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More stick than carrot? Xi's policy towards establishment intellectuals

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Relations between authoritarian governments and intellectuals are more complicated than relations between the government and general public. As information providers and opinion leaders on the one hand, intellectuals play an important role in promoting freedom of speech and challenging authoritarian social control. On the other hand, intellectuals may be recruited by authoritarian leaders as a mouthpiece for official policies and as providers of policy suggestions. Hence authoritarian governments are motivated both to repress and to co-opt intellