC remained much the same as in the pre-1949 period. The contemporary Chinese media news (since the 1870s) was initially modelled on western media

when the western colonisation in China began at the start of the twentieth century. It then copied the Soviet model when the CCP gradually consolidated its power (Chen, 1947: 1). When media first entered China, being named the 'mouthpiece of the people' (*weimin houshe*) was praise for newspapers (Chen, 1947: 1). In other words, it was a journalistic professional norm and something worth being proud of to speak for the people at the time.

The media was gradually modelled on its Soviet counterparts throughout the republic era. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, a group of people, some of who later became core members of the CCP, created newspapers to criticise imperialism and warlords. As journalists, they witnessed the life of ordinary people and appealed for support from workers and peasants while trying to avoid censorship. It was during this process that the communists experienced first-hand that the purpose of news could be more than disseminating information (Zhao, 1998). They realised that news propaganda was an essential part of a political struggle because it could garner people's support and at the same time collect intelligence for the Party. Since then, the CCP has always clearly claimed the political function of media and used media as such. Direct and explicit Confucian influences are not mentioned or referred to in either model.

After 1949, the media in China held a dual identity – it was both a media and an administrative organisation, meaning it was under the supervision of both the state and the CCP. The Party's focus shifted to ideological development, leaving the government responsible for the supervision of the daily running of newspapers. However, the Party bureaucracy, such as the Politburo and the Central Propaganda Department, often weighed in on substantive issues (Zhao, 1998: 22). In fact, when facing crucial editorial decisions, it was often the Party Secretary as the highest authority in media who finalised the decision (Zhao, 1998: 21). From the Broadcasting Bureau to provincial local media, they were all under the dual leadership of the state and the Party. However, as the attempt to separate the state and the CCP has never really been successful, the CCP has always had an impact on the media.

2.1.1The Party Principle

The dual identity of media in China means that they are prone to the influence of the Party ideology; thus they tend to churn out propaganda. In the Chinese context, what 'churning out propaganda' really means is to obey the

Party Principle. Inherited from Lenin's view on the role of media, the Party Principle is a belief that 'the Party newspaper should be the Party's collective propagandist, agitator, and organiser', which is 'instrumental in shaping the Chinese Party's journalism policy' (Zhao, 1998: 19). In other words, news is less about reporting the latest events, and more about facilitating whatever the Party tries to promote. As early as the 1920s, the CCP made the importance of media clear by declaring that '[j]ournals, daily publications, books and booklets must be managed by the Party's central executive committee' and that 'no central or local publications should carry any article that opposes the Party's principles, policies and decisions' (Tong and Cheng, 1993: 147). From the very early days, the CCP set out to implement the Party Principle and never hesitated to claim its control over media. Later, Mao further strengthened such notions by detailing four functions of the media: disseminating CCP policies from the central to the local, educating, organising and mobilising the masses (Bishop, 1989). Mao's vision of the top-down one-directional communication required strict control over the media by the Party, and the Party had many means to do so. Through ownership, the CCP often released general rules on media regulation in the CCP announcements and top leaders' speeches. There were also some specific guidelines on news reporting. For instance, certain incidents required particular timeliness, such as the death of important personalities, foreigners in China or Chinese overseas ('Central Party Propaganda Department, Central Party External Propaganda Group, Xinhua News Agency, "Several Suggestions on Improving News Reporting",' 1993). Furthermore, the CCP was able to directly order what topics were covered, corresponding to the political tasks of the time. Through censorship, the Party could ban certain politically dangerous topics. The state apparatus guaranteed legal punishment for those who failed to follow the Party Principle. However, all these rules of control were subject to amendment or overturn as the CCP saw appropriate, hence the rules were often subject to frequent changes.

The Party Principle reached an extreme point during the Cultural Revolution (Bishop, 1989: 93). At the time, the majority of the newspapers ceased publication, leaving only 43 within the whole country (*China Statistical Yearbook 1993*, 1993: 785). The *People's Daily*, the *People's Liberation Army Daily* (PLA Daily) and the *Red Flag Magazine* were the three most important publications

remaining in circulation, and these media were where Mao and the CCRG passed on their most important orders. Many radio programmes were duplicates of this official news or Mao's writings (Lynch, 1999: 22). The news was full of sweeping claims inciting class hatred and blind extolment of Mao. Be it choosing content or even font, there was little editorial independence. Zhao describes that the lack of diversity of information sources 'led to a situation in which a single editorial in *People's Daily* could shape a whole mass movement' (Zhao, 1998: 32-33). Accordingly, Lynch named this style of control a form of 'communication compression' (1999: 22). The CCP used deliberate manipulation, distortion and exaggeration in this 'compressed communication' to serve political purposes.

2.1.2 Western media values

After Mao's death, media reform, as part of economic reform, took place in the late 1970s. According to the reform plan, the official media was no longer an 'instrument of class struggle' (Zhao, 1998: 34). Rather, it was to facilitate the new focus of the CCP: economic development. During this fairly economy-focused and comparatively politically relaxed period, media started the attempt to be a partially-marketised business and experimented with western news values, which I will explain in detail shortly below. Despite some backlashes in terms of media control and censorship, such as the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Chinese media and the way the CCP use it have changed significantly. Six forces drove the transformation of the media in China: the Party, the state, capital, professional journalists, individual media users and Chinese culture (Luo, 2015: 51). Many scholars regard the first three forces as the most influential factors in the current Chinese media system, also known as Commercialisation Authoritarianism or Marketised Authoritarianism (Zhao, 1998; Zhao, 2004; Murphy, 2007; Sparks, 2008; Stockmann, 2012). By contrast, professional journalists, individual media users and Chinese culture appear to be less impactful. Professional journalists usually do not have the final say in the production of media programmes; individual media consumers have limited say in the production of programmes primarily aiming for ideological indoctrination, despite the fact that they can provide feedback for media programmes; culture influences media in a more pervasive but intangible way, which is very difficult to isolate from the other forces. Therefore, in this section, I mainly focus on the first three dominant forces: the Party, the state and the capital. The three factors manifest themselves in two

prominent phenomena that occurred to the media in China: the introduction of western media values and the popularisation of commercialisation.

Liberal democratic news values re-entered China after 1978, among which the most prominent were freedom of the press, 'People Principle' and journalism law (Zhao, 1998: 34). These values are among the many assumptions underpinning the use of framing theory in liberal democratic media studies, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3. Here, I illustrate the influences and limitations of these values in studying Chinese media during the reform era. These western media ideals temporarily inspired new possibilities of what Chinese journalism could be. Facts were given special attention after Deng's advocacy for 'seek[ing] truth from facts'. The scope of news that was covered expanded rapidly. Coverage of human interest, disasters and crimes, which had been ignored in the past, began appearing in news. Sometimes, news exposing the wrongdoings of local government would even lead to punishment from Beijing. Truthfulness, brevity, timeliness, liveliness and readability became important (Zhao, 1998: 34). While insisting on the media's role as the mouthpiece of the CCP, the then Party General Secretary, Hu Yaobang, allowed the call for more editorial independence. In October 1987, the then Party Secretary, Zhao Ziyang, listed media reform, alongside political reform, in the agenda of the Thirteenth NPC. At the same time, the media's role as the Party's mouthpiece was dropped from the reform agenda after heated debates (Polumbaum, 1990: 41). This was partly because the discourse advocating for media democratisation such as freedom of the press, the 'People Principle' and media law which regulates and protects people working in the media industry had entered the discussion, giving Chinese media some potential new roles in society (Zhao, 1998: 41; Wu and Wu, 2004).

For those living in China, talking about 'freedom of the press' seems to be such a taboo and utopian topic today. However, it was included in the discussion of media reform in the 1980s (Zhao, 1998: 36). It was not only autonomy for the press but for every individual Chinese citizen as well. Hu Jiwei, former editor-in-chief of the *People's Daily,* once explained,

> The kind of press freedom we want to advocate is press freedom for all the people and not just press freedom for news workers. Freedom of the press for citizens is the right to be kept informed as masters of the country, their right of political consultation, their right of

involvement in government and their right of supervision over the Party and government (1989: 8).

Article 42 of China's Constitution declares that 'all citizens possess freedom of speech' provided it does not harm the nation, the society and other people's lawful rights (Shao *et al.*, 2016: 41). Indeed, Hu's statement emphasized the 'right' of individuals to supervise the Party – something guaranteed by the law and constitution. Nonetheless, this kind of freedom worried the CCP because it went against the Party Principle of the media's educational and indoctrinating role, and because it might lead to social instability. Wang Ruoshui, ex-*People's Daily* chief editor, appealed to the Party by arguing that it was bureaucracy and corruption that led to social chaos. The media could, by contrast, contribute to easing the social tension by functioning as a supervisor ('Mainland Scholars Talk Freely about Freedom of the Press,' 1988).

Some scholars proposed the idea of the 'People Principle' in the early 1980s to replace the long-standing Party Principle. Initially, it was criticised but re-entered the political discussion in 1987. This idea was premised on the lesson from the 'Party Principle' and the Cultural Revolution. Gan (1994: 45) elaborates:

> … the lesson of the holocaust of the ten-year Cultural Revolution has taught us that the Party's leadership, even the Party Central Committee, may commit mistakes. When mistakes are made and when the Party's press blindly executes the leadership's intentions, newspapers themselves are committing serious mistakes. Therefore, upon discovering mistakes, editorial departments should not blindly implement their instructions. Newspapers should put the interests of the people above everything else and be run accordingly… When a communist society is attained, even the Party will be eliminated. Yet the people are permanent, they live forever!

This interpretation of the People Principle was rather radical from the CCP's point of view because it pointed out the detrimental mistakes the CCP had made and its ultimate demise in the realisation of a Communist society. This was a fairly honest claim but unacceptable for some of the CCP leaders. Discussing the ultimate demise of the CCP after talking about the Cultural Revolution carried a tincture of heresy. A less radical view on the People

Principle argued that media should serve both the Party and the people (Qian, 1989). Even this interpretation was a direct challenge to the CCP, as the Party had always thought of themselves as representing and speaking for the people. Stressing the ‘People Principle’ implied otherwise.

As a part of the campaign that strived to move China away from the lawlessness that characterised the Cultural Revolution, there were proposals that journalism should have its own ‘law’ of functioning to guide what the media should be doing. The number of laws and regulations overseeing media at both the national and local level has been on the rise since the 1990s. Defamation law is one of the common ways to control and punish those who do not toe the official line (Liebman, 2011: 845-846). As Stockmann reveals, the media loses the majority of the cases according to her journalist and lawyer sources (2012). Meanwhile, the media and courts have developed a complex relationship. On the one hand, the CCP actively uses the media to promote its dedication to its version of ‘rule of law’, which is different from its conventional western counterpart, as I will explain further in the later chapters (Liebman, 2011). On the other hand, the CCP also indirectly controls the court through funding, personnel management as well as media framing of court cases in some instances (Liebman, 2007; Lin, 2012: 424). As this research demonstrates, the official media and the court collude with the Party to support certain political campaigns in some cases. In other cases, the official media appear to replace the court to ‘pass’ a verdict and produce the illusion of a guilty verdict through its media framing. In this way, the CCP diversifies the means to control media while shifting responsibility from the political administration to the legal system.

Despite the discussion about the ideas of the freedom of the press, the People Principle and the ‘rule of law’ inspired by western liberal media values, the real impact of them in China was ‘loud thunder, small raindrops’ (Starck and Xu, 1988: 143). Very little consensus existed on these ideas as there were too many factions splitting among the political elites on the issue of reform. Western media often described China’s reform in the 1980s as a tug-of-war between ‘Reformer vs Hardliner’ (Zhao, 1998: 42), as if both sides were a unified entity. In reality, there were so many factions within the

reform campaign that they never reached sufficient consensus to push any of their ideas through. Neo-authoritarians believed that China was not ready to embark on the road of democracy supported by media freedom and still needed time to enhance its citizen's knowledge and ability before putting an end to paternalistic rule. There were also the technocrats driving the actual operational reform in the 1980s. Relying on giving 'scientific training' and creating 'professional occupations', they believed that being practical was the correct way to tackle all social issues (Zhao, 1998: 42). Then there were the democrats advocating that China's modernization needed democracy and that only by participating in democracy could the Chinese people understand and live with democracy (Zhao, 1998: 43). They wanted to enact laws to protect journalists' rights and at least have part of the media independent of the CCP (Jernow, 1993; Sun, 1994). All three groups of reformers had their various emphases and disagreements on what was best for China. Consequently, concrete reform measures that they all could agree on were few.

Worst still, all of the discussions halted in the face of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in the summer of 1989. It marked a major setback for all reforms, including media, as the Party Principle made a full-scale return. Jiang Zemin, who took over the role of the CCP Party Secretary after the crackdown, gave a speech reiterating the media's mouthpiece role (Jiang, 1990). Li Ruihuan, who was the Central Committee member in charge of propaganda, also stressed the positive function of media propaganda which the CCP had historically made use of and called for the continuation of this tradition (Li, 1990). Hence, there would be no substantial structural change in the media. Pro-reform journalists, editors and government staff were replaced by conservative ones. A 'Leadership Team on Ideological and Propaganda Work' under the Politburo member Ding Guan'gen was established to reassert ideology into media (Zhao, 1998: 46-47). Restrictions on media that had been loosened during the 1980s were tightened again. The discourse on the freedom of the press, together with other liberal media inspired ideas, disappeared quietly. The media reform has since then been on the economic and technological side.

In short, the economic reform in China had a tremendous influence on the media industry. It brought about a range of Western media values, such as

freedom of the press, the 'People Principle' and media law. Due to the disagreement among the political elites in terms of which reform route was best for China, these values were never thoroughly or systematically applied. However, they were under heated discussion among the Party, the intellectuals and the public. The more lasting impact of the media in China is commercialisation, which re-started in the 1980s and accelerated after the setback of 1989. Official media, unlike local media which had less influence and thus faced less control from the CCP, were under the most pressure to balance being the mouthpiece of the CCP and attracting readership at the same time. The tradition of the CCP political communication means that the two were often at odds with each other – CCP propaganda is infamous for its emptiness and lack of readability, as the analysis of this research will show. However, the CCP has been evolved in terms of its political communication. It has adapted to the latest technology, which is discussed later in the section on media in Xi's era (Lee, 2009; Stockmann, 2012). My focus below is the influence of one force of capitalism – commercialisation.

2.1.3 Commercialisation

Commercialisation in China experienced waves of progression and regression since 1949. It existed briefly in Mao's era. Chinese media, like many other industries at the time, used to emulate the way its Soviet 'Big Brother' ran its country (Lu, 1979/80; Bishop, 1989: 92). However, after the denunciation of Stalin inside the Soviet Union in 1956, China gradually sought to break away from its influence. Hence, Chinese media developed in a more indigenous way. The CCP permitted advertising and a few commercial newspapers because the traditional Party newspapers were simply not appealing enough to urban residents (Zhao, 2008: 79). Major newspapers such as the *People's Daily* began to learn from Western media, expanding coverage, including public debates and improving their writing style. The *People's Daily* even became financially independent thanks to advertisements (Fang and Chen, 1992: 83-84). However,

after the 'Hundred Flowers Movement'[7] backfired and the Anti-Rightist Purge[8] began, the Party's attitude towards private-owned commercial newspapers consequently became rather discouraging. Media censorship thus increased. For example, newspapers could only publish pro-CCP materials; Government officials often refused to give much information during interviews with commercial newspaper journalists because of their 'intrusive' way of asking questions (Zhao, 1998: 16). As the planned and collective economy went ahead, advertising became increasingly difficult to find. The result was that the number of commercial newspapers plummeted. Between 1950 and 1952, all 58 commercial newspapers died out (Sun, 1988: 61). Similarly, all 33 commercial radios had disappeared by 1953 (Zhao, 1998: 17). What was left was the kind of media which followed a strictly top-down order (central – provincial – municipal) and was monopolised by the CCP.

The situation did not change until the end of the Cultural Revolution. Media reform began at the same time as the economic reform (Shao *et al.*, 2016). In 1978, the Ministry of Finance introduced a business management system into some media in Beijing, such as the *People's Daily.* One year later, the first advertisement in the post-Mao era appeared on Shanghai Television, marking a re-start of media commercialisation in the PRC (Zhao, 1998). Meanwhile, thanks to the economic growth, the number of TVs, radios and other forms of media in individual households increased dramatically. The number of TV sets shot up from 3.4 million in 1978 to 230 million in 1992 (Zhao, 1998: 53). More demands for television content meant that the media needed to provide more channels, more programmes and more broadcasting time. Government at all levels soon began to struggle to fund the growing demand. The central government could only provide roughly 9 per cent of what was needed for the print media technological

[7] The Hundred Flower Movement (1956-1957) was a period when Mao tried to secure the support of intellectuals and scientists for his economic development policies. Mao thus relaxed the culture, art, media, and science sectors to encourage intellectuals to freely voice their opinions. For more information, see Roderick MacFarquhar (1974) *The hundred flowers campaign and the Chinese intellectuals*.

[8] The Anti-Rightist Purge immediately followed the Hundred Flower Movement as it backfired. Some criticism even questioned the right of the CCP to rule. The amount of criticism that the Party received prompted Mao to fiercely attack those who voiced their concerns during the Hundred Flower Movement. Mao ordered Deng Xiaoping to be in charge of the purge of over half a million such people (Dikötter, 2011). Among them, many were intellectuals and students. They were subsequently sent to labour camps in rural areas to conduct re-education through hard labour.

renovation in the 1980s (Zhao, 1998: 53). Consequently, advertising became the lifeline for Chinese media. The revenue reached around 618 billion yuan (£70bn) in 2018 (Reporter of the Industry, 2018: para 2).

Since the late 1970s, advertising, both from home and abroad, has been the most important non-governmental financial support for most media in China (Zhao, 1998). Especially in the 1990s, the advertising rate in China was one of the lowest in the world and thus attracted many global commercial giants such as Casio, Hitachi, Toyota, Coca-Cola and IBM. This money brought a boom to China's media industry. The year of 1992, according to Joseph Chan, 'will be remembered as the year of commercialisation'(Chan, 1993: 25.2). He argues that the commercialisation since 1992 is as significant as the demand for democratisation in the late 1980s. In early 1992, Deng made a series of tours in Southern China and gave several pro-reform speeches along the way. Therefore, eventually, the CCP re-focused on furthering the economic reform after the backlashes of the Tiananmen Crackdown (Fewsmith, 2008). In October, the NPC officially adopted Deng's main points in those speeches and official re-prioritised the economic reform. Business began to sponsor media content or support particular columns. By 1995, there were 2200 newspapers in China selling 72 million copies a day (*ibid.*). Newspapers expanded the number of pages in order to contain more information as well as advertisements. The majority of newspapers used a four-page broadsheet format in 1992, but the number of pages increased to eight and then twelve within two years. 'The eye of the newspaper' – an eye-catching spot, the first place a reader is likely to see when glancing at the newspaper (Zhao, 1998: 58) – used to be reserved for Mao's quotes or political slogans during the Cultural Revolution. It was for advertisements in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Party organs such as the Xinhua News Agency became operating like a giant business consortium, running scores of dailies, weeklies and monthlies simultaneously. Similarly, the *People's Daily* had five subsidiary publications in the 1990s, four of which were modelled on commercial newspapers rather than Party journalism (Zhao, 1998: 66). Official media increasingly resembled official corporations.

Nevertheless, the official Chinese media has simultaneously changed and remained the same (Zhao, 1998: 48). On the one hand, the then Politburo member Li Ruihuan ordered the media content to be changed from

something preaching, empty and dry to something more informative in order to meet the readers' needs (Chan, 1993: 25.3-25.4). On the other hand, the news reporting lacked important substance for a long time. Cover-ups and censorship often stood in the way of what the readers needed and wanted to know. This paradox existed largely due to the media's unchanged dual identity: they were under the control of a system of party organs and state departments, both of which set up groups in media. They formed a hierarchical structure in terms of media governance to ensure objectives from the top were successfully passed down to the audience (Creemers, 2015). At the very top was the Standing Committee, who usually held an informal discussion to formulate directives for the official media to distribute. They directly passed directives to the Central Propaganda Department (CPD), an important party organ in charge of the thought work in media as well as education. The CPD drafted general policies for ministry-level government institutions such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, State Administration of Press, Publications, Radio, Film and Television and the State Council Information Office (Creemers, 2015: 54). It is these ministry-level institutions' responsibility to formulate specific and concrete regulations for the media. Relevant media-related organisations could interact with the CCP and give feedback on policies but were undoubtedly all under the control of the Party.

The dual control over the media means that this pattern continued as Xi took power in 2012 (Ringen, 2016). In Xi's era, the CCP has increasingly rejected liberal democratic values such as 'pluralism, regulatory impartiality and free expression (Creemers, 2015: 48)'. Many dissidents have been terrorised, investigated, arrested or persecuted, and journalists are among them. The editorial team of the Liberal magazine, *Yanhuang Chunqiu,* which existed for 25 years under the protection of the liberal CCP elites, was secretly replaced; the then 71-year old liberal journalist Gao Yu was jailed (now released due to her illness) for 'leaking' state secrets and forced to make a TV confession ('Gao Yu: Chinese Journalist Released from Jail over Illness,' 2015; Buckley, 2016). Meanwhile, the occasional exceptions such as exposing corrupt local

officials were closely monitored in terms of their social impact. They were an illusion of a relaxed Party media environment.

Meanwhile, the information explosion and technological advancement forced the CCP's response in terms of the control of information. Online media has proliferated since 1993 when the Chinese government decided to develop internet technology (Shirk, 2011: 1). The official media all have an online presence. Subsequently, the spread of mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices has facilitated wider access to the internet and social media. The number of internet users in China reached around 802 million in 2018 (Deng, 2018: para 3). The amount of information online has rocketed. The speed of online information dissemination has become so fast that it is invariably where news first appears. In this sense, the CCP 'chooses' to relinquish some control over information in exchange for economic gain, improvement of its international reputation, government performance as well as popular support (Shirk, 2010: 5). However, the growing speed of information dissemination undoubtedly poses enormous political challenges for the CCP in meeting the demand of the masses and maintaining its exclusive leading position (Naduvath, 2009; Shirk, 2010: 5). The internet forced the CCP to evolve its technique of control to adapt to the latest technology instead of solely relying on human manual effort (Hachigian, 2001; Zheng, 2007; Yang, 2009). For example, the Great Firewall prevents access to popular Western social media and foreign news, which carry politically inconvenient information; all major websites available in mainland China have implemented keyword censorship; the CCP also deploys a large amount of human resources to further manually check user-generated contents (Qiang, 2011). After over thirty years of marketisation without major political reform, the official Chinese media today seems to be have the status of being changed and remaining the same simultaneously (Zhao, 1998). The news indeed includes more diversified topics and becomes timely to suit the taste of the readers today, yet it remains properly filtered. The implications of this status manifest themselves in the role media play.

2.2 Role of the media in China

Taking into consideration the trajectory of media development since the Cultural Revolution, I will discuss the media's role at different periods of recent PRC history in the following paragraphs. I conclude that despite the depoliticisation and the marketisation of media since the economic reform, a fundamentally unchanged political system means a fundamentally unchanged role of official media: Party journalism championing the Party Principle.

The role of media before 1978 was solely to fulfil the political objective of the CCP (Li, 1998: 11). After 1978, media became more able to fulfil some social objectives, such as exposing corruption, tracing unethical and illegal business operations, exposing poor quality products and raising issues of the rights of vulnerable people. After the Western journalistic values and the People Principle were shut down after 1989, many believed that the commercialisation of media would be able to revive the media reform. After all, the market indeed changed the nature of news media in China. It used to be solely for the purpose of making revolutions, according to (Mao, 1990b); but the media are now partly about making money. Since the control of information is one of the key characteristics of authoritarian regimes, many scholars recognise that the pressure to generate revenue and attract a larger audience can challenge the CCP's information control (He, 2008; Lin, 2012). This process, the so-called 'information empowerment', is further facilitated by internet technology such as social media. The result is that the Chinese people have more diversified sources of information that can potentially break the monopoly of information wielded by the CCP (Shane, 1994; Smith, 1996; Brewer, 1997; Dennis and Synder, 1998; Curran, 2000; Ekecrantz and Olofsson, 2000; Shirk, 2011).

However, the commercialisation of media in China is in essence different from that in a liberal democratic society. Underpinning a liberal democratic media system is constitutional law, which recognises and protects private property and legislative law, thereby allowing a free market and competition among the media (Zhao and Hackett, 1998; Luo, 2015). China has neither of the two. All land in China is officially owned collectively, though individuals can buy the right to use it for a period of time; The CCP's 'visible hand' always tries to outmanoeuvre the market's 'invisible hand'(Harvey, 2005: 120; Luo, 2015). Therefore, Zhao (1998)

is very cautious in terms of what commercialisation can offer to media democratisation in China.

Neither the Party Principle nor commercialisation alone is the guiding power of the official Chinese media today. In fact, Chinese media is under the control of both the Party and business (Zhao, 1998: 152). On the one hand, the CCP will never lose its control over the media as long as the 'Party Principle' stands. The CCP is essentially in charge of all the media in China. One cannot meaningfully distinguish the Party and the state. Hence, 'state-owned' and 'party-owned' in essence are the same (Shao *et al.*, 2016: 37). On the other hand, the neo-market mechanism determines that official media need to address issues that 'the audience' are concerned with, such as corruption, economy, food safety and pollution. Official media have to function like any other business in order to make a profit. However, unlike the traditional western 'the state vs the business' model, the state and the business are almost inseparable in China. The CCP also demands the media serve 'the people' and the public good as if they were a non-profit public service. Thus, the nature and expectation of media are fraught with contradictions. More often than not, media in China can supervise neither the Party nor the business (Zhao, 1998). Among the contradictions, the official Chinese media are facing the issue of balancing their political and social objectives (Creemers, 2015) – a question of when to use the old-school propaganda and when to apply subtle persuasion. Striking the balance is the core task of the official media.

The era of Xi is witnessing a return to the more rigid Party control over almost everything, including media. Since Xi's coming to power, the political objectives seem to have gradually outweighed any social objectives. The keyword in Xi's era is 'control', which reflects the nature of Xi's China (Ringen, 2016: 1). Compared with the Mao era, Chinese people today have much more freedom in terms of what they can do and say, but Chinese people also have unprecedented self-censorship – knowing what is allowed and what is forbidden (Chu, 1994; Huang, 2001; Lin, 2008; Yang, 2009; Lin, 2012; Ringen, 2016). Control is achieved through means such as education and media, or combinations of these elements. Hence, the control over media is tighter. Topics that are safe for journalists to tackle are increasingly secondary social issues and they rarely directly challenge the CCP (McCargo, 2003; Lin, 2012). The media is primarily

used to guide public opinion and legitimise the CCP's rule. Rather than telling the media what not to do, the CPD usually specifies how media should behave (Tang, 2005). What to cover and how to frame are crucial issues. Meanwhile, since 1989, sustaining stability has been a core target. Media professionals often ask themselves whether the news will produce negative effects or undermine social-political stability (Xiao, 1994). The only negative news the CCP permits the media to report are those items which can be framed as not harmful to social stability or jeopardise the legitimacy of the Party. Gradually, the media have formed the habit of self-censorship and gained the ability to reframe sensitive issues to avoid questioning the CCP's responsibility to run the country and take care of its people.

Zhao illustrates the above two points with an example of the reporting on the unaffordable university fee for poor families (1998). Higher education used to be state-sponsored, but the government was unable to provide enough funding in the late 1990s. Many students from less well-off families found it very difficult to afford the tuition fees. In order to bypass the censorship, the production team of the programme did not frame the issue around inequality, which could potentially cause social grievance. Instead, the team reframed the issue by painting the bigger picture that unaffordable tuition for higher education was a convention in capitalist countries. The team further noted that China was at an early stage of development and hence its education investment was insufficient. The programme even provided a solution - however insufficient it might be - by encouraging students from poor families to study harder to win scholarships. Thus, the example shows the importance of media framing and the way in which the media is able to guide the interpretation of the social issue.

2.3 Conclusion

In sum, the media in China since 1949 has generally experienced highly fluctuating development. The media enjoyed considerable freedom in the early days of the PRC before plunging into the 'Dark Ages' of Mao's continuous ideologically-oriented political and economic campaigns (Lu, 2004: 164). Journalism became a pure instrument for political propaganda and indoctrination. Deng's economic reform restored substantial freedom during the mid-1980s and some liberal democratic media ideals entered China. However, the 1989

Tiananmen Crackdown saw a return of the rigid mouthpiece media. Only in 1992 did new reform opportunities arrive when Deng's Southern Tour put the economic reform back on track. The media, together with many other industries in China, had to seek commercialisation for survival, which ultimately helped form the hybrid media structure of contemporary China.

Despite the economic changes and all the freedom it has brought, the core of the official media has always been the Party Principle. Media reform in China remains an economic project and the Party Principle in media has never changed (Zhao, 2008; Luo, 2015; Shao *et al.*, 2016). The official media tried to balance the political and social objectives and adapted to the latest technology and techniques (Kluver and Powers, 1999; Zheng, 2007), In terms of technology, the official media have learned to use animations and pop music to package and sell political ideas. In terms of technique, the official media is able to frame crises in a way to enhance the image and popularity of the CCP among the people, such as using anti-corruption campaign documentaries. The role of media changed from a pure propaganda loudspeaker during the Cultural Revolution to a more sophisticated adaptive Party persuasion. Thus, the fundamental role of media in China has not changed much since the Cultural Revolution. The media's bottom line has always been to serve as the mouthpiece of the CCP. Despite the fact that commercialisation and technological advancement have challenged the monopoly of information of the CCP and encouraged the peoples' participation in media production, the Party Principle remains the standard of Chinese media. Economic reform certainly brought changes to media, but not in terms of what role the media plays, only in how the media play their roles.

Ranking China as 176th out of 180 in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index, the NGO 'Reporters without Borders' describes President Xi as 'the instigator of policies aimed at complete hegemony over news coverage…' ('World Press Freedom Index,' 2017). During Xi's visit to CCTV in February 2016, a slogan declared blatantly that media must be 'surnamed Party' (Rudolph, 2016). Journalistic norms and the institutional practices of the official media are both strictly under the guidance of the Party. Commercialisation and technological advancement have challenged the CCP's monopoly on information and encouraged the participation of the people in media production. However, the Party Principle remains the standard of the official media. In this thesis, I study

the role of the official media through the theoretical perspective of framing and the methodological lens of critical discourse analysis, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework & Methodology

Having reviewed the literature of the history of the Cultural Revolution and the Chinese official media, I now turn my attention to the theoretical framework and the methodological design of the thesis. The purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, it grounds the research in the theoretical framework of the official media framing within the Chinese media system. The thesis covers the under-researched area where media framing theory is applied in a non-democratic non-Anglophone country. Secondly, it provides the rationale behind the research method of the thesis. Lastly, it summarises and explains the data collection process which serves as the basis for the analysis in the next two chapters.

This chapter begins with a review of media framing theory. I underline that certain aspects of media content are made more salient and persistent than others through the process of selection and reutilisation. Next, I present a review and three main reasons for choosing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Firstly, it provides a normative and explanatory critique of discourse, evaluating it against what ought to be right (Fairclough, 2017). Secondly, as the result of the normative claim, the explanatory interpretation follows what the CCP has always admitted – the aforementioned 'Party Principle'. Lastly, CDA complements framing theory in that the latter focuses on the patterned and explicit features of a text, whereas the former also takes into consideration what is purposefully left unsaid. I conclude the chapter by offering a detailed account of the data selection process.

3.1 Media Framing Theory

In the thesis, I approach mediated confessions from the lens of media framing theory. The following part critically reviews framing theory. It gives a brief overview of the broad application of the theory before scrutinising the area that is most relevant to the thesis: the official media framing in China. Considering the authoritarian nature of China, I propose to apply media framing theory in the manner that takes into consideration the Chinese media system, which is centred on 'the Party Principle' mentioned in the previous chapter.

3.1.1 Framing

Generally speaking, framing refers to 'the modes of presentation and interpretation that construct social realities' (Tang and Huhe, 2014:562). This

concept originated from anthropology and cognitive psychology (van Gorp, 2007) where anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972) showed how monkeys, through a certain interactive sequence, could frame and then distinguished an act of 'play' from an act of 'combat'. Meanwhile, as early as 1940, some researchers already noticed that reality was not one thing that everyone agreed upon. In the field of media and journalism, sociologist and journalist Robert Park argued that news should have been viewed as a knowledge source rather than reality. This is due to the fact that more often than not, 'the world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind' (Lippmann, 1921: 284). It highlighted the important mediating role of the media. However, only at the beginning of the 1990s did researchers start shifting their attention from a positivist view of the world to the idea of a reality that could be 'socially constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed' (Snow and Oliver, 1995: 586). Edelman compares the potential social realities to a kaleidoscope 'which can be readily evoked by altering the ways in which observations are framed and categorised' (1993: 232). This social constructivist root is where framing theory comes from.

Since then, researchers from various disciplines have discovered the value of framing. Apart from anthropology and psychology where it originated, framing theory has spread to subjects such as sociology (Goffman, 1997), policy research (Schön and Rein, 1994), public relations research (Hallahan, 1999), linguistics and discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1977; Tannen, 1979), political communication (Gitlin, 1980), social movements (Snow and Benford, 1988; Gamson, 1992) and even artificial intelligence (Ryan, 1991). Moreover, it is a particularly popular research concept in the study of media and communication (Entman, 1993; D'Angelo, 2002; de Vreese, 2012). Since the thesis investigates the media and official framing of the Cultural Revolution and Xi's first five-year term, I narrow my focus within the literature of media framing. I will demonstrate soon that the conventional application of media framing theory with an emphasis on the role of journalists is insufficient and problematic in the case of China due to the non-democratic nature of the country. I argue that applying framing theory in the Chinese media system means paying particular attention to the official discourse which has yet to receive more scholarly attention in media framing research.

3.1.2 Media framing

Framing theory in media and communication research has two theoretical strands. The first champions a psychological tradition, pioneered by the famous 'Asian Disease'[9] study of Kahneman and Tversky (1979). This tradition, also known as the 'equivalency framing' (Cacciatore *et al.*, 2016), investigates the question of whether people have different attitudes towards the same piece of information that is expressed differently. The second root lies in sociology, represented by Erving Goffman's (1997) work. This strand of framing is called the 'emphasis framing', which investigates 'what an audience receives rather than how *equivalent* information is presented'(Cacciatore *et al.*, 2016: 10, emphasis added). That is to say, this second strand of framing focuses on analysing what message is fed to the audience, the way in which the message is manipulated for the audience and how the audience decodes the message. This thesis is premised on the second theoretical root, investigating what kind of message the CCP wants the audience to receive in mediated confessions and how it is constructed.

Erving Goffman defines framing as 'schemata of interpretation' which allow people to 'locate, perceive, identify and label' events while trying to make sense of the world (1997:21). It is an active, contentious and evolving process. Researchers such as Tuchman (1978) and Neuman *et al.* (1992) argue that the media actively set frames for an audience, guiding their interpretations and discussion of the events. In contrast, Kosicki and McLeod (1990) contend that individuals are actively supplementing, reflecting and ignoring certain information from the media. In this sense, framing happens in two dimensions: media frames and individual frames (Kinder and Sanders, 1990; Entman, 1991; Scheufele, 1999).

Media frames are 'the characteristics of the news text' (Entman, 1991:7). They are usually characterised by selection, salience, re-utilisation and persistence

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[9] The 'Asian Disease' study is an experiment conducted by Tversky and Kahneman. The participants were told that in an imaginary scenario an unusual Asian disease would soon strike the US. It would kill 600 people. Two programmes were available for them to combat the disease. Tversky and Kahneman worded the essentially exactly same options differently, with one emphasising the survival rate and the other the fatality rate. Their conclusion was that people tended to be 'risk-averse' when they were facing an outcome of gains (survival). Meanwhile, people became more 'risk-seeking' if they were facing a losing situation (death). Tversky and Kahneman have since managed to demonstrate a consistent result when studying other issues (Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). Humans behave differently facing the same situation presented differently to them.

of certain aspects of an event (Gitlin, 1980; Entman, 1993). Therefore, media framing is a selective construction of events where certain characteristics of events outweigh the others in the text. Individual frames, however, represent an audience's 'internal structures of the mind' (Kinder and Sanders, 1990: 25), which examines people's perception and interpretation towards the same media item. This thesis does not investigate how the audience actually interprets the media programmes or whether the official media framing manages to alter people's opinions. Instead, it primarily focuses on the construction of media frames and subsequently a potential CCP-preferred interpretation of them. The aim of the analysis is to have a better understanding of the political logic behind the legitimation processes through the CCP-led official media framing. It is also able to explore how the framing is changed by the Party for various purposes at different times.

There are many ways that framing can operate in texts. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) identify at least five so-called media 'framing devices' in the western democratic media system. These framing devices are where frames are often located in media texts: metaphors, exemplars (historical examples), catchphrases, depictions and visual images. These framing devices provide crucial guidance for the analysis in the thesis. They also summarise three 'reasoning devices' that the framing process relies on: it often starts with a causal analysis of the roots of an issue and then presents the consequences and effects of the problem. In the end, it appeals to people's principles by making moral claims. These two devices and the moral judgement directly facilitate the identification of framing in the analysis chapters.

Gamson and Modigliani treat the content of media discourse, which includes the aforementioned framing and reasoning devices and moral claims, as 'the outcome of a value-added process'(1989b). This process creates a so-called 'media package'. The success of such a media package is premised on the combination of cultural resonance, sponsors and media practices. Cultural resonance refers to the relatively constant social-cultural background. Framing requires drawing on this shared social meaning in a historically and culturally specific context (Reese, 2009; Fairclough, 2010a). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) give an example of how the pro-nuclear progression frame fits into the American cultural value of supporting technology and efficiency. However, counterframes

can exist. For instance, there is also part of America's culture that is very sceptical about technology and fears technology eventually running out of human control. Therefore, the authors remind us to think of culture dialectically. As the analysis will show, similar contradictions exist in Chinese culture and they are reflected in the framing analysis.

'Sponsors' means those who are in charge of public relations in various social organisations, governments and companies. Their responsibility is to keep in touch with journalists to promote their collective agenda. Sponsors are familiar with journalistic routines and some of them may have been journalists themselves in the past. However, having sponsors actively shape a collective agenda does not mean that journalists are passive. 'Media practice' describes the journalists' role in shaping media framing (Halberstam, 1979). For instance, even in Cultural Revolution China, there was conscious passive resistance to the unreasonable personal attack of some cadres at the early stage in the Revolution. Delaying publication as long as possible after the CCP denunciation meeting was one method of silent resistance (RMRB History, 1988). Hence, in a liberal democratic country, whether certain framing makes it to the news depends on the three main factors mentioned above.

Much of the recent debates within media framing theory tilt heavily towards journalists and the study of media effects (Cacciatore *et al.*, 2016). There was even a recent call for the abandonment of 'emphasis framing' and a total shift towards effect studies in order to end the conceptual confusion of framing with some other similar concepts such as agenda-setting theory (Cacciatore *et al.*, 2016). These arguments may seem to make sense in the study of media effects, or the aforementioned individual frames. However, the debate leaves out the discussion concerning media frames and the theoretical values of 'emphasis framing' in analysing the formation of media frames. Moreover, since the theory has been developed on cases predominantly from Western democracies, as shown in the previous chapter, it has some default assumptions as to journalistic professional norms, checks and balances in political systems, and the responsibilities of business corporations, which are very different from those in China. For example, journalists often have the duty to keep powerful institutions in check; media is supposed to be a contested public sphere where various participants voice different opinions. Also, the business interests of big media

organisations may be at odds with their expected traditional media responsibilities. There are many differences between authoritarian political environments and their liberal democratic counterparts in terms of the ways in which relationships among political elites, the media, business corporations and ordinary people intertwine. Here, I would like to highlight the point that, for authoritarian states, media, together with education, is a critical tool in legitimising the domination of the leaders. As Sullivan elaborates, 'authoritarian regimes select and control access to the information that citizens are exposed to and interpret "the facts" for them' (2014:29). This selection, control and preferred interpretation mean that when positioning media framing theory in a different context, such as China, the boundary of the three sources of influence begins to blur. As reviewed in the previous chapter, the Chinese media system's dual identity and the core of the 'Party Principle' means that the theoretical nuance will inevitably affect the application of the theory. An authoritarian media system is very likely to significantly undermine the individual journalist's role in framing the news.

Therefore, instead of advocating moving away completely from 'emphasis framing', I propose that the application of media framing theory needs a shift of attention to other elements rather than the journalist-centred ones. It is particularly relevant when researching areas in which individual journalists have limited control of the framing in contrast to their counterparts in liberal democratic countries. The previous chapter has explained that the official media during the Cultural Revolution was rather different from that of the rest of the period since 1949. The total politicisation of the society meant that the CCP or a group of top political elites, as the main source of framing influence, held the aforementioned three roles simultaneously: they determined the ideology and professional norms of journalists; they made rules about the organisational routine and political preference of the media; and last but not least, they were also the 'external sources' - authorities, interest groups and elites – that could effectively influence the creation of media content. Today, in the age of the internet in Xi's China, the Party retains an influence on the three roles. The official media can often effectively counterframe most challenges from less influential media, increasingly so in Xi's era. While it is true that resistance to total control has always existed, the individual journalistic-centred sources of influence in the case of Chinese official media are very likely to ineluctably fuse into the one factor, 'the CCP',

considering the fundamentally unchanged political structure in China (Tang and Huhe, 2014).

3.1.3 Official media framing in China

The application of media framing theory in this study closely relates to the role of the official media in China during the Cultural Revolution and Xi's era. Official media in China has always been at the forefront of constructing common beliefs to facilitate the Party's rule. Its importance also lies in the fact that it often provides a possible inference into the otherwise murky Party politics. Young explains that,

> China's media are a sort of window on the soul of the Communist Party. They present the Party's message of the day, its broader agenda, and information on how it aims to achieve its goals. They also contain messages – some straightforward and others more veiled – of what is and is not acceptable, and what happens to those who make trouble. Equally important is what's *not* reported, be it an event that's considered taboo or an official who has fallen out of favour (2013:3).

Therefore, caution is necessary when applying media framing theory in the case of China. The focus on the CCP means that it is the official framing that has to be under particular scrutiny in the thesis. By no means do I suggest that the CCP is a monolithic entity and that every member in important positions agrees on all matters. However, the official media framing is often the result of 'an internal hegemonic struggle for interpretative supremacy among the regime's intellectual and political elites' (Bondes and Heep, 2013: 320). That is to say, after the power struggle and deliberation, once a particular framing is agreed on, the CCP has the advantage to direct the interpretation of it due to its control over the official media, creating potentially very effective official framing (Noakes and Johnston, 2005).

Bondes and Heep (2013) innovatively combine the social movement framing perspective (Snow and Benford, 1988) and the study of legitimacy (Beetham, 1991) in an exploration of the official discourse during President Hu Jintao's era. Borrowing Beetham's idea on power and legitimacy, the authors argue that the ruling party in authoritarian China plants the notion of leadership qualities and the determination of serving the people by reproducing an official frame that is in line with the established rules in Hu's era. Supported by

identifiable evidence, these rules are justified by norms shared between 'the dominant and the subordinate' among Chinese people (Bondes and Heep, 2013: 319). They rightly point out that '[s]tudying both the limits and shifts in official framing and their related concepts can help to provide useful insights into the country's political development' (Bondes and Heep, 2013:331). Their case study, therefore, sets an example for this thesis to further explore the issue of official framing and trace the ideological framework and political development in China since the Cultural Revolution.

In conclusion, media framing theory contends that through selection and reutilisation, certain aspects of media content are made more salient and persistent than others (Gitlin, 1980; Entman, 1993). Metaphors, historical examples, catchphrases, depictions and visual images often indicate the location of frames in media programmes (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Together, they identify, diagnose, suggest solutions to and make moral claims on the topic. The success of framing depends on the relatively constant social cultural background, or 'cultural resonance', that is specific to a society at a particular moment (Ferree, 2003). After the review, I propose to build the theoretical framework of the thesis on the media framing theory with a particular emphasis on official framing after taking into account the nature of the media system in China. The thesis has two major contributions to framing theory research. First of all, it answers the call for more diachronic and cross-movement framing research (Benford, 1997). The thesis examines the official media framings at two historic periods under two CCP leaders (the 1960s and the 2010s). Secondly, the thesis is a demonstration of applying framing theory in an authoritarian nation. Currently, cases from western democratic countries dominate the empirical studies of media and communication (Yoshitaka, 2007). This domination, as pointed out earlier, often leads to certain assumptions embedded in the media, cultural and political systems. Therefore, this research provides a critical reflection on the elements that potentially affect the application of framing theory in a non-democratic non-Anglophone environment.

Having presented the theoretical framework of media framing theory, I move on to explain the rationale behind choosing the CDA approach and clarify how the three-dimensional model facilitates the analysis.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

3.2.1 What is CDA?

Broadly speaking, I use critical discourse analysis in the thesis: a qualitative critical realist approach to media framing analysis. It gives priority to the study of power relations and the role of language in challenging or maintaining the existing power relations (Breeze, 2011: 512). CDA is transdisciplinary, relational and dialectical (Fairclough, 2010b: 3). There are multiple schools within CDA. Fairclough and his colleagues state that CDA is a 'problem-oriented interdisciplinary research movement, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda' (2011: 357). That is to say, depending on the project and the researcher, CDA has different foci and is conducted in various ways (Fairclough, 1985; 1989; Fowler, 1991 [initial British school]; van Dijk, 1991 [sociocognitive model]; Wodak, 1996 [the Viennese Discourse-Historical Approach]; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999 [developed British school]). Such heterogeneity and flexibility mean that individual researchers may have different understandings of some of the core, but rather contentious notions associated with CDA, such as discourse, power and ideology. Therefore, it is necessary first to clarify these concepts in this thesis.

I apply Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA to examine the power relations, identities and ideology involved in the mediated confession mainly through the lens of language. In this thesis, discourse, in its abstract uncountable noun form, means 'language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life' (Fairclough, 2003: 26), such as written texts, spoken languages as well as visual images. I adopt the Foucauldian view on power, which means that power is productive (Foucault, 1972: 45). That is to say, power has the ability to produce subjects and agents through discourse, influencing who we are and how we think. For instance, a confession discourse creates 'confessants' who admit their mistakes, 'confessors' who listen to the confession, and a repenting procedure. In this way, CDA deals with the relation between language and identities. As for ideology, it describes the creation of meaning in order to serve the dominant power (Thompson, 1984: 4). It often implicitly manifests itself as values, standards, norms or 'truths', which are crucial for the CCP in order to articulate its legitimacy to rule. These values, standards, norms or truths can be complex, contradictory and messy in nature (Hodge and Kress, 1988; 1993; Hodge and

Louie, 1998: 11). This is discussed in more detail in the section detailing Fairclough's three-dimensional model later in this chapter.

Fairclough (1995: 135) defines CDA as a school of,

> discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

The implication of this definition is that CDA is an empirical study of the relations involved in the production, dissemination and consumption of language and its connection to the wider social structure. Language on its own is not the focus of CDA. Rather, the analytical importance lies in both the internal and external relations of discourse.

The internal relation deals with discourse itself as a set of relationships. That is to say, it draws on 'orders of discourse, i.e., social practices (forms of social activities) in their discoursal aspect, and their discourses, genres and styles associated with them' (Fairclough, 2010: 359). 'Discourses' refer to 'particular ways of representing part[s] of the world' (Fairclough, 2003: 26). For example, different political discourses about China, such as the Century of Humiliation Discourse emphasising the bitter past as opposed to Xi's more assertive and Sino-centric China Dream Discourse, reflect different relationships between China and the world. Genre refers to a semiotic form of 'acting, of producing social life' (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002: 193). 'Genre' is 'the use of language associated with and constituting part of some particular social practices…' (Fairclough, 1995: 56). Different genres mean acting and interacting with discourse in different ways, such as public confessions, street interviews, news bulletins and documentaries. 'Style' is 'particular way of being, i.e., a particular identity' (Fairclough, 2010: 358). It explores the way in which a person's use of language manifests in self-identification. For example, there are various ways to conduct self-criticism as a confessant. In the analysis, these will manifest in the way in

which the confessant frames themselves, their wrongdoings and their relation to others in the social-cultural and political environment.

The external relation refers to the link between discourse and other 'objects' such as power in the external social structure (Fairclough, 2010a: 3). Such a relation is often dialectical, meaning the relationships 'are different from one another but not… "discrete", not fully separate in the sense that one excludes the other' (Fairclough, 2010b: 4). That is to say, power can be discursive, yet not purely discursive (such as physical power). Therefore, discourse and power are neither discrete nor reducible to each other. In the end, both the internal and external relations mean that discourse both shapes and is shaped by a specific society at a specific time. Next, I provide the rationale for choosing CDA as my method.

3.2.2 Why CDA?

CDA is highly relevant in the study of the framing of mediated confessions because it connects meaning to power. More specifically, there are three main reasons to choose CDA in this research. The first reason lies in CDA's preference for politically interested research. Inspired by Marxist theories, more specifically the Frankfurt School, CDA has a political tendency (Breeze, 2011: 498). Instead of observing and interpreting like many natural scientists who aim to hold a 'neutral' and 'objective' ground, CDA theorists identify the hidden problem, evaluate it and prescribe how it ought to be dealt with. In this sense, it is a 'critical' and 'normative' approach which advocates intervention after the identification of issues. Not all analysis of texts is or needs to be 'critical' so that a judgement is given. For example, content analysis is only a 'simple description of structures of texts and talks' (Maingueneau and O'regan, 2006: 230). CDA is 'critical' and 'normative' in that it does not claim that researchers should be neutral observers in terms of its research aims and often actively aligns itself with the powerless.

However, such politically charged aim is also one of the biggest critiques of CDA. Some CDA critics are suspicious of this emancipatory righteousness (Widdowson, 1996; Hammersley, 1997; Widdowson, 1998; Widdowson, 2004; Shi, 2014). I admit that there is no guarantee that one's own sense of judgement must be correct and accepted by others. Nevertheless, CDA is appropriate for this study. Considering that the CCP never hides the fact that the media's first

obligation is to be loyal to the CCP, as reviewed previously in this chapter, nor is it shy about openly sanitising media, the official Chinese media is bound to frame the news in the service of the Party first and foremost. When the needs of the powerless in China inevitably come into conflict with that of the CCP, the interests of the powerless can easily be sacrificed for the preservation of the Party. To use CDA in the research is to state clearly that one of my research aims is to demonstrate the way in which the current official media reinforces existing power relations through careful framing.

The second reason for using CDA is that CDA researchers often adopt a particular selective interpretation. CDA critics tend to argue that overinterpretation may endanger the scholarly task of producing valid knowledge (Hammersley, 1997: 245). Therefore, I now explain the principle of interpretation: it is set according to the CCP's political agenda. Since the CCP is never shy to admit the discursive control and manipulation to serve the Party purpose, what constitutes the official news is an ideological product specific to the Party leader. This particular interpretation is important. For example, official media texts have been carefully crafted by the relevant Party personnel, especially important editorials which would have been drafted, redrafted, checked and proofed by top CCP members such as Zhou Enlai in the 1960s. Seemingly trivial details have to follow a rigid standard. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret the Party's intention in the Party Principle and reveal the Party's logic and potential intention embedded in the framing of mediated confessions. This is not a pure personal interpretation preference but something the CCP has always admitted and done.

Moreover, reading the line alongside the CCP's political agenda has been proven a reliable way of interpretation. For example, the order of the names of leaders appearing in news is never random, with the most important appearing first all the time (Leese, 2011: 109). Certain wordings are indeed reserved for a certain level of leaders. This is why there was such a fuss when Xi was hailed a 'great helmsman' by some officials during the 19th NPC in 2017 – it is a term only Mao had been entitled to (Gan, 2017). Details as such cannot be generalised in the linguistic theories, yet they are crucial in understanding the political discourse in China. Considering the degree of discursive control in China, many people rely on reading between the lines to infer what happened or may happen in the future. Consequently, it has been almost a requirement, in some cases a survival

technique, for the reader to unpack news according to his or her experience and understanding of the politics of the time (Hodge and Louie, 1998). For instance, in the 1960s – a time when every aspect of people's lives was under the control of the Party - some people noticed that if it was common to see a sentence containing two different emphases, such as 'we should highlight the importance of politics; we should also do our own jobs well' or 'education should emphasise politics; education should also emphasise on teaching quality' (Yang, 1988: 60). The reader understood that the real importance was the second half of the sentence, and the first half was merely a compulsory part stating what was politically required in the news framing formula. This kind of interpretation was highly subjective and selective but crucial in sensing political changes. It was based on life experiences and the political situation of the time. Even though mediated confessions may not be as important as the Party frontpage editorials penned by the elite, its highly orchestrated nature means that it is very likely to be carefully and deliberately worded in the way it is. According to the report of the Safeguard Defenders (2018), what to say and how to say it during the confession recording is often under tight control. Frequent retakes of recordings due to unsatisfactory performances are very common. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that the cases examined in the thesis are carefully prepared in a similar fashion. Hence, careful reading according to the specific political situation is needed.

The third reason to use CDA is that the utilisation of theoretical integration framing theory and CDA potentially makes the analysis more comprehensive. More than merely focusing on the linear effects, both concepts highlight the process of maintaining or challenging certain existing framing and power. Similar to the pluralistic nature of framing theory mentioned above, CDA is 'transdisciplinary' (Fairclough, 2010a: 476). It benefits from theories and notions from other social science disciplines, lending itself to integration and being used in association with complementary research methods. More importantly, CDA and framing theory can complement each other in the analysis. The strength of framing is to pinpoint what is intentionally made salient in the text, while CDA can potentially take into consideration what is deliberately omitted. What is missing is as important as what is present. Therefore, a methodological approach which takes into account of both provides a more thorough analysis of mediated

confessions. Having laid out the reasons for choosing CDA, I next discuss the CDA approach to study media discourse.

3.2.3 Media Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (1995: 56) summarises the 'twin focuses' of media discourse analysis: communicative events and the order of discourse. Communicative events are the empirical cases of language use, such as a specific news bulletin or an episode of a TV documentary. The communicative events as social practices change and are changed by the order of discourse. The order of discourse, which Fairclough borrows from Foucault, refers to a 'network' of 'the discursive practices of a community' which mediates between the concrete text and language in an abstract sense (Fairclough, 1995: 55). It is 'sets of conventions associated with social institutions' (Fairclough, 2001: 14). In the thesis, the order of discourse of mediated confessions refers to the conventions of news media and self-criticism which is constituted by genre, style and discourses mentioned above. The media discourse analysis typically concerns the continuity and change in the media discourse in relation to the social order. Social order is a set of rules around which social practices are organised and the order of discourse is the semiotic reflection of this social order. Now I introduce Fairclough and his colleagues' three-dimensional model which systematically traces and analyses communicative events.

Fairclough and his colleagues contend that there are three dimensions within a communicative event: a textual dimension, a discursive dimension and a social dimension. Thus, a three-dimensional CDA is an analysis of 'the relationship between texts, interactions and contexts' (Fairclough, 2010a: 21). The three-dimensional model represents the conceptual framework of CDA, which functions to establish links and mediate between texts and social practices. It aims to bridge the gap between social theories and linguistic theories (Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 6). As a result, researchers can integrate various elements from different theories as long as these elements are ontologically and epistemologically coherent and appropriate. The three-dimensional CDA framework is also flexible in that while maintaining a comprehensive view of discourse practices mediating between the language and the social political practices, one may choose to focus on one of the three dimensions according to the research agenda (Fairclough, 1995: 62).

The first dimension revolves around 'texts'. This level is most interested in the linguistics analysis of the textual and visual content, including vocabulary, grammar, and sentence organisation. It largely adopts the analysis of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fairclough, 1995: 58; Fairclough, 2003: 5). In the thesis, through analysing the language used by the confessants and those who are immediately involved in the story, the analysis can show the construction of individual identities. Meanwhile, through the linguistic features surrounding the involved subjects, this level of analysis reveals the relationship between the confessant and those who are closely involved. In the end, via the construction of the subject identities and relations, this dimension identifies the construction of the aforementioned reasoning device that is involved in different mediated confession cases: diagnosing problems, making moral judgements and prescribing remedies.

On the level of textual analysis, I apply the linguistic analysis in a cautious manner. In general, many social science theories and approaches are heavily Western-centric, and so is CDA (Hodge and Louie, 1998; Shi, 2014). Considering its theoretical foundations, assumptions and application, Shi claims that CDA is a 'hegemonic discourse in academia itself' (2014: 5). Some of his arguments are controversial[10], but I do share his statement that the majority of the communicative events in existing CDA research are examples from the western democratic countries or are carried out in English. Therefore, when analysing Mandarin Chinese texts, apart from the linguistic features that it shares with English, such as active/passive voice and modalities, I also pay attention to the potential different linguistic and rhetorical features that are a part of Mandarin Chinese, but not English, such as an implicit form of judgement *shi…de,* which has no equivalent in English and I will explain in more detail in Chapter 5.

[10] Shi (2014) places the role of traditional Chinese culture at the centre of interpreting current Chinese political communication. He heavily criticises the 'propaganda' interpretation of the political communication from many Western scholars and views it as an example needing a 'de-westernised' reading. He proposes to use the traditional Confucian culture of 'nature-human harmony' to understanding Chinese political communication. Shi emphasises the Eastern culture's harmony-oriented characteristics and believes that 'informing, educating and mobilising the public' to maintain social and political stability is 'a culturally alternative, moralistic tradition of using communication for societal good…', rather than a 'polarising and pejorative' propaganda (Shi, 2014: 70). Such claims can be seen as controversial since it can be argued that the current function of Chinese media follows neither a Confucian tradition nor an alternative way of using communication 'for societal good'. I later argue in the thesis that there is a need for Chinese people to think twice about the 'culture' they are selectively fed.

Moreover, in Mandarin Chinese, there are two popular discursive forms – closed and open. The closed one refers to those whose form is reductive and meaning relatively clear, whereas the open one is allusive (Hodge and Louie, 1998). The closed form includes *chengyu* (set phrases, usually in four characters) and slogans whose implication is usually straightforward. In contrast, the open form, such as couplets (*dui'ou*), parallelism (*paibi*) and poems, is more artistic. The open form echoes the rule of 'discrepancy' (Shi, 2014), meaning that the open form of the Chinese discourses is indirect and full of covert meanings, as one Chinese saying goes: 'words are finite whereas meaning is infinite'. This discrepancy has a profound implication in terms of the research goal of Chinese discourse analysis. The goals of the interpretation should be 'suggestive' and 'dialogical' (Shi, 2014: 91), and pay attention to the possibility of having multiple interpretations. The textual level of analysis in the later chapters will also take into consideration the closed and open discursive forms.

The second level of analysis is the interpretive level, which relates to the production and consumption of media texts. An institutional discursive practice includes elements such as newspaper editorial routines and newspaper reading groups during the Cultural Revolution. By contrast, a narrower sense of discursive practice includes studying the transformation of information from various sources into news or TV programmes. One important such transformation is intertextuality. Intertextuality is an interpretative process that constructs meanings through other available texts, such as direct quotations (Kristeva, 1980: 36). Intertextuality is important because it is through referencing to other sources of texts that a new text builds its authority and argument (Hansen, 2006). If 'different discourses and genres are articulated together in a communicative event', constitutive intertextuality occurs, which is also known as 'interdiscursivity' (Fairclough, 1992). For example, when talking about the rehabilitation of corrupted officials, the Party often calls it a process of treating sick people. It exemplifies the healing discourse being migrated to the realm of politics. As I mentioned above, it is at this level of the communicative event that the order of discourse elements plays a role. The two key elements in the order of discourse - genres and discourses – often reveal the assumed and expected means of producing and consuming media discourse. The way the communicative event makes use of the order of discourse and the reference to other sources determines,

to a large extent, whether the media discourse under scrutiny is a reinforcement or a reconstruction of existing identities, relations and power structures.

With the mediation provided by discursive practices, the textual level is connected to the third dimension – the social level. This level examines the context of mediated confessions. This context is the basis of the socially accepted norms for the production and interpretation of mediated confessions. It explains the formation of the discourses identified from the previous two levels of analysis. Depending on the research topic, one may choose to discuss in more detail the economic, the cultural or the political practices. I focus on the political and cultural practices in this analysis.

Media discourse is 'sensitive' (Fairclough, 1995: 51) to social and political changes. Hence, through tracing the change in media discourse, one can expect a certain corresponding change in the broader environment. More specifically, since the practice of confession is a manifestation of ideological education, I attempt to address the crucial ideological consequence of mediated confessions in this part: to what extent, does the mediated confession discourse change or maintain the current socio-political order? That is to say, how does mediated confession construct particular Party legitimacy at different times and to what extent has the framing strategy for legitimising the CCP's rule changed or remained the same? The answers to these questions will be addressed after the analysis in the concluding chapter.

Overall, the three-dimensional model places ideology or the ideological consequences of media discourse at the centre of the investigation. Fairclough highlights 'the ideological workings of language' (2001: 2) as the way in which power is exercised in society. Building on the work of Hodge and Kress (1988; 1993), Hodge and Louie (1998: 52) further propose to distinguish the so-called P-ideology and S-ideology in the case of China. The former (P) characterises the ideology's function to showcase the power of 'the powerful' and separate them from 'the non-powerful', whereas the latter (S) functions to maintain solidarity and stress interdependence among 'the non-powerful' and between 'the powerful' and 'the non-powerful'. The two conflicting ideologies create the corresponding discourses with different emphases. P-ideology, utilising oppositional binaries, tends to explicitly show the differences and implicitly indicate preferences,

whereas S-ideology focuses on the interdependence of and the equal importance of the binaries.

For instance, what is the power relationship between the Party and the people according to the two ideologies? S-ideology explains that, on the one hand, expressions such as ‘serve the people’ and ‘power bestowed by people’ shows a master-servant relationship where the existence of the CCP depends on the trust and support of the masses; on the other hand, people ‘rely on’ and ‘trust’ the Party in the sense of a parent-child relationship where the masses cannot do anything if the officials keep neglecting their duties. It is a sense of feudal ‘subject mentality’ (*chenmin yishi*), similar to an expression which describes the local officials and residents – parents officials (*fumu guan*). In this relationship, the officials were described as the parents of the local residents, implying a total reliance from the local residents on the officials being responsible and upholding justice in order to have a good life. Therefore, S-ideology emphasises the interdependence and equal importance of the people and the Party.

P-ideology often suggests that the CCP members are advanced and know better what is good for the people. A common phrase in news ‘the Party and the people’ – ‘the Party and the people trust you’ or ‘the Party and the people thank you’ – sets the hierarchy clearly. Firstly, the order shows that the Party is always of the top priority and the people are always secondary. Secondly, such sentences are more likely to eminate from the President, rather than from any ordinary people. The very fact that there is no voice of the people in official news demonstrates the supreme position of the Party. Therefore, P-ideology showcases the domination of the CCP.

Consequently, while P-ideology creates binary identities in which ‘the powerful’ can display their domination, S-ideology tries to blur the distinction to ensure unity and harmony. The view of ideology follows the same logic as the understanding of Beetham’s legitimacy, which was introduced previously in the section of Chinese official media. Both the P/S-ideology and Beetham’s theory of legitimacy require a show of the differences that distinguish the powerful and the powerless at the same time a show of the consent over the differences between the powerful and the powerless. The contradictory process neatly captures how ideology and legitimation can be understood in China where the logic of any story is secondary to the Party’s political agenda. The analysis chapters will investigate

whether there is a creation of such distinctions alongside a show for consent and how it is framed. Having discussed the official media framing theory and the rationale of applying Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA, I describe the data collection process in the last part of this chapter.

3.3 Data Summary

The data collected in the thesis includes both historical materials from the Cultural Revolution and the most recent (2015-2017) examples from Xi's era. For the period of the Cultural Revolution, due to accessibility issues today and the limited media technology in the 1960s and the 1970s, I have chosen to collect confession news from the *People's Daily*. As mentioned before, many media disappeared at a certain point or temporarily ceased publication. It makes it difficult to systematically trace long-term changes of the same publication. By contrast, the uninterrupted existence of a selected few media makes it possible to better capture the change and similarity of the way in which official media have operated over time and the *People's Daily* is one such example. It is the one newspaper organisation which has a bureaucratic rank equal to a ministry (Jernow, 1993: 1). Consequently, it has a unique duty to the Party. As a national newspaper, the *People's Daily* was one of the only three official publications which remained in circulation during the Cultural Revolution and is the sole survivor among the three today. It was a key propaganda tool during the Cultural Revolution, containing important information and directions which were often read out on radio and loudspeaker for further dissemination. Today, the *People's Daily*, like other official newspapers, is much less popular among audiences. This is partly the result of the development of media technology, which transmits news in a much faster and more entertaining fashion than the traditional official printed press. It is also the result of having a close tie to the CCP, which leads to restrictions on the topic and language of the publication. The CCP often has to impose compulsory subscription in local government departments, business organisations and schools. The significance of such official newspapers lies less so in the circulation, but more for its symbolic status as representing the seemingly unified Party voice.

The data in the thesis not only spans two periods of time but also includes different kinds of media into which confession has made an appearance. Considering the technological and economic developments, I choose three CCTV

news clips and a CCTV documentary series as contemporary data. Unlike those who had very little access to information during the Cultural Revolution, Chinese people today have many more options regarding what to read and watch. Compared with official newspapers today, television programmes from CCTV have a wider reach and attraction to the general public, in spite of also being official media. In fact, an initial scan of the contemporary data reveals that much of the political ritual of confession and self-criticism is mediated through television rather than newspapers, and then further spreads on the Internet. By selecting the aforementioned data, I aim to capture not only the content of official framing but also the CCP's ability to adapt when facing the challenges posed by economic and technological advancement. The detailed selection procedure and criterion are as follows.

3.3.1 Newspapers

This thesis collects the confession news pieces firstly from the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1976) and from the *People's Daily* (1946-2008) database, and then the first five-year term of Xi's presidency (2012-2017) from the limited access to its contemporary database produced by the website http://data.people.com.cn/ (1946-2018). I conducted a keyword search using the phrase 'I made mistakes' (*wo fancuowu*) in the database to narrow down the number of articles. The reason to choose this particular phrase is that the other seemingly obvious choices of words, such as 'confession' (*chanhui, fanxing*), 'self-criticism' (*ziwo piping*) and 'mistakes' *(cuowu*), tend to return the corpus of news articles describing the *necessity* of being self-critical and self-reflective rather than a *confession* written by or attributed to someone. However, the existence of those articles did reflect the confessional culture approved by the CCP, which was part of the social and political norm at the time. The search returned 56 pieces of news, ranging from 1946 to 2008. After skimming through the pieces between June 1966 and September 1976, I narrowed the 56 pieces down to 8 news articles. The reason to include pre- and post- Cultural Revolution data is that it gives a simple but straightforward overview of the development of the confessional practice represented in the newspaper since 1946. The result echoed the literature in Chapter 1 that self-criticism and criticism was not an invention during the Cultural Revolution (see Figure 2). According to Figure 2, confession-themed articles were most popular (7 pieces) between 1956 and 1958.

They peaked again at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, though with fewer than half of the articles in 1957. A similar spike recurred at the beginning of the 1980s. The confession articles almost disappeared during the years after 1995. Since the database does not include any news articles published after 2007, I searched the open online resources[11]. The search[12] returned only one article, which turned out to be irrelevant to confession. However, having no recent confession news in the *People's Daily* does not mean mediated confession does not exist. As mentioned before, much of it has transferred to the platform of television.

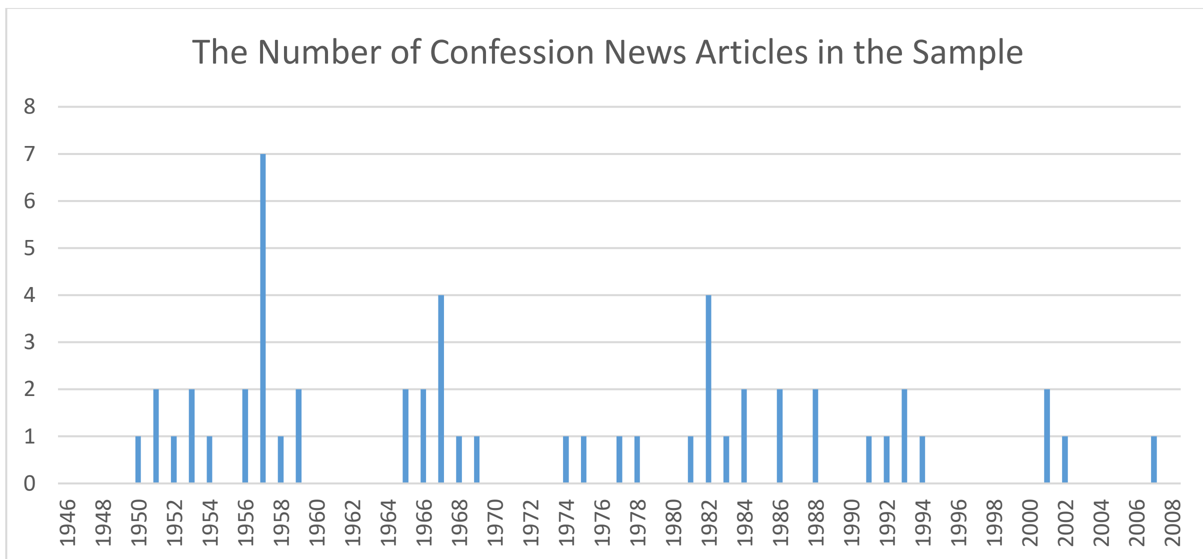

Figure 2 The Number of Confession News Articles in the Sample

3.3.2 TV News Clips

With the advancement of media technology, confession and self-criticism are often mediated through TV news. TV news, with its sound and visual framing effects, becomes an ideal option for the CCP to make the confession ritual as widespread as possible. According to the Safeguard Defenders (2018: 4), there were at least 45 TV confession cases between 2013 and 2018, involving people from all walks of life. There were journalists who were said to have produced false reports, public intellectuals who were alleged to have spread rumours and celebrities who were accused of taking drugs. I selected three cases for analysis which have attracted much attention from home and abroad alike. They are the

[11] http://58.68.146.102/rmrb/20170526/1?code=2 (Accessed 26 May 2017).

[12] Due to access issue, I only had a limited access to the article: I could only read the title, publishing information and the first few lines of the news. Nonetheless, it was enough to decide whether the article was relevant or not. In this case, it was irrelevant.

case of journalist Gao Yu, Hong Kong-based Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai and Swedish rights activist Peter Dahlin.

The three cases bear common traits that are shared across TV confessions, but they also have their own unique characteristics (Safeguard Defenders, 2018: 37). The TV confessions are politically motivated, yet they are often framed as anything but politically relevant. They all exhibit the three 'Ds' character – deny, denounce and defend. It is the task of the thesis to analyse how the three 'Ds' is framed in every case. Meanwhile, all the three cases also exhibit their uniqueness, charting a broad sketch of what can possibly be involved in mediated confessions today. The confessors are from different professions (a journalist, an activist and a bookseller) and nationalities (Chinese, Swedish, and a man who was born in mainland China but does business in Hong Kong and holds a Swedish passport). The reasons for them being forced to conduct TV confessions and the content of their confessions are different, which I will explain in detail in the analysis.

Here, I would like to highlight the quite unique case of Gui. Alongside the cases of Gao and Dahlin, Gui's case demonstrates the diversity of nationalities and professions in the mediated confessions. While the cases of Chinese journalist Gao Yu and Swedish activist Peter Dahlin have both ended – Gao was sentenced and released while Dahlin was deported to Sweden and barred from entering China for ten years (Wong, 2016), bookseller Gui Minhai represents a more complicated case. Gui was born in Ningbo, southeast China, but is currently a Swedish citizen who does not hold PRC citizenship. Before his disappearance, he made a living from selling books in Hong Kong. He was one of the five Hong Kong Causeway Bay booksellers who were kidnapped by mainland authorities due to, according to wide speculation, their book business, despite the denial from the mainland. Gui's multiple identities and connections with mainland China, Hong Kong and Sweden make him a prism, refracting multiple relations that the framing needs to construct and coordinate simultaneously. Gui's case reflects a growing trend that the political ritual of confession has not only reappeared in China but can also affect anyone in Chinese society if the CCP feels threatened by them in any way and needs to make an example of these societal members in public.

3.3.3 Documentary - 'Always on the Road' (2016)

More varieties of public affair programmes have entered the official media since the economic reform. They are deceptively more attractive and less propagandist communication measures. As reviewed in Chapter 1, Xi's anti-corruption campaign is his flagship political agenda and the official media are at the forefront of promoting it. There have been three documentaries about the anti-corruption campaign since 2012: 'The Party's Work-style Construction Is Always on the Road' (*Zuofeng jianshe yongyuan zai lushang)* (2014), 'Always on the Road' (*yongyuan zai lushang*) (2016) and 'Forging Steel Requires Strength in One's Body' (*Datie haixu zisheng ying*) (2017). 'The Party's Work-style Constriction Is Always on the Road' tells the anti-corruption stories from the perspective of the CCDI, which is usually inaccessible for the ordinary people. Shifting focus, the latest anti-corruption documentary 'Forging Steel Requires Strength in One's Body' features the corruption cases mainly involving the Commission for Discipline Inspection at both central and local levels. The documentaries strive to show that the Commission for Discipline Inspection, as the internal disciplinary organisation for the CCP, is actively battling on the frontline of Xi's anti-corruption campaign and at the same time is no exception to scrutiny.' The Party's Work-style Constriction Is Always on the Road' and 'Forging Steel Requires Strength in One's Body' are shorter; only four and three episodes, respectively. The corruption cases in these two documentaries are less well-known. In the case of 'The Party's Work-style Constriction Is Always on the Road' the guilty officials are mainly on the city level, with a few cases on the provincial level. As for 'Forging Steel Requires Strength in One's Body', even though it showcases the stories of the fallen provincial officials and CCDI staff, these people are less known by the public. All three are co-produced by CCTV and the Party regulation watchdog, CCDI. All three were firstbroadcast at prime time 20:00 on CCTV1.

In this thesis, I choose to focus on the 2016 CCTV Anti-corruption documentary 'Always on the Road' (*yongyuan zai lushang*). Consisting of eight episodes, the documentary tells the story of scores of fallen officials during Xi's Anti-corruption campaign. Compared with the rest of the documentaries produced in 2014 and 2017, 'Always on the Road' attracted more media attention both home and abroad. Dubbed 'China's Real "House of Cards"' by some media (Shi, 2016), the documentary highlights the involvement of some very high-ranking

(provincial level and above) disgraced CCP officials confessing and repenting of their crimes (CCDI, 2016). It is said that there are fourteen high-level 'tigers' appearing in the documentary, including the highest ranking fallen CCP official so far - a former member of the PSC and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission - Zhou Yongkang. Therefore, the high publicity and the special attention on self-confession make 'Always on the Road' an appealing sample for this research.

3.4 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter introduces the official media framing theory and its application in the Chinese media system, explains the rationale behind the use of Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA and gives details about the selection and the collection of the sample data for the thesis. The theoretical framework of the thesis is to answer the question of how the mediated confessions during the Cultural Revolution and Xi's China are framed to facilitate the creation of a sense of the revival of the Cultural Revolution in Xi's China. The thesis is informed by media framing theory. However, considering the media and political system in China, I propose to apply it with the emphasis on the influence of the official/CCP instead of the usual journalist-centred perspective. In the analysis chapters, through examining the framing device such as metaphors and examples and identifying the reasoning device (i.e. what is the issue and how to solve it), critical discourse analysis can reveal the cultural resonance and relatively constant cultural background of China that the CCP has been keen on using to frame the confessions.

This study applies Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA to investigate how the TV confession is framed to maintain the CCP's rule. CDA is able to distinguish the elements that have changed and the possible reason behind the changes because changes in the use of language can be a sign of social shifts, which ultimately link to changing power relations (Fairclough, 1995). Such analysis can demonstrate the relationship between discourses and social orders through three steps. The analysis begins by unpacking the textual linguistic features of the item under study. It then interprets the effects of the production and possible means of consumption of the discourse. Finally, it explains the social, cultural and political environment that gives rise to the discourse (Fairclough, 2001; Fairclough, 2003). Meanwhile, the application of media framing theory in

China can provide valuable insights when testing the theory in the non-democratic non-Anglophone environment. Having discussed the relevant historical background of the Cultural Revolution and self-criticism, the theoretical framework of media framing theory, the methods of CDA and the data so far, I provide the detailed analysis in the following two chapters. In Chapter 4, I assess the historical data of the confession news in the *People's Daily* during the Cultural Revolution. The news clips and the documentary of Xi's era will be examined in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4. Confessions on the *People's Daily* during the Cultural Revolution

This chapter presents a critical discourse analysis of eight pieces of sample confession news from the Cultural Revolution. The purpose of the chapter is to investigate the historical background of the confession practice at its crucial transition period so that it can shed light on the recent resurgence of a similar phenomenon in Xi's China in the following chapter. This chapter begins with a summary of the key characteristics of the structure and the content of the news. Through a close reading of metaphors, historical examples, catchphrases, depictions and visual images, the first two levels of analysis explore the textual and the intertextual characteristics that frame the key subjects, their relationships with each other, and the social, cultural and political norms surrounding the confession news. The analysis reveals the framing of the confession news centred on the reasoning device: the diagnosis of the reason for the confessants' mistakes. As we will see, the reason for making mistakes was largely due to the fact that they had relaxed mentally and paid inadequate attention to studying Mao's teaching. The third level of analysis highlights three discourses that emerge from the socio-political background of the Cultural Revolution. To maximise the effectiveness of persuasion, framing tends to appeal to cultural resonance. Therefore, the analysis explains how the framing of the confession news increased the cultural resonance through conforming those key subjects, their relationships and norms to the concurrent cultural, social and political background. As mentioned in the literature review section, regime legitimacy and the work of ideology centre on both the showcase of the difference and the unity between the dominant and the subordinate. Thus, this chapter concludes with a discussion on how the form of confession news created a constructed consent between the subordinate and the dominant subjects in the confession.

4.1 Content characteristics of the confession news during the Cultural Revolution

During a series of political and economic campaigns in the 1950s, the CCP had encouraged the public to showcase their anger, love and shame in criticism, self-criticism and mediated versions (Myrdal, 1965; Hinton, 1966; Crook and Crook, 1979; Endicott, 1991). The early stage of the Cultural Revolution could be considered as an extension of those campaigns (Yang, 2016: 249). However, the

content and the structure of confession news went through some significant changes. Regarding the content of the eight selected news articles that I previously narrowed down from the *People's Daily*, two characteristics in particular contribute to the framing. Firstly, most of the news content was abstract. Only a small proportion of the texts was dedicated to recounting what happened in reality; the majority of the content was repetitive political rhetoric, which is in line with observations made in Chapter 1. Personalised experiences and stories which often distinguished one story from another hardly had any presence in the news. It substantiated Leese's claim that a 'superficial analysis of media texts' revealed that the overarching themes of the time were 'class struggle' and 'Mao worshipping', which consequently restricted the variety of topics available in media (2011: 180). Secondly, the confession news repeatedly referenced similar or even the same works from Mao. Regardless of what the stories were, certain extracted quotes applied in all scenarios, resulting in repetitive language and tedious rhetoric style.

In terms of the structure of the stories, there were generally two forms in the sample: the traditional first-person self-criticism (6 pieces) and the educational feature stories (2 pieces). The former generally exhibited the following patterns:

1. A short description in the form of editor's notes, Mao's quotes or general statements on the key issues which occurred in the Cultural Revolution;
2. The confessant ('I') admitting having committed mistakes;
3. Sharp conflicting thoughts clashing in the mind of the confessant;
4. Realising mistakes after consulting Mao's works;
5. Feeling ashamed and vowing to change (in some cases, recalling the personal suffering in the past);
6. Expressing loyalty to Mao and his campaigns;
7. Repeat from No.1 or end.

As the summary shows, these articles generally apply the three reasoning devices of the framing process. As mentioned before, the reasoning devices in media framing theory include three stages. It firstly conducts a causal analysis of the root of an issue and then presents the consequence of the problem. In the end, it appeals to people's integrity and self-discipline by making moral claims. Regardless of the content of the sample story, the confessed mistake was invariably abstract and attributed to the abstract reason of failure to follow Mao's

guidance or to study Mao's works. The natural solution was to closely follow Mao's instruction and rigorously study his works. The consequence of such framing was a highly repetitive storyline with little factual substance.

By contrast, there were two educational feature stories (19690906 & 19690601) which contained detailed and distinctive personal experience. Both were about local leaders, narrated in the third person 'him' (there was no indication that any of the confessants were female) and including first person conversations. I use the article published on 6 September 1969 as a key example (Personal Experience Example) in the following analysis, though examples from other pieces were also present. Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional discourse analysis, the next section explores the way in which the framing of the confession news contributed to the establishment of the legitimacy of the CCP's campaigns in the Cultural Revolution. I begin with the textual level of analysis.

4.2 Descriptive level of analysis

The descriptive level analysis examines some of the internal relations of the discourse: it is about the identity of the subjects who are directly involved in the story. The confession news essentially tells one story of self-salvation of different confessants: it diagnoses the root of the mistakes, investigates the cause and prescribes a treatment. Therefore, the construction of the causal relationship is crucial. The descriptive level of analysis identifies linguistic features that feed into the construction of identities of the subjects and the relations among them. The most important social subject created here is the 'confessant'. The most important relationships the confessant has are with 'the confessors', 'the masses' and 'the enemies'. The following linguistic features are particularly relevant to the analysis: lexical choices, the degree of certainty of the language, the use of passive voice and the sequencing of information.

4.2.1 Confessants

Self-criticism had spread to the whole of Chinese society in the 1960s and many ordinary people joined, or were forced to join, the mass criticism campaign (Hu, 2012). Nevertheless, the data show that the page of the *People's Daily* seemed to be reserved overwhelmingly for the confessions from the Party members and leaders, regardless of their rank. Among the eight confession news pieces, the confessants included one provincial cadre, three city-level cadres (one

article was a compilation of confessional speeches from six city-level cadres), one county-level cadre, two factory leaders and one Party Secretary from Tsinghua University. They were either the author (a piece of first person self-criticism) or the protagonist of the news article (an educational story about 'him' or 'her' the confessant). In this sense, the confessant was not an ordinary person.

The reason behind the lack of ordinary people could be twofold. Firstly, it might have mirrored the political situation during the Cultural Revolution. Cadres at various levels were targets for criticism and struggle, especially at the initial stage of the Cultural Revolution. However, as the country descended into anarchy, Mao sent the PLA troops, who predominantly supported the Party elites rather than the rebel groups, to restore order. The rebel masses and the ordinary people consequently made up most of the casualties. Major institutions, including national media such as the *People's Daily,* were in firm command of the political elites, leaving no place for the real stories of the ordinary people in the official media. Secondly, the newspaper also reflected the hierarchical political order. As I will show in the analysis, the politically dominant – those who came from a good class background, resided in the urban environment and possesses the leading position – tended to obtain representation in media while the politically subordinate were either invisible or negatively represented.

Overall, the identity of the confessants was vague. Sample articles usually devoted little content to confessants' personal stories. Apart from the name appearing as a byline at the start or a signature at the end, the content of the articles (6 out of 8) was so vague and lacked personal elements that they could have been written by and be about anyone. A typical example goes,

> *When checking against the method of Chairman Mao's historical materialist ideas and class analysis, I found that my view on the proletariat revolutionaries was the same as members of the gentry on peasants during the democratic revolutionary time. Those so-called people who did 'not follow the instructional words' – the majority of them – were the ones resisting slavery during the rule of the counterrevolutionary line, daring to offer advice, daring to hold on to the truth. They were full of revolutionary characters. In the Cultural Revolution, they hold high the red flag of the great thought of Chairman Mao, stand at the frontline of struggle, drag out the small*

> *bunch of capitalist roaders within the Party, unearth a large amount of evil evidence of their attempt to resurrect counterrevolution and drag them off the saddle. Their stance is firm and their flag bright. They fear nothing. But I've stood on the opposite side to them and become a stumbling block to the revolution. (19671123)*

The content above was essentially empty in the sense that it did not reveal what exactly the confessant's wrongdoing was. It was hard to picture in reality what 'stand[ing] at the frontline of struggle and pull[ing] out the small bunch of capitalist roaders within the Party' was. The confessant specified neither who 'they' were nor what the 'large number of evil facts' included. The meaning remained rather unclear and on the metaphorical level. Such vagueness meant that the same words could potentially appear in news on a different date and be penned by a different person about a different story and no one would be able to tell the difference. In the end, this kind of empty content reflected the everyday way of speaking, thinking and writing that characterised the Cultural Revolution. However, there were two exceptions with personal stories featured in the news, which will be introduced alongside Chairman Mao in the next level of analysis.

Having introduced the confessants, I now examine those who were also involved in the news but were less prominent than the confessants. They were 'confessors', 'the masses' and 'the enemies'. Confessors were those who listened to confessions from confessants, such as readers of the *People's Daily*. In some cases, confessors actually appeared in news stories. They were often members of the masses, such as a factory worker who actively participated in the mass criticism session. The masses, or the 'revolutionary masses', referred to the individual students, workers or peasants. They collectively had two basic images, appearing to be both friendly and menacing. However, the actual identity of the collective masses was generally vague and changeable, and thus the relationship between the confessant and the masses often seemed fluid and even contradictory. As for the enemies, they took various forms and the following were some typical examples: the character '*si*' (selfishness), Liu Shaoqi the biggest capitalist-roader in China and his local agents, the landlord and Japanese from the 'old society', and the American Imperialists and the Soviet Revisionists. They existed everywhere in society; they were in constant struggle with the masses, and more importantly, they were bound to lose. The identities of these subjects were by no

means static, passive or clearly demarcated, as one could assume multiple identities at once or over a period of time. For example, a confessor could turn into a confessant after studying Mao's teaching. As mentioned earlier, I arbitrarily separate these identities for the purpose of analysis. In the next section, I will unpack the framing of the relationship between these subjects, which reflected as well as constructed the political and social norms in the news in the next section.

4.2.2 Confessants & confessors

A typical relationship between a confessant and a confessor was dialectical and seemingly contradictory. I illustrate the relationship by using the educational news story: 'Personal Experience Example'. Published on 6 September 1969 and titled 'We All Should Continue the Revolution!', the story depicted the thought struggle of Zhang Yonggui, a CCP cadre and manager of Shenyang Chain Company. Written in a third person account and mixed with occasional first person conversations, the news showed how Comrade Zhang managed to overcome the shame and pressure of being criticised by the masses due to his lack of passion for being a leader during the Cultural Revolution. He eventually resumed his responsibility as a local factory leader and persuaded a young man to correct his slacking work attitude. The young man had previously harshly criticised Comrade Zhang at a struggle meeting. He was also rather rebellious, showing the most contempt for senior members of the factory who repeatedly criticised the young man for slacking. Thus, the identity of the young man as a confessor was clearly in the dominant position in this relationship. Despite being a slacking junior worker, he dared to direct the harshest criticism towards the head of the factory. By contrast, inferiority, worry and hesitation featured heavily in the identity of Comrade Zhang. Comrade Zhang's specific mistakes were downplayed as the news never mentioned what mistakes he had made. Instead, the news emphasised the psychological effect of being someone who had been criticised before. Comrade Zhang always needed the 'warm help' and 'encouragement' from other workers so that he could carry out his duty without being overwhelmed by self-doubt. He dared not discipline the slacking young worker because he fretted over 'losing authority and face' and 'feared that his words would be viewed as a retaliation' for what he had suffered.

The relation between Comrade Zhang and the young man seemed contradictory. On the one hand, Comrade Zhang was supposed to be in a more

powerful position than the slacking young worker. Comrade Zhang was, after all, head of the factory. However, as someone who had already been publicly shamed, Comrade Zhang felt unconfident and thus hesitant to execute the leadership of the company. He did not dare to correct the young man's slacking behaviour. However, their relation dynamic flipped once again after Comrade Zhang carefully studied Mao's work. The following extract from the 'Personal Experience Example' was what Comrade Zhang said to the slacking young man after the young man had questioned Comrade Zhang's credentials to criticise other people. Comrade Zhang replied with a brief self-criticism before using the key element in his self-criticism to persuade the young man;

> *The root of my [Comrade Zhang's] mistake is the failure to closely follow Chairman Mao's words. You [the young worker] were born to a new society and grew up under the red flag, and you should think about why your father did not have enough food or warm clothes when he was forced to do physical labour for the landlord in the old society. Why was your father beaten almost to death when he was captured and sent to do hard labour by the Japanese devils? Chairman Mao led us to overturn the backwardness, and only until then did we start to have the kind of life we enjoy today. If you do not study or work hard, how can you claim that you have followed the words of Chairman Mao, the respectable old man? (19690906)*

Their relation began reversing after Comrade Zhang cited Mao's teachings and recalled the bitter history. The use of the pronoun 'you' and the modality 'should' alongside each other indicated an educating tone. 'Should', expressing a high degree of certainty of the speaker and signalling a norm should be followed, indicates that Comrade Zhang was the one who was in the position to lecture others. In saying '*you should* think about…', Comrade Zhang urged the young man to remember the past. Comrade Zhang made the demand based on his own experience of having gone through the process of making mistakes, realising mistakes and then remoulding his thought. He was the one who became capable of distinguishing right from wrong and was 'knowledgeable' enough to guide and elicit the emotional response of the young man.

It was Mao that made possible the reconciliation between the seemingly contradictory relationships. In the example, it was Mao, not the act of confession,

who enabled Comrade Zhang to gather the courage to educate the young man and the young man to regain respect for Comrade Zhang. As in all other confession news, Mao did not directly appear in the story, nor was there real-life encounter with Mao. However, Mao's name or his works were the ultimate source of authority from which the confessants sought help. When Mao was not directly mentioned, the confessant often referred to Mao's works or the role models from his works. Therefore, the role of Mao was crucial in making possible the seemingly contradictory relationship between the confessant and the confessor, which will be addressed in detailed in the intertextual section.

4.2.3 Confessant & the masses

As mentioned above, the masses appeared both friendly and hostile to the confessants. This section examines how the two opposite images constructed the relationship between the confessants and the masses. The first image of the masses was that of a wise trustworthy adviser. Guizhou cadre Yu Jialin's confession titled 'Only by Firmly Believing the Masses Can One Return to Chairman Mao's Revolutionary Path' (19671123) highlighted the role of the masses during the Cultural Revolution in a utopian scenario. 'Return' suggested that one had previously deviated from Mao's original path, thus indicating the anecdotal role of the masses in confession. According to cadre Yu, the masses were 'proletarian revolutionaries' who were 'disobedient' (in a positive way), 'very revolutionary', and 'brave enough to give advice and uphold truth'. They were 'the *most* understanding and reasonable' group of people who followed Mao's guidance 'the *closest'*, and 'drew the *clearest* demarcation between who to love and hate'. The superlatives underlined the ideal qualities of the masses: they possessed the highest moral and intellectual ground, thus were the most suitable candidate to listen to the confession. Never should the confessant as a cadre or leader be 'detached from' the masses; therefore, the confessant proposed that one must 'trust, learn from and mingle with the masses'. This meant that the confessant should have participated in physical labour with ordinary workers and peasants so that the cadre and the people would be able to 'emotionally and physically work as one'. Thus, the masses played an indispensable supportive role in correcting mistakes of cadres. Hence, the confessant should treat the masses as a 'good mentor and helpful friend'.

Despite this positive, wise, welcoming, tolerant and earthy image of the masses, there were more than a few instances when 'the masses' appeared to be very susceptible to the enemy's influence. This second image of the masses manifested in Cadre Yu's self-examination. He raised the following points about 'shedding the ugly mantle of pretentiousness and becoming a willing pupil' in front of the masses,

Be honest with the masses;

Together with the revolutionary masses, firmly expose and criticise the Chinese Khrushchev and his agents in Guizhou;

Responsibility must not be pushed down in order to avoid the situation of the masses criticising the masses' (19671123).

While the text demanded that one be humble and show willingness to learn as a pupil would do, it somewhat hinted that the masses sometimes could not differentiate right from wrong and end up attacking each other. It actually echoed the CCP's belief that the Party represented the masses and guided them, as the masses did not know what was best for themselves, despite the masses being the source of wisdom according to the CCP. It was contradictory to the previous identities of the masses. In this scenario, the masses needed the confessant's action to realise what went wrong and who to criticise. Thus, the confessant became the guidance of the masses.

Furthermore, through reading between-the-lines, one could also sense that the masses could even be dangerous sometimes. One rather explicit example in the data was the recurring theme of 'having a correct attitude towards the criticism from the masses'. Guizhou cadre Yu, mentioned above, explained why he hesitated when conducting self-criticism: 'the painful feeling', 'the shame' and 'losing face' in public. He concluded that the root of his hesitation was 'being scared of the masses' (19671123). This was at odds with the supposedly trustworthy and understanding masses mentioned in the previous paragraph. Certainly, nobody would feel positive about being named and shamed in public, but had the crowd been truly supportive as described previously, they would not have intimidated the Party cadres as such. Therefore, similar to the confessor, the masses had two seemingly contradictory identities when interacting with the confessant. The masses were supposed to be wise and understanding, yet they

could be harsh and prone to manipulation. The reason for this contradiction was implicit in the news, but the social level of analysis later provides an explanation.

4.2.4 Confessant & the enemies

The last set of the relationship was between the confessant and the enemies. There were four main kinds of enemies in the framing: the Chinese written character *si* (selfishness), Liu Shaoqi and his local agents, the 'US Imperialists' and the 'Soviet Revisionists'. The character *si* seemed to be the strongest among the four. As something intangible, *si* represented the internal subjective factor causing the confessant to be tempted by the external enemies, such as the other three mentioned above. In the confession news titled 'Eliminate Selfishness and Build up Devotion to the Public Interest; Following Chairman Mao to Make Revolution Forever' (19680613), all paragraphs, except for the opening one mentioned 'character *si'* at least once. Moreover, in the first three years of the Cultural Revolution, the following expressions were very common in the sample news.

- *'To become a true leading revolutionary cadre, one must first and foremost revolutionise one's mind and remove the character si.' (19670412)*
- *'From now on, I will surely study laosanpian [three of Mao's famous writings] hard, further fight against the character si, and establish Mao Zedong Thought as an absolute authority. I will devote my whole life to the revolution and achieve new things for the people and the revolution.' (19671123)*
- *'All evil comes out of the character "si"; all mistakes come out of the character "me".' (19680613)*
- *'Although I have corrected the attitude toward the criticism from the masses and come out to work, I haven't removed the root of the character si.' (19680613)*
- *'Character si is very stubborn, just like class enemies who do not easily give way.' (19680613)*

These examples illustrate the determination to remould human nature and overcome selfishness. Remoulding human nature and overcoming selfishness was an abstract process. Therefore, it is interesting that *si* was framed as if it was a tangible object rather than an intangible element of human nature. Fighting the character '*si*' was a process of objectifying an abstract idea as if it was something concrete. It functioned in reverse to the process of nomification, which turns a

concrete action to an abstract concept. This effect of objectification of one's selfish thoughts to a Chinese character produced an illusion that to stop being selfish was as straightforward as removing dirt from one's hands through washing.

Like tumours or diseased body parts, such framing ensured that it was not the person's fault to be selfish. Rather, being selfish was like being caught unfortunately by a disease that was somewhat outside the person's control.

> *It is precisely due to this character si that led me to deviate from Chairman Mao's revolutionary path and turn away from the revolutionary masses in the campaign. I have thoroughly realised that: character si is the soil where revisionism stems and grows and the deciding factor for my mistakes. If one can't struggle against and overcome the character si, one can make mistakes anytime and anywhere when carrying out work. The 'resentful feeling' in one's mind is a derivative of the character si, which is the 'bacteria' causing me to continue carrying out the wrong line. (19671123)*

The character *si*, rather than the confessant, was blamed for the mistake. Criticising and fighting the character of 'selfishness' (*dou sizi*) was like fighting an illness caused by 'bacteria' from the outside. In this sense, the confessant excused himself for 'being selfish' due to this shortcoming being unintentional and uncontrollable. This, as the contemporary data will show, is a recurring way of framing something that the CCP vows to remove but struggles to implement.

Apart from the internal factor abetting confessants to make mistakes, one of the most infamous external sources of evil at the time was Liu Shaoqi and his 'local agents'. Before Liu's expulsion from the CCP in October 1968, it was impossible for official media to name Liu and criticise him directly. Thus, the media used terms such as 'traitor', 'scab' and 'Chinese Khrushchev' to refer to him. Therefore, while the specific culprit in the confession story was often vague, Liu or the derogatory labels associated with him often appeared as the target for crushing. For example,

> *If the revolutionary proletariats do not command the 'absolute power', do not have the invincible passion, or do not take 'an act of violence', it is impossible to carry out a big fight and killing against*

the Chinese Khrushchev and his agents in Guizhou, impossible to drag out and expose the vermin, and also impossible to strike them down. (Yu)

Firstly, the enemies were described as harmful 'vermin'. The enemies in the other confession news were also labelled as 'bacteria' (*xijun*) and 'poison' (*liudu*). Such analogies justified the use of violent language as well as violence against them. They became umbrella derogatory terms which could be conveniently used in any context when an enemy was present. Secondly, the enemies were also referred to as 'the Chinese Khrushchev's agents in Guizhou'. 'Agents' was a vague umbrella term, specifying nobody. It was a convenient political synonym to any local leaders or cadres who were under attack. The term conveniently included all kinds of people from Guizhou under one of the most serious crimes of the time – being an accomplice of the biggest traitor in China. 'Khrushchev' was hardly an unknown name to the Chinese people at that time either. Nikita Khrushchev succeeded Joseph Stalin as party secretary and initiated a de-Stalinisation. Khrushchev criticised Stalin's rule and personality cult at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, which 'shocked the socialist camp to the core' (Dikötter, 2016: x), including China. The CCP leaders were very cautious about their reaction but eventually decided to break the decade-long bond with their Soviet 'Big Brother' and publicly denounce the Soviet Union as a revisionist power. Since then, the Soviet Union and Khrushchev had become synonymous with revisionism in China. By 1967, many Chinese people would have realised who 'the Chinese Khrushchev' was (Yang, 2016). From the end of 1966 to the beginning of 1967, Liu had been attacked by Mao and singled out as the biggest Chinese capitalist-roader in China, namely 'the Chinese Khrushchev'.

After Liu's official expulsion, the attacks on enemies naturally became explicit in targeting Liu,

Now he has realised that due to a lack of mental preparation for the socialist revolution in the past, he deviated from Chairman Mao's proletarian revolutionary path and was dragged by Liu Shaoqi's counterrevolutionary revisionist path to an evil route of capitalist restoration. He passionately states that 'the more the masses criticise me, the more I abhor the renegade, traitor, scab Liu Shaoqi and the more I love the great leader Chairman Mao! It was Liu Shaoqi who

brought me harm and it was Chairman Mao who saved me! When the masses criticise me, they are pulling me towards the right path. I will stand on the same side as the masses, thoroughly criticising my own mistakes by using Mao Zedong Thought and criticising the counterrevolutionary crimes committed by the great renegade Liu Shaoqi and his agents. (19690601)

Once again, despite the confessant admitting his own lack of preparation for the revolution, he immediately diverted the blame to Liu. He 'was dragged' onto the wrong route by Liu's 'counterrevolutionary revisionist path'. The passive voice deflected the responsibility of making the mistake from the confessant. By not omitting the agent who carried out the action, the confessant actively assigned the blame to Liu. Moreover, the enemies' image in this example produced the illusion that the confessant had a personal grudge against Liu and Liu's nameless cronies. The sentence structure made the grateful admiration for Mao and the bitter hatred for Liu parallel to each other, creating a clear sharp dichotomy. However, apart from showcasing the high spirit of fighting the enemies, the confessant did not reveal anything concrete as to who the enemies were and how they had harmed the confessant.

Aside from Liu Shaoqi and character *si*, the enemies also existed outside China. Considering the strong international revolutionary spirit that the CCP upheld at the time, these foreign enemies appeared largely as the token enemies in Mao's quotation that was cited by the confessant, such as the imperialism, the feudalism and old society. In a few cases, they appeared to trigger bitter memories contrasting sharply with the happy life after 1949. In the Personal Story example above, the confessant asked the young man to remember how his father had suffered – '[he] *was forced to do physical labour for the landlord in the old society. Why was your father beaten almost to death when he was captured and sent to do hard labour by the Japanese devils…*'. The use of passive voice here unconventionally underlined the agent of action and the confessant actively assigned responsibility and blame to the old society and the Japanese. 'The landlord' and 'the Japanese' were named as the culprits who had physically abused the young man's father. Passive voice *bei* in Chinese implies the unjust nature of an event with negative undertone (Hodge and Louie, 1998). This use of passive voice in the horrible personal experience reinforced the victim status of

the young man's father. Meanwhile, despite the fact that the 'War of Resistance against Japan' had ended decades ago, the Japanese were called the 'devil' (The expression is still in use referring to the Japanese today), *guizi*. 'Gui' refers to ghosts that people become after their death. This colloquial epithet degraded the Japanese from humans to a 'monstrosity of the unknown' to show hatred. It suggested the fear of the speaker as well as a Sino-centrism-fuelled contempt towards the supposed culturally inferior Japanese (Ching, 2012: 712). Since then, Japan has become the paradigmatic 'devil' (Gries *et al.*, 2016).

In sum, the typical enemies in the confessional news discourse included character *si,* the enemies within China such as Liu Shaoqi and his 'agents' and the token enemies lurking abroad such as the Japanese and imperialists, revisionists, the capitalist roaders, together with their respective representatives in local provinces, commonly referred to as 'them'. They played a key role in the overall framing of the Party's generation of a revolutionary world and a perpetual cycle of hatred that bound the masses to the CCP. The textual level of analysis so far has revealed the various relationships presented in the confession news. It showed a clear signal: one needed to have strong correct emotions and attitudes towards different people. These strong emotions included boundless praise and trust for the masses and fierce hatred towards enemies. Overall, they demonstrated a clear attitude towards various groups of people, despite the occasional contradictions. However, these were by no means the only subjects that were involved in the framing of the confession news. The next level of analysis moves to explain the intertextual relationship that was indispensable to the framing of confession news.

4.3 Interpretive Level of Analysis

The interpretive level of analysis unpacks the production and interprets the constructed identities and social relations in the texts through an intertextual and an interdiscursive examination of what has been framed as 'truth' and how it was made convincing. I begin an examination of the intertextual reference with an analysis of the relationship between confessants and Mao. Mao was the most important subject involved in the news yet was not physically present in the actual events. The analysis identifies three roles that Mao simultaneously possessed at the time in relation to the confessants. These three identities explained the formation of the political norm of the time: Mao's supreme position could not be openly challenged. It then highlights that the framing of confession news made

active use of people's familiarity with Mao's quotations and works due to the aforementioned norm. Aside from Mao, the interpretational level of analysis also explains how the composure of the context was designed to be interdiscursively manipulative and persuasive. This level of analysis concludes with a summary of the reasoning device identified from the enquiry so far, highlighting the personal responsibility in making mistakes and the role of Mao as the saviour.

4.3.1 Confessant & Mao

Mao played an imperative intertextual role in framing the confession news, just as every aspect of people's life revolved around him at the time. Mao was not personally involved in any of the news, yet all sample data referred to him or his works multiple times. He was omnipresent, connecting tightly to all other subjects. Mao acquired three main identities in the media framing in relation to the confessant and the masses. Firstly, Mao was framed as a patriarchal figure at the head of the family. Secondly, he was portrayed as a wise old man who was a great teacher to all. Lastly, he was the emperor saviour of the people. In reality, the three identities often overlapped and were hard to separate.

Firstly, Mao was framed as someone who was close to the confessant, as if everyone had a private 'Chairman Mao'. In the Personal Experience Example, confessant Comrade Zhang and his relation to Chairman Mao were constructed firstly through the choice of words. As a political leader, Mao personally 'led' everyone to 'overturn the backward situation'. However, Comrade Zhang also regarded Mao as a senior member of a family who deserves one's obedience and respect as a junior. As the textual analysis shows, lexical choices such as '*duideqi/duibuqi'*, '*talaorenjia*' and '*ting* someone's *hua'* are typically used in a family environment. Comrade Zhang referred to 'Chairman Mao' as '*talaorenjia*' (the respectable old man). Meanwhile, Comrade Zhang appealed to the juniors to '*ting* someone's *hua'* (follow some's instruction) and never to '*duibuqi'* (let down) Mao. Using both of the verb phrases and *talaorenjia* is very common in Chinese family discourse when referring to the respectable ideal relationship between senior family members and their offspring.

Similar framing also existed in other news articles, for instance,

I noticed that the self-criticism of a bunch of cadres in power who had taken the capitalist road within the province had covered up the truth

regarding the issue in Qingdao. They deceived Chairman Mao and the Party central committee. I felt that I would have let Chairman Mao and the Party Committee down if I hadn't reported the situation to Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee. Thus, I exposed their issue to the Party Central Committee. (19670328)

The lexical choice in the above example surrounding Mao created an illusion that the confessant had known Mao personally and been able to talk to Mao in person to report issues. Meanwhile, the confessant felt that he had a personal responsibility to tell to Mao that someone had hidden truth from him in Qingdao. However, the confessant was very unlikely to have a personal connection with Mao as there was no evidence in the news indicating that this was the case. Therefore, such framing brought Mao closer to the masses, invoking a sense of respect, love and obligation on a personal level towards him. Through reframing Mao from the public political discourse to the private family discourse, the lexical choices fed into the construction of an imagination of a family-like society and a social order that could increase the Party's legitimacy to rule and facilitate the Party's control over the masses. The explanatory analysis later looks into the cultural environment that facilitated this reframing in more detail.

Mao's second identity was as a man of knowledge and a sage-like existence, from whom everyone should have drawn wisdom. Thus, his words were frequently cited as truth and wisdom. The beginning of confession news was usually Mao's quotes or a general but passionate extolling of how unstoppable the Cultural Revolution was. A typical example was,

The great leader Chairman Mao teaches: 'For those good people who made mistakes, (we) need to educate them. When their ideological consciousness awakes, (we) liberate them immediately'. Workers in the capital and the PLA Mao Zedong Thought Communication Team in Tsinghua University recalled and summarised the experience and situation of implementing Chairman Mao's cadre… (19690601)

The example shows how a piece of confession news usually began. Mao's direct teaching gave a very broad brush of how the story would be interpreted without explaining explicitly the link between the quote and the story. However, the quote does indicate how to 'educate' and 'liberate' the good people as opposed to

struggling against them. The lexical choice of ‘teach’ (*jiaodao*) means ‘to coach’ (*jiao*) and ‘to guide’ (*dao*), which belongs to an education discourse. The undertone was that Mao was more than a politician, but a great teacher as well, echoing one of Mao’s well-known ‘Four Greats’ titles of the time – ‘the great teacher’. The two relationships between Mao and confessants – ‘father/son’ and ‘teacher/student’ – typified Mao’s crucial intertextual role in framing the confession discourse. I provide a more in-depth explanation in the following paragraphs.

Thirdly, while Mao was framed as a wise male senior family member and a wise sage, he was also portrayed as a divine emperor. Mao’s personality cult reached the apex during the Cultural Revolution (Leese, 2011). An obvious indication was the drastic increase in the number of times that Mao was mentioned in the news. The same keyword search for the period between 1950 and 1976 returned nineteen results, all of which referred to Mao at least once. Eleven articles were published before 1966 and they mentioned Mao thirty-three times altogether, three times per article on average. However, for the eight articles that were published during the Cultural Revolution, Mao was mentioned 161 times, around twenty times per article. No other treatment of the CCP leaders of the time ever reaches that intensity.

Moreover, Chairman Mao was framed as a specific kind of saviour, as certain lexical choices in the news carried a strong sense of emperor-worshipping. The aforementioned Qingdao cadre, Li, concluded his confession with the following rallying cry,

> *Long live the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution!*
>
> *Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat!*
>
> *Long live the invincible Mao Zedong Thought!*
>
> *Long, long live our great teacher, great leader, great commander and great helmsman Chairman Mao! (19670328)*
>
> *Li Yuanrong*

This chanting style was not an invention of Li. Rather, ‘Long live…’ was a widespread slogan, frequently appearing as an inscription on the first couple of pages of publications during the Cultural Revolution (Wang, 2008). There is no

agreement[13] on the evolution of the phrase 'Long live…' (*wansui*), but few disputes that the term was reserved for paying special respect to emperors. The most classic example is the phrase 'long, long live to somebody' (*wansui, wansui, wanwansui*). Directly translated as 'living ten thousand years, living ten thousand years, ten thousand and ten thousand years', the term is often seen to refer exclusively to emperors. Any other members of the emperor's family could only 'long live' a thousand years[14]. The arbitrarily assigned number reflects the strict hierarchical order – the supreme status of the emperor was unchallengeable, not even by his family members. Therefore, Mao and his thoughts were elevated to the same status as emperors. Together with the use of exclamation marks, the chanting created a mood of passion and exceptional dedication towards Mao's order. Such expressions were very popular during the Cultural Revolution.

4.3.2 Intertextuality

Mao's identity and supreme status were reflected in the frequent intertextual reference in the confession news. Intertextuality describes 'the phenomenon that other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text, which is typically expressed through explicit surface textual features such as quotations and citations' (Wu, 2011: 97). Intertextuality typically reveals the existing discourses that the current text is drawing on. Mao's words and works were a typical example. Mao was a central figure connecting all subjects during the Cultural Revolution and was thus a core factor in the framing of the confession. As mentioned before, Mao's personality cult reached its peak during the early stage of the Cultural Revolution, and references to him were omnipresent. Every piece of confession news included direct quotations of Mao's writings or directions, many of which were well-known excerpts from the *Little Red Book*. Drawing on Mao's supreme authority, the excerpts functioned to empower the confessant's argument (Leese, 2011). At a time when policy changes were rather frequent and when everyone tried to avoid any suspicion of deviating from Mao's directions, Chairman's quotes were the ultimate source of legitimacy.

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[13] There are sources online but none of them can be verified to be valid.

[14] A couple of historical figures are known for wanting to 'live nine thousand years', such as the notoriously powerful eunuch, Wei Zhongxian (1568-1627) and the 'East King of the Heavenly Kingdom' of the Taiping Rebellion, Yang Xiuqing (1821-1856). Neither of them was the supreme leaders like the emperor but the power they amassed was second to none. Yet their titles were still different from the emperors, suggesting the significance of the emperor. For more information, see Luo, Ergang (2000) *The History of Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*.

However, the intertextual use of Mao's quotations was often out of its original context. For instance, 'We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports' was a popular quote among confessants. It was originally from an article called 'Interview with Three Correspondents from the *Central News Agency*, the *Sao Tang Pao* and the *Hsin Min Pao'* on 16 September 1939. It first was compiled into Mao's *Selected Works* and later the Chapter of 'Two Classes and Class Struggle' in the *Little Red Book* (Mao, 1990a). The article recorded an interview between Mao and the journalists from three media outlets[15] about the challenge of the Japanese invasion. In 1939, the journalists addressed Mao not as 'Chairman' or 'comrade', but 'Mr.'. It was a time when the CCP was still a guerrilla force and overpowered by the KMT; a time when Mao had yet to ascend to the pinnacle of power; also a time when China was at war with Japan and Mao appealed for 'democracy' – sharing power with the KMT - within China to fight against the Japanese invaders. What Mao had meant in the interview was that the CCP and the KMT had the same goal to protect China from the Japanese invasion, so they should not have been enemies. Instead of fighting amongst themselves, which would only benefit the Japanese, both the CCP and the KMT should have supported 'whatever the enemy opposes' and opposed 'whatever the enemy supports'. Therefore, the 'enemies' in the original quote meant the Japanese soldiers. The most striking linguistic feature of this quote was its absolutism and the 'us vs them' dichotomy. The choice of words such as 'should' and 'whatever' increased the certainty of the tone of voice. The two sentences sent the same clear message - to do absolutely everything to obstruct the advance of Japanese. This position represented Mao's military strategy as well as the determination to defeat the enemy during the 'War of Resistance against Japan'.

By contrast, the confession news (19670328) which cited this quotation was about the confessant's hesitation to denounce other cadres in Qingdao. The enemies in the news were 'a small bunch of cadres in power taking the capitalist road within the Provincial Party Committee' who attacked the deputy mayor of Qingdao Comrade, Wang Xiaoyu. What the reader might have imagined in the current context was rather different from the aforementioned Japanese invasion.

[15] The *Central News Agency*: An official Kuomintang news agency;
The *Sao Tang Pao*: the Kuomintang military newspaper;
The *Hsin Min Pao*: the national bourgeoisie's loyal newspaper.

For those who had not known the context of the quote, the absolute tone hardly left any room for compromise as to the attitude towards the enemies. However, for those who had known the origin of the quote, taking the sentence out of its original context in this example invited them to imagine the enemies in the current context as the same as an outside aggressor with whom the Chinese people must have had a life-or-death struggle. This could immediately escalate the conflict between these capitalist roaders and the people to the level of a national security threat.

Aside from citing Mao's works in a word-for-word manner, indirectly incorporating his writings in the confession news made Mao's presence more overwhelming. Referencing the title of Mao's well-known works and the names of the model heroes mentioned in these sources were two common ways to refer to Mao indirectly. For example, three out of four confession pieces published in 1967 referenced *laosanpian,* the so-called 'Three Constantly Read Articles'. Two directly mentioned the words *laosanpian* and one referenced the protagonists from it. The lack of attribution of the source indicated that it was the political norm for the audience to know who the author was. Similarly, as mentioned before, not all of Mao's quotes were attributed. Nor were the quotes necessarily in quotation marks. This indicated the degree of familiarity with Mao's work that the readers of *People's Daily* were expected to have.

Laosanpian is the name of a collection of Mao's three early essays. They share one theme: 'to serve the people'. The three articles are 'In Memory of Norman Bethune' *(jinian baiqiuen*) – a story about a Canadian Communist and physician who treated wounded Chinese Eighth-route Army soldiers and rural villagers during the War against the Japanese; 'Serve the People' (*wei renmin fuwu*) commemorates a selfless Communist soldier Zhang Side who died in a kiln accident; and the third article 'The Foolish Old Man Who Moved the Mountains' (*yugong yishan*) is Mao's take on the old Chinese fable about the Foolish Old Man whose family lived near two mountains and was obstructed by the mountains from going out. The old man decided to lead his family to move the mountain by digging the rock and soil away day after day, generation after generation. The core of all three writings is to teach people the virtue of selflessness and tenacity. It calls for everyone to strive to be a socialist new person through sacrificing personal interests for the collective good. For example, one extract in the

confession news read: ‘When I couldn’t fall asleep at night, I contrast myself with Zhang Side and Norman Bethune. I feel very much ashamed of my selfish thoughts’ (19670328). Through the names of two protagonists of *laosanpian* and without mentioning Mao directly, the confessant was still able to demonstrate his loyalty to Mao’s teaching.

Moreover, the way in which *laosanpian* was portrayed in the confession news also showcased the confessant’s praise for and devotion to Mao. It was called a collection of ‘brilliant works’ (19670412), ‘a sharp weapon to remould people’s worldview’ (19671123) and ‘the bedrock to establish the character “selflessness”’ (19671123). It was the ‘thoroughly effective cure’ (19671123) which signalled a healing discourse which I discuss in the next section. *Laosanpian* was something that one had to ‘work hard to study’ (19671123). Through these praises and analogies, the confessants were further signalling loyalty to Mao. It is worth noting that for the data in the 1970s, the quoted works were no longer exclusively Mao’s. Famous Marxist works, such as Marx and Engel’s *The Communist Manifesto* and Lenin’s *The State and Revolution,* appearing alongside Mao’s work, became the claimed guiding study materials for the confessant (19740911). It was potentially a sign of the waning of Mao’s personality cult compared with its heyday from 1966 to 1969. Nonetheless, the theme of loyalty to Mao persisted thanks to the explicit and implicit intertextual reference of him and his well-known works.

4.3.3 Interdiscursivity

When ‘different discourses and genres are articulated together in a communicative event’, they are interdiscursively applied in a specific discursive practice. Interdiscursivity, or ‘constitutive’ intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992), refers to ‘the mixing of diverse genres, discourses, or styles associated with institutional and social meanings in a single text’ (Wu, 2011: 96). As mentioned above, there was an interdiscursive relocation of healing discourse from the realm of health to politics, just like the relocation of a family discourse from a private family setting to the public realm of politics. Metaphors can indicate when a particular frame is present, as mentioned in the review of media framing theory in Chapter 3. This metaphor is rooted in the Chinese culture surrounding ‘curing diseases’. A typical example is the slogan ‘*chengqianbihou, zhibingjiuren’*:

Punish those before, prevent those after; cure disease, save lives. Coined during Yan'an Rectification Campaign (1942-1944), the slogan has been in use since the 1950s. The first part of the slogan *chengqianbihou* originates from *Classic of Poetry*, literally translated as 'learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones'. It is also a chengyu that usually describes a four-character idiomatic phrase that concisely captures an educational story. *Chengyu* is a closed form of discursive regime[16] features prominently in Chinese. That is to say, its meaning usually leaves no ambiguity as to what is right or wrong. The purpose is to end a debate by clearly siding with one party rather than the other (Hodge and Louie, 1998). Therefore, *chengqianbihou* exhibits the attitude that learning from past mistakes to avoid future ones is undoubtedly the right thing to do. Mao's emphasis on the first part of the phrase was to encourage the candid exposure of one's past mistakes for a better future.

Mao added *zhibingjiuren* – curing the sickness to save the patient - to complete the phrase, highlighting the purpose of having such an attitude towards past mistakes. Mao originally used the phrase during the Rectification Campaign to deal with the killing among the communists (not the first time, nor the last time). The original aim of the campaign was to 'root out spies and "rescue" people from secret lapses' (Apter and Saich, 1994: 289). The way to achieve this goal was 'to get people to confess and to use their guilty knowledge as a point of entry into the process of confession' (*ibid.*). However, the campaign quickly turned to a witch hunt fuelled by paranoia, causing the death of many CCP members. Mao had to intervene to avoid the Party's self-destruction from the intra-Party purge. Within this context, 'cure the sickness to save the patient' was an exercise in damage control. The target for elimination should have been 'illness' and the goal was to save the person. Hence, this phrase highlighted that it was the error, not the person that should be under attack.

During the Cultural Revolution, the term was not commonly cited in the confession pieces; this was probably due to the fact that the atmosphere was no longer to cure the disease and save the patient. The phrase only appeared once in the 8 selected pieces of confession news (19670328). Instead, the healing

[16] Discursive regime encompasses 'the systems for managing and policing discourse' (Hodge and Louie, 1998: 11). A Foucauldian notion is about who decides what counts as 'true' and under what conditions. These systems provide the background for discourse analysis in the thesis.

discourse obtained a new twist. While the confession news framed the enemies and their thoughts as pernicious, Chairman Mao and his works were quite literally called 'panacea'. Mao's words were able to treat all ailments, magically healing the curable and the incurable alike. For instance, Guizhou cadre, Yu, described Mao's work *laosanpian* as 'panacea' to prevent and cure illness caused by selfishness (19671123). Thus, echoing what has been argued above, failing to follow Mao's direction was the root of all mistakes. The absolute loyalty for Mao was unquestionable. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, using healing discourse remains prominent in Xi's China.

Having discussed how the confession discourses were intertextually and interdiscusively linked to other discourses and genres, I now turn my attention to the other aspect of the discursive practice: the producer of mediated confessions and the relationship between the official media *People's Daily* and its readers.

4.3.4 News & audience

In terms of the production of the confession, I analyse it from two perspectives: the nature of official media during the Cultural Revolution and the use of modalities and pronouns. In terms of the nature of the media, it had a huge impact on the relationship between the news and its reader. This relation was conditioned on the circumstance of the Cultural Revolution. The confession news on the *People's Daily* carried the most important political messages to the whole nation. Prior to 1966, media and journalists were the enablers of popularising the Party's political discourses such as 'people vs non-people…' and educating 'the people to correctly understand and cherish their own state'(Chinese Academy of Sciences Media Research Centre, 1980). During the Cultural Revolution, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the majority of the media ceased publication. For the few remaining national publications, their task remained to convey the Party's political discourse. As one of the few national official media remaining in operation, the *People's Daily* was often the place where important directives were issued. There were study groups dedicating time to learn important news in the *People's Daily*. Therefore, it was clear that readers of the *People's Daily* were not merely information consumers who could pick and choose to read what interested them most. They must accept and study the political and social norms contained in the news without question. This means that the *People's Daily* spread the confession news that was supposed to have happened in local villages or cities to

the whole of China. It revealed the problems in daily life and set examples for how to solve them. Through the *People's Daily*, the confession was recontextualised into a wider political background and set up as a model for nationwide emulation.

Within the actual content of news, modalities and pronouns can often indicate the relationship between the reader and the content producer. Modality in linguistics refers to 'the logical truth or reality status of a statement or sentence' (Scollon, 2014: 107) and is represented by modal verb auxiliaries such as 'must/mustn't' and 'should/shouldn't'. Coupled with pronouns, modalities can produce effects such as ordering, advising and warning the reader. For instance, the Personal Experience example was titled 'We all should continue the revolution!'. The 'should', coupled with the exclamation mark, suggests that the speaker was making a firm and passionate demand as to what needed doing. With the pronoun 'we', the effect of such a phrase indicates the speaker actively sided with and was passionately motivating the readers to follow him to continue the revolution.

Moreover, the modality was often coupled with first-person conversations, which further increased the degree of certainty of the language. Many such dialogues were prescriptive in that 'you the reader' were addressed directly to do something as if it is a command 'you the reader' had better follow (Machin and Van Leeuwen, 2014). For example, in the Personal Experience Example,

> *Old Comrade Zhang grabbed his [the slacking young man's] hand and said: 'You must follow Chairman's orders. As long as you correct your mistakes, it will be fine. You need to get a copy of the document from the 9th Party's Congress and study it by heart, trying your best to be Chairman Mao's good worker.'* (19690906)

Through the use of 'you', together with the modality 'must', Comrade Zhang was not only addressing the young man who was having a conversation with him (assuming that the story is not fictional) but also speaking directly to the reader to give advice – studying the central document and behaving yourself. Consequently, it increased the level of certainty of the attitude of the speaker, thus put the speaker in a commanding position.

A third way to increase the degree of certainty is to present a statement as a matter of fact, leaving no room for anyone to question the statement. In the same news, cadre Zhang gave an example of how to persuade a militia commander to correctly deal with the conflict between the militia and the masses. In the quoted conversation below, the cadre connected the liberation of the poor to the role of Mao as a manner of fact,

> *Having said so and judging from his [the young worker's] facial expression, I [Comrade Zhang] found that he was contemplating what I had said, thus I continued: 'Think about it – why were we oppressed and forced to beg and run away from famine? It was precisely because we the poor had no barrel of gun or control of rubber-stamps. Now Chairman Mao saved us from a sea of bitterness and let us take control of the rubber-stamp. However, you are making a scene - abandoning the barrel of gun and being unwilling to make a revolution. This is a critical issue concerning whether you are loyal to Chairman Mao or not…* (19680613)

The depiction of Chairman Mao's role in liberating the Chinese people was stated as something that had happened and was known to all. The conversation quickly moved on to criticising the younger worker's behaviour, leaving no time for questioning of Mao's role.

Therefore, through modalities, the prescriptive use of the pronoun 'you' and presenting a statement as a matter of fact, the degree of certainty of the language increases and the difference between the dominant and the subordinate manifests. Overall, the language used in the confession news, like many other official writings of the time, appeared very definitive and certain about the message they conveyed to its audience. The interpretative level analysis showed that Mao's works were quoted as unquestionable truth and guidelines to be followed. It not only showcased the determination and dedication to study Mao' works and corrected the mistakes but also strengthened the reader's position as someone who needed guidance as to what to do. It also reflected the relationship between the official media who represented the voice of the Party elites and the audience: the former was there to teach and guide the latter. The latter could only absorb what they were told without questioning.

The textual and the interpretative level of analysis so far has shown the respective relationships between the confessant and the confessor, and between the masses and the enemies. Through lexical choices, use of the passive voice and a series of linguistic techniques, the framing of confession news established the identity of confessants as vague and lacking in individuality. The relationships between the confessant and the masses seemed contradictory. Conventionally, the confessant was supposed to be in a commanding position due to his leadership status. However, ironically, the confessant had usually been publicly shamed and thus felt insecure and hesitant in front of the confessor. However, self-criticism ultimately provided the confessant with the legitimacy to be the person who was capable of distinguishing right from wrong and who was in the position to lecture the confessor. Similarly, while the anonymous masses appeared wise enough to be the teacher of the confessant, they occasionally also seemed to need guidance to distinguish right from wrong. Worse still, despite praising the masses for their tolerance, friendliness and open-mindedness, the self-criticism alluded to the fear of the confessant in facing the masses. The linguistic features also highlighted three roles that Mao was playing simultaneously: the emperor, the wise senior and the patriarchal family head. The enemies included the Chinese character *si*, Liu Shaoqi and his local agents, the 'US Imperialists' and the 'Soviet Revisionists'. The image of the enemies might be vague, but the attitude towards them was definitive. They were the worst, most evil and horrible obstacles on the path to communism. They were to blame, not the confessants.

The reasoning device – the identification of, the judgement of and the solution to a problem - has also emerged from the two levels of analysis. There were three prominent sets of logical causal sequences that comprised the reasoning device. The first logical sequence was that failing to follow Mao's direction led to one making mistakes. Confessants often attributed 'the root' of their mistakes to the 'failure to study Mao's brilliant works diligently' (19670328). The second logical sequence was that carefully studying Mao's works enabled the confessants to realise their or others' mistakes. As one example shows: 'Judging from recent work, I reaffirm my understanding that one must read Chairman Mao's books, that it is unacceptable for one not to read his works and that one shouldn't forget Chairman Mao's books even for a single second' (19670328). The repeated use of modalities such as 'must' and 'shouldn't' and the

regurgitation of essentially the same thing demonstrated an explicitly absolute attitude. The double-negative phrases '*fei…buke'* (it is unacceptable not to do something) underlined the impossibility of ignoring Mao's teaching and articulated clearly that using Mao's thought to criticise someone prompted the person to realise his or her mistakes.

The first two logical sequences lead to the last one, i.e. that Mao, occasionally together with the Party, was the reason that the people were having a better life. Mao was framed as the sole saviour of the people from the 'old society' and its oppressor. Recalling the bitterness before 1949, Qingdao cadre Li Yuanrong directly credited Mao and the Party for saving him, asserting that: 'The old society abused my whole family so much that we barely survived. It was the Party and Chairman Mao who saved me' (19670328).

From the three logical sequences above emerges the reasoning device: the framing identified the problem that confessants all 'committed mistakes' regarding lax political thought. It then came to the verdict that it was dangerously wrong to hold the incorrect belief. The framing prescribed the solution to correct the wrong beliefs and actions: the close study of Mao's works and the following of his teachings. Accordingly, three confession discourses manifest themselves: 'the omnipresent imaginary paternal leader' (regarding Mao), 'the correct attitudes toward the masses and mass criticism' (regarding masses/confessor) and 'dehumanisation' (regarding enemies). These discourses reflected the order of discourse surrounding the mediated confession as they set the social, cultural and political contexts and boundaries. They are under closer scrutiny in the following explanatory analysis.

4.4 Explanatory level of analysis: ideology & power

To critically analyse the text is to 'elucidate' the 'naturalisation' of the ideological elements as common sense (Fairclough, 2010a: 31). This level of analysis examines the social context which facilitates and catalyses the naturalisation process. This section elaborates the social contexts that enabled the reasoning devices identified in the previous analysis. Meanwhile, according to the official media framing theory, appealing to cultural resonance - the relatively constant social and cultural background - in framing an event can increase its influence (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Therefore, this section first examines

how the framing of confession news appealed to the shared Confucian norms, the hidden reality and the healing tradition. Next, I argue that through the practice of confession a form of superficial consensus was constructed among the dominant and the subordinate in China.

4.4.1 Confucian Value Discourse: families and nations

The way in which Mao was framed reflected the persistent Confucian hierarchy during the Cultural Revolution. On the surface, the CCP was busy transforming China from a repressive 'feudal' society to a modern revolutionary new state by discarding the Confucian tradition while following a communist path. In reality, the 'feudal' way of thinking was not only too hard to eliminate but became, probably unwittingly for both the CCP and the people, useful for the CCP's propaganda.

The previous two levels of analyses revealed that Mao was omnipresent in the confession. He was framed as the head of a family, who everyone was close to, loved, respected and followed. He was also a source of wisdom that everyone must consult on a daily basis. Meanwhile, he was also hailed as an emperor at the top of the social hierarchical order. In the atmosphere of encouraging to replace kinship with revolutionary comradery and reverence for Mao, it was quite ironic that the kinship value of filial piety was used to reinforce the revolutionary fervour and loyalty of the masses towards Mao. As the chapter will later show, kinship is a recurring element in mediated confessions. It lives up to the importance to which Fei *et al.* (1992: 63) describe,

> In Chinese society, the most important relationship – kinship – is similar to the concentric circles formed when a stone is thrown into a lake. Kinship is a social relationship formed through marriage and reproduction. The networks woven by marriage and reproduction can be extended to embrace countless numbers of people – in the past, present, and future. The same meaning is implied in our saying "Everyone has a cousin three thousand miles away," with three thousand miles indicating the vastness of kinship networks. Despite the vastness, though, each network is like a spider's web in the sense that it centres on oneself. Everyone has this kind of a kinship network, but the people covered by one network are not the same as those covered by any other… Therefore, the web of social relationships

> linked with kinship is specific to each person. Each web has a self as its centre, and every web has a different centre.

By Fei's standard, Mao should have been the most important centre for everyone in the vast web of social relations in China during the Cultural Revolution. This process of recontextualising family discourse into political discourse constructed Mao as a senior patriarchal figure of all of China. As Chen observes and summarises, during the Rectification Campaign in the 1940s '[a]version to confession seemed to be universal, and the party branch secretary had to do something to alleviate the participants' fears . . . Personifying the party as a benevolent father who helped the participants in the rectification class make great headway in revealing their inner thoughts' (Chen, 1986: 335-337). It equally applied to the Cultural Revolution, with the only exception that it was Mao, not the Party, who was personified as a benevolent father. For example, it was quite common for the revolutionary youths to call 'Chairman Mao' 'dear father' (Lian, 2018). As the textual analysis shows, lexical choices such as '*Duideqi'* and '*talaorenjia*' were typical family discourse. Senior people were viewed as sources of wisdom due to their decades of life experience in Chinese culture. Similarly, framing Mao as '*talaorenjia*' corresponded to some other common expressions which invited people to love and respect Mao as if he were the wise head of one's family (*jiazhang*). A popular song at the time was named 'Father is dear, mother is dear, but not as dear as Chairman Mao[17]'. It celebrated the fact that people should love Mao more than their own parents. Therefore, this recontextualisation of family discourse into a political context in newspapers invited the reader to view Mao - a political leader who the majority of the Chinese people had never met in person or had any direct relationship with - as a senior male figure who they were not only close to but also indebted to. The masses, as the children, must respect and appreciate the wisdom of the head of the family.

Related to the image of a respected old male in the Confucian tradition is the figure of a wise sage. Assuming the role of guidance and inculcation, the

[17] The lyrics of the song: 'Our political party is greater than heaven and earth; Chairman Mao loves the people more than parents loves their children; Nothing in the world compares with the goodness of communism; An ocean's depth can't compare with the depth of friendship with our class; Chairman Mao's principles are the treasure of the revolution; Whoever is against Chairman Mao will be our enemy! ' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-yRcQULWkcQ (Accessed on 28 October 2017)

Chinese traditional teachers upheld the belief in 'the fundamental malleability and perfectibility of human beings (Lifton, 1968: chapter 20; Munro, 1977)'. They viewed it as a duty for themselves to give advice and for everyone to keep cultivating and perfecting the Heaven-bestowed self. This was why they often saw great potential in confession for changing to a better self (Lin, 2008).

The previous two points combined made a powerful claim for Mao to rule China. According to Lü Kun (Yang, 2016), a government official and thinker of the Ming Dynasty[18], emperors had the divine mandate of heaven to rule (*shi*). Only a sage who was moral, knowledgeable and wise could criticise the emperor's rule (*li*). The news framing of Mao effectively scored both '*li*' and '*shi*', an emperor who had the mandate of heaven and a parent figure who had wisdom, knowledge and experience. 'The ruler is the master, the father and the teacher in one' (Lin, 2008: 175). Therefore, as a figure of both an imperial emperor and wise sage, Mao became the sole most powerful figure to lead China and his position was impossible to challenge.

Mao's powerful image reflected the social and political hierarchical order prior to and during the Cultural Revolution. As stated in Chapter 1, even though Confucianism dominated China for a large part of history, its reception had been rather mixed since the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Rapid changes affecting all aspects of life ensued. Reflecting upon China's recent falling behind many western countries as well as neighbouring Japan, many intellectuals of the time diagnosed that the Confucian tradition was the cause of a declining China. Some of those intellectuals later became the founding members of the CCP, such as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao (Sun, 2013). During the Cultural Revolution, Mao called for the destruction of the 'Four Olds'[19] in the early stage of the Cultural Revolution and later for attacks on Confucius directly alongside Lin Biao.

However, as Gamson and Modigliani (1989) remind us concerning the dialectic elements of culture, conflicting attitudes can coexist in framing. On the one hand, despite Mao's mobilisation to denounce Confucianism, it was impossible to completely weed out its influence on the Chinese people's way of thinking. On the other hand, this seemingly modern aberration of destroying

[18] For a comparison of Mao and the 1st emperor of the 'most Chinese' dynasty Ming, see Andrew, Anita M and Rapp, John A. *Autocracy and China's Revel Founding Emperors* (2000).
[19] 'Four Olds' refers to old Customs, old Culture, old Habits, and old Ideas.

tradition is, in a sense, a mere illusion. '[T]here are Confucian overtones in the Marxist-Maoist orchestration. The crucial role of ideology under communism lends particular interest to China's ideological past' (Fairbank, 1976: 59), such as the firm beliefs in the malleability of human nature and the pursuit of perfect humanness mentioned before. Therefore, the PRC was de facto an 'imperial autocracy' (*huangquan zhuanzhi*) with a Soviet-Union-style power structure (Yang, 2016).

In the 1960s, China was still in the transition from a society lasting over two thousand years to something seemingly drastically different. Many ordinary people struggled to come to terms with the fact that they, not the emperor, were supposed to be the master of China. In the 1950s, the peasants' understanding of the revolutionary discourses was still largely based on their experience of traditional daily life and understanding of the world (Leese, 2011: 3). Many people in rural China thought of Mao as nothing but a new emperor. The Party had to order people to stop prostrating themselves to Mao (Leese, 2011). As mentioned before, slogans such as 'Long Live Chairman Mao!' were popular expressions. Even within the CCP, the imperial discourse continued to exist. '*Baoshou pai'* (the conservative faction) had been originally called '*baohuang pa*i', literally the 'protecting emperor faction' before Premier Zhou Enlai ordered the renaming. In 1967, when the rebel group attacked Xu Shiyou, Commander of the Nanjing Military Region, Xu went into hiding in a farm in Dabie Mountain and declared he would rather fight guerrilla warfare than be put through endless struggle. Mao saved Xu by receiving him in person in Shanghai. The first thing Xu did upon meeting Mao was to drop to his knee (*ibid*.) – a traditional etiquette toward the senior to show submission. Not long after the collapse of the emperor rule, discourses as such reflected the popular perception of Mao's status and society in general. These small details showed that the traditional way of thinking was still engraved in people's minds, despite the great effort to denounce and eliminate it.

4.4.2 The Fear of the Masses Discourse: the hidden reality

Official news, together with slogans, quotations, songs and model dramas, contributed to an image of distorted reality during the Cultural Revolution. The passion, unity, upbeat spirit and success exhibited in the news was, more often than not, opposite to what was actually happening. Nonetheless, reality still

managed to creep into the news. The construction of the relationship between the confessants and the masses was a revealing example. The discourse on ‘having correct attitudes toward the masses and the mass criticism’ was prevalent in the confession news. The positive image of the masses had been established in the official political discourse prior to the Cultural Revolution. The masses were the people of good class. Mao had a simple dichotomised categorisation of the Chinese population in the 1950s: ‘the people’ and ‘the non-people’. ‘The people' were the 'good' class, including the poor, the hired, middle peasants and all those who were working for the CCP; the 'non-people' were the 'reactionaries', the landlords, the bourgeoisie, the bureaucratic capitalist class, the KMT members, the KMT sympathisers and the KMT henchmen (Mao, 1965). Mao used to have the ambition to remould human nature in order to create a utopian communist society. To a degree, ironically, this determination to bend human nature was similar to the Confucian persistence of pursuing a perfect Heaven-bestowed humanness, which is mentioned in the previous section. The Confucian teaching of humanness rejects the idea of an incomplete inadequate human nature. Rather, one needs to constantly strive for self-improvement and perfection (Lin, 2008). Mao shared this predilection and demanded that everyone should devote themselves to the collective good instead of personal material gains. He endeavoured to create a ‘paradise on earth’ by forging a utopian kind of people who were selfless and united under the banner of communism (ter Haar, 2002: 56).

However, as the previous analysis shows, ‘the masses’ who were supposed to be supportive and wise, often intimidated the confessants and needed guidance to distinguish right from wrong. The confessants, while admitting the mistakes ‘sincerely’, tried subtly to excuse themselves from taking full responsibility. Behind the fear of the masses was the bigger, yet unsurprising, picture of distorted reality in news, covering up the chaotic political reality during the Cultural Revolution.

Emotions and revolutionary fervour were good for mobilisation but also inherently dangerous as they could develop in unexpected directions. Mao and the Party elites almost lost total control of certain provinces. Many Party cadres of various ranks were also under verbal and physical attack in 1966 from the ‘revolutionary masses’. They had become Mao’s most hated class enemy within

the Party. These privileged bureaucrats, who were not necessarily in possession of a large amount of personal wealth, commanded the wealth of the whole nation (Djilas, 1957). They stood opposite to Mao's ideal of selfless socialist men; thus, Mao wanted to cleanse the bureaucratic ranks, which he believed were threatening China's communist course. The cadres knew the horrific consequence of standing in the wrong queue. They knew Mao's insistence on the suppression of the enemies in his writings. They knew the excessive public-shaming, violence, torture and death in reality. The intensity of the violence contributed to the appearance of an anarchistic society, to suicides and to a sense of insecurity among people, intellectuals, local cadres and ordinary people alike. The subsequent insecurity left everyone vigilant and extremely careful in terms of who they should support. Yang (2016) accurately argued that Mao was indeed 'the great helmsman' in that, despite the personality cult, he still had to steer the direction all the time to maintain a delicate power balance among groups such as the revolutionary masses, the rebel groups, the CCRG, the senior conservative Party elites and the PLA. This led to frequent shifts of political attitudes towards the same group of people, which caused huge confusion among the population.

The psychological fear and the physical abuse soon led to a meltdown of the government at various levels and the country slipped into anarchy. Mao reluctantly realised that he needed this group of purged bureaucrats to ensure the basic function of the country. Mao's method thus changed to, as he used the analogy, 'scorch' the cadres while not letting them burn (Yang, 2016). The verbal and physical attack should not lead to the elimination of the cadre, but instead should teach them a lesson. Mao wanted them to 'display a frozen pose' (*liangxiang*) - a term from Peking Opera - which 'crystallizes the emotions and attributes associated with a character' (Berry, 2016: 36). That is to say, through the humiliating process of 'displaying a frozen pose', the cadres were permitted to return to work after expressing remorse. Nonetheless, in reality, it was impossible for the cadres to know which faction of 'rebel masses' to support when they returned to work. 'The rebel masses' split into factions depending on their respective interests and protégés in the Party. Every faction claimed themselves as 'the rebel masses' despite most of them being in conflict with each other.

For instance, a telling example was the framing of the front-page news article published on 1st June 1969. It had a very long title: 'Capital Worker-PLA

Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team summarising and implementing the experience of the cadre policy; firmly implementing Chairman Mao's proletarian policy; liberating the good people who had made mistakes but now realised the mistakes and were ready to change' (19690601). This extremely long title contained many hidden messages. 'Capital Worker-PLA Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team' referred to an important event in July 1968 in which Mao had ordered the PLA to take control of Tsinghua University and break up the student factions participating in violent struggles (Yang, 2016). However, the title, as well as the body of the article, revealed little about the physical confrontation between the students and the PLA. The PLA military force became 'the communication team' instead, softening the image of the military intervention. Unity became the key phase: the term 'good people' in the title set the tone: the people who had made mistakes belonged to the 'good' class. They had realised their error and showcased the willingness to change. Therefore, the students and the PLA were united as one under Mao.

However, this was a distortion of reality. As a result of years of ideological campaigns, it was a well-known fact that the consequence of being 'an enemy' could be very serious. As a series of radical collectivist social changes rolled out in the 1950s, various Party official claimed on different occasions that the bourgeois class had been transformed. Even Mao acknowledged that the bourgeoisie could become 'the people' after transformation (Deng, 1956: 213-214). In this ideal world, the enemy eventually deserved a chance to join the ranks of socialist new men. However, the criticism generated during the Hundred Flowers Movement shocked Mao. He 'rediscovered' the existence of class enemies within the Chinese society, and worse still, even inside the Party. He subsequently responded to it with political censure and purges, which were estimated to have persecuted over 550,000 people (Dikötter, 2013). The 'rightists' became the most hated class enemy. Mao (1965: 417-418) was very clear on the different treatments towards different categories of the people, as he elaborated;

> Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Community Party, unite to form their own state and elect their own government; they enforce their dictatorship over the running dogs of

> imperialism – the landlord class and bureaucrats – bourgeoisie, as well as the representatives of those classes, the Kuomintang reactionaries and their accomplices – suppress them, allow them only to behave themselves and not to be unruly in word or deed. If they speak or act in an unruly way, they will be promptly stopped and punished. Democracy is practised within the ranks of the people, who enjoy the rights of freedom of speech, assembly, association and so on. The right to vote belongs only to the people, not to the reactionaries. The combination of these two aspects, democracy for the people and dictatorship over the reactionaries, is the people's democratic dictatorship.

For the success of the revolution, the happiness of the people and the liberation of the nation, 'non-people' or the enemies must have no rights and be subjected to oppression.

The chaotic and cruel aspects of the mass struggle sessions were never directly portrayed in the news. No negative information about the Cultural Revolution was permitted in the news. Hence, when the mass struggle sessions were mentioned, they were claimed as victorious and necessary. However, the fear, panic, confusion and the struggle of conflicting thoughts that resulted from the mass criticism and self-criticism sessions were unintentionally reproduced in the *People's Daily*. It became a way to frame the confession news. The confessants often felt wronged by the masses, confused, hesitant or 'couldn't understand' who they should support. It was genuine confusion caused by what they had witnessed. The messy mass struggle meetings happening daily shadowed the idealistic heroic proletariat triumphing over evil capitalist roaders. Thus, in this sense, the calling 'don't be scared of the masses' was not only what the confessant hoped to convey to others, but also something about which the confessant needed to persuade themselves. The contradictory images of 'the masses' was a reflection of the gap between Mao's theoretical model masses and the everyday Chinese people. Such framing of the relationship between the confessant and masses reflected the rhetorical effort that the Party made in bridging the gap.

4.4.3 Dehumanisation & Healing discourse

Two intertwined discourses permeated Mao's campaigns in the first decade of the PRC: 'the heroic exploits of the good' and 'the demonic machinations of the bad' (Schoenhals, 2007: 465). This 'justice vs evil' dichotomy shaped how everything should be understood. Having examined the discourse around 'the good people', it is time to analyse the opposite side. This section highlights the two discourses that are related to the enemies: the Dehumanisation Discourse and the Healing Metaphor.

The dehumanisation of the enemy derived from a similar strategy: Demonisation. It was a 'striking feature' in Mao's political discourse (Schoenhals, 2007: 465). Dehumanisation means degrading human beings to animals, insects or other physical objects, while demonisation goes one step further to reducing people to monsters, spirits or supernatural elements that exist in traditional folklore and religion. The demonisation discourse had long been in use prior to the Cultural Revolution as a way to legitimise violence towards 'the Other' in the traditional cultural context. The CCP's application of dehumanisation meant a continuation of this religious tradition (ter Haar, 2002).

Although the causality of discourse and social changes is never mechanical or regular (Fairclough, 2003), ter Haar's view on demonisation sheds light on the function of dehumanisation during the Cultural Revolution. Demonisation

> … functions in the setting of human targets, establishing a sense of legitimacy for the performance of violence, and presenting how actual violence should be carried out… the demonisation of political enemies in contemporary Communist China, far from being a modern aberration, is continuous with Chinese tradition in that the demonisation of the Other has always been a fundamental element in Chinese religious culture (2002: 60).

In traditional Chinese beliefs, people viewed demons as the cause of plagues, barbarian invasions, and other natural or man-made disasters (*ibid*.) Ter Harr also argues that '… the basic idea that some people can be categorised as bad elements and should be removed from society and then eliminated by means of drastic

violence remained in place and in practice even gave rise to new, communist, forms' (2002: 54). This deep-rooted culture facilitated the use of a dehumanisation discourse during the Cultural Revolution. Debasing certain groups of people as animals and vermin, or even demons, was to portray them as harmful, thus justifying the violence against and the physical destruction of these people. Demonisation and dehumanisation of the Other do not directly cause physical assault, but their use can be understood as an endorsement of the religious tradition to pick a target, single out enemies and threaten to destroy them. Furthermore, through the practice of division such as cursing the Japanese 'devil' (*guizi*) when remembering the bitter past and fighting to remove the poison spread from the Chinese Khrushchev, the dehumanisation process enabled the rest of the people to unite around 'the panacea' of Mao's works and directions.

Unity through division meant that all of Mao's mass campaigns needed enemies. Mao inherited this approach from Stalin's 'perpetual struggle against a roll call of imagined dastardly enemies who are collaborating with imagined Western agents to restore bourgeois capitalism and liberalism' (Bishop, 2019: para 29). Without the enemy, the purpose of campaigns would cease to exist. Moreover, it is often easier for people to agree on things that are negative or generate hatred. Thus, the enemy was 'an indispensable requisite in the armoury of a totalitarian leader' (Hayek, 1994: 143). Animals, insects and poison were popular labels for the enemies, reducing them to non-humans. Since 1957, even vulgar street language made its way into the official political discourse regarding 'the enemies'.

The abusive treatment inflicted on 'the enemies' during the Cultural Revolution might be similar to what had been used in many previous campaigns, but the identities of the enemies were more or less a pure manufactured product (Perry, 2001). Despite Mao's belief in the remoulding of human nature, by the time of the Cultural Revolution, the consensus was that the enemy class had to be eliminated. They had infested the whole society and infiltrated into the Party (Sun, 2013: 19-20). The previous mass campaigns, such as the Land Reform and the Anti-rightist Campaign, should have rooted out the enemies such as landlords and the KMT spies prior to 1966. Then who were the enemies during the Cultural Revolution? They were unlikely to be real landlords or spies but people who were simply labelled as such for some far-fetched reasons, apart from those whose

family backgrounds and records were so bad that they had been the crushing target of every single mass movement.

Corresponding to the Dehumanisation Discourse was another culturally inspired discourse: the Healing Metaphor. One root of the Healing Metaphor was from religious faith healing practice, such as the symbolic therapy in Daoist tradition. The early proliferation of Buddhism in China, especially in the northern part of China, went hand in hand with the belief in magic. People believed that Buddhist monks had the magic power of healing and healing was a key attraction for converts (Wu, 1979). The other root operated in a secular sense, such as the practice of admitting wrongdoings from a student to a teacher. The foundation of the second root related to the Confucian belief that human nature was malleable: therefore, when one was imperfect, one could always strive to get better, as if the imperfection was metaphorically being sick,

> We must resolve to seek a new life and drastically rid ourselves of our errors without any concealment. Formerly King Hsuan of Ch'i, admitting his excessive aggressiveness, greed, and lust, confessed to Mencius all his faults one by one. Since he did not hold back anything, Mencius sincerely reassured him by saying that he was capable of turning his faults into good points. Our situation also should be like that of a patient who uninhibitedly gives a full account of the sources of his disease to the physician. Once the physician knows the roots of the disease, he can prescribe an appropriate remedy. Otherwise, even if there were an elixir, what good would it do if it did not match the disease? Now when we meet, we should be frank and strict with each other. Above all, let us not indulge in generalities. It is important that we describe the disease as it is so that the disease can be recognised and treated as it is. Only then can candid and beneficial counsel be given (Li, 1973: 13.14b).

The ridding of mistakes was just like recovering from an illness. This excerpt used the ‘curing sickness’ analogy to reveal the benefits of correcting errors. Positively and actively tackling the illness under the direction of a doctor rather than hiding it was the proper way to deal with human imperfection. As the previous analysis shows, the CCP adopted this ‘curing illness’ metaphor, but the application of the

analogy was more than purely rhetorical. Recent studies reveal the social psychological mechanism of the faith healing discourse in confession,

> Recent studies of group dynamics underline the immense psychological power groups can wield over their members. In particular, one is impressed by the awesome pressures to conform to group norms experienced by individuals who are unanimously declared 'sick' or insane. The 'patient' is able to save himself, in the sense of restoring his own self-esteem as well as being reincorporated into the group, only by demonstrating complete acceptance of group values and norms. These pressures were effectively increased in the rectification movement through small-group study and discussions that included the criticism of every cadre by his peers and searching self-criticism (Selden, 1971: 195).

The emphasis here was no longer to persuade the confessant to take a positive attitude to deal with the mistakes. Instead, it was about the social pressure – one 'is declared' sick or insane, regardless of how one felt.

In Mao's various campaigns, the mounting pressure forced many people to end their lives. In campaigns during the Cultural Revolution, such as 'Cleanse Class Ranks' (1968-1970), a great number of people with their families were accused of being spies, for instance, and were subsequently killed. Going hand in hand with the witch hunt for the counterrevolutionaries was the emphasis on the 'practical' policy to avoid any backlash from targeting too many people within a short period of time. For instance, when talking about the campaign in a university in Shanghai, Zhang Chunqiao, a key member of the CCRG, warned that,

> One needs to measure the application of the policy, otherwise, people jump off the building one after another, which is unsustainable. It doesn't solve problems either. You [East China Normal University] target so many people at once, they are going to make complaints against you. Keep students in control. Don't target too many at once (Yang, 2016: 735).

It was rather direct and clear that confession was a strategic choice. The concern was about how to implement policy tactically without invoking social and

political backlashes instead of any concerns with human lives. Thus, the tactic looped back to Mao's slogan 'Learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones; cure the sickness to save the patient': from time to time to appeal to target the mistake rather than punish the confessant.

4.5 Framing Implications: Discourse and Power - A Practice of Constructed Consent

The analysis so far has demonstrated how the framing of the confession news conformed to a certain established traditional way of thinking. It has also shown the justification process of turning certain people into insignificant subordinates. Ultimately, both framing theory and CDA are interested in the relation between discourse and power. Having analysed the framing of the confession news, this section considers the ideological implications of such framing. Ideology is meaning in the service of power (Thompson, 1984). Therefore, this section looks at how the framing was designed to serve the powerful. The implications are unlikely to be confined to the specific time of the Cultural Revolution and the form of newspapers. As the next chapter will show, it has a more profound and lasting presence. This section explains how the confession news in the *People's Daily* also created an illusion of consensus as to the hierarchical status quo between the dominant and the subordinate in the Chinese population.

Two types of confessional practices from Chinese history can shed light on the maintaining of the division. When studying the confessional tradition in China from 1570 to 1670, Wu (1979: 20) distinguished two types of confessional practices depending on who the confessor was. The confessors of the first type were divinities and the second the peers of the confessant. The content of a confession towards divinities typically include all human sins whereas a confession intended for peers was more likely to contain a more detailed examination of personal behaviours. In this sense, most of the confession news articles from the data resembled the first type intended for divinities. Only a few confessions in the news contained more detailed personal experience, such as the Personal Experience Example, resembled confession to peers. The vague, abstract and politically ornate language did not reveal a considerable amount of personal misconduct. 'Vagueness' was a weapon for the Party to plant fear in the mind of the people (Link, 2002). If it was vague, one did not know what went wrong or

where the forbidden line was. Thus, one became hesitant to do anything that was not clearly in line with the permission of the CCP for fear of unknowingly crossing the red line. The vague political jargon, instead, packaged into the confession all sorts of typical 'sins' of the time, such as 'being selfish', 'being scared of the masses' and 'neglecting to study Mao's works'. These 'sins' were so pervasive that these general labels became the everyday mistakes that everyone might commit and could articulate in confession. The whole process not only hid what really happened to the confessant but also underlined the dominant (the leader/the CCP) in comparison to the subordinate (the confessant). The individual personal grievances or 'misconducts' were rendered to a uniformed but meaningless self-criticism demanded by the Party.

Such self-criticism represented a strict hierarchal order. Echoing the previous studies, self-criticism is usually expected from the weaker to a higher-rank (Apter and Saich, 1994; Hu, 2012). The analysis showed that this power disparity in framing between the dominant and the subordinate was maintained by generating high psychological pressure via discourse. One way of generating pressure was the use of crude language to conduct self-criticism. Hu (2012: 107) argued that the use of vulgar language was a privilege of the criticisers and a suggestion of 'the dominant status of the speaker [criticisers] vis à vis the listener (person being criticised)'. It accelerated the process of destroying human dignity. In the confession news, the framing of Mao, the masses and the enemies built up the mental stress. The overall effect of using damaging labels was that without specifying anybody or any wrongdoings, the relationship between the confessant and the enemy was both clear and vague. The relation between the confessant and the enemies was a clear boundless hatred, as demonstrated by the violent tone. Meanwhile, the denunciation was vague in that readers who did not know the confessant still had no idea who the enemies were after reading the piece. It was a criticism targeting essentially nobody and anybody. This imaginative enemy in news was handy in the sense that since enemies must have existed according to Mao's instruction, a vague symbolic enemy could easily fill in the gap where a specific foe was either non-existent or could not be named for whatever reasons. The mental pressure that such labels were able to generate essentially put the majority of the population in an overwhelming sense of agitation, anxiety,

uneasiness and wariness. The physical, as well as mental welfare, was beyond one's control.

In the end, very few chose to or were able to challenge the confession and thus a superficial consent was manufactured between the powerful and the powerless in the newspaper. By admitting the accusation and agreeing to conduct self-criticism, confessants signalled consent and submission to the authority (Fiskesjö, 2017). In this sense, confession was both 'an indictment and a verdict' (Hu, 2012: 104). Regardless of whether the accusations were true or not, or whether the confessants were guilty or not, the purpose of criticising oneself was to demonstrate his or her attitude towards Mao's and the Party's authority. Arguing otherwise was never good for salvation.

4.6 Conclusion

In sum, the framing of the confession news during the Cultural Revolution was along the track of the traditional Chinese social and cultural norms and the CCP political norms. Through an examination of linguistic features such as word choices, sentence structures, and modalities, it demonstrated an often contradictory relationship between the confessant, the confessor, the revolutionary masses and the enemies. Through an intertextual analysis of dominant Mao and the Healing Discourse, it explains the domination of Mao at the time and a didactic relationship between the newspaper content producers and the audience. Taken together, the framing identified the root of cadre making mistakes as a lack of Maoist thought work and subsequently proposed the solution of studying Mao's teaching more diligently. Through an examination of the historical background leading up to and during the Cultural Revolution, the explanatory analysis related the discourses to the external cultural, social and political power of the time. Despite the official denunciation of Confucian culture, the CCP was still implementing a Confucian ideal of hierarchical structure. It reflected the actual difficulty in changing something that had been engraved in the minds of many Chinese people.

It is crucial to examine the framing of the rules or beliefs that the CCP adopted or changed and to identify the way in which the Party expected this framing to work among the Chinese population. The analysis reveals the ideological implication of the framing: maintaining the ideologically correct

position on paper at all-time despite the contradictions in cultural resonance. It was also an era in which it was impossible to resist any criticism without being accused of the hideous crime of being 'anti-Mao, anti-Party and anti-people' (Hu, 2012). Thus, the confession news was a form of constructed consent spread through the national newspaper. It reflected as well as reinforced a sense of impossibility to rebut any criticism, thus reinforcing the existing domination of Mao.

With the death of Mao in 1976, the Cultural Revolution came to an end. The Gang of Four was arrested and put on a public trial as the masterminds behind the chaotic decade. Wang's and Yao's confession, Zhang's silence as well as Jiang's defiant protest became the last memory of the Cultural Revolution. Politics gradually began to retreat from ordinary people's life. So did mediated confessions. According to the data I collected, the number of confession pieces in the *People's Daily* dropped after 1977. When the phrase 'I made mistakes' appeared in news, the confession was only a constituent part of a story or an example in a story addressing some other issues. The phrase became something only 'mentioned' rather than 'highlighted'. Besides, the meaning of 'I made mistakes' also changed. During the Cultural Revolution, the phrase usually meant making political mistakes, such as deviating from the Maoist communist path, holding a passive attitude towards the criticism from the masses or hesitating to criticise others. Since the 1980s, however, the phrase 'making mistakes' (*fancuowu*) in news articles has carried the underlying meaning of 'to use public office for private gain' (*jiagong jisi*), which is the definition of corruption. Thus, the term became a euphemism for accepting bribes or using public status or profession for personal gains. According to Yang's (2016) observation, the degree of corruption after the economic reform is truly worse than that in Mao's era. Although there is no denying the existence of a sharp conflict caused by material inequality and elitism in Mao's years, which consequently triggered some people to write Big Character Posters during the Cultural Revolution to criticise the Party, it is true that all of China was in poverty at the time and that most Party cadres maintained a frugal lifestyle. However, it is equally true that corruption troubled the CCP in Mao's time and is an increasing challenge after the Cultural Revolution. Having said that, is confession gone forever? My research suggests

that while the confession discourse may remain unseen in newspapers today, it has made a comeback in other media forms in Xi's China.

Chapter 5. Analysis of Mediated Confession in Xi's First Five-Year Term

The end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of technocratic reform saw the political use of self-criticism fade out of ordinary people's daily life. As mentioned at the end of the last chapter, the keyword search of 'I made mistakes' gradually lost its original political connotation and became obscure in the *People's Daily*. When it did appear in the 1980s, it was mostly a euphemism for taking bribes. However, it does not necessarily mean that mediated confessions are no longer used by the CCP. In fact, Xi's era has witnessed dozens of confessions involving people from all walks of life, appearing not in newspapers but on television. There were journalists who were said to have produced false reports, public intellectuals who were alleged to have spread rumours, celebrities who took drugs, ethnic minorities who committed murder and looting in Xinjiang and CCP cadres who were expelled and arrested for taking bribes (Yoon, 2015; Mitchell, 2016). This recent resurgence of confessions in media from non-Party members and the CCP cadres alike shows that the CCP regards this technique as being very useful once again in tackling the challenges that the Party is facing today.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, it illustrates the social, cultural and political resonance that is invoked by the framing and how it potentially shapes and is shaped by the society in Xi's first five-year term. Secondly, it dissects how language constructs the power relations and ideology to create the dominant/subordinate divide in Xi's contemporary China. Both points are crucial to the understanding of the implication of the contemporary resurgence of the historical practice, which I will examine in the next chapter. For the analysis on the contemporary data, this thesis mainly focuses on confessions from two sources: three news clip broadcasts on television and a documentary on Xi's anti-corruption campaign. Hence, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the three news clips. The second part investigates the confessions contained in the anti-corruption documentary 'Always on the Road' (2016). I begin both parts with an overview of the media content. Then, I start the three-dimensional CDA of the respective mediated confessions. Both parts end with a brief discussion on the framing implications in terms of discourse and power.

5.1 New clips

Through three TV confession news pieces, the first part of this chapter provides an in-depth inquiry into the framing of the relevant confession discourse. It highlights a common identity that the confessants share across the three TV confession cases: they are all framed as 'criminals', and are convicted by a public trial on CCTV rather than any court. Aside from the shared criminal identity, two confessants are also painted as enemies of China while the remaining one is a morally failed unfilial son. The analysis follows the three levels of analysis of CDA: the descriptive analysis pinpoints the language, metaphors and grammar that crystalises a certain framing. The interpretive level of analysis dissects the production and reception of the cases. An intertextual examination explains the role of the narrator and the strategic omission in guiding the interpretation of the confession. The explanatory analysis explores the cultural resonance giving rise to the framing of three types of discourses: 'Rule of Law' Discourse, National Security Discourse and Family Value Discourse. The CDA of the confession news shows that the CCP uses the ideology-fused discourses to strengthen its control over the public perception of 'law', 'culture' and 'tradition'. The framing highlights two power divisions: between the morally and legally superior and inferior, and between 'us' the good and 'foreign' the evil. Thus, this chapter highlights the manipulative use of law and traditional Chinese culture by the CCP in the discourse and reveals the mundane nature of the TV confessions. As will be explained in more detail later, this mundane nature is a rather calculated strategy to subtly embed these carefully mediated confessions within everyday news.

The following analysis of the news clip is organised as follows: it begins with a general introduction of the three pieces of confession news before moving on to a linguistic examination of the actual content. The interpretive analysis ensues before a discussion of the framing implication of the power divide the framing creates.

5.1.1 General Information on the News Clips

In the thesis, I examine three confession news clips in detail. The confession news clips of journalist Gao Yu and activist Peter Dahlin were broadcast on the CCTV 24-hour news. The case of bookseller Gui Minhai was featured in 'Oriental Horizon', a news magazine programme broadcast at eight o'clock in the evening, a prime time (19:30 - 22:00) TV slot in China ('China bans

foreign TV shows during prime time,' 2012). Despite the different stories, the three news pieces share similar key components: reporters' narration, interviews with people involved and first person confession. For each case, I firstly provide a sketch of the story and then examine the linguistic construction of the key subjects and their relations. Then, the interpretive level of analysis connects the text and discourses to their counterparts outside the cases and the social background more generally. It also explains the relationship between the audience and the producer of TV confessions. Lastly, the explanatory analysis, bringing together the internal and external relations, provides elaboration on the social background that gives rise to the discourses identified.

The Case of Gao Yu: descriptive level of analysis

The first case is about veteran journalist Gao Yu. She appeared in a succinct news piece lasting ninety seconds in the CCTV-13 Morning News (*Zhaowen tianxia*) on 8th May 2014, admitting having endangered national security by leaking a secret document to a foreign website. However, the document that Gao is alleged to have leaked is hardly a national secret. It is the 'Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere' (2013), also known as 'Document 9', warning against seven 'dangerous Western values' (ChinaFile, 2013). Gao's court verdict claimed that she leaked the secret document to the US-based media *Mingjing* in 2013, while both *Mingjing* and Gao later rejected the claim. 'Document 9' used to be unavailable to the public but was well circulated among cadres above the municipal level. It was then partially published in some local newspapers (Kuaixun, 2013). The full content is now available online; therefore, it is by no means a 'national secret'(ChinaFile, 2013). There is no other information about Gao, such as her age, profession and motivation. The reason for Gao's arrest remains murky; however, many people speculate that it relates to her liberal views and outspoken political writings in the 1980s and 1990s, for which she has been to prison twice already (Yu, 2015). Thus, the authority has viewed her as a 'troublemaker'(Rudolph, 2016). She was eventually sentenced to seven years in prison in April 2015 and released six months later due to health issues.

The following section lays out how Gao's identity as 'a convicted criminal' and her relationship with the 'foreign website' are linguistically framed. There is an explicit framing of a crime story with Gao as the criminal and a strong presence of police. Freshly solving the case, the Beijing Police claims that the

then 71-year-old Gao had leaked to a certain foreign website a document containing national secrets and found a large amount of evidence at Gao's home. Without any formal trial at the time of broadcasting, the news clip nonetheless portrays Gao as a criminal from both textual (the script of the news) and visual perspectives.

Textually, the news directly names Gao four times, three out of which she is called 'criminal suspect Gao Yu' rather than 'Gao Yu' (CCTV13 Morning News, 2014). 'Criminal suspect' means that the person is only a suspect and has not been convicted by the court yet. However, the lexical choice has a very clear implication that the person is extremely likely to have committed the crime, if not already found guilty. Meanwhile, she is also referred to as *qi* – a third-person genderless pronoun which can refer to both humans and objects. It is a term commonly used in crime news because it dehumanises a person and produces a manner of formality, cold judgement and distance. Referring to Gao as *qi* is another way to imply her culpability. Gao's 'own' words are self-incriminating too,

> *I believe, what I did was (shi) something that broke the law, endangered the national interests. What I… I did was very wrong (de), I…I…I…I sincerely learnt this lesson, and, erm… must plead guilty to the crime (Morning News, 2014).*

Within two short sentences, Gao admits having committed crime and brought harm to national security. She pleads 'guilty' even before going to a court trial. Visually, the footage of Gao is shown from the police source. The environment where Gao makes her confession is a typical police station setting. Wearing an orange inmate vest, Gao walks into an 'interrogation room' (as shown in a close-up of the placard) accompanied by two police officers. Her face is artificially blurred[20], which is not unusual in crime news reporting (Ning, 2017). In the room, Gao sits opposite to and answers questions from two investigators. The footage also shows her signing paperwork and providing fingerprints in red ink. In sum,

[20] There is no clearly defined practical regulation as to when to blur the face of the people involved in crimes. Instead, there is only a few 'common sense rules'. Among them, the faces of those who are involved in a court case which is not open to the public need blurring. These cases usually relate to national secrets and security. This could be the reason for Gao's face coverage. Another rule relevant to Gao's case is that the face of a person who has not been formally convicted, i.e. the person's rights has not been deprived by court, should be blurred (Ning, 2017).

both the textual (audio) and the visual framing of Gao set her up as a convicted criminal.

The incrimination of Gao is framed through the relationship between her and an anonymous 'other' – 'a certain overseas website' (*mou jingwai wangzhan*) to which Gao is accused of providing secrets illegally. The adjective 'overseas' is the only available information about the website, which associates 'foreign' with illegal activities. She becomes an accomplice to the unspecified overseas force and thus is a traitor to China. The broad term *jingwai* (overseas) creates a separation between 'us' and 'them'. Literally meaning 'outside the national border', *jingwai* referring to anything that is outside China. The physical borderline becomes a metaphoric divide, which not only refers to Gao's leaking sensitive information from inside China to some media outside of China but also pushes journalist Gao outside the legal realm and categorises her as a part of *jingwai*: a traitor who is disloyal to her motherland and breaks Chinese law.

The Case of Peter Dahlin: descriptive level of analysis

The second case concerns a Swedish citizen and NGO aid worker Peter Dahlin. On 20th January 2016, Dahlin confessed on the Morning News (CCTV13[21]) that his organisation, the Chinese Urgent Action Working Group (CUAWG), had broken Chinese law and harmed China's national security by illegally training lawyers, inflaming local social conflicts and inciting Chinese people against their own government. In the news, Dahlin talks about the foreign funding involved, names a few lawyers he has worked with and also briefly comments on the fair treatment he has received so far during his detention. Notably, his confession is backed up by two of his colleagues, Wang and Xing, who provide some detail as to the daily operation of the organisation. They are seen as using their insider knowledge to expose Dahlin's intention of tarnishing the reputation of China by fabricating human rights issues. In reality, according to the *Guardian*, the work of the CUAWG is 'attempting to help Chinese civil society by offering training and support to human rights lawyers who were trying to provide justice to China's disenfranchised and downtrodden' (Phillips, 2016).

[21] http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2016/01-19/7723653.shtml (24 August 2018). The linked website China News claims to have released the clip at the night of 19th January 2016. However, both the clip itself and the source link (attached under the clip from the CCTV website) show that the clip was released on 20th January. It is puzzling how the China News published something that was released the next day. It could be a website technical issue.

Many people believe that Dahlin's arrest is directly linked to one of the major crackdowns on human rights lawyers which occurred in July 2015 (*ibid.*).

One of the most eye-catching elements of Dahlin's case is his Swedish nationality. Although Dahlin is not the first foreign national to be paraded in a TV confession, foreign confessants are still in the minority. Therefore, there are unique elements in his confession due to his non-Chinese nationality. One such element is that Dahlin not only admits to all the wrongdoings and apologises for 'hurting the Chinese people's feelings', but also mentions that he has been treated well while under the police investigation. Such a claim does not exist in the other two cases that this thesis examines. He claims that,

> *I have no complains to make. I think my treatment has been fair. My treatment has taken special circumstances into consideration, for example, my unique medical condition. I've been given good food, plenty of sleep and I have suffered no mistreatment of any kind. And I've also been given the opportunities to meet with representatives from my embassy.*

Dahlin's words can be interpreted as a response to the accusation of human rights violation by the Chinese government. Many foreign governments, media and NGOs have criticised China for its human rights violations (Peerenboom, 2005). The treatment of criminals, suspects or the extra-legal detainees can be worse. In both Gao's and Gui's confessions, there are zoom-in shots of their hands showing no handcuffs or visible bruises and scars. Dahlin's Swedish nationality makes the security agents feel more obliged to show that they abide by the law to avoid human rights criticism. Therefore, Dahlin's above 'disclaimer' can be the best response to any such criticism and the proof that nothing inappropriate happened.

Quite different from Gao's framing, Dahlin is not visually framed as a criminal. In the clip, he sits in front of the camera with normal clothes rather than an orange vest. Dahlin is only called 'a criminal suspect' once and the incrimination is done mainly through textual (audio) framing. At the start of the news, the presenter claims that the police have 'destroyed' (*dadiao*) an illegal organisation. '*Dadiao'* means 'smashing, destroying or wiping out' somebody or something, a lexical choice commonly associated with police actions and violent crimes. The implication is to suggest the illegal and dangerous nature of Dahlin's

organisation. The CUAWG, according to its website, specialises in providing ‘rapid legal aid to rights defenders with the purpose to advance the rule of law in China’ (CUAWG). The description contrasts sharply with the image of violent crimes which *dadiao* paints. In a similar vein, the news presenter declares that the criminal suspects including Dahlin have been subject to ‘criminal coercive measures according to law’ (CCTV13 Morning New, 2016). ‘Criminal coercive measures’ refers to,

> …those taken by judicial organs in accordance with the law to restrict the personal rights of a citizen or deny him or her of such rights. When a coercive measure is taken against a person, the person's honour, freedom and other rights are bound to be adversely affected ('Criminal Coercive Measures Standardized,' 2004)).

However, this definition is not immediately available for the audience, thus what it means may be unclear. Meanwhile, ‘criminal ’and ‘coercive’ bring connotations of severe and serious consequences. Therefore, the lexical choice related to the police makes Dahlin’s lawyer-training NGO appear to be dangerous, reinforcing the guilty nature of Dahlin without an actual trial. Dahlin makes his confession in English, which is translated into Chinese and shown on the screen in subtitles. He speaks as ‘we’, but the subtitle shows ‘I’. This inaccuracy in translation, deliberate or not, further concentrates all the responsibility on Dahlin alone. Throughout the disclaimer of his fair treatment and claiming to have hurt Chinese people’s feelings, Dahlin begins almost all his sentences with ‘I’ or ‘my’, underlining it is indeed his true feeling rather than someone trying to put words into his mouth.

As Dahlin is framed as a foreign saboteur who undermines the Chinese government, his accusers – Wang and Xing - are more than his victims: they claim to be Dahlin’s accomplices. Within the eight-minute news clip, Wang speaks for a total of one minute and forty-seven seconds; Xing speaks for forty-eight seconds. Together, they speak for almost one quarter of the length of the programme. While they are speaking, they wear normal civilian clothes, but their faces are artificially blurred. The same close up of Wang’s hands appeared four times as he speaks. Without delving into any detailed content of their accusation, the visual cue hints that they are no longer working for the anti-China foreign force and that both of them have transformed into repented accusers whose insider

knowledge can reveal the true intention of Dahlin. Accordingly, their role has also transformed from merely repenting and self-criticism to incriminating Dahlin and the anti-China foreign force behind him. The next section delves into the content of their interviews closely to reveal the relationship between Dahlin and his accusers.

The relationship between Dahlin and his accusers is twofold. Firstly, they were colleagues as both Wang and Xing worked for Dahlin. Due to this work relation, Wang and Xing play an essential role in incriminating Dahlin. According to the narration, Wang and Xing have 'colluded with' (*huotong*) the Swede. *Huotong* is a verb with a strong negative connotation and thus is often associated with illegal behaviours. As Xing claims,

> *…in truth, Peter is an agent of the overseas anti-China force inside our country. He made use of livelihood-related issues such as land expropriation and demolition, in order to deceive the masses and lure them to act against the government to fight for their own interests. He intended to use civilian agents like me to gather the public opinion of our country and negative news about local government, and then pass it abroad. The material will be used by the anti-China force abroad to attack the human rights issue of our country and damage the good international reputation of our nation. This further facilitates the foreign anti-China force's plot of attacking the economy and politics of our country.*

The word choice of 'agent' in the quotation is rather reminiscent of a typical Cultural-Revolution style language. As shown in the previous analysis chapter on the Cultural Revolution confession news, 'agent' appeared frequently during the decade, especially in the context of describing the colluders of Liu Shaoqi, who was the biggest Capitalist Roader and 'the Chinese Khrushchev' at the time. Thus, being an 'agent' in that context implied that the person was a lackey of China's biggest enemy, Liu Shaoqi. The application of the term in the current context can invoke the antagonistic emotion familiar to those who experienced the Cultural Revolution and thus escalate the hatred towards Dahlin. In a similar vein, Dahlin's other accomplice, Wang, brands the organisation as 'a pioneer station' and 'a bridgehead' of the anti-China force to 'place eyes inside' China, so that 'when the

time is ready, he could subvert the political power and our party leaders' [22] (CCTV13 Morning News, 2016). 'A pioneer station' and 'a bridgehead' are among the favourite metaphors of the Party propaganda and were popular war rhetoric during the Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2004). These war-related metaphors appeal to a similar emotion to that of the 'War against Japan' and agitate the anti-imperialist sentiments. Therefore, the careful lexical choice of the accomplices constructs Dahlin as an enemy of China who has plotted to undermine the Chinese government from within and destroy China's reputation worldwide, while Dahlin's accusers show remorse and loyalty to China by exposing his 'crimes'.

Meanwhile, the second aspect of the relationship is that the framing is trying to draw a line between Dahlin and his accusers, implying that Wang and Xing are actually victims. For instance, when the accusers talk about their involvement in Dahlin's organisation, they both use 'they' to refer to Dahlin and his organisation, claiming that 'their' purpose is to 'tarnish the good reputation' of 'our' country (CCTV13 Morning News, 2016). Such lexical choices, together with Dahlin's repeated use of 'I', manages to shift the accusers from Dahlin's side to 'our' side. It emphasises the fact that the accusers were lured to carry out illegal deeds. By condemning Dahlin as the enemy of the Chinese people, Wang and Xing showcase their determination to separate themselves from Dahlin.

The Case of Gui Minhai: descriptive level of analysis

Aired around the same time as Dahlin's confession is the third case, which concerns another Swedish citizen: Gui Minhai, a bookseller who used to be based in Hong Kong. Gui disappeared from his house in Thailand in late 2015. He abruptly appeared on CCTV news in early 2016, claiming to have handed himself in for a drunk-driving accident which had occurred over a decade ago. Broadcast on 17th January 2016 in the TV programme 'Oriental Horizon', the ten-and-a-half-minute-long news feature recounts an emotional tragedy. According to the story, Gui handed himself in to the mainland police due to his guilty conscience for being a criminal at large and an irresponsible son. Gui confesses to drunk driving, killing a female university student and then escaping abroad during probation. His claim is backed up by a traffic policeman's recollection of the case and the mourning of the victim's mother over her only daughter. Meanwhile, Gui describes the restless life of an illegal immigrant abroad. The passing of his father

[22] Translation from https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20160122/c22china/dual/

and his sick mother prompted him to return to China to face legal punishment and take moral responsibility. In tears, he expresses the regret of breaking up the victim's family and the failure to fulfil his filial duty to his own parents. However, there are multiple discrepancies throughout the programme. Small details such as the different Chinese characters in Gui's name and the different T-shirts he wears make Gui's confession look less voluntary. Escaping during probation was also an illogical choice. It contradicts a 2005 news report of the accident which described Gui as being 'willing to assume "full responsibility" in the form of economic compensation…' (Bandurski, 2016: para 12). These inconsistencies further question the authenticity of the confession. Moreover, what is unsaid is his real 'crime' – publishing books about the private lives of current top Chinese political leaders. Many speculate that Gui's publication about the private lives of top Chinese political leaders is the real reason behind his abduction, as Gui's publications are sometimes 'thinly-sourced, tabloid-style political books...which are outlawed in mainland China' (Holmes and Phillips, 2015: para 22).

Compared with Gao and Dahlin, Gui is less directly called a 'criminal', but the incriminating references are both explicitly expressed and implicitly implied. Gui, a hit-and-run driver who escaped abroad for many years has now finally handed himself in. The traffic policeman mentions Gui as the 'driver who caused the accident' (*zhaoshi siji*); the narrator describes Gui's years abroad as the 'life of a fugitive' (*taowang shengya*). Even Gui speaks of himself as a 'criminal fugitive' (*taofan)*. He then describes his guilty feeling,

> *…After leaving the country, I had hoped that my mental pressure would have been alleviated. However, the pressure wasn't reduced. In fact, it became worse, as my mounting feeling of guilt and shame grew day by day. On the one hand, I… ran away from my responsibility, which…further hurt the feelings of the victim's family. On the other hand, I illegally left China. Not only did I escape my original punishment, but also break the Chinese law again… that was one more crime… and so… a sense of guilt and shame… made me suffer long-term mental unrest.* (Oriental Horizon, 2016)

Gui's own account of shame and regret, together with the incriminating lexical choices, underlines the typical restlessness of a fugitive, signalling explicitly Gui's criminal identity. Gui's criminal status is also alluded to in a less direct

way. For instance, Gui has 'victims', indicating that Gui has brought harm to other people. At the end of the news feature, the narrator adds that Gui is under investigation for 'being involved in other criminal activities', which further underlines Gui's propensity to reoffend. The details utilise and reflect the presupposed social and cultural norm surrounding the fear of crimes (Chang, 1990). By portraying Gui's guilty nature both directly and indirectly, the details set the scene as a crime story.

Nonetheless, 'a criminal' who fled probation is by no means the only image that the framing of Gui constructs. The following section explains the framing of Gui's second identity: 'an unfilial son'. Filial piety is a Confucian virtue regarding one's responsibility to care for and please one's ageing parents. It is one of the most important virtues in traditional Chinese family values (Chan and Tan, 2004). From this perspective, Gui is an unfilial son, as he confesses that his fugitive status meant he could not take care of his frail parents,

> *…However, I was a criminal at large, so I couldn't go back to China and visit my… my parents were in their eighties (swallowing hard twice). In 2015, my dad died of cancer (sobbing). I couldn't attend the funeral (crying). After this, my mother fell gravely ill, so (swallowing)… I missed her day and night. I wanted to (crying)… see her once more while she was alive (crying)… Therefore, I must go back to the country and hand in myself. I will shoulder my own responsibility. I…am also willing to receive… any punishments* (Oriental Horizon, 2016).

When Gui is recounting the passing of his father in tears, he says that he 'must' return to China and 'will' face all the responsibilities. The two modalities indicate a high degree of certainty of the language, showing the determination of a repenting son. According to Halliday (1985), verbs can indicate a sense of being, an action and a feeling, distinguished respectively as 'relational verbs', 'material verbs' and 'mental verbs'. The latter half of Gui's confession is composed of a series of action verbs, such as 'go' (back to the country), 'hand in' (myself), 'shoulder' (…responsibility) and 'receive' (…punishments). These are typical action verbs that show behaviours as opposed to the abstract thoughts or intangible feelings. Through laying out the motion, these verbs indicate Gui's willingness to take action.

Meanwhile, Gui's 'unfilial son' identity coupled with the traumatised mother's interview illustrates an emotional tragedy. Compared with the story of a traffic accident, a more gripping story here is the devastating consequence of Gui's drunk driving presented as an emotional story told by the victim's mother. Details about Gui's victim were scarce, only that she was a female university student surnamed Shen in her early twenties at the time of the accident. Her father was so grief-stricken that he fell ill and became suicidal. Her mother shows the journalist Shen's room which the parents still keep for her. With tears, she also explains that she keeps the photo of her daughter on her phone and key rings. The couple never escapes the death of their daughter. The narrator describes that her death means her parents have to go through '*baifaren song heifaren*', which literally means 'a person with grey hair bids farewell to a person with black hair' at a funeral. It describes the tragedy that one experiences at the death of one's child - one of the three most tragic scenarios in traditional Chinese culture, alongside losing one's mother at an early age and losing one's wife in mid-life. According to the narrator, her parents had hoped that she would soon '*chengjia liye*': start a family and a career. This lexical choice is unusual. Despite the somewhat improved social status of women in China, the four-word idiom is conventionally associated with the male heir in a family. Sons are expected to form their families and start their careers, whereas daughters are expected to marry into other people's families and focus on domestic affairs (Zhang, 2018). Using the term reveals the effort to frame the status of the daughter in this family: she was as important as a son. Consequently, the loss of the daughter is equivalent to the loss of a son, which marks the end of a family line from a traditional Chinese perspective.

Gui is framed to have a strong tie to his own family in China and exhibit a sense of guilt towards his old sick parents. Gui describes himself as 'guilty', 'full of shame' and 'tortured mentally for a long time' (Oriental Horizon, 2016). He claims to be homeless because of the mental unrest after leaving China illegally and cites an old saying that 'my home is where I can be at peace' as proof. The framing magnifies Gui as the unfilial son who has not been around his parents. However, what is left outside the frame is as important as what is spoken out loud. Such framing ignores his other possible family roles, such as the fact that Gui is also a husband and father who has a wife and a daughter living outside China (Siu

and Lam, 2016). This omission presupposes that Gui's kinship has only existed in China where he is the son. What is unsaid becomes non-existent so that Gui's 'fugitive life' abroad could be nothing but living alone and rootless.

The relationship between Gui and the victim's family is framed rather indirectly but is consequential. Much attention is also focused on the consequential recounting of the victim's mother. The mother never refers to Gui. All that she says is about the traumatic life experience after the accident. The sole focus is on her as mother whose life still very much revolves around her daughter. The interview with the mother of Gui's victim induces an emotional and moral response. Instead of demanding Gui be brought to justice, the framing fixates on the emotional devastation the family has suffered. Without directly mentioning Gui, such framing enlarges the serious consequence of Gui's action and strengthens her position as a victim who is powerless to escape from the tragedy Gui has created. The construction of the relationship strengthens Gui's identity as a culprit and unfilial son who escaped abroad during the probation period for a drunk driving case and brought huge trauma to the victim's family as well as to his own family.

Therefore, in sum, the descriptive analysis of all three cases identifies two types of stories that the framing tries to tell. The first type is crime stories in which the culprits are bought to justice. On the basis of the linguistic analysis of the three news pieces, it is evident that Journalist Gao Yu, Swedish activist Peter Dahlin and Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai are all framed as 'criminals' in media before going on court trials. Their respective relationships with the relevant subjects – the anonymous foreign website (Gao), ex-colleagues (Dahlin), and both families affected (Gui) – all strengthen the construction of their 'criminal' identity in the stories. Meanwhile, the second story carries personal framing variations. The framing of Gao's leaking of the national secrets of China abroad and Dahlin's working for some unspecified foreign anti-China force further implicates them as the enemy of China. By contrast, the treatment of the China-born Swedish citizen Gui is rather different. The linguistic framing of Gui underlines his link to China and deprives him of anything that can be related to a foreign national. He is branded as an unfilial son according to traditional Chinese culture as well as being a repeat offender. The next section explores the interpretation of what the linguistic features have identified.

5.1.2 Interpretive level of analysis

The interpretive analysis addresses the issue of media production and interpretation. Just as in the last chapter, it examines some external elements of the discourse and their relationship with the framing. Its purpose is to identify the themes that the confession constructs from two aspects. The first aspect is to examine media production in terms of the using of verbs and modalities, which is able to reveal the relationship between the news and its audience. This relationship, in turn, indicates the purpose of the news. The second aspect is to examine the external references that are involved in the production of news. It reflects how the framing of the three news clips makes use of the existing discourses. Then, the analysis summarises the themes and the genres applied in the confession. The themes and genres are the crucial connection points to the larger social structures.

The programmes & the audience

This section examines the production of media content through modalities and verbs. The previous linguistic analysis has briefly touched upon some examples. Here I would like to put emphasis on explaining the purpose of the modalities and verbs in terms of what message the producer tries to convey and what relationship is formed through the modalities and the verbs. Verbs and modalities facilitate the formation of the content and reveal the intention of subjects (Halliday, 1994; Fairclough, 2001). The previous section about Gui's 'an unfilial son' identity has demonstrated the action verbs signalling Gui's keenness to take action to correct his past wrongs. A similar example is also present in Dahlin's confession,

> *I violated Chinese law through my activities here. I caused harm to the Chinese government and hurt the feelings of the Chinese people. I apologise sincerely for these and I'm very sorry for this ever happened* (CCTV13 Morning News, 2016).

The action verbs – violate (law), cause (harm), hurt (feelings) and apologise – substantiate Dahlin's wrongdoings and produce a compelling sense of real damage and the resultant regret. By contrast, the 16-second footage of Gao's confessional words provides a succinct view of both modalities and mental verbs in use,

> *I believe, what I did was (shi) something that broke the law, endangered the national interested. What I… I did was very wrong (de), I…I…I…I sincerely learnt this lesson, and, erm… must plead guilty of the crime.* (Morning News, 2014)

Gao's repentant attitude is clear through the use of the modalities *hui* (will) and *yao* (must), despite the fact that what Gao says is so vague that it reveals no substantive information as to her crime. What is also noteworthy is that Gao's confession is the only place in the news where a determinate clause is applied. The relational verb *shi* is determinate, implying a judgement or an assertion that is so obvious that it is too redundant to spell it out (Hodge and Louie, 1998: 87). The word *de* roughly means 'apostrophe-s possessive form in English' (*ibid.*). 'Built into the *de*-form is an ideological potential which is added unobtrusively to every particular act of judgement, contributing to features of the use of *de* which are otherwise inexplicable' (Hodge and Louie, 1998: 88). That is to say, the combination of '*…shi…de*' is able to transform a neutral descriptive sentence into judgement with a predilection. In this case, Gao's self-evaluation comes to the judgement that she has made serious mistakes.

The examples above demonstrate at least two purposes that the content is trying to achieve. The main purpose of using action and relational verbs and modalities is to frame the confessants as sincerely apologising. It, in turn, defames the confessants and enhances the credibility of the stories in their entirety. All confessants in the TV news clips exhibit such sincerity and 'determination' to criticise oneself. The second purpose is to make the audience forget the fact that the confessants have not gone through court trials, which establishes a presumption of guilt (Yu, 2015). Moreover, at the end of both Gao's and Gui's cases, the narrators also reveal that they are repeat offenders. The clips state that Gao was convicted for the same crime in 1993 and sentenced to six years of imprisonment; Gui is under investigation for some other crimes. This detail further stigmatises Gao and Gui. Gao was a criminal before; thus, it is no surprise that she can do it again. Gui was so morally degraded that he ran away after hitting a pedestrian and even escaped abroad to evade responsibility. Thus, it is no surprise he is involved in other crimes. Therefore, the whole interpretation of the confession emphasises guilt and remorse, but not the details of the 'crime' itself.

Consequently, the news aims to convince the audience that these people are criminals, despite the fact that they have not been convicted.

Intertextuality & interdiscursivity

This section examines the intertextual and interdiscursive references in the production of three news clips. As mentioned in the last chapter, intertextuality describes the reference to other existing texts in the current text. Quotations, for instance, are a typical example of intertextual reference. It shows that the intertextual application of any texts outside the three news cases is a typical way to reveal existing themes that the three news clips are drawing on. A prominent example in the data is Dahlin's use of 'hurting the feelings of the Chinese people' mentioned above (CCTV13 Morning News, 2016). The phrase deserves particular attention because it is not Dahlin's invention. Intertextually, it bears a recognisable mark of the Chinese government. Within the Chinese official discourse, this phrase has become a ritualistic term referring to the 'bad foreigners' (Rudolph, 2018). It is often associated with the conduct of foreign people or organisations that is deemed as inappropriate from the perspective of Beijing, ranging from the political, such as foreign leaders meeting with or showing support to the Dalai Lama, to the mundane, such as hotels listing Taiwan as an independent country on their booking webpages (Rudolph, 2018). According to my brief content analysis on the appearance of this term in the *People's Daily* between 1949 and 2018 (see Figure 3), the term has been in use continually since 1978. The frequency peaked in the turbulent 1989. It was in constant use between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s, with a rough average annual use of 13 times. The nations or organisations that repeatedly 'hurt Chinese people's feelings' include the Japanese government, which keeps visiting the Imperial Shrine of Yasukuni and having island disputes with China; the US government, sometimes together with the EU Parliament or individual EU countries, which intermittently meet with the Taiwanese leaders and Dalai Lama and 'interfere with Chinese domestic affairs'. All three issues have been controversial for decades and China has always been very firm on the issue of Japan, Taiwan and Tibet, even during the years of 'hiding one's light under a bushel'. Despite the decline in usage since 2010, over a decade of associating the term with certain nations and foreign relations disputes cultivates a particular mindset and way of interpretation. Consequently, Dahlin's use of the term not only sends a strong signal of the involvement of Chinese authority to an informed

audience but also escalates his offence to the same priority level with the most sensitive foreign relations issues.

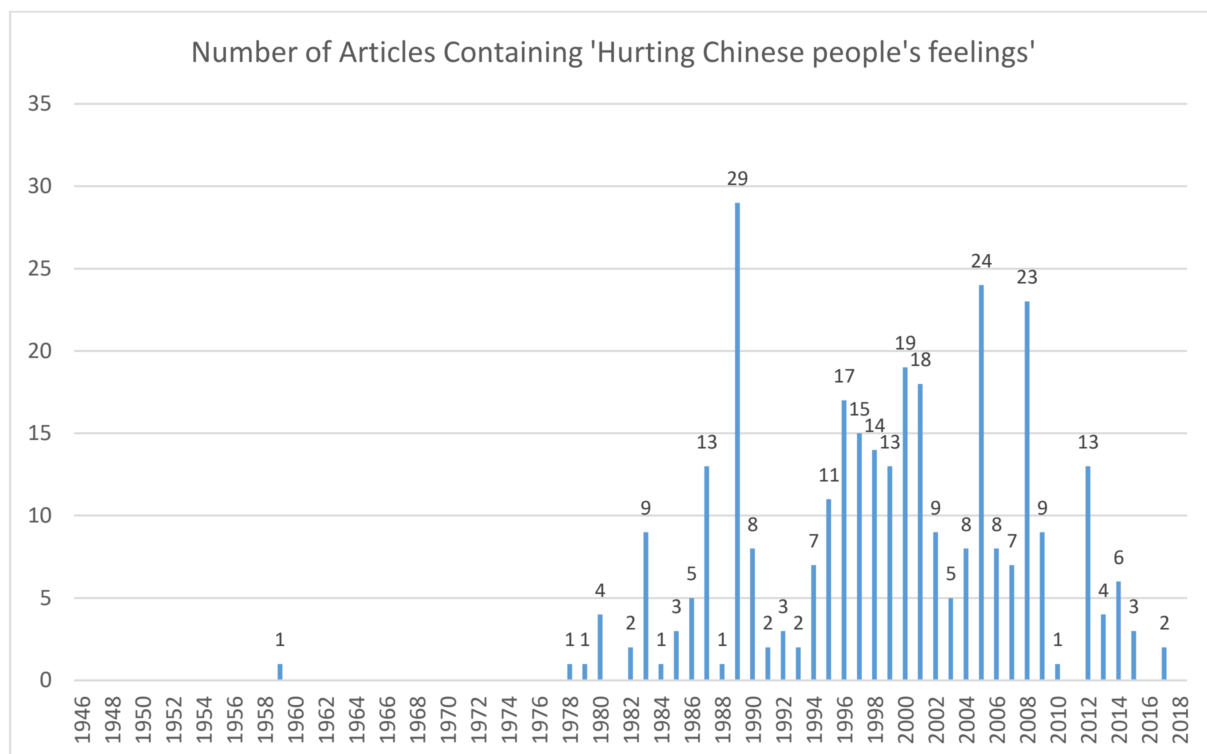

Figure 3 Number of Articles Containing 'Hurting Chinese people's feelings' in the People's Daily *between 1946 and 2018*

The production of media is also closely linked to the genre of the text. Genre by itself contains unspoken assumptions and interdiscursively affects the interpretation of the content. I highlight two aspects here: the genre of the media items and the role of narration. In terms of genre, Gao's and Dahlin's cases are news bulletins, whereas Gui's is a news feature programme. As mentioned before, both Gao's and Dahlin's clips were repeatedly shown on a 24-hour news channel. Like the rest of the news repeated multiple times a day on the 24-hour news, being on that channel adds banality to the clips. They became an inseparable part of the mundane news that is seemingly present over and over, yet is neglected by most of the people most of the time. By contrast, the brand of the programme 'Oriental Horizon' can boost the credibility of the orchestrated confessions. Debuting in 1993, the show was China's 'first large-scale news magazine programme' (Hong *et al.*, 2009: 42). Its brand has been built on covering pressing domestic social issues with professional journalistic language in contrast to the usual empty political preaching. The programme itself wields respect among its audience, thus making the narration more persuasive.

Both media genres rely on the second aspect that I would like to highlight here: the seemingly neutral narration or voiceover of the news reader. In fact, the role of narration is rarely neutral. Take Gui's case as an example. Packaged as a news feature, Gui's confession is merged seamlessly with the interviews with the relevant people and the third person narration. This narration plays a crucial role in guiding the interpretation of Gui's story by following the checklist of the three 'Ds' introduced in the literature review: Deny, Denounce and Defend. To *deny* the abduction accusation of Gui directed at the Chinese government, the female presenter begins the programme with: 'there have been many reports about Gui's so-called disappearance in foreign and Hong Kong media recently' (Oriental Horizon, 2016). The 'so-called disappearance' suggests that Gui did not evaporate for no reason. Nor was any foul play from the Chinese authority involved in his disappearance. It implies that what the programme is going to reveal is the 'real' truth. The news concludes with the following extract, echoing the previous 'so-called disappearance',

> *Narrator:*
>
> *Gui Minhai said, the moment when he had decided to return to China and handed himself in, he was also ready to be responsible legally for all his actions. Gui Minhai handed himself in to mainland police in October 2015. However, to his surprise, some people with ulterior motives sensationalised his decision.*
>
> *Gui:*
>
> *It was my voluntary choice to come back and hand myself in. It had nothing to do with anyone else. I don't wish any individuals or organisations, including the Swedish authority, to be involved or interfere with my returning to China. Although I hold Swedish nationality, I really feel that I am still Chinese. My root is still in China… Therefore, I hope the Swedish authority can respect my personal…choice, my privacy and right to make this decision. Let me myself solve my problems.* (Oriental Horizon 2016)

In the example, the narrator guides the interpretation of Gui's confession by speaking on behalf of Gui first. The narrator leads the audience to believe that Gui is genuinely 'surprised' that the Swedish authority and foreign media are looking

for him. Such framing makes Gui indirectly *denounce* the Swedish authority and the foreign media as 'people with ulterior motives' who 'sensationalised' his disappearance. Gui's own words are only heard after the narrator lays out the important causal relations. Emphasising the voluntary nature of his return to China, Gui is *defending* his captors and their actions. Hence, through summarising the account of the events and fulfilling the 'three Ds' task, the narration ensures that what the confessant says can only be understood in a certain way.

In sum, as shown in the descriptive and the interpretive analyses so far, the reasoning device identifies one crucial problem that is shared across the three stories - all the confessants have broken the Chinese law. Consequently, all three subjects are framed as criminals and all three clips share a common theme of criminal justice. Further exploration of the crime committed by the confessants shows that two of them are related to threatening national security. The only exceptional case spends much effort in creating a tragedy of two families following a car accident. The reasons for the confessants to break the law vary, but they all have to show remorse. The genre of the media item and the role of narration reveal the message that is embedded in media production. The unspoken assumptions are coded into the news programmes that people are watching. The intertextuality and interdiscursivity already hint at the wider social, cultural and political environment, or 'cultural resonance', that gives rise to the framing of the theme of criminal justice, national security and family values. The next explanatory level of analysis examines the discourses surrounding the themes and how they come into existence.

5.1.3 Explanatory level of analysis

The explanatory analysis explains that the discourses used by framing appeal to the current social, cultural and political environment. Such an environment has been established or is under the active construction by the CCP. It is important because it explains the rationale behind the framing of the three confession cases and reflects the CCP's ideological steering process. It paves the way to reveal the power disparity in Chinese society today. The three discourses that are identified in the data are the 'Rule of Law' Discourse, the National Security Discourse and the Family Value Discourse, which I unpack next.

'Rule of Law' Discourse

The shared identity of 'a criminal' among all three confessants signals a strong 'Rule of Law' Discourse. It is worth noting that the 'Rule of Law' Discourse here is a shorthand for 'socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics', which is the official translation of Xi's definition of 'ruling the country according to law'. It underlines the indispensable and leading role of the CCP in building the legal system in China and distinguishes itself from any other forms of 'rule of law' (Li, 2018: 3).

The 'Rule of Law' Discourse appeals to the aforementioned institutionalised resonance of establishing a system of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics. Since the late 1970s, Chinese top leaders have made an effort to avoid the 'Rule of Man', especially the kind characterised in Mao's late years (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018a). Much effort has been put into building the legal framework and raising general legal awareness. Between 1949 and 1978, there were merely 134 laws passed (111 were later deemed invalid), among which only one was passed during the Cultural Revolution in 1975. Within the two decades after 1976, the NPC and its Standing Committee passed over 337 laws (Pei, 2001). The numbers of law firms and lawyers also rose from 1,456 and 5,500 in 1981 to over 8,300 and 110,000 within the two decades (Peerenboom, 1998). Meanwhile, the Party has been raising legal awareness and cultivating an ethos of respect towards law-based rules among the public. The institutes promulgating law began publicising laws and this practice has become a part of the Five-Year Plan (Peerenboom, 2002). The official media produced more law-related programmes. CCTV initiated its legal channel in 2002: CCTV-12 Society and Law (its name changed to National History on 1 January 2019). The official website declares its mission: 'to implement the state policies of "rule of law" and "rule of virtue" to achieve the goal of building a 'harmonious society' (CCTV12). Many other CCTV channels also broadcast legal programmes, such as "Legal Report" (1999-now) on CCTV1. The result is the creation of a basic legal structure and a general legal awareness among the public. Thus, it is fair to conclude that China has moved away from the kind of prevalent lawlessness that characterised the Cultural Revolution and the 'rule of law' has become common Party vocabulary today (Peerenboom, 2002; Minzner, 2011; Chen, 2016).

Xi also claims to prioritise 'rule of law' in his political agenda. The year 2012 was the 30th anniversary of the 1982 Constitution and Xi declared that China

'must firmly establish throughout society the authority of the constitution and the law' (Zhao, 2012b). Two years later at the Fourth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, 'rule of law' became the core topic of the plenum for the first time (Peerenboom, 2015). The plenum issued the important document 'CCP Central Committee Decision Concerning Some Major Questions in Comprehensively Moving Governing the Country According to the Law Forward' (Decision, 2014), signalling a potential further reform in the legal area. The official rhetoric continues showcasing Xi's commitment towards the 'rule of law' since he came to power in 2012.

However, law remains a tool for the Party when it deems it necessary (Radin, 1989; Peerenboom, 2002; Zhang, 2017). In pre-modern China, law was an instrument for the state to carry out its plans and policies instead of a justification of the rightful existence of the state. The Chinese emperors did not have a 'right' to rule, but a 'duty' – Mandate of Heaven – to govern (Bünger, 1987; Li, 2015). In this sense, the role of law in China has largely remained unchanged. As mentioned before, Xi clearly rejects the notion that law should 'impose meaningful restraints on the state and individual members of the ruling elite' (Peerenboom, 2002: 2). 'Decision 2014' unapologetically underlines the leading role of the Party in the implementation of the 'socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics' (Peerenboom, 2015; Pils, 2015; Zhang, 2017), thus legitimising the use of public naming and shaming to discipline and intimidate the confessants. Moreover, Minzner (2011) argues that, since entering the twenty-first century, China's legal reform has been in regression. deLisle (2015) also predicts that law will assume a more repressive role in dealing with political changes. In the name of maintaining social stability, the Party has installed a top-down policy which encourages the court to mediate any disputes, rather than to follow legal norms. Apart from TV confessions, Xi's flagship anti-corruption campaign has been largely carried out through extra-legal investigation (Peerenboom, 2015). The recent crackdown on human rights lawyers and the incarceration of Uyghurs in re-education camps in Xinjiang are two very telling examples that, in areas such as social stability, the Party is ruling over the law.

The TV confessions were conducted at the expense of the human and legal rights of all three confessants and the rights as a foreign national in the case of Gui and Dahlin. This use of public naming and shaming to discipline and

intimidate the disobedient is the opposite of the liberal democratic definition of rule of law. Thus, law is still very much a tool of the ruling elites to consolidate their position rather than a means to limit the powerful. The use of the 'Rule of Law' Discourse in the framing can be seen as a means to create a rather distorted picture of justice.

National Security Discourse

Closely related to the 'Rule of Law' Discourse is the National Security Discourse. As seen from both the cases of Gao and Dahlin, they are accused of 'leaking secret documents abroad' (CCTV13 Morning News, 2014) and 'committing criminal activities related to endangering national security' (CCTV13 Morning News, 2016). Xi's term has witnessed the spread of the crimes in the name of endangering national security to punish, intimidate and silence dissidents. National security can be defined as 'an idea, a doctrine, and an institution, designed to bridge the traditional division between the interests of the state abroad and those of the state at home, and to merge the culture of everyday life with that of the defence of the national interest' (McSweeney, 2004: 20). The concept means it is critical to align people's interests as much as possible to national interests. However, it is crucial to note that national interests vary depending on the internal logic of the state at a given era. Thus, what national security entails changes over time. Therefore, borrowing from Katzenstein (1996), it is more important to 'define' national security than to 'defend' it. The framing of the cases gives a glimpse of how the CCP under Xi defines national security.

Xi has expanded the definition of 'national security'. The National Security Law was passed in July 2015 after the establishment of the National Security Commission (NSC) on 15 April 2014. The law gives an extremely broad coverage of areas related to national security, ranging from the more traditional aspects such as military, territorial, political and economic, to the new cultural, cyber, ecological and religious areas, or what Xi called in the first meeting of the NSC 'a holistic view of national security' (Xi, 2014). Moreover, this overarching definition of national security means that Xi endeavours to make everyone responsible for national security. As Gao and Dahlin's accusers Wang and Xing show, the people are both potential instruments and enemies. Gao was a journalist who was 'convicted' by the media for threatening the national security of her motherland. Wang and Xing, who were once the accomplices of Dahlin, repented

and helped convict their Swedish ex-colleague. All three seemingly ordinary Chinese people were relatively unknown to the public prior to their TV confessions. The framing of their confession warns that it is possible for ordinary people to be involved in serious national security issues.

The concept of national security demarcates geographically, linguistically, culturally, historically who 'we' are, and thus what 'we' are for and against. In this regard, the national security discourse draws from as well as feeds into the existing Century of Humiliation Discourse[23] and the China Threat Discourse[24]. Both discourses stimulate the rise of the need to improve China's image as well as to undermine the foreign image (Callahan, 2005). The framing of the confession relates to the social unrest within China as a result of hostile foreign forces. The accusation from Dahlin's two accomplices is a good example. While implicating Dahlin, his accomplices mention that they have gathered negative information from 'petitioners' (*fangmin*), 'relocatees' (*chaiqianhu*) whose houses are facing compulsory demolition and those who are 'at the bottom of the society'. The accomplices' account provides a glimpse into China's current internal conflicts between the ordinary people, especially the poor people, and the government with regard to housing, personal rights and forceful, even violent, policy implementation at the local level of government. The framing selects these issues as a warning that should anyone come across such people who are organising or staging public discontent over these issues, be aware there can be a foreign anti-China force meddling. This linkage represents a well-established logical chain that distrusts foreigners. The CCP often brands foreign organisations as 'the black hand behind the scene' of some domestic unrest, such as the Soviet Union's attempts to incite Xinjiang's independence in the 1960s, the student movement in

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[23] The Century of Humiliation discourse was born out of a series of military defeats, colonialism and imperialism from 1883 to the mid-twentieth century (Callahan, 2004). The Party has deliberately utilised this national scar to promote the inviolability of China's territory and sovereign integrity. Therefore, international disputes such as the long-term row over the East and the South China Sea and the more recent the trade war with the US are described by some ordinary Chinese as 'the foreigners are bullying us again' (Larmer, 2018: para 3). Some Chinese people are very aware of such issues and are attuned to interpret them in the context of national humiliation.

[24] The China Threat Discourse became particularly topical in the 1990s. The rapid economic growth in China made many people wonder whether China would challenge the current world order and regional security in the near future (Roy, 1996). The China-threat side criticises China as 'a bully' who 'tries relentlessly to expand its reach' (Krauthammer, 1995: 72), while its opponent fought fiercely back by calling out these comments as 'arrogant' and 'an idiot's gibberish' ('US Urged to Abandon "Cold War" Syndrome', 1995: 44).

1989 and the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong in 2014. Consequently, 'the abroad' is often framed as the main source from which most of the 'mad' criticism about China comes (Li, 2009: 20). The new National Security Law signed by Xi has a particular emphasis on espionage as it replaced the Counterespionage Law (Tatlow, 2014). As directly manifested in Dahlin's case, the aforementioned development foresaw a series of investigations of foreign NGOs in China for fear of a gradual and peaceful subversion (Lampton, 2015).

The ideological function of the National Security Discourse can be viewed as a framing strategy to tackle mainly internal threats by diverting the attention of the public to the 'foreign'. As McSweeney (2004: 21) rightly points out: 'a nation can only be mobilised for national security in peacetime if the majority of people identify the state and its enemies as the highest expression of their own personal security and fear'. Moreover, the notion of 'the state' in China is often blurred into 'the Party' because the Chinese people are represented by, and *only* by, the CCP. The CCP has tried to equate the love for the nation with the support for the Party, and Xi's era only sees the escalation of such indoctrination (Zhao, 2005). In this sense, national interests become regime interests and national security the CCP's regime security (Zhao, 2016b: 94). Thus, it is not surprising that the CCP regards praise as love and criticism as subversion. The National Security Discourse oversees the escalation of disagreements or challenges towards the Party to the subversion of China. Such logic helps deflect the Party's own policy failures (Lampton, 2015). The result is that the international tension manages to dilute the intensity of the domestic pressure threatening the Party's rule. Despite the risk accompanying such a strategy, it can distract the population from the immediate social unrest, at least temporarily.

Family Values Discourse

The awareness of national security issues is not the only concept that has been codified, as there is also a trend to bring tradition under formal regulation. The most prominent example is filial piety exemplified in Gui's confession. The framing of Gui as a genuinely repentant son aims to resonate with the most ingrained and important social relationship in China – kinship (Fei *et al*., 1992). It has been done through legal measures as well as moral pressure. Xi's era witnesses the spread of filial piety to the public and legal domain. On 1 July 2013, the revised 'Protection of the Rights and Interests of Elderly People' came into

effect. Its Eighteenth Article demands that ‘family members living apart from the elderly shall frequently visit or greet the elderly’ (Congress, 2012). People were astonished at the moral decline; visiting parents had descended from virtue to the realm of law. There has been an individualistic moral turn (Yan, 2010). For years, the government has warned everyone against a morally degraded materialistic society, which has fatally eroded the traditional social virtues. The Party thus vows to protect this virtue by codifying it into law.

However, considering the fact that this legal regulation exists more on paper than in practice, it is social pressure and moral judgement that are the more prevalent weapons for the Party to regulate the people’s behaviours. Through the recontextualisation of ‘starting a family/career’ rhetoric from the son to the daughter, Gui is framed as a bad person who not only neglects his filial duty but also deprives the parents of another family of being taken care of by their only daughter. This exemplifies a challenging yet less-discussed social issue: *shidu* family. *Shidu* family refers to parents, under the One-child Policy (1979-2015), who lose their only child and are unable to have another one (Fong, 2016). According to official estimation, there had been over one million such families by 2010 and the number is stilling rising (Wu and Dang, 2013). Losing one’s child is universally tragic, but what makes it worse in China is the child’s indispensable role in caring for the ageing parents (Hesketh *et al.*, 2005; Han, 2017). According to the most recent 2010 population census at the time of writing, there are around 177 million people above 60 years old in China (Ma et al., 2010). Social security and medical insurance are supposed to cover city residents, but it is only available to 40 million people. The rural population is neither fully covered, nor does it enjoy the same standard of service (Yi, 2013). The lack of care facilities and medical expenditure means that most of the elderly have only their children to turn to.

Shidu families do not even have children to turn to. The government had promised to take care of the parents when promoting the One-child Policy in the early 1980s (Bao, 2013). Slogans such as ‘Family planning is very good. Government helps raise the old’ (Wang, 2018) provide a glimpse of the picture. However, in reality, there is a huge gap between the needs of *shidu* families and the local implementation of the relevant policy (Han, 2017). Therefore, when facing the grieving parents of Gui’s victim, assigning blame solely on the culprit

distracts the audience from questioning the government's responsibility. Consequently, the framing underlines the moral condemnation of Gui, which eventually outweighs the legal consequence. The framing constructs Gui's causing death by drunk driving as less serious than the 'real' crime - breaking up a family and forcing the parents to experience the death of their only child.

Similarly, the Family Values Discourses also reveals that the framing is a strategic choice in dealing with a series of subsequent issues of the ill-thought-through One-child Policy. By advocating filial culture, the framing shifts the responsibility of retirement care completely onto the younger generation, who are likely to be the only children to their parents and are themselves facing the mounting pressure of working and child-rearing. Their failure to take care of their own parents can now have legal consequences. However, in the era of the revival of traditional Confucian culture, moral stigmatisation is more detrimental (Minzner, 2018). It forces a sense of guilt in adult children, as demonstrated in Gui's tears when remembering his absence while his parents were ageing.

5.1.4 Framing implication

Having conducted the CDA of the TV news confessions of journalist Gao, NGO worker Dahlin and bookseller Gui, this section reflects on the social and political power divide that the discourses in the framing reveal. I highlight below the fact that it has been done in a subtle and strategic way.

There are two main divides and the most obvious one is that the confessants are morally inferior (legally inferior can be integrated into morally inferior because whoever breaks the legal bottom line is very likely to have broken the moral bottom line) to their accusers. They are criminals who are harmful to society; they are repeat offenders who are beyond salvation; they are feckless adult children who selfishly ignore the needs of their parents and escape cowardly from their legal responsibilities; they are malicious foreigners who are plotting to sabotage the rightful rise of China. They deserve to be subjected to legal and moral condemnation from the victims, the audience and the nation.

The second divide is between 'us' and 'the foreign', or 'the anti-China force abroad'. As the analysis shows, all three cases have various degree of foreign involvement. Gao sent national secrets to a '*certain* website abroad'. The report Dahlin's organisation produced is 'the *so-called* Human Rights Report'.

The news narrator describes Gui's disappearance as 'the so-called missing'. The distrust towards 'the foreign' is coded in the wording which implies that the foreign organisation is suspicious, the report is untrue and Gui did not truly disappear. Such wording forms the almost cliché response to a familiar accusation. It sets the tone that the foreign, also including Hong Kong given its freer media environment, media's reporting on China-related affairs often lacks credibility. It invokes another familiar stereotype: according to the Chinese authority, the western media is biased when covering China. Their coverage of China is predominantly negative (Stone, 2017). Instead, the news story from the CCTV is going to reveal what really happened.

This divide sets the tone that anything 'foreign' or 'abroad' is likely to enlarge the negative perception of China and even instigate illegal subversive activities in order to undermine China's development. This force remains largely faceless and anonymous. Such media presentation not only means that any foreign countries can become the 'anti-China force overseas' at any time when they challenge China, but also creates the dichotomy of 'China' against 'the non-China world'. It simplifies the complex world in that any non-China territory morphs into one entity which is hostile toward China. It resonates strongly considering the deep-rooted memory of the Century of Humiliation upon which the national salvation is based (Callahan, 2004). Even in the era of Xi's national rejuvenation, the threat from the outside is still there. The framing becomes a simple divide between 'good vs evil' and 'China vs the world'. Border generation is one crucial function of nationalism (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995). Here what we are witnessing is a process of border building, albeit in the mind. It is the 'foreign' and 'abroad' that defines what China is, instead of culture, custom or values which are the conventional defining characteristics that distinguish one group from the other (Conversi, 1995). In this sense, 'culture' is indeed a concept for manipulation as a result of the 'foreign/China' divide fanning nationalism.

Having discussed the two kinds of division, I now explore the two important corresponding observations regarding the division. Firstly, the accomplices of the confessant, as shown with Dahlin's ex-colleagues, demonstrate the fluidity of this dominant/subordinate divide. They were originally in the same category as the confessants so they had to conduct self-criticism. However, they

also provide incriminating evidence and criticism of the confessant. This process reveals signs of the 'bad elements' reintegrating into the people.

Secondly, and unsurprisingly, the politically dominant CCP is defining what legally and morally correct norms are, despite the contradictions existing in the discourses. The final words from Gui in the confession nicely capture this conflict (see Excerpt Two in the section of 'Rule of Law' Discourse). Gui has been forced to claim that his return to China is voluntary and to identify himself more as Chinese. This leads him to request the Swedish authority to skip the relevant legal proceedings, even though it is a legally guaranteed right of a foreign national in China. Despite the emphasis on the 'rule of law', Gui's self-identification as Chinese (having been born and raised in China, having Chinese parents, citing Chinese classics, etc.) is framed as overriding his legal status (a Swedish passport holder). After recontextualising the family value discourse to the national level, the filial duty of a Chinese son to his motherland triumphs over law and order. Meanwhile, Gui asks the Swedish authority to 'respect' his 'personal rights' which ironically are protected by the law that he has just been made to undermine. The battle between the discourses rightly captures as well as reinforces the current Party-centred legal structure and the definition of what it means to be Chinese. What we are witnessing is a selective application of legal regulations and interpretation of Chinese culture to alleviate the pressure on the Party under Xi in the face of many thorny issues.

Therefore, I argue that the framing of the three confession news clips means that the propaganda value of TV confessions of those who are neither Party members nor well-known figures lies in this banality. For the domestic audience, the three confession cases are not a show-trial type of media spectacle. Kellner's definition of a media spectacle highlights its popular nature: they often 'disrupt ordinary and habitual flows of information' (2016: 3). The cases are hardly 'disruptively' popular among the domestic audience. CCP propaganda is usually pompous and overbearing. However, the three cases represent the subtle persuasion inundating society. The three confession cases, like many other TV confessions, take the form of crime news (Yoon, 2015; Gardner, 2018). As mentioned earlier, there are numerous TV programmes designed to familiarise the public with the concept of law. They are camouflaged nicely among them. From people's existing ideological foundation, the confession churns out the familiar,

even clichéd, bad foreigners, re-offenders, traffic accident tragedy, morally failed fugitive, irresponsible son and eventual triumph of justice. In turn, the confession reinforces the associated stereotypes and norms. However, banality does not mean harmlessness (Arendt, 1963; Billig, 1995). Such TV confessions can quietly function to prime people for a society whose cultural and political norms are increasingly at the mercy of Xi's ideology. The periodic injection of such mundane confession news of ephemeral popularity insidiously develops emotional and expectational immunity towards governance failures. It placates and pacifies.

The analysis demonstrates that the framing of TV confessions clearly shows a dominant/subordinate divide, with the accusers and the victims occupying the moral and legal high ground as opposed to the criminal confessants and the anti-China foreign force behind them. The framing encourages the condemnation of the confessants who display total submission to whatever criticism is inflicted on them. The framing also defends the Party's legitimacy to rule by deflecting responsibilities of governmental failures and maintaining the CCP's dominance in China.

5.1.5 Conclusion

In sum, the first half of the chapter has focused on the analysis of three TV confession news clips. The descriptive analysis examines how the identities of the confessants and their relationships with other important subjects are linguistically framed. All three confessions are part of crime news with them being strongly implied as criminals, despite there being no court trials prior to the TV confessions. Both journalist Gao and NGO activist Dahlin are labelled as 'criminal suspects' and, more importantly, the enemies of China. In comparison, bookseller Gui's other identity as 'an unfilial son' is as important as, if not more than, his criminal identity. The interpretative analysis examines how the framing borrows from the existing political discourses, such as 'hurting Chinese people's feelings' and reveals the unspoken role of the narrator and the genre of official news in shaping the interpretation of the confessions. In the end, the explanatory analysis links everything to the wider political agenda of the socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics alongside the promotion of national security and certain traditional family values in Xi's China. The finding demonstrates that mediated confessions capture in a microcosm the Party's logic for promoting certain social, cultural and political norms.

In an ideal world, when someone agrees to go on TV to confess, this person is effectively vindicating TV confessions as a legitimate method and showing submission to the authority who demands the confession. However, it is extremely likely that all three confessions were orchestrated and forced (Fiskesjö, 2017; Safeguard Defenders, 2018). At the time of writing, Gui is still missing. Roughly a month after Gui's confession on 17 January 2016, Hong Kong's Phoenix TV broadcast another televised confession that involved Gui and his colleagues apologising for trading 'unauthorised' books in mainland China (PhoenixTV, 2016). Since then, Gui was said to have lived under surveillance outside official custody before disappearing again. On 20 January 2018, he was taken away from two Swedish consular members who were accompanying him on a train to Beijing for medical reasons. Three weeks later, Gui appeared on a third TV confession and expressed the 'shame' he had for 'leaking national secrets' and being 'tricked' by the Swedish authority into attempting to escape abroad again. Gui was seen claiming that 'Sweden used me as a pawn against China' ('Gui Minhai in Government-Arranged Interview: Sweden Used Me as a Pawn against China,' 2018). The rest of the year of 2018 saw the worsening relationship between China and Sweden. Small incidents such as Chinese tourists' bad behaviours in Sweden and the alleged racist comments from Swedish media kept flaring up on both sides (Agerholm, 2018; Withnall, 2018). In this sense, TV confessions are by no means a genuine form of consent.

However, it is clear that TV confessions can strategically and conveniently mould both cultural norms and legal regulations to justify the Party's actions. This has a crucial practical implication: 'Traditional culture' has been dubbed as the 'root' or the 'soul' of the nation, increasingly so after 1989 (Perry, 2017a). In facing a decline of political trust in the past two decades (Wang and You, 2016), the CCP needs to restore its credibility by making it difficult for everyone to think critically. Compared with the Maoist style propaganda, the current official persuasion, adorned with themes of 'traditional culture' and 'law and order', is much subtler, and potentially more effective. As the TV confessions show, the framing distracts the audience from the governance failure and shifts the blame onto individuals. At the same time, it reproduces the moral panic of an ever more economically polarised society under the siege of foreign saboteurs. Ironically, 'traditional virtues' or 'law and order' conveniently become the excuse for the

Party to justify its own immoral and illegal behaviour in dealing with its domestic social conflicts.

Apart from the practical implications, the analysis also contributes to a new understanding of the propaganda value of televised confessions. For those who have heard of the abduction of Gui and the arrest of Gao and Dahlin, TV confessions are chilling intimidation, showcasing the capability of the Party to coerce someone, both physically and mentally, into destroying themselves. However, for those who are oblivious to the deceptive nature of TV confessions, all three cases are just more examples of the triumphant 'justice has long arms' cases on TV which have been regularly broadcast to increase the awareness of the law among the public. The three confessants were all little known to the Chinese public prior to, and probably after, the confessions. Therefore, instead of viewing the TV confession as a political-showtrial style of media spectacle, I argue that it resembles more ordinary crime news. Its domestic propaganda value lies precisely in its banality, which blends into the Party's everyday narrative of what the world looks like, who the Chinese should be and how they should behave. As mentioned earlier, confessions were originated from the Party disciplinary tool of criticism and self-criticism. Therefore, the CCP members are certainly not immune to the resurgence of the confessional practice. The second half of the chapter examines a documentary in which the confessants are all Party cadres.

5.2 Documentary: 'Always on the Road'

Apart from taking the form of news on TV, mediated confessions also find their way into other media forms. CCTV, as an active collaborator and participant (Safeguard Defenders, 2018), has produced documentaries which make heavy use of confession. Different from the TV confession news, the confessants in the documentary tend to be the CCP cadres. The structure of the second half of this chapter is similar to that of the first half: it starts with a brief introduction of the documentary before going into the three-level CDA examination of the framing. The purpose of this section is to explain the way in which the confessions are conducted by a different group of people on a different media genre for a different purpose. The analysis argues that the confessions of the fallen officials contribute to the education of the public about the causation of corruption, which ultimately contributes to the legitimation of the CCP's current rule.

The documentary I examine in this chapter is ‘Always On The Road’ (2016), which consists of eight episodes featuring Xi’s anti-corruption campaign since 2013. It is co-produced by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and the CCTV. It was broadcast on CCTV1 at eight o’clock in the evening – the primetime hour in China - between 17th and 25th October 2016 (Chenhua, 2016). According to the online introduction of the documentary, the production team visited twenty-two provinces, shot over forty classic corruption cases, and interviewed more than seventy experts, scholars and discipline inspection cadres[25]. It features fallen cadres at or above the provincial level, which provides a ‘very strong warning and educational purpose’ (program intro). While eight episodes in length, the documentary tells one story repeatedly – the reasoning device: from the Party’s perspective, how the Party cadres become corrupted and how the Party has been successfully tackling corruption since the 18th Party Congress in November 2012. Every episode deals with a specific sub-topic about corruption (Table 1). Orchestrated confessions are weaved into the framing of the story.

Episode	Programme Title[26]	Content
One	Winning Or Losing Public Support	People are the ones the CCP must serve.
Two	Setting Good Examples	The importance of the exemplary role of a leader; Xi is a model for emulation.
Three	Leaving Marks When Treading On Stones	The crackdown on drinking, eating or purchasing other services by using public funds.
Four	Swords Shown	Buying and selling government positions.
Five	Discipline First	The important role of the Party discipline.

[25] Discipline Inspection cadres refer to the staff of the Commission for Discipline Inspection at various levels. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection is the highest internal control authority in charge of control cases involving cadre corruption and other misconducts.
[26] Translation is from the *China Daily*, http://cn.chinadaily.com.cn/fanfusuji/201610/27/content_27798301.htm (3 October 2018)

Six	Bring Down Both Tigers And Flies	The huge damage of corruption at the local level.
Seven	Skynet Hunting	Arresting corrupted cadres who have escaped abroad.
Eight	Addressing Both the Symptom And the Cause of Corruption	Curing both the symptom and the root of corruption.

Table 1 Summary of the Episodes

One of the highlights of the documentary is that it includes cases of many 'tigers' – a nickname for high-ranking corrupt Party officials. For instance, when the narrator introduces the documentary at the start of the first episode, it uses the footage of the court hearings of four high-level officials, including Zhou Yongkang. Zhou, a member of the 17th Politburo Standing Committee who was in charge of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, is one of the biggest tigers that Xi's anti-corruption campaign has captured as of 2019. The emphasis on the 'tigers' is to distinguish Xi's anti-corruption campaign from the previous ones, which shows that Xi takes corruption seriously. However, the court hearing footage is the only place where Zhou and other 'tigers' appear. The documentary reveals no more details about them than the little information that has already been available to the public.

The following analysis addresses the confessions that make up the documentary through three levels of CDA. The first level of linguistic analysis investigates the textual features that establish a causal relation – the reasoning device - for explaining the Party cadre corruption. The second level examines the production of the confession. The third level provides an explanation of the framing process that the confession invokes and how they, in theory, can legitimise the Party's rule. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the implication of the use of confessions in the documentary. I argue that the function of the confessions is didactic, despite the confessions appearing to be self-critical and humiliating. They are designed to prevent the audience from making their own judgement and incite them to feel indignant by invoking emotional responses at both the family and national level.

5.2.1 Descriptive level of analysis

The documentary tells a story of the fallen officials and the self-salvation of the Party: it diagnoses the issue of corruption, investigates the cause and prescribes a treatment. That is to say, the reasoning device is the central framing issue. The following section has two parts as it examines the two main subjects directly involved in the documentary confession: the confessants and the supporting figures who either echo the confessants' reflection or show endorsement of the Party's anti-corruption campaign.

Confessants: the fallen cadres

There are forty-one cases of confessions in the documentary and they exhibit the following patterns. The content of the confession usually consists of five parts:

1) The disbelief and disappointment about their current disgraced situation;

2) Recalling their own misbehaviour and the resultant bad influences on others;

3) Analysing the cause of their behaviour;

4) Showing support for the Party's crackdown on themselves;

5) Showing deep remorse.

The framing of the Party cadres falls into the following pattern. The cadres often come from a poor family background. They looked up to the Party when they were young, joined the Party during their most impressionable years and devoted decades working diligently and outstandingly at the local level, as exemplified in Episode 1,

> *Narrator: Zhou Benshun was born to a deprived family. He also started from the bottom, working at the local level and gradually ascended to a senior cadre.*
>
> *Zhou: We have suffered a lot of hardship since childhood, so I came out of a poor family. I have hated corrupt officials since childhood.* (Ep1)

The narrator firstly provides an overview of Zhou's climbing the ranks from a poor upbringing. Then, Zhou's own words demonstrate how much he was against

corruption, even mildly suggesting a degree of linkage between corruption and the cause of poverty. In other words, his 'roots' were good and he only became corrupt gradually and very recently. Appendix 1 contains more such examples from different fallen officials featured in the documentaries.

One prominent characteristic of the above framing is that it sets the message that anyone can become corrupt. Sun Yeli, deputy director of the Party Documents Research Office of the CCP Central Committee, describes in the documentary: 'An official might have been a good cadre yesterday, but today this same cadre has already become a captive' (Ep5). Instead of long-term work and a life process, corruption is framed as a sudden fall to disgrace as a matter of sharp difference (indicated by the use of 'but') between yesterday and today. Such a framing of corruption creates a sense of randomness and inevitability in the sense that everybody needs to be vigilant about corruption because even the best trained cadre who comes from a poor background and hates corruption can become corrupt overnight.

The individual stories of the downfall may vary but the framing of the cause of corruption is largely the same. It has both internal and external factors, but in the end, the main reason is personal and internal: the erosion of personal beliefs and morality, the lack of spiritual pursuit, and the contempt for law and Party regulations while possessing public power. When they talk about their own corruption, most cadres acknowledge that without the power in their hands, many of their 'friends', 'relatives' and 'businessmen' might not have bothered to cultivate a friendly relationship with them. That is to say, the reason for becoming corrupted is very subjective and up to the individual. Typical examples include,

> Bai Enpei, former vice-Chairman of the NPC Environment Protection and Resources Conservation Committee:
>
> *With the gradual promotion and the influence of the environment, I became increasingly more self-centred. Especially after 2005 when I hit sixty years old, I fell seriously ill. My thought work 'dropped anchor' so I started to pursue the monetary and the material.* (Ep.1)
>
> Liu Guanglong, former vice-Chairman of the Political Consultative Conference in Lüliang, Shanxi Province:

> *Comparing with the past, I indeed have relaxed, quite a bit, the self-discipline in recent years. Psychologically, I feel that I've been a cadre for a long time. The thought that the life of a cadre [should be] better than that of the ordinary people led me to crimes. I also feel really ashamed that having been a Party member for over thirty years and leading cadre for over twenty years, in the end, I fell into this situation.* (Ep.4)

Both confessants admit having loosened their self-control over the years. Such an excuse holds the individuals' subjective attitude primarily responsible for their corruption. The lexical choice of 'psychologically' (*xinlishang*) is a straightforward way to focus on Liu's personal feelings. Similarly, Bai puts the blame on his lax thought work (*sixiang*) as being caused by the promotion, the environment, his old age and illness which has lured him to let loosen his guard. The mental verb 'feel' (*juede*) further emphasises the role of Liu's subjective feelings. Therefore, *xinlishang*, *sixiang* and *juede* are used here in a way that emphasises the person's individual perception. This thought work and self-control, just like a person's physical condition, is at the mercy of the environment and can deteriorate over time. It is also worth noting that when Bai laments over his own corruption, his self-description is first and foremost 'charmed by ghosts and losing one's mind' (*guimi xinqiao*) before going back to criticising his losing 'beliefs and spiritual pursuits'. *Guimi xinqiao* describes Bai's incredulity at becoming so materialistic. The lexical choice figuratively blames supernatural power rather than Bai himself, highlighting the proclivity and susceptibility of turning corrupt and echoing the aforementioned inevitability of turning corrupt.

Once they pinpoint the cause of corruption, the confessants prescribe their own treatments. Firstly, some of them praise the punishment from the Party, defending the CCP's disciplinary measures against themselves. Bai claims that,

> *I am corrupt, but I very much hope that the central Party can increase the anti-corruption force. Since the 18th Party Congress, the central has adopted a series of actions, such as seeing Party self-governance exercised with rigour, to tackle corruption. This is the Party's hope. Only by doing this can our Party shoulder the historical responsibility.* (Ep1)

Bai's words justify his own arrest by the Party disciplinary apparatus. His use (or the script that is given to him) of the reference to being '*our* Party' reveals that he still views himself as a part of the CCP despite having committed financial crimes and being officially removed from the Party and the public position, according to the caption in the documentary. I will come back to this point later when discussing how the framing creates power disparity. Here, I highlight the fact that it is a common practice among the confessants.

Next, the confessants express regret because had they followed strictly the Party discipline and the order from Xi, they would not have fallen to disgrace. As Zhou Benshun - former Party secretary of Hebei Provincial and a member of the provincial People's Congress Committee - reflects,

> *China has always been a society of etiquette and favour. For example, if everyone gets together, the ties and relationship cannot be expressed without eating and drinking together. Why did the Central Committee stipulate the 'Eight-point Regulation'? What benefit can it bring to the working style of the whole Party? What importance does it carry? [I] didn't make an effort to understand it thoroughly and didn't pay real attention to it in my mind. So [I] have problems now.* (Ep.1)

The use of 'so' is an illustration of a simply drawn causal relationship: Zhou's neglect in not paying attention to the Party regulation led to his wrongdoings. The series of questions turn the confession into an interrogation of his past self and a current repenting self. He makes this self-conversation audible to the audience. Meanwhile, such framing also implicitly deflects any possible failures of the Party in the occurrence of corruption. This is done by repeating that the Party and Xi have distributed policies and regulations, in this case the 'Eight-point Regulation' and set a good example for emulation. Therefore, it is not the Party's fault that someone still violates the discipline and breaks the law.

Many confessants acknowledge the pernicious effect caused by corruption. In the story of cadre corruption, one can find the family story of the cadre: apart from being politicians, a number of confessants in the documentary also assume the family role of father and son. They admit that they have disappointed not only the people who they 'avow to serve', the Party who they admire and the

colleagues with whom they work, but also bring harm to their families. Many repenting cadres tearfully regret the harm that they have brought on their families. The cases of Tan Xiwei, Su Rong and Liu Tienan are very illustrative. Tan, former deputy director of the Chongqing Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee, admits that he fails ‘the expectation of his parents’ (Ep8). Su, former Party Secretary of Jiangxi Province, blames himself for harming his family,

> *I not only destroyed myself but also entrapped my wife and harmed my son, leading the whole family into the abyss of financial crimes. Had they not been the wife or the son of a Party secretary, or had I not been provincial Party Secretary, they could’ve done nothing. And there would have been no such problems now.* (Ep4)

Through a series of action verbs such as ‘destroy’ (*huidiao*), ‘entrap’ (*keng*) and ‘harm’ (*hai*), Su’s confession is grammatically an active process which establishes the relationship between the actions and the actor ‘I’. It holds Su responsible for the actions. The subjunctive mood expresses Su’s personal wishful thinking that things could turn out differently, which reflects his regret. In a similar vein, Liu, former Director of the National Energy Administration, confesses that ‘using my own power to help him [Liu’s son] live a good life – this is essentially the reason, or I wouldn’t have broken the law’ (Ep8). In the interview, Liu calls his adult son a ‘small child’ who ‘has neither skills nor money or in other words, has limited professional knowledge’. Such wording reflects that although in his thirties, the adult son continues to be treated as a child who needs help from his father Liu. Tan Xiwei’s case exhibits a similar pattern, except that Tan is the ‘child forever’.

> *In the eyes of other people, Tan seems to be a filial son. Before being investigated by the Party, he sensed that the situation would be bad and that he might not be able to see his mother again. He went back to his hometown, kneeled down in front of his mother and admitted his big mistakes and letting his parents down. Hearing his confession, she slapped him. Then they huddled together and cried.* (Ep8)

Tan’s case is similar to Liu’s in that the adult sons in both cases are treated as if they are still children. Tan is a cadre and middle-aged adult, yet he kneels in front of his mother who eventually slapped him. Kneeling is a Chinese hierarchical tradition which has mostly disappeared in the big cities today. But it is certainly

still in use in certain areas such as rural places. Regardless of whether one still practises kneeling or not, the meaning of the action and the hierarchical order encoded into it are clear: however old he is, he is a son to his mother forever and thus subject to the teaching of his mother.

Meanwhile, the two cases also present different parent-children relations existing today. The two cases show two almost reversed kinships within contemporary Chinese society. Tan, who is from rural China, holds a traditional filial son image – obedient to his mother and visiting her presumably one last time after sensing that he would be damned under investigation by the Party and could no longer take care of his ageing mother. His case highlights the traditional family relationship between the parents and the children. Liu, however, spoils and is willing to do anything for his only son. The documentary does not specify what exactly he did for his son, but it is reported that his son is involved in almost all of Liu's bribery (Southern Metropolis Daily, 2014). Such examples demonstrate that in the story of corruption, the theme of family is tied into many confession cases; in the realm of politics in China, time and time again, the role of the family is indispensable.

In sum, the Party cadre confession pictures their shared trajectory of downfall. As ambitious and diligent youths, they joined the Party and worked hard to gain their current position. However, they have paid insufficient attention to the Party discipline for the past few years and thus relaxed their guard against a comfortable material life and some business associates. They were also influenced by reproducing a corruption culture that enriches their families and themselves. Their own accounts, sometimes with tears, are supported by various other subjects. I will analyse these supporting subjects in the following section.

Supporting Voices: central and lower-level inspection teams & the CCP

To make the confessions from the fallen officials convincing, the documentary includes a variety of supporting voices. There are sixty-nine interviewees altogether: they are investigators from the central and local Commission of Discipline Inspection (CDI), Party researchers and academics specialised in CCP history, former colleagues of the fallen officials, involved business company representatives, family members and the police. Among these groups of subjects, it is the first two that form the most audible supporting voice and are under close examination here.

The most frequent appearance is from the Discipline Inspection Department and the Party members at both central and local levels. Thirty-nine CDI staff and nine Party cadres appear in the interviews in the documentary. CDI staff are the ones who deal with the cases first-hand; thus, their main task is to witness the scale of corruption. For example, the staff from the CCDI Zhou Tao provide additional information about the scale of corruption of Bai's wife,

> *Just to deal with merely these things, we spent altogether around a dozen days. Like emerald bracelets…we use this - a string - to tie them [the bracelets] altogether. Grab them like this. This gives you an idea of the scope [of their corruption].* (Ep1)

In the interview, without the presence of the actual bracelets to reify the bribery, a series of action verbs from Zhou neatly portray the busy actions that the staff had to take in order to confiscate the ridiculous number of emerald bracelets that Bai's wife managed to accumulate through Bai's position. As a witness, Zhou provides a vivid glimpse into an enormous amount of material wealth that Bai's wife alone possessed and substantiates the evidence of Bai's abuse of public power.

As to the Party cadres who are interviewed at various levels, their roles are twofold. Firstly, they denounce their former colleagues, some of who are their predecessors. Their second task is to use the Party discourse to express approval of the measure to tackle corruption. However, there are two special cases: ex-senior-manager of China National Petroleum Corporation, Wang Daofu, and ex-Deputy-Secretary-General People's Government in Jilin Province, Wang Shusen. Both of them are like the ex-colleagues of the Swedish activist Peter Dahlin: the former describes himself as 'both a perpetrator and victim' (Ep8) because he only committed crimes under the instruction of his boss. In a similar vein, the latter implicates his boss Gu Lichun while conducting self-criticism,

> *The pair of us had a quite bad influence. The two of us had dinner parties every day, of course, the location is secretive right? Actually,* [we] *had realised it, but still left it to chance – no worries, you may not be able to catch me.* (Ep2)

The use of 'the pair/two of us' ties Wang and his boss Gu together. Wang is then able to go on speaking on behalf of Gu, showing Gu's involvement in the dinner parties. Such pronoun choice expands the role of the confession to more than

repenting and apologising for the confessant's own behaviours – it can function to implicate others. The purpose of their confession, considering their minor positions, is more to bear witness to the crime of their bosses than seek their own salvation.

Supporting voices: the Party researchers and the academics in China

Apart from the CDI staff and Party cadres, the second most frequently interviewed people are the Party researchers and the academics within China. Thirteen of them are cited and three of them make repeated appearances in different episodes. The main task for this group of people is to provide theoretical support to the expectation of the causal linkage behind the corruption admitted by the confessants. They selectively draw upon experiences from the historical background contained in the Party-approved history, political theories and Chinese culture.

The historians who are interviewed in the documentary cite the stories of well-known historical figures to prove that an individual's personal conviction is the key to combating corruption. 'Using history to allude to the present' has been a common but important practice for the Chinese literati class to voice their political opinions, be it flattering or subversive (Unger, 1993). It is an apt, subtle and relatively safer means for the intellectuals to participate in political discussions. In Episode Four, History Professor Han Sheng from the renowned Fudan University in China refers back to one of the most internationally well-known Chinese eras: the prosperous Tang Dynasty. According to Professor Han, Emperor Taizong (598-649) was extremely tough in punishing corrupt officials. They were even excluded from the national level pardons, meaning corruption was unforgivable under any circumstances. Shen uses Tang as an example to implicitly justify and praise Xi's anti-corruption campaign, which is seen as being as tough and unforgiving as Emperor Taizong's zero-tolerance policy. Meanwhile, it is also implicit praise for Xi's China and compares today to the Tang Dynasty when China's prosperity was widely recognised around the globe. The underlying message is that as long as Xi keeps acting tough on corruption just like Emperor Taizong, China will once again become a strong nation with international fame. Similarly, Episode Eight presents the example of Fan Jingwen (1587-1644), a Ming Dynasty politician who was famous for his rejection of bribes from both families and strangers despite the extremely corrupt political

environment at the time. Fan is used as a role model for the cadres today to remain ethical in the highly corrosive environment.

Apart from the history of China, intellectuals also reiterate the CCP sanctioned Party history. Xie Chuntao, Director of the Party History Research Centre in the Party School, articulates the importance of the will of the people and reaffirms the Party's historic mission,

> *The will of the people (what people's hearts are for and against) is very important. Once it is lost, it is very hard to win it back; there may not even be chances to do so. The CCP won the right to rule China and it must be the choice of history and the people. It makes good sense. However, this choice doesn't solve all the problems once and for all. Today, realising the China Dream and making people's lives better are our more important tasks and responsibilities. Not only getting economically more affluent, but the incorruptibility of our Party and government is, I believe, what is very important to laobaixing (ordinary people). Only by ensuring the Party's fine conduct can corruption be prevented and reduced or convince laobaixing of the advanced nature of the Party members.* (Ep1)

Xie builds up the legitimate role of the Party in China step by step. First of all, Xie describes the Party as destined to rule China as a manner of fact. The modality 'must' is a strong indication that it is unquestionably true that history and the people have chosen the Party. Having established this fact, Xie talks about what the Party needs to do. Despite his prescription to deal with corruption within the Party, Xie establishes an unspoken assumption that all the discussions about the Party corruption must acknowledge that the CCP is the only legitimate force to lead and rule China. These examples illustrate the way in which contemporary intellectuals use historical allegories to add credibility to and justify Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

Subjects – who are also involved?

The documentary produces various subjects for a certain purpose. The descriptive analysis has touched upon the most prominent subjects – the fallen cadres and a range of supporting voices - who are involved in the framing of the Party's story about the Anti-corruption Campaign throughout the documentary. The following is a brief summary of the less prominent but nevertheless important

subjects that are referred to in the episodes: Xi Jinping and the Chinese people. They are important mostly due to their intertextual function, which will be analysed in the interpretive analysis later, so it worthwhile to examine briefly here how these subjects are linguistically constructed.

Xi is undoubtedly the exemplary leader and CCP member according to the documentary. Despite only making a limited number of indirect interview appearances in the documentary, Xi is an overarching figure who links other subjects together. Xi is directly named thirty-six times throughout the eight episodes; only one of the episodes does not mention Xi at all. The second episode alone names Xi eighteen times, as it is an episode that is devoted to Xi and its theme is the importance of the exemplary role of the leaders at various levels. Xi certainly is portrayed as the epitome of such a figure. He is an erudite speaker, quoting classics. He gives speeches, holds meetings and instructs the whole party. The episode also shows him walking side by side with villagers, visiting their homes and sitting with them in a crossed-leg fashion on a traditional Northeast Chinese heatable adobe bed. The visual footage gives Xi a common touch and paternalistic care while having a seemingly less improvised conversation with the villagers.

Meanwhile, there are also multiple times when Xi is attributed indirectly. For example, ‘the 18th National Congress’ is mentioned thirty-one times throughout all episodes except for one. The 18th National Congress of the CCP was held from 8 to 14 November 2012. Despite Hu Jintao still serving as the president at the time, this NPC marked the beginning of Xi’s era as he took over the CCP as well as the military from Hu (Branigan, 2012). He vowed to tackle official corruption during the National Congress. Therefore, the repeated expression of ‘since the 18th National Congress’ is a reminder of and an emphasis on Xi’s era. Xi’s appearance represents and showcases the highest excellence of the Party, which is a common practice for the official media to depict the top leader in China. What is unusual is Xi’s direct link to Mao and a certain version of the Party history, which I will elaborate further in the intertextual analysis. Now I turn my attention to the people who Xi vows to serve.

The Chinese citizens in the documentary are unequivocally supportive of Xi’s anti-corruption campaign. The satisfaction rate of the government anti-corruption effort in a survey in the documentary shows an improvement from 75

per cent in 2012 to 91.5 per cent in 2015 (Ep1). There are also street interviews with passers-by in Shanghai (Ep5). The interviewees claim that they are able to see ‘the hope for the young generation’ now because the anti-corruption effort is ‘for real’ this time (Ep5). Guangzhou citizens can now relax in a park which was exclusively reserved for the local officials prior to the anti-corruption campaign (Ep2). Ethnic minority villagers encourage Xi to keep ‘smacking flies’ in their village (Ep6). These interviews are primarily to provide evidence that corruption has harmed the ordinary people and demonstrate the effectiveness of and support for Xi’s latest effort at cracking down corruption.

As mentioned in the descriptive analysis, when the fallen cadres refer to the Party, they still use ‘our’ Party even though they have already been expelled from CCP. It may be that the script that they were given required them to say so, or that it is hard to change a habit of years overnight. Regardless, the use of such a pronoun gives an impression that the cadres are a part of ‘us’ the Party. The CCP belongs to them regardless of what they have done. I will discuss the implication of this later.

The descriptive analysis so far has presented the reasoning device of articulating the causal factors surrounding corruption through the linguistic construction of the confessants and those who are closely involved in their downfall of them. The two groups of people present the same causal relationship from two different perspectives. In the confession of the fallen officials, they themselves unanimously blame their own relaxed discipline and failure to implement the Party’s teaching for their downfall. They apologise for their past behaviour, express willingness to repent and even shed tears for failing the expectations of the Party, the people and their families. A range of supporting voices represented by the CDI staff at various levels and the Party scholars validate the causal relationship. A specific version of the Party history, the Party’s theoretical foundation, Chinese culture and history are among their repertoire of support for the anti-corruption campaign. In sum, the most competent and caring cadres could succumb to the temptation of money and power. Their degradation is gradual and recent. They themselves are to blame for their corruption. Meanwhile, Xi is seen as the ideal leader who enjoys absolute support from the people. Such framing on top of the corruption cases can shed light on the production of the

documentary and the purpose of such framing. I discuss this in more detail in the next section.

5.2.2 Interpretive level of analysis

Building on the descriptive analysis, the interpretive level examines how the production of the documentary influences the interpretation of it. The purpose of the analysis here is to identify the relationship between the confession discourse and the external elements that are crucial to the production of the discourse. Firstly, it examines the intertextual role of Xi and Mao in promoting the cause of Xi's anti-corruption campaign. Xi and Mao are both external subjects who make no direct personal appearance in any of the confessants' stories. However, they are the most important subjects that feed into the construction of the overall background of Xi's anti-corruption campaign. The analysis then examines the intertextual references of Xi and an interdiscursive transformation of the healing discourse into the political realm, where one may find a similar phenomenon to that of Mao's era. The analysis next explores the production of the subtitles and the often unquestioned role of the narrator in the documentary as a media genre. The analysis concludes with a brief discussion of the prominent themes that come to the surface after the first two levels of analyses. They function to connect the linguistic elements to the wider social background of Xi's China.

The people & Xi & Mao

Xi is featured fairly frequently in the documentary. As mentioned before, he appears not as someone directly involved in the confession cases, but an overarching political figure looming over China today. He can be seen chairing the government meetings and having direct interaction with villagers. In multiple occasions when Xi is giving speeches at different meetings, he speaks of 'our' Party, which aligns himself with the representatives of the CCP. As we shall see in the next example, this alignment enables Xi to become a bridge that connects the poor village in the heartland of China to the powerful political elites like himself in Beijing. In the second episode, when Xi visited the farmers in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province in 2014, the footage shows that the villagers are waving at and shaking hands with a smiling Xi. An old villager says to him: 'you are an invincible opponent of the corrupt officials and a lucky star for Chinese people. We Shiye people welcome you'. This old man assumes the role of a

spokesperson for his local Shiye people as well as the whole nation to thank and welcome Xi. In another scene, surrounded by Liangjiahe villagers, Xi speaks,

> *The first step of my life was at our Liangjiahe. I stayed for as long as seven years, from 1969 to 1975. However, when I left the village, my body left but my heart remained here (applause). At the time I said (to myself), if opportunity allowed in the future, I would go into politics and do a job that brought benefits to the people (applause).* (Ep2)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, despite his experience as a youth sent down to the rural area because of the purge of his father, Xi's princeling background could not be more different from the local villagers. However, the pronoun 'our' immediately closes the distance between Xi and the villagers and the applause from the villagers showcase their approval of Xi's words.

Nevertheless, none of the staged performance above is new or unique to Xi. What distinguishes Xi from his predecessors is the link between Xi and Mao. Thanks to Xi, Liangjiahe has ascended to become a politically 'secular shrine' in China (Buckley, 2017) – its history, poverty and love for the Party have to exist for the sake of the CCP's myths. Xi and his Liangjiahe in Episode Two remind the audience of Mao and his Yan'an, which is mentioned in Episode One. In the first episode, Xie, Director of the Central Party History Research Department, explains the 'ideal' communist society in Yan'an under Mao in the mid-1940s. In Mao's Yan'an, according to Xie's description, nobody was idle and everyone could write directly to Mao through the suggestion boxes along the streets. Such direct supervision from the people was the solution to the seemingly inevitable decay of a prosperous era and the means to create an everlasting dynasty. According to the Party ideologues, there is a natural law explaining the rise and fall of the dynastic life cycles in the long history of China (People's Daily Online, n.d.). It is a very Confucian historiographical understanding of China's past and future (Unger, 1993). Every dynasty eventually comes to its demise and a new one arises out of it. The cyclical process continues. However, the CCP under Mao's leadership has claimed to have found a way to escape from this cycle, also known as *Lishi zhouqilü*. Mao attributed the reason for the end of all dynasties to the corruption of emperors and political elites caused by a lack of power supervision. Therefore, as long as the people effectively supervise the CCP, the Party, in theory, can avoid the cyclical route. In this way, the documentary seamlessly draws connections

between Xi and Mao, Liangjiahe and Yan'an, and corruption and the supervision of the people. Consequently, a saviour-return story emerges: Xi had devoted his youth to Liangjiahe, accumulated work experience in other places and eventually returned to Liangjiahe as a strong supreme leader to fulfil his promise. The framing of the village is to freeze Liangjiahe in time so that it remains an underdeveloped place perpetually waiting for and needing saving from the Party leader. The 'secular shrines' function to invoke the people's memory of a hard time, imagined or not, that the Party shares with the people and the ideal (or utopian) society that the Party strives to build. Such a connection lends Mao's legitimacy to Xi and validates the current anti-corruption campaign with historical experience.

The presence of Xi can also be felt through many other intertextual references. When framing the causal relationship concerning cadre corruption, there is much existing political jargon and many clichés associated with Xi's political agenda in the documentary. As mentioned in the descriptive analysis, 'the 18th Party Congress' is an implicit way to refer to Xi and the government since 2012. The documentary also uses television clips of show trials in which the Party cadres are seen confessing in public court trials. It showcases Xi's ostensible respect for law. Another typical framing device is the use of healing metaphors in the documentary. There are three popular four-word healing related *chengyu* within the official Party parlance which originate from old Chinese idioms. They express the Party's determination to eliminate corruption through highly animated verbs,

- *Mengyao quke*: '(corruption is) a disease that calls for powerful drugs',
- *Guagu liaodu*: 'to scrape the toxins off the bones',
- *Zhuangshi duanwan*: '(a real brave man is willing) to cut off one's own snake-bitten wrist to save his life'. (EP1)

They were used by Xi when giving a speech on the importance of Party discipline during the third Plenary Session of the 18th CCDI in 2014 (Dong, 2014). The action verbs paint vivid pictures of the enormous physical sacrifice a brave man needs to make in order to rid himself of the disease and survive. The metaphor thus equates the excruciating physical pain to the agony that the Party is willing to

go through to remove corruption. Xi's speech was later reported by Xinhua News Agency just before Zhou Yongkang's official downfall as the rumour about it began to circulate. Zhou's case is subsequently viewed as the 'hand' that the Party painfully but determinedly decided to cut off. Such metaphors, popular since the 1940s, find their way not only into Party documents and news but also documentaries and other forms of media. They not only appeal to Chinese culture and language, which easily resonate among the people, but bear the trace of the highest command of the Party - the authority of Xi.

Apart from unveiling the trace of the official Party discourse under Xi, the healing metaphor also has an interdiscursive purpose. Its relocation to the realm of politics not only highlights the urgency to deal with corruption but also implies the curability and hope after the pain and sacrifice caused by Party discipline and legal justice. Thus, the implication here is that Xi and the Party are very much in control of China's current situation; therefore, the political, social and cultural values that Xi is promoting must be legitimate and obeyed.

Narrator & audience

Having discussed the relationship between the confession discourse and its external factor, Xi, I now direct my attention to the construction of the relationship between the documentary and its audience. I discuss three main aspects of this documentary: the subtitle translation, the genre of documentaries and the choice of verbs.

The subtitle translation in the documentary, besides its usual function as the visual facilitation for audio information, guides the understanding of the audience as they listen to an unknown language and make sense of it by reading the subtitles simultaneously. In the documentary, there are many interviews with the ethnic minorities in China who express their approval of Xi's anti-corruption campaign in their own local languages. In Episode Six, for example, there is an interview with a Xinjiang Uyghur villager being translated from a verbal conversation to a textual subtitle. The subtitle goes,

> *Corruption is something we very much detest. It is very good that the country is making a big effort to fight against corruption now. We are very happy to see the country fighting against corruption.* (Ep6)

I asked a native Uyghur speaker to translate the interview using the closest Mandarin words. The translation is the following,

> *Regarding this thing, my opinion is that it is not right. The current policy is to eliminate these things, and it works very well. We are very happy after the introduction of this policy.*

The original subtitle involves transformation from a colloquial Uyghur language (phonetic) to a written form of Mandarin (graphic) (Rosa, 2001). For this kind of transformation, the original content is subject to adaptation due to limited space on the screen, a reasonable amount of time to read and a proper match to the visual image (*ibid.*). To complicate things further, there is also the inherent issue within translation itself. A comparison between the two versions shows that the villager does express a similar meaning, but the subtitle modifies the meaning to make it closer to the theme of the documentary. The use of the pronouns 'it', 'this' and 'these things' are ambiguous, and their meaning can change depending on the context. It is possible that the translation makes his words closer to what he intends to mean. It is equally plausible that his words were taken out of their context. Whichever case it is, there is no denying that the purpose of the Mandarin subtitle is to guide the audience's interpretation of the interviewee's words. Besides, to 'detest' something carries much more emotion than to merely feel 'not right'. Regardless, the translation is not incorrect but does alter the tone of voice. The translated version expresses firmer and clearer support for Xi's anti-corruption campaign. Ignorant to the language, most of the audience have to rely solely on the subtitle to understand the Uyghur interviewee, leaving no possibility for alternative interpretation.

Secondly, the genre of documentaries can reveal its relationship with the viewers. According to an arbitrary yet analytically informative categorisation of the documentary, 'Always on the Road' falls mostly under the 'expository mode'[27] of a documentary. This kind of documentary uses an old-fashioned

[27] Apart from expository documentary, according to Nichols (1991), there are three more: observational, interactive and reflexive types. An observational documentary supports an unobtrusive record of what is happening and eschews the moralising elements of expository documentaries. An integrative documentary highlights the role of filmmaker and strives to engage with individuals actively and directly. Reflexive documentaries use similar devices to the others but aim to provoke a more nuanced understanding among the audience of what kind of effect these devices have on their understanding of the documentary. 'Always on the Road' is

method of storytelling by applying 'voice-of-God commentary and poetic perspectives sought to disclose information about the historical world itself… even if these views came to seem romantic or didactic' (Nichols, 1991: 32-33). 'Always on the Road' is a narration led documentary in which the producer tells the audience what to think through the voice over. Through the voice of the narrator, 'Always on the Road' introduces the audience to the 'natural law' about corruption and to the historical mission of the Party in rejuvenating China. The omnipresent voiceover provides information that is not immediately available to the viewers and sounds 'both reasonable and logical as well as irrationally selective' (Bruzzi, 2006: 57). It sounds 'reasonable and logical' because the audience often expects what they hear in the documentary will be true. The combination of masculinity and anonymity creates the so-called 'voice of God' model which disguises itself as being neutral and presenting the truth. The deep, slow-paced male voice in the 'Always on the Road' reaffirms the confessants' description of their own past and reinforces the simple linear causal relation of corruption. It thus sounds 'authoritative' when informing the audience about the way to understand cadre corruption and leaves little room for other possible interpretations. However, this authoritative voice is often selective and presents only a certain perspective without specifying the reason for ignoring the others. It is due to both the length and the purpose of the documentary. Consequently, the narration often sounds didactic (Drew, 1983; Kozloff, 1988; Bruzzi, 2006). This reveals a potentially cynical function of the narration: it orders the viewer what and how to think.

That is to say, 'Always on the Road' resembles more of a talk show revealing stories behind scenes with a didactic purpose. It shows the audience how the CCDI works to capture the wicked officials who then share the 'real' experience of treading on the wrong path. Through regurgitating the Party discipline, Xi's historiography and a Confucian morality, the confessants educate the audience about the Party-sanctioned social, political and cultural norms. The interviews all occur outside the courtroom. The venue is usually bright and neat. Despite having been convicted, the confessants are not wearing any outfits that indicate their criminal identities. Such visual cues are designed to downplay the

highly scripted Party propaganda which is very far removed from the aforementioned three modes of documentary.

fact that they have committed serious financial crimes and allow the officials to continue educating the public. Consequently, the documentary is not meant for the audience to raise questions, to feel outraged or to deliver judgement. Rather, it is an opportunity for the fallen officials to teach them a lesson to accept the reality and entrust the Party to handle corruption.

Thirdly, the intention of the media production is often coded into the use of verbs in the confession script. Different confessants use a variety of colloquial verbal terms to express their repentance, showing 'regret (*huiheng*)', 'feeling guilty (*neijiu*)' and 'losing face (*diulian*)'. This selection of mental verbs can illustrate a state of mind in which the confessants have clearly realised their past errors. The purpose of using the guilt related mental verbs can demonstrate the sincerity for repentance by showing the mental thought process of the confessants. Similarly, the action verbs used in the healing metaphors mentioned above are also very effective. Such metaphors that involve a graphic language evince the unwavering determination to remove the disease of corruption in spite of the agonising pain: it is for the longevity of the Party and China. The Party packages such determination as a strength. Xi's anti-corruption campaign distinguishes itself from the previous ones as the most serious effort so far. The purpose is to stress to the audience that the process of treating the disease is painful, but the disease is ultimately curable. By the same token, the CCP may be riddled with rampant corruption now, but the framing of the documentary sends a clear message that the Party will eventually defeat it and that the Party keeps thriving.

In sum, the interpretive analysis enables the audience to draw specific experience and existing knowledge to decode the content of the documentary. Intertextually, the framing convinces the audience of the causal relation of corruption; interdiscursively, it proves the popularity of the campaign and restores people's trust in the Party. Both are used in the construction of the relationship between this particular documentary and the broader social and political reality today. From the analysis so far, three themes have emerged in terms of the framing of the causal relation of and the solution to eliminating corruption. Firstly, the link connecting Xi and Mao in terms of a good example of discipline and respecting the will of the people invokes a Party discipline theme. Second, Xi's Liangjiahe and the old generation of the Party members form a theme surrounding the nostalgic historiography of the glorious past of the Party. Lastly,

despite the documentary being about politics, a family theme remains visible in the confessions. The next level of explanatory analysis steers the discussion towards how the framing connects to the broad social, cultural and political background of Xi's China, with an emphasis in terms of the three themes.

5.2.3 Explanatory level of analysis: ideology & power

The explanatory analysis zooms into the discourses that have emerged from the three themes identified by the previous two levels of analysis: the Rule of the Party Discipline Discourse, the CCP Historiography Discourse and, once again, a Family Values Discourse specific to Xi's era. The analysis ends with a discussion of the power division reflected by the framing of confession documentary.

Rule of the Party Discipline Discourse

As mentioned in the interpretive level of analysis, the documentary frequently uses CCTV news clips showing the footage of confessions, the repentance of the captured 'tigers' and their respective trial sentences. This media spectacle is to showcase the so-called 'rule of law'. However, the 'Rule of Law' Discourse here is not so prominent as the Party Discipline Discourse due to the fact that it is mainly the CCDI that supervises, punishes and decides whether a specific corruption case of a CCP cadre would be referred to legal prosecution. That is to say, as the title of Episode Five 'Prioritising the Compliance with the Party Discipline' suggests, Party discipline plays a more imperative role than the law in dealing with the corruption cases of the Party members.

Xi has been strengthening the Party discipline through the mass-line campaigns reminiscent of Mao's in order to tackle the rampant 'formalism', 'bureaucracy', 'hedonism' and 'extravagance'. They are known as 'four work styles' relating to the irresponsible work approach and attitude of the Party cadres, and they can fatally erode the legitimacy of the Party (Zhao, 2016b). The Sixth Plenum of the CCP's 18th Central Committee convened in October 2016 had a particular emphasis on the Party discipline (Miller, 2017). Xi explained that the Plenums of each year since the start of his term were devoted to one of the sub-themes of his 'four comprehensives' – 'deepening reform' (2013), 'ruling the country by the law' (2014, as mentioned in the first half of this chapter), 'building a moderately well off society' (2015) and 'governing the party strictly' (2016). In 2016, the Party discipline was high on the agenda.

One disciplinary measure that Xi has seen to implement is actually the formalisation of the long-lasting practice of self-criticism, the so-called ‘democratic life meetings’ (*minzhu shenghuo hui*). The Sixth Plenum issued ‘Guidelines on Inner-party Life in the New Situation’ to regulate how to conduct such meetings. The Party’s disciplinary apparatus sends out supervisory teams which consist of leading Party members at the same administrative level to collect reports at various levels (Zong, 2013). Cadres have to both make self-assessment and pass information about their colleagues and even superiors to the supervisory team. They must ‘combat fears that one may lose face’ ('Explanation on the Code of Conduct for Intraparty Political Life under New Circumstances', 2016). The guideline reassures that reporting on one’s senior will not hurt one’s future promotion. High-ranking officials must be setting good examples in implementing the guideline. It is an updated version of the 1980 ‘Guidelines on Inner-party Life’ issued under Deng. Many people regard Deng’s landmark guidelines as successful in tackling the rampant ‘special-privilege mentality’ within the Party after the Cultural Revolution (Baum, 1994: 140). Xi’s new guidance expresses a similar admiration in terms of restoring order and uniting the Party to reform ('Explanation on the Code of Conduct for Intraparty Political Life under New Circumstances', 2016). Therefore, the new guideline, especially Clauses Nine and Ten, holds the principle of ‘unity - criticism - unity’ on paper at least.

However, the Rule of Discipline Discourse is designed to tackle mostly the subjective elements in corruption, which is reflected in Xi’s new guideline. The central message explaining the fall of cadres in the documentary is that it is the self who gradually relaxes the discipline, thought work and studying the Party directives. Accordingly, many interviewed Party intellectuals and CCDI staff recommend a strict implementation of the Party discipline as the solution. This is echoed in the first guidance of the document: ‘be firm in our ideal and conviction’ towards socialism with Chinese characteristics, which champions the importance of individual subjective determination. Xi also re-elevated the importance of the individual ideological beliefs once he took up the helm of the Party in 2012. He used the demise of the Soviet Union to reiterate the indispensable role of ideological beliefs. The once hopeful saying in the 1950s ‘Soviet Union's Today Is Our Tomorrow’ sounds eerie today. Xi thus committed himself to stand up to the laxity in ideological beliefs (Grammaticas, 2013). In the documentary he is

seen demanding the Party cadres to 'focus on self-purification, self-improvement, self-innovation, [and] self-awareness' through a colloquial expression of 'looking in the mirror, grooming oneself, bathing, and seeking remedies' ('The CCP Work Meeting on the Mass Line Convenes; Xi Jinping Gives an Important Speech', 2013). The four 'self's in this framing device highlights the role of individuals' personal will and determination. The set of self-care actions similarly underlines that it is the self that is responsible for one's downfall in the area of corruption. In the face of mounting social conflicts, economic development bottlenecks and potential political unrest (Zhao, 2016b; Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018b), the CCP's governance performance become the most crucial element for the legitimacy of the Party. The CCP desperately needs any measures to reduce the pressure and certainly prevents intra-Party corruption from threatening its rule. The result of such framing is the exoneration of the Party from being blamed for having appointed these corrupt officials to important jobs in the first place. By shifting all the blame for corruption onto the individuals who are unable to face the enticing material luxury, the framing exempts the CCP from any possible major responsibility.

Moreover, in this age of rampant Party corruption, the CCP cannot afford to take the blame for creating a comfortable environment for corruption. This is why the objective structural factors that cause corruption in China's political system are conveniently left out. Andrew Wedeman, whose book is cited out of context in the documentary to support the anti-corruption campaign, claims in the very same book that the CCP is essentially above the law, let alone the Party discipline, and that the anti-corruption efforts so far have not addressed the structural cause of corruption (Wedeman, 2012). There has been much literature about the root of corruption which identifies the institutional flaws as one of the most important factors (Lu, 2000; Bai, 2014). However, the framing of the confession attributes the cause of corruption almost exclusively to subjective reasons. While the cadre apologises and feels compelled to toe the Party line to blame their own subjective manner for their corruption, they may unintentionally express their own perplexity as to why they are caught. When the fallen cadres talk about their corruption experience, there is sometimes a sense of puzzlement (*moming qimiao*). As shown before, Bai speaks of taking bribes due to 'being possessed by a ghost'. Such expression gives a sense that corruption is beyond

self-control, as the cadre seems to be under the influence of a supernatural power. The framing avoids talking about the structural reasons for corruption and blames a person's subjective attitude and morality, which could be vulnerable, especially in the face of a social environment that is structured in a way that makes vital personal connections in all spheres of life (Gold *et al.*, 2002).

Naturally, in order to eradicate corruption, the Party needs to enhance its members' awareness through Party discipline. From this perspective, the Party is presented as a victim of corruption, as it loses the trust and the heart of the people. Meanwhile, it is also a self-correcting entity that is supposed to consist of advanced-natured[28] and disciplined members. According to its own parlance, the Party is destined to lead China. This powerful claim contrasts strongly with the image of a victim riddled with rampant corruption, which is exactly how the self-salvation of the Party looks like: the CCP is powerful and weak at the same time; the process is easy and hard at the same time. In the end, it is very questionable how effective morality and self-control can be. According to Yan's (2009) anthropological study in the village, his interviewees express doubts about whether they would have no involvement in corruption had they had more power. The villagers admit that in the face of an almost social norm of corruption, an individual's morality is too weak to fight against the trend (Pei, 2017). Highlighting only the human will as the root of corruption is a deliberate diversion of attention away from the objective factors which can be argued convincingly as the root of corruption (Peerenboom, 2002). The consequence of such framing can be severe in the long run. As studies show, the collective or institutionalised behaviour that undermines trust between people is much more detrimental than individual actions (Gong, 2006; Yan, 2010). The largely overlooked structural cause of corruption will continue to damage the social trust and morality of the whole Chinese society.

The CCP historiography: a nostalgia for rectitude – the role of intellectuals and historians

[28] 'The advanced nature of the CCP' is a phrase describing the Party's self-claimed advanced understanding of the world and how to better transform the world accordingly. As a Marxist-Leninist party, the CCP believe that its political theory and campaigns have a more positive impact on society, thus, such advanced understanding makes the CCP superior to other political parties. Consequently, the CCP believe that this advanced nature is critical to its rule (Heath, 2014).

When people are dissatisfied with the current situation, they tend to idealise the past (Yan, 2009: 49). Such an observation is especially germane to a fast-changing society like China. It is the task of intellectuals, especially historians, to create such a past. The task of some historians is to 'provide a legitimising historical perspective as the basis of the national project' (Conversi, 1995: 74). Their mission is not to produce knowledge based on investigating the past. Instead, they are writing fictions for a specific purpose, creating a collective memory or even making myths. This is certainly true in the context of the CCP historians and their missions. As the documentary shows, dozens of interviews with historians, scholars and intellectuals contribute to the Party framing of corruption through creating the history of the CCP and China. Together with other Party institutes, they create a CCP Historiography Discourse that includes two main framings. Firstly, corruption within the Party is a rather recent phenomenon and, secondly, the old generations of the CCP members were in some way purer and should be the role models for today. The discourse paints a glorious nostalgic past of the Party centred around Mao. Mao's quotes and conversations with others, like during the Cultural Revolution, become a distinctive source of wisdom and proof of the legitimacy of Xi and the CCP today.

Firstly, the CCP Historiography Discourse generates a sense that it is only within recent years after the rapid economic growth that the self-discipline of the cadres began declining. As multiple confessants testified, they grew up in a poor environment and worked their way up gradually before only recently being tempted by material gains. However, such a picture of corruption within the Party is distorted. Despite the unprecedented scale of corruption in terms of the number of people and the amount of power and money involved, corruption has always haunted the CCP (Wedeman, 2012; Fewsmith, 2018). Even during Mao's time, there were the 'Three-anti/Five-anti campaigns' tackling the bureaucratic misconduct in the 1950s (Lu, 2000). In 1952, the infamous case of Liu Qingshan and Zhang Zishan ended up with the execution of the pair of senior Party officials and revolutionary heroes (Fiskesjö, 2017). Corruption continued to be a threat to the CCP afterwards, from the Red Guard Movement (1966) to the popular discontent that ensued after the Cultural Revolution (1978) and to the student protests (1989) (Barmé, 2018). The data collected for the thesis also echoes this claim. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the keyword search of 'I made

mistake' in the *People Daily* shows that it turned to a euphemism for 'I took bribes' in the 1980s. Thus, it is an illusion that corruption is only a recent phenomenon.

Secondly, the discourse establishes a pure image of the older revolutionary generation so that the Party today can draw legitimacy from it. It has been a usual tactic for the CCP (Meng, 2018). Examples such as the society in Mao's Yan'an and Tan's old revolutionary mother not only praise but also create a sense of nostalgia for the idealised past. Xi is the mediating figure linking today to the glorious past under the leadership of Mao. What makes Xi stand out among his recent predecessors is, firstly, the scale of his presence in media. In terms of the appearance in the *People's Daily* within the first eighteen months of the presidency, Xi (4725 times) is only second to Mao (almost 7000 times) which is also far ahead of the third highest frequency of Hua Guofeng (2605 times) (Qian, 2014). Secondly, Xi is the connecting figure also in the sense that he tries to bridge the divide between the Maoist and the post-Mao eras (Brown, 2016; MacFarquhar, 2018). The conventional way to understand China's recent history is that 1978 marks the end of Mao's radical communist experiments and the beginning of the reform opening era. It was since then that China had moved away from the Maoist self-destructive mass campaigns and made tremendous economic progress. Despite moving away from the Maoist route to manage China, Deng once claimed that 'we will never do to Mao what the Soviets did to Stalin' (Kristof, 1989). Thus, the official verdict on Mao remains tha6t his positive contribution outweighs his mistakes. Even this small percentage of bad was caused by manipulative people like the Gang of Four. Nevertheless, Xi does not even want to interpret the past half a century as such. Instead, Brown (2016: 102) rightly argues that 'Xi has focused on the common vision between the two eras – creating a strong country through a strong party – rather than on the lack of unified means by which to do this'. When speaking of the lessons offered by Mao's deadly campaigns, Xi glosses over the detrimental consequences of the Cultural Revolution and the GLF and promotes the 'Two Undeniables':

> The historical period after economic reforms [1978] must not be used to deny the historical period before economic reforms; and the historical period before economic reforms must not be used to deny

> the historical period after economic reforms (*Treating the Two Periods Before and After the Reform Correctly*, 2013).

The ‘Two Undeniables’ assert that there should be no rupture between Mao’s and Deng’s eras, which is clearly to underplay the disastrous part of Mao’s campaign. Once again, these ‘Two Undeniables’ mirror Xi’s attitude towards Gorbachev’s attack on Stalin, which fatally undermined the legitimacy and stability of the Soviet regime, and could not be allowed to occur in China (Zhao, 2016b).

The urgent task Xi is facing is to combat ‘historical nihilism’. The term in China refers to the ‘public scepticism about the Communist Party’s version of past events’ (Whitehead, 2017). One way to fight against ‘historical nihilism’ is to enforce the correct Party and China history. Directives as such signal the end of what Schwartz calls ‘progressive reclaiming of Chinese history’ which has taken place under Deng to restore the reputation and position of those who were enemies of the people (Vogel, 2011: 661). In the late 1970s,

> …it is clear that modern history still serves politics in China. However, there is a difference between a situation - such as prevailed during the Cultural Revolution and even before - in which historians are told by the political leadership what to study, how to study it, and what conclusions to reach, and one in which historians, although consciously or unconsciously responsive to shifting political and ideological winds, are relatively free to look at the evidence and draw conclusions on the basis of what they find. It seems evident to us that Chinese historians have broken out of the first situation and are moving towards the second (Cohen and Goldman, 1980: 52).

Cohen and Goldman’s observation shows that the officially sanctioned past existed after the Cultural Revolution, but disagreements on the Party’s past were tolerated to a degree. History is uniform again four decades later and decorated with revamped myths about the Party martyrs and exceptional leaders. As Callahan (2015:13) observes, the official discourse today on China’s future is ‘singular, inevitable and undeniable.’ For example, some people who pursue a less fettered version of the Party history began questioning the credibility of the heroic acts of some of the most well-known communist model soldiers and workers. The doubts not only undermine the heroic image of the Party but also erode the

credibility of the claims from the Party. To tackle the issue, the NPC makes it punishable by civil law for ‘those who infringe upon the name, likeness, reputation, or honour of a hero, martyr, and so forth, harming the societal public interest’ (The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2017: Article 185). The well-known wartime heroes and martyrs have been given state approved status, which is used to prevent people from questioning the degree of truth behind all their heroic legends (Zhen, 2018).

The CCP Historiography Discourse that is present in the documentary framing means that to idealise the past and to blur the Maoist and post-Mao eras are always based on the abuse of power in some way (Yan, 2010). Consequently, the legal and disciplinary measures have been put in place to deter people from deviating from where the CCP wants them to look. By Cohen and Goldman’s standard, Chinese historians are backtracking to the first situation they mention in the quote. Be it realistic, exaggerated or fantasised, the CCP’s victory promotes a shared national identity through education and media (Volkan, 1997: 48). The tradition, memories and myths that are framed in the documentary breed nationalistic strength, which is ‘the most reliable claim on the Chinese people's loyalty' (Smith, 1999; Zhao, 2016a: 1169).

Family Values Discourse: a changing morality

Despite the fact that confessions in the documentary are largely about the law, the Party discipline and politics, the Family Values Discourse remains. The filial culture and the relocation of the discourse from the family to the national level that featured in the analysis of the Cultural Revolution data are present in the documentary too. Xi commits to prescribe traditional Chinese culture as a treatment for cadre management and corruption (Angle and Zhang, 2013; Schuman, 2015; Anderlini, 2017). One prominent manifestation in the framing is the filial culture. The confessants often become very emotional when talking about the harm they have brought to their families. Tan and his honest old CCP member mother, in a way, reveal an ideal revolutionary-traditional family relation. The communist revolutionary mother bears the full responsibility for educating her son, thus Tan the adult son always ‘listens to the words’ of his mother. The revolutionary lineage continues in the family in which the mother is mother and the son is son, regardless of their age and life experience.

However, a more prominent phenomenon within the Family Values Discourse than the traditional filial culture is nepotism. Some confessants mention that their corruption is related to their families, especially the children. Some explain that they only hope to provide their children a living condition which is as good as businessmen can afford. Or, they allow their children to benefit illegally from their own positions in terms of job opportunities. Even when the children become adults, they continue to take advantage of their parents' social and political status, sometimes illegally. The confession reflects a trend which reverses the traditional filial roles. Children no longer need to provide monetary or physical care because their parents have accumulated enough wealth and enjoyed a host of state-provided privileges. Moreover, these adult sons and daughters are viewed by their parents as being too young to be capable of anything. They continue to live under the wings of their parents whose social and political resources can be at their disposal (Sun, 1983).

The two cases echo the observation of scholars such as Yan that there is a 'changing moral landscape' in the filial culture since the reform era in China (2009: 36). In Xi's China, the one child in a family has become the centre and the parents and grandparents work hard to raise this one child. This family structure is called 'descending familism' as opposed to the traditional 'ascending familism' centring on the senior generation (Yan, 2009). The descending familism is reflected in several confession cases in which the offspring of the confessants are either directly or indirectly involved in the corruption. The shake-up of the filial culture means that many audiences may find the confessants, to a degree, understandable, as most parents today share a similar difficulty in bringing up their only child. Meanwhile, a surging number of young people today believe that to make their parents happy (fulfilling the filial duty), they need to make themselves happy. Their parents have told them that their own happiness depends on the children's well-being (Yan, 2009). However, what makes the younger generation happy is sometimes in conflict with what traditionally considered filial behaviours. Thus, in the documentary, what the framing advocates is the traditional filial culture. It obliquely criticises the new morality by linking it to causing corruption (parents hoping to provide their children with the best opportunities possible). In this sense, it clamps down on the most contemporary twist of what filial piety is and promotes the more traditional family values.

What the changing family values reflect is a shakeup of the moral and ethics in China since the 1970s. During and prior to Mao's time, the ethics of collectivism was the official discourse. As Yan accurately summarises,

> From Confucian ethics and traditional culture to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Republic, the emphasis [on the collective] continued; what had changed was merely the replacement of the family, kinship groups, and the emperor with socialist collectives, the Communist Party, and Chairman Mao (2009: 42).

The relocation of the Family Values Discourse from the private to the public political realm echoes Yan's argument. However, that is not to deny that there is sometimes a gap between the actual practice and the advocacy of selflessness. This means that the dominance of the Communist-backed moral ethics makes it impossible even to publicly acknowledge the legitimate existence of selfishness. The end of the Cultural Revolution saw a gradual collapse of such collective ethics while a new individualism has been on the rise. Since the 1980s, individualism has spread in Chinese society as China has become materially wealthier. The Party thus drew legitimacy from satisfying both the individual and the national desires by moving away from the Maoist socialist experiment to a 'state-initiated discovery of universal human nature of individual desires…' (Rofel, 2007; Yan, 2009: 47). As Deng's Southern tour in 1992 reaffirmed the opening-up policy, the state-induced awareness of the self soon became unstoppable. Many people working in the public sector flocked to the burgeoning private sector to make money, including cultural and political elites. It was a time when the behaviour of those elites fundamentally changed the view of the ordinary Chinese on 'making a profit': it was no longer disgraceful or dangerous to be rich. It was desirable. It was after this change that the rampancy of the corruption jumped to unprecedented levels, despite the Party rhetoric warning against the moral crisis.

The more traditional Family Values Discourse, relocating from the family to the national level, is another effort by the CCP to try to not only tackle the moral crisis but also garner mass support. As part of the Party discourse, Xi is branded as not only a caring husband but also the patriarchal figure to China. Considerable media propaganda actively draws such parallel to encourage its

audience to view the country as a big family – to love it and to obey its rule (CCTV, 2018). The family discourse exists implicitly, despite the Party having banned calling Xi 'Xi Dada' – a term from the north and northwest China referring to one's father or those who are older than one's father - for fear of invoking the memory of Mao's personality cult during the Cultural Revolution (RFA, 2016). Present in the narrator's concluding remark of Episode Two, Xi encourages the Party cadres to 'keep a child's heart of innocence and purity' (*chizi zhixin*). It describes the relationship between the Party and the people as the child and the parents. The purpose of such framing is to showcase the loyalty and the commitment the Party has towards the people. By doing so, the Party hopes to continue to repair and advocate its performance-based legitimacy to rule which includes moral performance and all other government functions (Zeng, 2016). However, a quite contradictory framing simultaneously exists in the documentary, which frames the people as being in constant need of the Party's guidance and support. The Party unapologetically demands loyalty from its people.

Through the Rule of the Party Discipline Discourse, the Party Historiography Discourse and the Family Value Discourse, the framing the confession in the documentary reflects the social and political direction at which the CCP tries to steer China. The following section explains the relevant implications of such framing.

5.2.4 Framing implications

Having completed the CDA, this section addresses how the representation of the world, identities and relations that are underlined reflects the issue of power in the confessions in the documentary. Deriving from the above analysis, the framing of the documentary showcases two sets of power imbalances in the mediated confession. Firstly, it unveils the Party's rationale behind the preference for public self-criticism and the expectation of what the mediated confession is able to achieve. The preference reflects that the CCP has dominant power over its members in a towering fashion. Secondly, as a result of the first implication, the framing of confessions also unwittingly reveals the way in which the CCP demands everyone to know their places in a subtle manner, reinforcing the current social and political hierarchical divide.

One of the interviews with a Party cadre reveals the sinister purpose of the confession. The Party-building expert Huang Weiting boasts in the documentary

about the effectiveness of public naming and shaming. The metaphor that he uses vividly portrays the detrimental effects of being shamed publicly,

> For many people, the scariest thing is being named (laughing). This is because many of our cadres, especially our Party cadres, care a great deal about their 'face' (laughing). If you are named and shamed in public, some of you feel like as if your face is ripped off in public and you have nowhere to hide. By using this method of naming, the purpose is, on the one hand, to teach the person a good lesson; on the other hand, and more importantly, to teach the masses and the cadres around them a good lesson. It is to educate more Party cadres in order to ensure them to be cautious. (Ep3)

Huang's laughter suggests that he is satisfied with and proud of embarrassing cadres in public as a punishment and warning. The effect not only makes the confessants 'lose face' but lose face in an extremely shameful way. It is exactly this burning sensation on raw flesh that the Party is trying to achieve. Huang's words show that the purpose of public naming and shaming is to 'teach a lesson' in a particular way: it is designed to warn and terrorise any disobedient cadres and the public. Meanwhile, whoever is subject to such naming and shaming, as we have seen, does not appear to have any way to resist. They have to be seen to be criticising themselves, denouncing each other and even implicating family members. The lack of resisting voices is the total domination of the Party over the individual members. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that this total domination of the CCP over its members is by and large a 'non-antagonistic' power divide. That is to say, most of the corrupt CCP cadres are malleable 'good' people worthy of forgiveness. As previous examples show, the use of 'our' Party by the fallen officials reveals that the confessants, despite their illegal behaviours and their official removal from the Party, are still allowed to view themselves as a part of the CCP – 'our' Party.

Within the Party, there is an elevation of Xi above the rest of the political elites. The relationship constructed between Xi and Mao reinforces each other's position. On the one hand, the documentary pictures Xi as respecting the will of the people and implementing tougher Party discipline, which it links to the ideal society of Mao's Yan'an. Such linkage strengthens Xi's position as a reliable political custodian for China. On the other hand, Xi only awakens the memory of

Mao's constructive rather than destructive role so that Mao's public appearance in Xi's China can be overwhelmingly positive. In such a way, the two CCP leaders legitimise each other. For Xi, such a comparison distinguishes him from the other Party members as well as his past few predecessors, posits him closer to 'Mao the China saviour' and moves away from a sense of collective leadership.

The second rift is the 'inside/outside the CCP' divide. The divide of in/out-groups has been a traditionally strong characteristic based on a low in/out-Party mobility and distrust of strangers in Chinese society (Yan, 2009). On the one hand, becoming a CCP member is very difficult, let alone ascending to the top rank. On the other hand, the traditional individual person-oriented hierarchical association means the rights and the duty of a person are only relevant within this association (Fei *et al.*, 1992). Thus, the social distance between two strangers is rather wide and this is why the distrust of strangers has been wisdom passed through the generations (Chen, 2006). Taking both factors into consideration, the divide between the ordinary people and the Party members is explicit on both ends. The difficulty in joining the Party means that only a small portion of the Chinese people are a part of this network which possesses a vast amount of power and wealth. Hence, it is not news that the Party cadres, especially those of high rank, have always had their privileged living compound and hospital. On a personal level, the confessants feel less responsible for the people who are outside of the confessants' circles of association than they do for their immediate family, friends and colleagues.

Moreover, there is a stark contrast between how people are treated differently when they break rules and laws depending on whether one is a CCP member or not. The Party claims to encourage people to supervise and report any cadre's illegal behaviour. Hence, in theory, the Chinese people should be in a dominant position because the cadres are at their service and accept their supervision. While ordinary people must obey Chinese law, the CCP members are, first and foremost, subject to the Party discipline scrutiny, which is supposed to be a stricter code of conduct. However, the Party's self-supervision is a flawed system and cannot be relied on as the primary measure to curb corruption, thus subjecting cadres under the Party discipline often means that they can escape the *same* law and punishment that other ordinary non-Party people will have to face. The corrupt ones are not necessarily undergoing proper disciplinary or legal

process; those who do go through the disciplinary processes may not necessarily be punished for a pure corruption reason (Yuen, 2014). Therefore, the rule of discipline, to a degree, is undermining the rule of law. Moreover, a double standard emerges between the ordinary people and the CCP members regarding legal and disciplinary punishment. Consequently, even when the Party members serve legal sentences, they may be placed in a designated prison with treatment and facilities that are different and unavailable to ordinary prisoners - Qincheng Prison[29] is a good example. From the verbal to the physical, the gap between the Party and the non-Party has always been wide. The framing of the confession documentary only widens the gap.

In sum, the second half of this chapter shifted the attention from the confessions in news clips to documentaries. In 'Always on the Road' (2016), the confessants are overwhelmingly Party cadres and government officials convicted or under the investigation of the CCDI. The documentary claims to expose the background stories of the fallen top-ranking officials. However, a close viewing says otherwise. Nothing detailed about their cases is revealed and the trajectory of their downfall remains opaque. What the documentary does show is the official narrative of corruption. The linguistic framing of identities as fallen officials in Xi's anti-corruption campaign helps construct the logical sequence of the rampant corruption from the CCP's perspective. As the confession is often echoed and reinforced by a range of supporting voices, the presence of a healing metaphor in the framing of the intra-Party corruption is noticeable, countering the ominous prediction that corruption would really lead to the downfall of the Party (Pei, 2017). The framing aims to strengthen Party legitimacy through borrowing creditability from Mao and a certain version of the Party's revolutionary history.

[29] Qincheng Prison is a max-security prison in Beijing run by the Ministry of Public Security instead of the Ministry of Justice. Built in 1958 with the assistance of the Soviet Union, QinCheng was originally designed to imprison high-ranking war criminals in the Sino-Japanese and the civil war. It eventually turned into a place which incarcerated many high-ranking cadres who were targeted by political purges during the Cultural Revolution. Since then, it has been the prison for the most important political prisoners in China (Guo, 2012). Among them were people who were involved in the Gang of Four (Mao's last wife Jiang Qin), the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 (Bao Tong, secretary of Premier Zhao Ziyang) and high-profile corruption cases (Bo Xilai). The treatment of these prisoners in Qincheng is often a political decision, thus they may enjoy certain privileges or suffer deliberate abuse depending on their individual cases. While abuse in prison is not uncommon in China, privileged treatments in prison most likely only exists in Qincheng.

As a programme co-produced by the CCDI and the CCTV, its role is to inform and educate the audience about corruption instead of initiating a debate about it. The core message for the audience is that corruption is a recent event caused by mainly subjective reasons. Thus, the way to deal with it is to strengthen personal willpower and determination, combined with harsh punishment from the Party as a deterrent. Consequently, carefully studying the Party policy and checking one's behaviour against the Party Constitution is the key method to avoid making mistakes. However, the framing distracts people from the structural flaw of the CCP as the root of corruption and encourages them to believe that the Party is the crusader spearheaded by Xi against such individual decay (Murphy, 2007). The constructed causal relation that is to blame for the rampant Party corruption prevents the audience from questioning the existence of any other causes of corruption, as long as this one logic stands. The CDA reveals the Rule of Party Discipline Discourse that, yet again, shows that the CCP is operating above the law. The CDA also discovers a concentrated effort from the CCP to construct certain myths about its own past and Xi's agenda of rewriting the post-Mao memory. Family values remain a recurring discourse in the framing of the confessions. The Party tries to reverse the trend of the 'descending familism' in which the only child in a family occupies the central position (Yan, 2009). By invoking of the traditional filial kinship within a family and even at a national level, the framing of the confessions distracts the audience with the love for ones' family and nation from possible indignation, judgement and actions against the CCP.

5.3 Conclusion

After fading out from ordinary people's lives for around three decades, Xi's era has seen a comeback of mediated confessions, not in newspapers, but on the official television CCTV instead. This chapter moves on from the data collected from the Cultural Revolution period and examines the contemporary mediated confession cases. Taken together with the news clips of journalist Gao Yu, Swedish activist Peter Dahlin and Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai alongside the documentary 'Always on the Road', the chapter reveals that the active use of mediated confessions by the Party to popularise a particular framing of reality. Firstly, a 'foreign anti-China force' is lurking behind the foreign media, NGOs and even among some Chinese. They threaten China's national security and

undermine China's rightful peaceful rise. Secondly, the CCP emphasises the rule of the law with Chinese characteristics and the Party discipline to the confessants and the general public, despite the fact that their very use of mediated confessions reflects the opposite. Such emphasis is on educating the audience as to how to correctly understand certain challenges China is facing today, such as corruption. Last but not least, the traditional filial values must be upheld to counter the recent moral turn related to the economic growth and the negative consequences of the One-child Policy. It is not only to be obeyed at the family level but at the national level as well.

The framing of the mediated confessions in both the news clips and the documentary showcase the power disparity among different arbitrarily created groups. The confession from non-Party members creates an 'inside China/good vs outside China/bad' and a 'moral/legal superiority vs inferiority'. Meanwhile, there is also an inside/outside Party divide which privileges the insider. Within the Party, there is total domination of Xi over the individual members. None of the power imbalance is new, as much of this imbalance is partly constructed through intertextual references. The framing functions mainly to reinforce the existing social-political structure. In terms of the undesirable changes in society such as the moral crises and declining trust in the CCP, the framing pinpoints them and asserts the Party-preferred cultural values in an attempt to reverse the damage. Having examined the data from both the historical and contemporary periods, I put the results together in the next chapter in order to discuss the similarities and differences in framing mediated confessions, as one iconic legacy of Mao's era.

Chapter 6. Changing Stage, Changing Repentance?

There have been many social and cultural changes from the early days of the PRC to Xi's era, yet the CCP remains. The stage for mediated confessions has changed, but how about the framing of confessions? The previous two analysis chapters have shown the changed as well as the unchanged discourses in the framing of the mediated confessions from both Mao's Cultural Revolution and Xi's first five-year term. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to piece together the results from both periods in order to understand the nature of the evolution of the framing and answer the research question posted in Chapter 1: to what extent is the framing of mediated confessions from Chinese official media in Xi's era a revival of that during Mao's Cultural Revolution? The resurgence of the practice itself is a sign of Maoist political control. Besides, many more alarming elements represented by the leader's personality cult, his swelling personal power, the traditional hierarchical order and an overall tightening control of the political sphere make a reappearance in Xi's China. Furthermore, they play a crucial role in the framing of the contemporary mediated confessions, which in themselves are a clear reminder of Mao's chaotic decade. Meanwhile, the changes in framing reflect the fast adaptability of the CCP in disciplinary measures. These elements together create a sense of déjà vu of the criticism and self-criticism during the Cultural Revolution.

This chapter first summarises the continuities and changes that I observe from the data. Overall, two persistent discourses and two changes stand out from the last two chapters. The theme of families and the dehumanisation of the enemy together with the healing metaphor have been in use in the confessions of both eras. I argue that both discourses persisting throughout the two periods demonstrate that the norms about families, dehumanisation and healing metaphors are the relatively constant cultural elements that have been specific to the Chinese society for at least the past century. Thus, their existence is likely to continue. The changes occurred in the areas that are related to the different political agendas of Mao and Xi, and consequently different confession styles. This chapter then discusses the ideological implications of the power divide, as a result of the different framings, that the two chapters have summarised. The result shows that P-ideology outweighs S-ideology as demonstrated in the framing of mediated confessions. It indicates a strong tendency of the CCP to use coercion and to

downplay the aspect of mutual dependency between the CCP and the Chinese people in Mao's and Xi's era alike. Next, I summarise the main contributions of the thesis and point out directions for future research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of mediated confessions, their resurrection and consequences today. This chapter concludes with a critical reflection of what the framing of the mediated confessions may suggest about the future political atmosphere in Xi's China.

6.1 Continuities

In terms of the discourses in each confession framing, some of them persist from the Cultural Revolution to today. In fact, they existed even before the 1960s and are likely to last in the future. The discourses relating to traditional family values and the dehumanisation/healing metaphor are both present in the two periods. I argue that the identification of these recurring discourses shows that they are firmly grounded in the deep-rooted Chinese culture that has remained largely constant over the generations.

6.1.1 Traditional Family Values Discourse

The most prominent discourse that existed both in the Cultural Revolution and today in mediated confessions is the Traditional Family Values Discourse. Exemplified by filial piety and the patriarchal hierarchical order, this discourse not only makes use of the accepted power relationship among the family members, but also tries to defend this relationship in the face of the erosion and shift of traditional moral standards in an increasingly materialistic Chinese society. With the old and the new morality entangled together, people often justify their behaviours by applying their preferred morality and ethics. So does the CCP. In Chapter 5, the conflicting discourses demonstrated in 'morality vs law' illustrate the complexity of the interpretation of what is right and wrong (Yan, 2009; Davis, 2010). Thus, the framing is a strategic move of flexibly appealing for morality and ethics in order to make individual citizens shoulder more personal responsibility when the CCP cannot effectively deal with the social issues caused by growing wealth gap and lack of a social safety net.

There is also the tendency to recontextualise the family discourse into the bigger political realm. Filial piety, a pervasive discourse under Xi's ideological advocacy, has a broader implication than a virtue within a family unit. It can be

elevated to a national level, becoming the starting point of patriotism and, more important, party loyalty. That is to say, the leader of the CCP assumes the role of the head of the family and demands respect, loyalty and obedience from his 'children'. This is consistent with the literal analogy as well as the dynasty governance philosophy – the '*Tianxia'* trope (Dreyer, 2015). Families, nations and *tianxia* (all under Heaven) are packaged together. The order of the world all under Heaven is the same as the order of a nation; the order of a nation is the same as the order of a family. From family values, the CCP demands the Chinese people follow the morality of self-sacrifice for the family. This morality emphasises the use of introspection and personal willpower to overcome difficulties in real life, instead of questioning the CCP's policies and political agenda (Brown, 2016).

Thus, patriarchal leaders, such as Mao and Xi, often play a central role in the framing of mediated confessions for the purpose of building Party legitimacy. However, there is no clear and legitimate top leader appointment procedure, thus the personal power of top leaders varies depending on the way they ascend to the position. Mao is undoubtedly the most powerful leader in China since 1949. The official media reflected this unparalleled power in the countless quotations and exhortations of Mao, which were highly intense, ahistorical, and out-of-context, as shown in Chapter 4. Deng was the supreme leader who initiated the reform era despite not having the official title of the Party General Secretary. Jiang, Hu and Xi all were or are the General Secretary, but the personal power of the former two cannot compete with that of Xi. Just like during the Cultural Revolution, Xi's political agenda today often taps into Mao's legitimacy by quoting his words and works. Despite not being on the same quantitative scale, both periods witness the use of Mao's quotes out of context, either to suit their current argument, which is totally different from, if not entirely opposite to, the original context, or to hide certain inconvenient facts or terms deemed too sensitive at the time of use. The contemporary reference to Mao also functions to elevate Mao's status among the younger generation who are less aware of Mao's deadly campaigns due to the change of textbooks on the Party history. Therefore, the discourse of Traditional Family Values lives on, not only shaping the moral ethos within family units but also cultivating people's unquestioning loyalty and obedience at the national level. In facing the danger of shifting traditional hierarchical order, the CCP's

determination to defend against the cultural turn is clear in the official media framing.

6.1.2 Dehumanisation Discourse and Healing Metaphor

The contemporary framing of mediated confessions remains fond of using Discourses of Dehumanisation and Healing. The Party routinely denigrates 'enemies' and corrupt officials by giving them derogatory names such as insects, animals or toxins. Such dehumanisation helps fuel the public resentment and justify the physical and mental abuse of the 'enemies' and corrupt officials. In a similar vein, the Party is fond of the analogy of healing. During the Cultural Revolution, a few confessants were merely 'sick', so they were not the 'enemies' despite their past mistakes. It was possible to cure them, even though the process (of naming and shaming in public) might be very painful. Similarly, in Xi's China, the corruption that plagues the CCP has made the Party sick to the point that even Xi himself admits that corruption is endangering the CCP and threatening its legitimacy (Wang, 2017). However, as the framing of the mediated confessions of the fallen officials tells, Chinese people should remain optimistic about the CCP in that it promises to have the courage to endure the pain and rid this disease under Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

As explained in Chapter 4 and 5, the discourses of Dehumanisation and Healing have a history stretching back to ancient Chinese religion and culture. They persist through the changes in history and remain durable. That is to say, similar to the traditional family values mentioned above, the Dehumanisation Discourse and the Healing Metaphor are part of the relatively stable Chinese culture. They become part of the cultural resonance that the Party framing can reliably and readily draw on. The relative stability of the culture also means that the persistent use of both discourses is likely to continue. Moreover, such discourses keep seeping into other media spheres that the CCP tries to regulate. As noted by the China Media Project (CMP), some prominent critical voices online were labelled as 'internet pests' and 'harmful pests' by the official media today (Bandurski, 2018).

Xi's era witnesses the return of mediate confessions of CCP cadre as well as non-CCP members. The discourses on traditional family values, dehumanisation and healing are both prominent in the framing of self-criticism and confessions during the Cultural Revolution and in Xi's era. They can be seen

as the order of discourse of mediated confessions in that they both specifically regulate the Chinese people's attitude towards each other and the CCP. Together, they contribute to a paternal image of the CCP and familial respect, loyalty and love among the people to the Party while demonstrating clear hatred toward the 'enemies'. These discourses within the framing of the mediated confessions invoke the memory of the Cultural Revolution. Having traced the continuities in the confession framing, I turn my attention to what is unique to their own periods of time.

6.2 Changes

There are two noticeable changes between the two periods: the political and the subsequent cultural shifts reflected in the discourse and the changes in the media framing technique of confessions. I argue that the former is largely due to the different agendas of different generations of the Party leaders; the latter is related to the changing mode of persuasion due to the social changes since the end of the Cultural Revolution.

6.2.1 Political and cultural themes

Due to the aforementioned 'Party Principle', it is the task of the official media to disseminate and promote the political agenda of the current political leader. The political themes of various CCP leaders certainly differ as they face different challenges. From the fear of the masses during Mao's chaotic Cultural Revolution to Xi's hailing 'rule of law', the Party discipline and punishing those who endanger national security, the changes mostly reflect the political agenda of the time. For instance, the CMP has developed a 'heat index' to monitor the frequency of certain phrases in the Chinese political discourse in the *People's Daily* (Beijing Language and Culture University, 2018; Qian, 2018). The two discourses identified in the contemporary analysis - 'national security' and 'socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics' – are categorised in the rank of the 'red hot sector'. This refers to the second most frequently used political terminologies, as opposed to the 'blazing category' which is the first rank. The framing of mediated confessions surely reflects some of the agenda of the political leader of the time.

Despite the lasting theme of traditional family values, there is a noticeable change of attitude towards the traditional culture overall. As Qin (2015) astutely

points out, the culture that characterised the 'evil old society' in the past has officially transformed into the 'excellent tradition that has lasted thousands of years' today. Consequently, the Chinese cultural norms have changed from being officially criticised to being selectively revived and promoted (Li, 2009). At the same time, China has changed from a socialist country (1950s), first to a third world country (1960s-1970s), then to a reforming and modernising 'socialist' state (post-1978) (van Ness, 1993). Such changes in the attitude of traditional culture and the identity of China mean that different framing strategies are needed to make the official persuasion effective.

6.2.2 Confession framing techniques

In terms of the style of confessions, it has changed from repentance to a deity (shown in Chapter 4) to a self-reflection against the moral standard or law and order (shown in Chapter 5). The former tends to lump together abstract human sins, such as selfishness during the Cultural Revolution, into self-criticism, making huge yet empty apologetic claims. By contrast, the latter seems to have moved away from the 'feudal superstition' towards a more modern and logical society. It seems to be more effective in persuading the population today. Despite the consistent presence of the political rhetoric of Mao and Xi, the language style characterising the confessions during the Maoist era was very aggressive and charged with Marxist buzzwords. Its contemporary counterparts, by contrast, are much more restrained. For instance, the anti-foreign discourse is explicit in the contemporary mediated confessions, yet none is as antagonistic and bellicose as that of the Cultural Revolution period. Compared with the Maoist style propaganda and the Post-Mao empty political slogans, the official persuasion adorned with 'traditional culture' and 'law and order' is subtler, and potentially more effective. Thus, it is quite clear that both cultural norms and legal regulations can be instruments to strategically and conveniently justify the Party's actions in different historical periods.

Such a style change has a crucial practical implication: as we think we have moved on from the political mind control from the Maoist era, thought restrictions can creep in from other directions. For the public who have been educated to be proud of their long continuous history and tradition, it is natural to accept anything with a label of 'traditional culture' or 'virtues since ancient time' without a second thought. 'Traditional culture' is often dubbed as the 'root' or the

'soul' of the nation, and as such it is particularly difficult to think critically about its potential manipulative role. Nonetheless, as the TV confessions show, the framing often distracts the audience from governmental policy failure and shifts the blame onto individuals. Having summarised the historical continuity of the traditional family values, the dehumanisation discourses and healing metaphors as well as the changes in the political and cultural themes and the persuasion style of mediated confessions, it is now possible to revisit the research question that I set out at the start of the thesis and to summarise the findings.

6.3 The role of the official media

At the start of the thesis, I laid out the research question: To what extent is the framing of mediated confessions from Chinese official media in Xi's era a revival of that during Mao's Cultural Revolution? I select an underexplored perspective to answer this question: mediated confessions. In this concluding chapter, I revisit the research question and the finding of the similarities and differences between the practices of two different eras. The continuity and the change summarised above are both important in that they reveal that the confessional practice in Xi's era is a revival of criticism of Mao's era in the following sense: in terms of the confession practice, there is an active effort from the CCP to reintroduce the revamped disciplinary measure of self-criticism that has long been in the toolkit of the CCP since its early days. Like in the Cultural Revolution, during Xi's reign, people outside the Party have been subjected to mediated confessions. In a number of cases, even foreign nationals have apologised for their anti-China behaviours. In terms of the framing, the official media CCTV packages many confessions as a part of legal programmes, which are largely created to strengthen the legal awareness of the general public. However, for those who know the political motivation and the coercion that goes behind the production of mediated confessions, it is chilling intimidation. The same logic runs in the mediated confessions of the CCP members who have fallen in Xi's anti-corruption campaign. The confessants are all eager to blame their lax mental self-control and failure to follow Xi's instruction for their misconduct.

The continuity in the practice as well as the framing mean that, although decades of reform has witnessed the political and social ebb and flow, the Party's survival remains at the core of the Party's interest. It is particularly pertinent in Xi's era. The continuity also shows that the CCP has been proficient in utilising

the traditional cultural and moral value and the media for its legitimation and motivational purposes. Meanwhile, the change in both the confession technique and framing demonstrate the CCP's adaptability to the social and technological changes.

The continuities and changes in framing shape and reflect the power dynamic of the two periods of time. Going back to Hodge and Louie's (1998) P-ideology and S-ideology mentioned in Chapter 3, the framing implications mentioned in Chapter 4 and 5 are illustrative examples in terms of the operation of ideology. The binary power divide, such as the morally superior confessors and masses as opposed to the inferior confessants, the defendant 'us' as opposed to the evil foreign saboteurs, and the inside/outside Party framing in the anti-corruption campaign documentary, normalises the social and political hierarchical divide between the CCP and the non-CCP members. It reflects the P-ideology, which distinguishes 'the non-powerful' from the 'powerful' through showcasing the power of 'the powerful'. Some of the examples of how this is achieved are through showing the CCP cadres' acute awareness to correct their mistakes and teach others and the different treatment they have after breaking the discipline or law. Meanwhile, S-ideology maintains solidarity and underlines the interdependence between 'the powerful' and 'the non-powerful'. This is done largely through the healing metaphor, which selectively and nominally calls for unity between those who have made mistakes and those who criticise them. Overall, as the analysis shows, P-ideology has a more prominent presence than the S-ideology during both periods of time. The imbalanced P-/S-ideology indoctrination can be an indication of great social unrest, which the Party is extremely cautious and nervous about. The CCP needs to insert and showcase more domination more directly. It reflects that the CCP considers, for the time being, direct control over the population to be more effective than stressing 'interdependence' between the Party and the masses. Xi, just like Mao, demands more obedience and loyalty from the Chinese people. Thus, the CCP inclines towards coercion rather than cooperation today.

Xi's obsession over 'party purity', 'criticism and self-criticism', 'the mass line' and 'the hostile Western liberalism' is a direct tribute to Mao's ideology. Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova rightly describe Xi's anti-corruption campaign as 'a controlled "intra-Party" Cultural Revolution' (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova,

2018: 7). The framing of the confessions in the anti-corruption documentary also recasts Mao's Yan'an period as a communist utopia. The particular historiography is a part of the most recent revamp of the Party history, downplaying the disaster such as the Cultural Revolution and re-embalming the myths of Mao and model communist martyrs. The Party has been trying to turn its own history from a burden to a source of legitimacy (Brown, 2016). As the analysis shows, the fundamentally unchanged political structure, in spite of the back and forth reform experiment, means a fundamentally unchanged role of the official media in China. They remain by and large a nation building tool in the service of the Party's interests (Zhao, 1998). The use of mediated confessions both within and outside the CCP facilitates the assertion of control and power over the Party members and everyone else living in China.

However, there is no denying that this interpretation of the CCP's rationale for using mediated confessions cannot guarantee the expected interpretation from the audience. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate whether the audience is sophisticated enough to make a judgement about, or even care about, such news. However, it does not negate the fact that it is important to know the actual reception and impact that mediated confessions' framing has. A more audience-oriented inquiry is needed to address the audience-reception questions so that there will be a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of mediated confessions and the legacy of the Cultural Revolution in China today.

Besides the question of audience reception, this thesis also opens up other interesting questions that deserve academic attention. Firstly, it is worth noting that it was not only the Chinses nationals who were subject to mediated confessions and the physical coercion behind it, foreign nationals such as the British and the Swedish were also involved. In the era of Xi's rejuvenation of China, not only in terms of the domestic living condition but also China's position in the world, what is the possible purpose and ramification of such use of mediated confessions in the eyes of the Chinese and the world? Secondly, the thesis showcases the long-lasting influence of deep-rooted culture. Just like in the west where there is a confession culture, so there is in China and possibly in a few more countries influenced by the Chinese culture, such as Japan and South Korea (Fiskesjö, 2017). Scholars such as Tayler (2009) have traced the genealogy of the confession culture in the west from Augustine to Foucault. A conventional history

of confessions seeks evidence from the past to confirm why confessions are the way they are now. It aims to summarise a universal purpose of confessions: it assumes that 'there is a transhistorical human need or psychological compulsion to confess' (Taylor, 2009: 6). Inspired by Foucault, Tayler articulates that '…genealogy uses history to cut open the present in order to create the space in which transformation can occur' (2009: 6). A genealogy of confessions seeks any disruptive elements to refute this universal claim about the therapeutic and psychological *need* to confess. In terms of the confession culture in China, what is the universal assumption about confession? What transformation can the new understanding bring about? To shed light on these questions, I call for a similar study on the confession culture in China. It may also provide insight in terms of the popularity of self-criticism and confession with the CCP.

This chapter so far has summarised the discoursal continuities and changes in the framing of mediated confessions. Overall, the continuities of traditional family values, dehumanisation and healing metaphors come from the same cultural root that has been relatively constant for at least the past century in China. Their existence is likely to last in spite of the recent cultural and moral shifts. The changes in framing here, in essence, are the style modifications which relate to the shifting sociopolitical background, such as the different political agendas of Mao and Xi and different tactics for political persuasion in Maoist and Xi's China. Overall, Xi's era witnesses the use of more subtly and sophisticatedly framed storytelling confessions in contrast to the rigid repetitive stories full of the same abstract political jargon during the Cultural Revolution. In his first five years in office, Xi not only revived and revamped the form of Mao's model of criticism and self-criticism, but also maintained the ideological framing strategy to produce discourses that control the society and the people. Similar to Mao, Xi is prone to ideological coercion by highlighting the distinction between the powerful CCP and ordinary people while paying lip service to their potential interdependence. Unlike his past few predecessors, Xi has significantly more personal power, creates a direct link to Mao and revives the supposedly glorious memory of Mao through particular historiography. It is in this sense that Xi is the new Mao (ChinaFile, 2013). The last section of the thesis looks back at Xi's first five-year term as well as forward to Xi's second five-year term.

6.4 Conclusion

毛(Mao)病不改，积恶成习(Xi)

Literally: Failing to correct the wrongdoings leads to the formation of bad habits.

Metaphorically: Failing to correct the problems of Mao's era leads to the appearance of Xi's era (Li, 2019).

In 2016, the above saying appeared on Weibo – a popular social media platform in China - during the traditional Chinese New Year. It was initially published by Zhang Yihe, who claimed that it was her spring festival couplets to celebrate the new year (*Suiyuejinghao*, 2016). Zhang Yihe is the daughter of Zhang Bojun, an intellectual who was labelled 'China's number one rightist' during Mao's anti-Rightist Campaign[30]. The above couplets are an ingenious succinct literary aural pun of traditional Chinese elegance and full of acute political awareness. She indirectly yet sharply criticises the way in which the CCP handles the consequence of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's legacy. She suggests that hurriedly burying Mao and the memory of his time to put them out of sight does not address or solve the problem of that era at all. It only takes a person like Xi to retrigger some of Mao's policy and agenda.

6.4.1 Xi's first five-year term

The thesis sets out to study how official Chinese media facilitates the creation of a sense of a revival of the Cultural Revolution since Xi took office in 2012. In particular, there is an important observation of the notable return of mediated confessions. Public self-criticism was very common during Mao's Cultural Revolution and some made it to the official newspaper circulating nationwide. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, there has been pendulum-like political and economic reform. The development of media has thus been at the mercy of this tug of war development, experimenting with commercialisation and western liberal ideas. In Xi's first five-year term, we are once again experiencing a contraction period in which social and political control over people is on the rise.

To study the phenomenon of mediated confessions, I selected data from both eras, focusing on eight news articles from the *People's Daily* during the

[30] He and many others who were labelled as 'Rightists' suffered repeated criticism and struggle before and during the Cultural Revolution. Some of their self-criticism was published on the *People's Daily* according to the data that I have collected for the thesis. Zhang Bojun is seen one of the five biggest 'rightists' to this day (Vidal, 2016).

Cultural Revolution which contain the cadre's and ordinary people's criticism and self-criticism. Through three TV confession news clips of journalist Gao Yu, Swedish activist Peter Dahlin and China-born-Hong-Kong-based Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai and the anti-corruption campaign documentary 'Always on the Road', the contemporary analysis chapter examines the phenomenon of the resurgence of mediated confession both inside and outside the CCP. Transformed from an intra-party disciplinary technique to a mass campaign catalyst during the Cultural Revolution, mediated confession has evolved into a tool that consolidates the Party's rule in both eras. While CDA cannot provide a quantitative analysis of the characteristics across the various confessions, it can provide deep insights into the framing of the confessants and their stories. It points out the manipulative purpose of the CCP official framing.

From the perspective of media framing theory and with the assistance of CDA, the thesis has revealed that during the Cultural Revolution, the confession framing made use of the Confucian Values Discourse in relation to Mao - the most important figure during that time. From individual families to collective communities, the patriarchal hierarchical order had to be followed. Mao, as the combination of both the emperor of the land and the father of the nation, must be respected, loved and obeyed. In relation to the masses, despite the repeated appeal to trust and learn from the masses, the framing also unwittingly reflected the chaotic social conditions through the Fear of the Masses Discourse. In relation to the enemies, the Dehumanisation Discourse was used to justify the verbal and physical abuses directed at them. Meanwhile, the Healing Metaphor was used to defend those who were not class enemies and to show leniency, however feeble the effort was. Mediated confessions during the Cultural Revolution exhibited a strong resemblance to confession towards a deity in the traditional Chinese confession ritual. That is to say, the confessant apologised for all human sins instead of the specific misdeeds that he or she had done, which further consolidated Mao's supreme position in China.

Half a century later, the 'Rule of Law' Discourse and the National Security Discourse have become prominent in the televised confessions. In other words, confessants are framed as criminals who admit that they have violated Chinese laws, such as compromising national security. However, the Family Values Discourse, exemplified by filial piety, also exists alongside the crime

story. Such framing condemns the confessant by defining them as both a legally and morally degraded person. The confession cases are all politically motivated, and are thus framed as pure crime stories to create a strategic diversion from the political reasons behind their downfall. These politically motivated cases are camouflaged in the ordinary crime news so that the general public, who are unaware of real reasons for the arrest of the confessants, take the news at its face value. The banality of crimes news certainly does not mean it is harmless. Its discourse power primes the people to always take personal responsibility in the face of hardship and difficulties in daily life instead of questioning the role of the government, which can easily be overlooked and under-estimated.

At the same time, the confessions of the fallen Party officials are compiled into the anti-corruption campaign documentary 'Always on the Road'. The framing of their confessions invokes the Rule of the Party Discipline Discourse and a particular Party Historiography Discourse that romanticises the earlier generations of the CCP members through the connection between Mao and Xi, and creates a nostalgic illusion of a lost past in the face of an increasingly materialistic society brought about by negative influences from the west. Family Values Discourse can still be found in the framing, extolling the filial duty in tackling the challenge of a reversed family hierarchical structure brought about by the consequence of the One-child Policy. The traditional filial duty exhibited in the Party cadre family contrasts sharply with some fallen officials' excuses for corruption: providing a better material environment for their children. The framing elevates the status of Xi among the CCP by connecting him and his early years in Liangjiahe to Mao and his idealised Yan'an. The framing also creates an inside/outside CCP divide. When the fallen officials confess, they never assume the identity of the criminal but remain 'cadres' of the CCP who are punished by the Party discipline instead of laws.

It is now clear that some discourses have persisted throughout the confession framing of the two periods. The use of the discourses of the Traditional Family Values, Dehumanisation and Healing metaphors in both periods show that these are the cultural elements that have been relatively constant in China. These traditions have been deeply ingrained in the subconscious of the general Chinese population. They are likely to persist in the years to come. At the same time, changes occur when different political leaders assume power. The different

political and social challenges they face mean that they prioritise a different political agenda. As a result, the discourses that are related to the political agenda of the leader and the style of mediated confessions have changed. In comparison to Mao's Cultural Revolution, the persuasion style of mediated confessions is much subtler and more sophisticated in Xi's China. The storytelling is no longer full of abstract, universal human sins, repetitive political slogans or devoid of the real substance of today. Crime news, family stories and anti-corruption pieces are all relevant and compelling stories to the Chinese people today.

However, these changes in discourses and style do not negate the fact that in Xi's first five years in office, he has not only revived and revamped the iconic model of criticism and self-criticism of Mao's era but has also maintained the ideological framing strategy to produce discourses that control the society and the people. In terms of the mediated confession among the CCP members, the revival and the standardisation of such a practice is a chilling reminder of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's era in general. There may not be any public struggle sessions initiated by the people right now, yet the fallen officials are often paraded in the show trials and their treatment is often outside the legal realm. In terms of the mediated confessions among non-CCP members, the thesis provides a different understanding of the practice. Instead of viewing it as a media spectacle which is 'disruptively' popular, I argue that such mediated confessions are quite the opposite: as I mentioned before, they blend into the ordinary crime news and appear to be mundane after decades of 'law and order' indoctrination from the CCP in the Chinese media. The banality of mediated confessions, however, can be dangerous. It sends an intimidating message to the specific audience who know the staged nature of mediated confessions. For those who are unaware of the amount of orchestration behind the mediated confessions, they are part of the 'law and order' and 'culture' teaching in the media, which controls the population while excusing the CCP from the abuse of legal power and policy failures.

This thesis has three main contributions. Theoretically, instead of the conventional journalist-centred theory, I argue for an official framing-centred framing theory when applying the theory in countries with a tightly controlled media system. In the environment in which media framing theory was originally developed, media is often viewed as a public sphere where individual journalists need to take into account various views involved in the story while reporting. The

relationship between the journalists and the various people involved in the production of the story influences the framing of the published piece. These people range from those who participate in the event, spokespeople for organisations, politicians, as well as editors within the media organisation. It is clear that media framing is a process of selecting, combining and balancing all the different voices. The media system in China today means that media framing is a rather different process, especially in terms of the official media. Although neither China nor the CCP is monolithic, it is safe to say that aggressively promoting the CCP's interest has become the priority of the official media in Xi's China. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the tightening of media control has been felt not only in the official media but it has also spread to the relatively liberal publications. Therefore, the CCP, as in the past but more so today, plays a decisive role in media framing.

The second contribution lies in the application of CDA in a non-Anglophone environment. The grammar, syntax and metaphors which are part of the analysis were predominantly developed according to the English Language. However, the application of CDA requires adjustment for use in non-Anglophone environments. It follows the rules that apply both to Mandarin and English as well as takes into account the linguistic feature that exists in Mandarin but not English. My application is certainly not the first example of CDA's application in Mandarin, but it joins the overall effort to de-westernise CDA by adding diverse examples and experiences to human knowledge.

The third contribution is that this thesis heeds the call to refocus on the CCP's recent history in order to better understand the China of today and its future. Perry identifies that a current impediment in the field of the Chinese politics is that there 'has been a tendency for the study of particular topics to be concentrated in brief time periods under hegemonic but ephemeral overarching approaches' (Perry, 2017b: 1). Many China scholars are very keen on predicting China's future but see little value in looking back farther than the very recent decades. Much current research has moved on from the Land Reform, the GLP and the Cultural Revolution. There is no doubt that the CCP and the PRC now look very different from how they looked previously. However, are those periods really of little value now? Has China truly moved on from them? Does the discontinuity mean that the old stories cannot inform China today? Xi certainly

does not think so; neither should China scholars. When one examines Xi's so-called 'innovative' ideological thought, one finds that these ideas often echo the writings and research of and about Mao's era. Therefore, examining the recent Party history can provide useful insights into the potential direction China may be heading.

In 2017, Xi's first five-year term came to an end, yet his personal power remained on the rise. The 19th Party Congress cemented the further rise of Xi by adding into the Party Constitution 'Xi Jinping Thought for the New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. It was an important symbolic gesture: the only other leader who had the ideology named after him was Mao (Martin, 2018). Meanwhile, the customary nomination of the next leader after Xi did not occur during the Party Congress, stirring up huge speculation inside and outside China about a potential third term for Xi. Regardless, the second five-year term of Xi is well underway; mediated confessions and other worrying signs continue.

6.4.2 Xi's 2nd five-year term

In March 2018, China entered Xi's second five-year term. 8th December 2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the 'reform and opening-up' policy, which ought to have been a proud proclamation to leave behind the poor and chaotic Maoist decades and to head towards prosperity. However, there are many other Maoist symbolic signs that have caught the eyes of the China observers. Both the content and the format of the communication invoke the memory of Mao and his Cultural Revolution.

At the beginning of 2019, the loudspeaker blasting official media news has returned to some villages in China. The official tabloid *Global Times* dubbed it as 'nostalgic': 'In the 1970s and 1980s when loudspeakers spread important announcements or told villagers to gather for community meetings', loudspeakers are back to play 'an important role in conveying the voice of the Communist Party of China… and the spirit of the 19th National Congress' to counter the negative influence of the internet (Chen, 2019: para6). An even more alarming example occurred in March 2019. Two students from Tsinghua University denounced their Marxist professor for teaching the 'wrong' ideology in a Cultural-Revolution manner (Park, 2019). Phrases such as 'cow demons and snake spirits' and 'poisonous weed' blatantly appeared in their public WeChat social media message. These terms bear the unmistakable mark of the Cultural Revolution. The

incident attracted some disapproving responses on social media and prompted some people to regard it as a disturbing sign that the ideological control had not only escalated as a result of the pressure from above but also by the policing of the classroom from students. Meanwhile, the government is aggressively popularising the 'Study the Great Nation' App among people (Park, 2019). As part of the patriotic education, over 100 million users receive points by answering questions about Xi and his thought. In some cases, the result of the tests on the App is tied to the annual evaluation of professional performance[31]. The very phenomenon and the content of the app quickly invoke the memory of Mao's personality cult and his *Little Red Book*. The above examples showcase the effort that the CCP is putting into mass persuasion. It updates the communication technique by continuing the use of effective old technology such as radio in rural areas and experimenting with new media in more developed areas. As argued earlier, a fundamentally unchanged political system means that serving the Party has made a return after the liberalisation of the official media in China in the 1980s (Jernow, 1994). Xi's rule further reigns in the control over the media in whatever form it takes. Considering that Xi's political agenda has regressed to tighter control over the society in general, the media has been made to facilitate and spread such control through certain discourses.

Even if the three examples were considered as a few extreme cases with limited impact, there are more concrete things happening. Xi's personal power continues to steadily grow. The way in which Xi was elected as president of the PRC at the NPC in 2018 was a telling story. Despite the fact that such voting is largely a symbolic gesture to respect the procedure, in 2013, among the nearly three thousand delegates, there was still one person who voted against Xi's appointment alongside three voters abstaining (Zhao, 2016b). However, five years later, the NPC *unanimously* voted for Xi (Zhou, 2018). Meanwhile, in March 2018, the NPC ceremonially and overwhelmingly voted to lift the two-term limit for the presidency (Buckley and Wu, 2018). The two-term limit was implemented by Deng to prevent a permanent rule like Mao's from occurring again and to ensure a transition of power as orderly as possible. In spite of being an unofficial rule, Xi's past few predecessors respected the term limit. The abolition invokes,

[31] From my personal source.

once again, questions such as 'Is Xi the new Chairman Mao?' or 'To what extent is the Cultural Revolution making a comeback?' (Farrelly *et al.*, 2019).

As mentioned in Chapter 5, despite the CCP's dynastic analogy, the Party is far from avoiding the cycle in reality. One prominent characteristic of the dynastic cycle governance is what Garnaut (2017) calls a pre-emptive 'You-die; I-win' struggle. There is no safe way to exit the struggle. People who lost in the struggle, and even their families, could die or be erased from history. Thus, the winner of struggle invariably prefers someone either sharing a bloodline or having a symbiotic relationship to take over the control. The crucial issue of succession has been a destabilising element for the emperors and the Party alike most of the time. For Mao, the classic Chinese literature was a source of wisdom to govern the country, despite the mass campaigns against the 'old culture'. According to some China watchers, the old governing philosophy such as the Dynastic Cosmology was the very core ideology to Mao. Xi has merely reinvigorated it to the highest level since the Cultural Revolution (Bishop, 2019).

Against this background, mediated confessions, once again, become the platform for the demonstration of loyalty as well as intimidation. A wider implication is that mediated confessions are a reliable tool that the CCP tends to use at times of great political uncertainty. Since Xi came to power in 2013, there have been over 50 TV confession cases recorded up to 2018 (Safeguard Defenders, 2018). The confessants' fates differed after the TV confessions; some of the confessants were released, some were imprisoned, some were under house arrest and some are still missing. As mentioned before, the whereabouts of the Swedish national, Gui, remains unknown since his repeated TV confessions. Some of the confessants go public with what has happened to them in the process of producing the mediated confessions. As widely speculated, the overwhelming majority of the confessions are orchestrated and forced. In this sense, TV confessions, like other forms of mediated confessions, are not at all genuine consent. The last criterion of Beetham's model is whether there is an agreement with the status quo from the subordinate. The thesis has shown that there is a show of consent from the confessants, but it is not the genuine consent Beetham refers to. The confession is to show ordinary Chinese people that for those who have been left out of sharing most of the fruits of reform, the misery is caused by foreigners, by moral decline and by individuals, rather than the Party.

The resurgence of mediated confessions can be an indication of regression to the Maoist form of social control. This method of generating fear through actual disciplinary actions coupled with mediated confessions is similar to the practice in the Maoist era. Both Mao and Xi have relied on confessions to create mental pressure and to enforce their rule at a time of political uncertainty (Minzner, 2018). It seems that Xi has not resorted to the mass campaigns which characterised Mao's own movements; he may never do. Some argue that there is already mass backlashes against the increasingly individualistic and capitalist society, such as the New Left and the more radical Neo-Maoist group (Blanchette, 2019). Xi seems only to have borrowed Mao's name and strategy partially to appear as a stronger, firmer, and more legitimate leader than he really is. However, watching TV is arguably a form of passive mass participation (Anderson, 1983; Meyrowitz, 1986). This thesis is unable to address the issue of the audience's reception of TV confessions. More detailed inquiries into other cases of mediated confessions and an audience-oriented study are urgently needed to better understand the construction and effects of TV confessions, and more broadly, whether it could possibly be true that we are somehow back on a ship that needs a great helmsman in order to safely travel through the treacherous water.

吾与足下 | Me and you

同舟人也 | on the same boat

舟若靠岸 | If the boat manages to dock

吾亦可登 | I will also manage to land

林昭 | Lin Zhao[32]

[32] Lin Zhao (1932-1968): a poet, journalist, Christian and political dissident from Suzhou. She devoted herself to the Communist revolution fervently before the Hundred Flower Campaign, which made her realise Mao's policy and movement was devasting and horrendous to China. She was imprisoned for what she had written in protest against the CCP and remained defiant throughout, writing articles which were critical of Mao and the CCP. To protest her treatment, she wrote by using her own blood when she was refused a pen. She was executed in 1968 and her family was notified of it when her mother was demanded to pay five cents for the bullets that were used to end Lin's life. For more about her life story, please consult Lian Xi's *Blood Letters: The Untold Story of Lin Zhao, a Martyr in Mao's China* (2018). Today, it has become forbidden to visit her tomb in the outskirts of Suzhou.

6.5 Self-reflection

How Mao's legacy and mediated confessions are considered depends largely on one's experience, knowledge, memory or imagination of it (Sorace *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, as part of the critical tradition and as a researcher in general, I need to be self-critical and self-reflective. I am Chinese. I was born in the early 1990s, grew up as an 'obedient kid' to my parents and 'good student' to my teachers, and was educated to university level in China. Most of my families and friends are in China. Having spent almost a decade living and studying in the UK, my worldview has changed. I would disagree with much of the thought about China and the world that I held when I was a teenager. Therefore, when researching and interpreting mediated confessions, I am not merely an observer (arguably nobody is), but also inevitably a participant. Who I am and who I was influenced the way I interpreted the mediated confessions. Here, I would like to highlight two aspects. Firstly, my experience has a major impact on my take on the Traditional Family Value Discourse and more broadly on the implication for Chinese scholars when researching China. Secondly, how the topic of the thesis gradually slipped into the more sensitive areas within China which unintentionally reflects the broad political regression since 2012.

6.3.1 Blood is thicker than water

The traditional family values and black and white attitude toward 'us' and 'the other' stood out instantly while I went through the data. Both views instinctually resonate with how I once thought about the world. I am still very much at the mercy of the traditional filial values and am frustrated by it. While settling far away from my parents seems to be the life direction that I am taking, I'm riddled with helplessness and guilt in terms of how I can take care of my parents when they are old as I am the only child. This is tangled with the typical 'black-and-white' attitude I used to have. My world was much simpler before: if you did not even take care of your own parents, you were a bad person, full stop. No excuses were allowed. I believed that I should only have looked inwards: what can *I* do to fix the problem?

However, studying abroad gives me a chance to step back and look around, questioning if I am really the root cause of the problem and what can be changed from the outside. Then, a plethora of social consequences of the One-child Policy become clear. I realised that while my experience may not be

universal, my dilemma and feelings are certainly not that uncommon. I am not the only one. It is quite common that many people of my generation are the only child in the individual family and live away from their parents to pursue careers. Even if they do live geographically close enough to be able to visit their parents frequently, it does not eliminate the ethical and financial issues of balancing the care responsibility between their parents, their own children and themselves.

From a young age, I was taught filial piety. There is nothing wrong with teaching family virtue and to love and respect one's parents. However, when it becomes *the virtue* that puts all the monetary, legal and moral (in particular) responsibility on children while the government is failing to deliver its duty of care for the old and its promise when forcefully rolling out the One-child Policy, the virtue becomes a sinister trap tossed out by the government and then hijacked and duplicated by social pressure to make the family members either fight each other or suffer together. The above is my experience at a personal level, but the implication of manipulating certain traditions at a social level can be very detrimental to Chinese society. It causes tension and conflict within the most basic social unit, the family.

6.3.2 Political regression and the anaconda in the chandelier

As someone who was born in the 1990s, my parents have warned me since I was a kid 'not to talk about politics'. Meanwhile, as a Chinese student studying media and communication in the UK since 2010, I have been pursuing the study of the media's role in the promotion of the Cultural Revolution since early 2014. With my parents' warning in mind, I did not consider my topic as sensitive in 2014. Nor did I expect that my topic would become too sensitive in such a short time. In 2014, I thought that the history of the Cultural Revolution may be an inconvenient topic, but at least the CCP had officially admitted mistakes were made. It is not a taboo that nobody dares to talk about. I learnt about the Cultural Revolution in school and that Mao was misled by the Gang of Four to have unleashed social and political chaos. People do mention the Cultural Revolution in daily life, often recalling it as a period of hardship. It was not a politically taboo topic, but it may have become one over the period of five years.

In Link's 2002 essay on China scholars' self-censorship, he acknowledges the step forward from Mao's era; it is now true that anything considered negative by the Party can generally be privately discussed without the fear of being

reported by neighbours. However, the threatening shadow of the consequence of being targeted by the CCP remains and looms overhead, like the lurking anaconda in the chandelier. Moreover, as mentioned throughout the thesis, the tide has clearly turned. History textbooks in schools have changed to the point that the Cultural Revolution it almost airbrushed out. 'Cultural Revolution', joining the rank of 'Tiananmen' and 'Xinjiang', has been on the list of censorship of academic journals that are allowed publication in China. For non-Chinese China scholars, visa access to China and the safety of their interlocutors are their main concerns when; for Chinese China scholars, taking the risk is not simply about personal courage. It is often the safety of family and friends that are the primal concerns. Approaching the end of writing up my thesis, I dared not show my father the draft despite his offering to proofread. I feared my parents would worry about me as well as themselves. Living in China, they are scared of the possibility that my writing may cause them trouble one day. This was the reason why I hesitated and still have not, as many of my PhD peers and scholars often do with their publications, promoted my first publication based on one chapter of this thesis on social media. In reality, my parents' fear and my concern may (hopefully) be far-fetched, or silly to some people, as my parents are likely to have exaggerated the possible impact of my thesis. The truth is that I am no longer sure where the boundary lies. It is too vague, uncertain, and seemingly far yet close at the same time. My experience shows that the level of sensitivity changes, sometimes more rapidly than one can possibly foresee. There have been valuable discussions on the dilemma of non-Chinese China scholars (Link, 2002; Millward, 2011; Greitens & Truex, 2018), yet the conversation about that of native Chinese China scholar is scarce by contrast. The consequence is that fewer Chinese China scholars will be able to afford to carry out the research that surrounds certain critical historical moments. Consequently, the relevant research area loses a crucial perspective of understanding those historical moments.

It is the reality that I and many others who are in a similar situation have to face and live with. Nobody can give guarantees and the price of getting targeted can be detrimental both physically and psychologically. The manufactured uncertainty – the big 'what if' questions - breed insecurity and fear at the back of one's mind in China. It is a very familiar story that characterised the Cultural Revolution. In this sense, I agree with Link (2002) that there may not be a good

solution to it and we are all affected. I do not and should not count on personal courage to produce certain research. Nonetheless, I do hope that there can be a more honest discussion about and among Chinese China scholars' research and dilemmas, just alike our non-Chinese China scholars have done. This may be a highly charged area of discussion, but only through discussions can we know that we are not actually alone; we can understand ourselves and let other people understand us and our research better.

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Appendix

The following are the examples from the *People's Daily* and CCTV news programmes appearing in the chapters in both the original Chinese and in English. I translate the news to the best of my understanding. The excerpts are presented here in the same order as they appear in each chapter in the main thesis.

News Examples in Chapter 4

19671123

When checking against the method of Chairman Mao's historical materialist ideas and class analysis, I found that my view on the proletarian revolutionaries was the same as members of the gentry on peasants during the democratic revolutionary time. Those so-called people who did 'not follow the instructional words' – the majority of them – were the ones resisting slavery during the rule of the counterrevolutionary line, daring to offer advice, daring to hold on to the truth. They were full of revolutionary characters. In the Cultural Revolution, they hold high the red flag of the great thought of Chairman Mao, stand at the frontline of struggle, drag out the small bunch of capitalist roaders within the Party, unearth a large amount of evil evidence of their attempt to resurrect counterrevolution and drag them off the saddle. Their stance is firm and their flag bright. They fear nothing. But I've stood on the opposite side to them and become a stumbling block to the revolution.

用毛主席的历史唯物主义的观点和阶级分析的方法来对照，我发觉我对无产阶级革命派的看法，就同民主革命时期绅士们对农民的看法一样。所谓"不听话"的人，大部分就是在反动路线统治时期抵制奴隶主义，敢于提意见、敢于坚持真理、富有革命性的人。在无产阶级文化大革命中，他们高举毛泽东思想的伟大红旗，站在斗争的最前线，把党内一小撮走资本主义道路的当权派揪出来了，挖出了他们妄图进行反革命复辟的大量罪恶事实，把他们拉下了马。他们立场坚定，旗帜鲜明，无所畏惧。而我却站在他们的对立面，成了革命的绊脚石。

19690906

We All Should Continue the Revolution!

我们都应该继续革命啊！

19690906

The root of my [Comrade Zhang’s] mistake is the failure to closely follow Chairman Mao’s words. You [the young worker] were born to a new society and grew up under the red flag, and you should think about why your father did not have enough food or warm clothes when he was forced to do physical labour for the landlord in the old society. Why was your father beaten almost to death when he was captured and sent to do hard labour by the Japanese devils? Chairman Mao led us to overturn the backwardness, and only until then did we start to have today’s life. If you do not study or work hard, how can you claim that you have followed the words of Chairman Mao, the respectable old man?

我犯错误的根本原因是没有老老实实地听毛主席的话，忘了本，忘了革命。你生在新社会，长在红旗下，应该想一想你父亲在旧社会里被迫给地主扛活时吃不饱、穿不暖是因为什么？你父亲被日本鬼子抓去当劳工被打得死去活来又是因为什么？毛主席领导我们翻了身，才有了今天。你不好好学习，不好好劳动，能说你听毛主席他老人家的话了吗？

19671123

They were ‘the *most* understanding and reasonable’ group of people who followed Mao’s guidance ‘the *closest’*, and ‘drew the *clearest* demarcation between who to love and hate’

革命群众是最能按毛主席的指示办事，爱憎最分明，最通情达理。

19671123

Shedding the ugly mantle of pretentiousness and becoming a willing pupil.

放下臭架子甘当小学生。

19671123

Be honest with the masses;

Together with the revolutionary masses, firmly expose and criticise the Chinese Khrushchev and his agents in Guizhou;

Responsibility must not be pushed down in order to avoid the situation of the masses criticising the masses'

对群众要讲真心话，要坚决地同广大革命群众一道揭发、批判中国赫鲁晓夫及其在贵州代理人的罪恶，责任绝不能往下推，避免引起群众斗群众。

19680613

Eliminate Selfishness and Build up Devotion to the Public Interest; Following Chairman Mao to Make Revolution Forever.

破私立公，永远跟着毛主席干革命。

19670412

To become a true leading revolutionary cadre, one must first and foremost revolutionise one's mind and remove the character si.

要做一个真正的革命领导干部，就必须首先有勇气革自己头脑中"私"字的命。

19671123

From now on, I will surely study laosanpian [three of Mao's famous writings] hard, further fight against the character si, and establish Mao Zedong Thought as an absolute authority. I will devote my whole life to the revolution and achieve new things for the people and the revolution.

我今后一定努力学习"老三篇"，进一步狠斗"私"字，在思想上树立毛泽东思想的绝对权威，干一辈子革命，为人民、为革命立新功。

19680613

All evil comes out of the character "si"; all mistakes come out of the character "me".

万恶全从"私"字起，千错都由"我"字生。

19680613

Although I have corrected the attitude toward the criticism from the masses and come out to work, I haven't removed the root of the character si.

我虽然端正了对待群众批评的态度，站出来工作了，但是并没有把"私"字的根拔掉。

19680613

Character si is very stubborn, just like class enemies who do not easily give way.

"私"字是很顽固的，它和阶级敌人一样不会轻易退走。

19671123

It is precisely due to this character si that led me to deviate from Chairman Mao's revolutionary path and turn away from the revolutionary masses in the campaign. I have thoroughly realised that: character si is the soil where revisionism stems and grows and the deciding factor for my mistakes. If one can't struggle against and overcome the character si, one can make mistakes anytime and anywhere when carrying out work. The 'resentful feeling' in one's mind is a derivative of the character si, which is the 'bacteria' causing me to continue carrying out the wrong line.

就是这个"私"字，在运动中使我背离了毛主席的革命路线，背离了革命群众。我深刻地认识到："私"字是产生和滋长修正主义的土壤，是我犯错误的决定因素。如果不斗倒"私"字，不管在何时何地，在执行任何任务中都是会

犯错误的。思想上的“怨气”是“私”字的派生物，它是使自己继续执行错误路线的“病菌”。

19671123

If the revolutionary proletariats do not command the ‘absolute power’, do not have the invincible passion, or do not take ‘an act of violence’, it is impossible to carry out a big fight and killing against the Chinese Khrushchev and his agents in Guizhou, impossible to drag out and expose the vermin, and also impossible to strike them down. (Yu)

如果无产阶级革命派没有“绝对权力”，没有压倒一切的气魄，不采取“暴烈的行动”，就不可能向中国的赫鲁晓夫及其在贵州的代理人进行一场大搏斗、大厮杀，就不可能把这伙害人虫揪出来，也不可能把他们打倒。

19690601

Now he has realised that due to a lack of mental preparation for socialist revolution in the past, he deviated from Chairman Mao’s proletarian revolutionary path and was dragged by Liu Shaoqi’s counterrevolutionary revisionist path to an evil route of capitalist restoration. He passionately states that ‘the more the masses criticise me, the more I abhor the renegade, traitor, scab Liu Shaoqi and the more I love the great leader Chairman Mao! It was Liu Shaoqi who brought me harm and it was Chairman Mao who saved me! When the masses criticise me, they are pulling me towards the right path. I will stand on the same side as the masses, thoroughly criticising my own mistakes by using Mao Zedong Thought and criticising the counterrevolutionary crimes committed by the great renegade Liu Shaoqi and his agents.

现在他认识到，自己过去由于对社会主义革命缺乏精神准备，背离了毛主席的无产阶级革命路线，被大叛徒刘少奇的反革命修正主义路线拉上了一条复辟资本主义的邪路！他激动地说：“群众越是批我，我越是痛恨叛徒、内奸、工贼刘少奇，我越是热爱伟大领袖毛主席！害我的是刘少奇，救我的是毛主席！群众批我一次，就是往正路上拉我一次。我要跟广大群众站在一个

立场上，用伟大的毛泽东思想彻底批判我自己的错误，彻底批判大叛徒刘少奇及其代理人的反革命罪行！

19670328

I noticed that the self-criticism of a bunch of cadres in power who had taken the capitalist road within the province had covered up the truth regarding the issue in Qingdao. They deceived Chairman Mao and the Party central committee. I felt that I would have let Chairman Mao and the Party committee down if I hadn't reported the situation to Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee. Thus, I exposed their issue to the Party Central Committee.

看到省委内一小撮走资本主义道路当权派的检讨中继续掩盖了青岛问题的真相，欺骗了毛主席，欺骗了党中央。我感到这样下去，不向毛主席和党中央反映情况，对不起毛主席、对不起党。于是，我向党中央揭露了他们的问题。

19690601

The great leader Chairman Mao teaches: 'For those good people who made mistakes, (we) need to educate them. When their ideological consciousness awakes, (we) liberate them immediately'. Workers in the capital and the PLA Mao Zedong Thought Communication Team in Tsinghua University recalled and summarised the experience and situation of implementing Chairman Mao's cadre…

伟大领袖毛主席教导我们："对犯错误的好人，要多做教育工作，在他们有了觉悟的时候，及时解放他们。"首都工人、解放军驻清华大学毛泽东思想宣传队最近在贯彻党的"九大"精神，落实党的政策的活动中，回顾和总结了贯彻执行毛主席干部政策的情况和经验，推动了全校解放干部工作的进一步开展。

19670328

Long live the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat! Long live the invincible Mao Zedong Thought! Long, long live our great teacher, great leader, great commander and great helmsman Chairman Mao! - Li Yuanrong

无产阶级文化大革命万岁！无产阶级专政万岁！伟大的中国共产党万岁！伟大的战无不胜的毛泽东思想万岁！我们的伟大导师、伟大领袖、伟大统帅、伟大舵手毛主席万岁！万岁！万万岁！——李元荣

19390916

'We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports'.

凡是敌人反对的，我们就要拥护；凡是的人拥护的，我们就要反对。——《和中央社、扫荡报、新民报三记者的谈话》1939 年 9 月 16 日

"Interview with Three Correspondents from the Central News Agency, the Sao Tang Pao and the Hsin Min Pao" (September 16, 1939), Selected Works, Vol. II, pp. 272. OR Quotations, pp15.

19690906

Old Comrade Zhang grabbed his [the slacking young man's] hand and said: 'You must follow Chairman's orders. As long as you correct your mistakes, it will be fine. You need to get a copy of the document from the 9th Party's Congress and study it by heart, trying your best to be Chairman Mao's good worker.

老张一把抓住他的手说："要听毛主席的话，有错改了就好。你把'九大'文献拿去好好学习，努力做毛主席的好工人。

19680613

Having said so and judging from his [the young worker's] facial expression, I [Comrade Zhang] found that he was contemplating what I had said, thus I continued: 'Think about it – why were we oppressed and forced to beg and run away from famine? It was precisely because we the poor had no barrel of gun or

control of rubber-stamps. Now Chairman Mao saved us from a sea of bitterness and let us take control of the rubber-stamp. However, you are making a scene - abandoning the barrel of a gun and being unwilling to make a revolution. This is a critical issue concerning whether you are loyal to Chairman Mao or not…

说到这里，从他的表情上看，和他的思想接茬了，我就接着说："你想一想，咱俩在旧社会为什么一块逃荒要饭受压迫？就是因为咱穷人没有枪杆子，没有掌握政权。如今毛主席从苦海里把咱救出来，让咱掌握印把子，可是你现在闹着不要枪杆子啦，不愿继续干革命啦。这是忠不忠于毛主席的大问题……

19670328

Judging from recent work, I reaffirm my understanding that one must read Chairman Mao's books, that it is unacceptable for one not to read his works and that one shouldn't forget Chairman Mao's books even for a single second.

从这一段的工作看，更是我进一步认识到，毛主席的书非读不可，不读不行，一时一刻也不能忘记都毛主席的书。

19670328

The old society abused my whole family so much that we barely survived. It was the Party and Chairman Mao who saved me.

旧社会害得我全家没有办法活下去。是党和毛主席救了我。

19690601

Capital Worker-PLA Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team summarising and implementing the experience of the cadre policy; firmly implementing Chairman Mao's proletarian policy; liberating the good people who had made mistakes but now realised the mistakes and were ready to change.

首都工人、解放军驻清华大学宣传队总结落实干部政策的经验 坚决地落实毛主席的无产阶级政策 及时解放犯错误而有了觉悟的好人'

Yang, 2016: 735

One needs to measure the application of the policy, otherwise, people jump off the building one after another, which is unsustainable. It doesn't solve problems either. You [East China Normal University] target so many people at once, they are going to make complaints against you. Keep students in control. Don't target too many at once.

要掌握好党的政策，不然的话，一个个跳楼，这是不行的，不能解决问题，你们（华东）师（范）大（学）一下子搞了这么多，人家要告你的状来了。学生要处理好，不要打击面过广。” (杨继绳，2016, p735)

Examples of the New Clips and the Documentary in Chapter 5

I believe, what I did was (*shi*) something that broke the law, endangered the national interested. What I… I did was very wrong (*de*), I…I…I…I sincerely learnt this lesson, and, erm… must plead guilty to the crime.

我认为，我做的是触及法律的事，危害了国家的利益，我、我这一点是做的非常错误的，我、我、我、我是诚心诚意地呃接受教训，而且，呃，要认罪。

…in truth, Peter is an agent of the oversea anti-China force inside our country. He made use of livelihood-related issues such as land expropriation and demolition, in order to deceive the masses and lure them to act against the government to fight for their own interests. He intended to use civilian agents like me to gather the public opinion of our country and negative news about local government, and then pass it abroad. The material will be used by the anti-China force abroad to attack the human rights issue of our country and damage the good international reputation of our nation. This further facilitates the foreign anti-China force's plot of attacking the economy and politics of our country.

彼得实际上是境外反华势力，在我们国内的一个代言人。他从民生领域的征地拆迁下手，蛊惑和蒙蔽群众，对抗政府，争夺利益。他就是要利用，像我

这样的公民代理人，来达到收集我们国家的社情民意，搜集一些基层政府的负面信息，传递到国外，来用于境外反华势力，攻击我国的人权状况，和抹黑我们国家在国际上的良好声誉。进而迎合境外反华势力在经济上、政治上对我们国家进行攻击的图谋。

…After leaving the country, I had hoped that my mental pressure would have been alleviated. However, the pressure wasn't reduced. In fact, it became worse, as my mounting feeling of guilt and shame grew day by day. On the one hand, I… ran away from my responsibility, which…further hurt the feelings of the victim's family. On the other hand, I illegally left China. Not only did I escape my original punishment, but also break the Chinese law again… that was one more crime… and so… a sense of guilt and shame… made me suffer long-term mental unrest.

出国以后，我本来以为我的心理压力呢能够缓解，但是呢，事实上不仅没有缓解，反而更加加重了。因为我的这个负罪感和愧疚感呢是与日俱增。因为一方面来说，我......逃避责任，对于，受害者的家属是进一步的心理上的打击。另外一方面，我偷渡出境，不仅没有接受原来的处罚，又进一步触犯了中国的法律......那也是罪上加罪......那这样呢，一种负罪感和愧疚感呢，使我受到了长期的心理的折磨。

…However, I was a criminal at large, so I couldn't go back to China and visit my… my parents were in their eighties (swallowing hard twice). In 2015, my dad died of cancer (sobbing). I couldn't attend the funeral (crying). After this, my mother fell gravely ill, so (swallowing)… I missed her day and night. I wanted to (crying)… see her once more while she was alive (crying)… Therefore, I must go back to the country and hand in myself. I will shoulder my own responsibility. I…am also willing to receive… any punishments (Oriental Horizon, 2016).

但是我是一个逃犯，我不能回国不能回去看我的，父母他们已经八十多岁了。（吞口水两次 2......）2015 年，我爸爸，得癌症，去世了（哽咽）。我也不能回去奔丧。（抽泣）事情以后，我妈妈有得重病，所以（吞口水）......我是日夜思念我想要在她......(哭)有生的时候再能够看到她一面......

（抽泣）所以我要回国自首，我要承担我自己的责任，我......也愿意接受......任何处罚。

I believe, what I did was (shi) something broke the law, endangered the national interested. What I… I did was very wrong (de), I…I…I…I sincerely learnt this lesson, and, erm… must plead guilty of the crime (Morning News, 2014).

我认为，我做的是触及法律的事，危害了国家的利益，我、我这一点是做的非常错误的，我、我、我、我是诚心诚意地呃接受教训，而且，呃，要认罪。

A full list of the introduction of the confessing cadres featured in the documentary:

Bai Enpei: Bai Enpei is the son of a poor peasant family. As young as 39, he became Yan'an Prefectural Party Committee secretary with the cultivation from the Party and excellent work.

Li Chuncheng: Because I…actually… since my teenage years, I had hoped to join the Party and work under the leadership of the Party.

Zhang Jianjin: Tianjin Medical Company Group is a big state-owned enterprise. Zhang Jianjin is very capable at work. During the decade in which he was in the position of main leadership, the corporation developed from being on the edge of bankruptcy to a giant in the industry with over 30 billion turnovers.

Yang Weize: He became the youngest cadre at the age of 36. At 44, he became the youngest member of the provincial standing committee. He was in the important positions, such as vice-secretary of Suzhou City Party Committee and secretary of Wuxi City Party Committee secretary.

Nie Chunyu: Before he took up the job in Luliang, Nie Chunyu had been doing research work in Shanxi Party Policy Research Office over two decades. He was pretty famous for his theoretical knowledge in Shanxi.

Lü Xiwen: In Xicheng District, she used to live a modest life, diligent and well-motivated. However, as her position raised, her lifestyle and ambition gradually changed.

Tan Xiwei: Tan Xiwei's hometown Shizhu County is in a poor mountainous area. He began his career as a commune clerk at the local level and became head of the county at 31. Local people spoke of him as hard-working, pragmatic and capable….

Deng Qilin: During the forty-year work in Wuhan Iron and Steel Corporation, Deng grew from a technician at the bottom to the leader of this big state-own company. Deng was a workaholic in the early days. His skills and professional dedication attracted much praise.

Ep.1

With the gradual promotion and the influence of the environment, I became increasingly more self-centred. Especially after 2005 when I hit sixty years old, I fell seriously ill. My thought work 'dropped anchor' so I started to pursue the monetary and the material.

慢慢随着职务的提升，再加上环境的影响，考虑自己的就越来越多对了。尤其是 05 年以后，自己也是 60 岁了，生了一场大病。这个时候思想就抛锚了，就追求物质的金钱

Ep.4

Comparing with the past, I indeed have relaxed, quite a bit, the self-discipline in recent years. Psychologically, I feel that I've been a cadre for a long time. The thought that the life of a cadre (should be) better than that of the ordinary people led me to crimes. I also feel really ashamed that having been a Party member for over thirty years and leading cadre for over twenty years, in the end, I fell into this situation.

和我过去比，确实这几年放松了，而且放松得很厉害。心理上觉得当干部时间长了，当干部要比老百姓生活要好一点，以至于形成了犯罪。自己也觉得很内疚，三十多年党龄，领导干部当了二十几年最后走到这一步。

Ep.1

I am corrupt, but I very much hope that the central Party can increase the anti-corruption force. Since the 18th Party Congress, the central has adopted a series of actions, such as seeing Party self-governance exercised with rigour, to tackle corruption. This is the Party's hope. Only by doing this can our Party shoulder the historical responsibility.

我自己腐败了，但是我非常期盼，中央能够加大反腐败的力度。十八大以后中央采取从严治党的一系列措施，这个严肃查处腐败，这就是党的希望，只有这样子我们党才能承担起历史责任。

Ep.1

China has always been a society of etiquette and favour. For example, if everyone gets together, the ties and relationship cannot be expressed without eating and drinking together. Why did the Central stipulate the 'Eight-point Regulation'? What benefit can it bring to the working style of the whole Party? What importance does it carry? (I) didn't make an effort to understand it thoroughly and didn't pay real attention to it in my mind. So (I) have problems now.

中国历来就是个人情社会，好像大家见个面，不吃个饭不喝两杯就总觉难以表达那种感情。中央为什么出台八项规定？它对全党改进作风有什么好处？有什么重大意义？没有深刻去理解，脑子里没有真的重视起来。所以出现这个问题。

Ep4

I not only destroyed myself but also entrapped my wife and harmed son, leading the whole family into the abyss of financial crimes. Had they not been the wife or the son of a Party secretary, or had I not been provincial Party Secretary, they could've done nothing. And there would have been no such problems now.

不仅毁掉了我自己，也坑了老婆害了儿子，将全家带上经济犯罪的深渊。他们如果不是书记的老婆、书记的儿子，没有我这个省委书记，什么都干不成，不会出现这些问题。

Ep.8

In the eyes of other people, Tan seems to be a filial son. Before being investigated by the Party, he sensed that the situation would be bad and that he might not be able to see his mother again. He went back to his hometown, kneeled down in front of his mother and admitted his big mistakes and letting his parents down. Hearing his confession, she slapped him. Then they huddled together and cried.

在周围人的眼里，谭栖伟似乎是个孝顺的儿子。在被组织调查前，他预感情况不妙担心再也见不到老母亲，专门回了趟老家，跪在母亲面前承认自己犯下大错，对不起父母。母亲听后打了他一巴掌，然后母子俩抱头痛哭。

Ep.1

Just to deal with merely these things, we spent altogether around a dozen days. Like emerald bracelets…we use this - a string - to tie them (the bracelets) altogether. Grab them like this. This gives you an idea of the scope (of their corruption).

我们光清理这些东西呢，前前后后大概十几天的时间。像这种这个裴翠手镯，都用这个，用一个绳子一系，系起来，这一串手镯就这么一提溜，就这种概念。

Ep.2

The pair of us had quite a bad influence. The two of us had dinner parties every day, of course, the location is secretive right? Actually, (we) had realised it, but still left it to chance – no worries, you may not be able to catch me.

我俩影响挺坏，俺俩天天有局，还整个秘密地点是不是。其实已经意识到这个了，但是有种侥幸心理--没事儿，你不一定能抓到我。

Ep.1

The will of the people (what people's hearts are for and against) is very important. Once it is lost, it is very hard to win it back; there may not even be chances to do

so. The CCP won the right to rule China and it must be the choice of history and the people. It makes good sense. However, this choice doesn't solve all the problems once and for all. Today, realising the China Dream and making people's lives better are our more important tasks and responsibilities. Not only getting economically more affluent, but the incorruptibility of our Party and government is, I believe, what is very important to laobaixin (ordinary people). Only by ensuring the Party's fine conducts can corruption be prevented and reduced or make laobaixin believe the advanced nature of the Party members.

人心向背是非常重要的，人心如果失去了之后，再想来挽回是很难的，甚至没有机会的。中国共产党为什么赢得执政地位，肯定是历史的选择、人民的选择，这个道理很清楚。但是，不是一次选择一劳永逸了。那么在今天我们更重要的职责是实现中国梦，是让人民生活过得越来越好。不光经济上越来越富足，我们党和政府的干部要廉洁，我想老百姓也是看得很重的。抓好我们的党风，才可能预防减少腐败的发生，也才能真的让老百姓相信你是先进的。

Ep.2

The first step of my life was at our Liangjiahe. I stayed for as long as seven years, from 1969 to 1975. However, when I left the village, my body left but my heart remained here (applause). At the time I said, if opportunity allowed in the future, I would go into politics and do a job that brought benefits to the people (applause).

人生啊，我的第一步迈出来，就是到咱们梁家河。来这里一下子就呆了七年，1969 年到 1975 年。但是呢，我走的时候，我的人走了，但是我把我的心留在这里。从那个时候我就说，今后如果有条件有机会，我要从政，做一些为老百姓办好事的工作

Ep.6

Corruption is something we very much detest. It is very good that the nation is making a big effort to fight against corruption now. We are very happy to see the country fighting against corruption.

腐败是我们非常反感的事情，现在国家大力进行反腐败是非常好的，看到国家反腐败，我们感到非常高兴。

Gao Yu:

Regarding this thing, my opinion is that it is not right. The current policy is to eliminate these things, and it works very well. We are very happy after the introduction of this policy.

对于这种事情我的看法是认为不对的，现在的政策是扫除这些事情而且做的很好，在这个政策建立之后我们感到非常开心。

Ep.3

For many people, the scariest thing is being named (laughing). This is because many of our cadres, especially our Party cadres, care a great deal about their 'face' (laughing). If you are named and shamed in public, some of you feel like as if your face is ripped off in public and you have nowhere to hide. By using this method of naming, the purpose is, on the one hand, to teach the person a good lesson; on the other hand, and more importantly, to teach the masses and the cadres around them a good lesson. It is to educate more Party cadres in order to ensure them to be cautious.

实很多人来说呀，他最怕的是被曝光（乐呵呵）。因为我们很多干部，特别党员领导干部还是很要面子的（笑笑笑），你被点名道姓地公开曝光了，那有人感觉是自己脸皮被当众扒下来了，会感到无地自容。通过这种曝光的形式，一个方面是深刻教育本人，更多的是深刻教育周边更多的群众和更多的干部，是教育更多的党员干部，使他们呢通过这个来引以为戒。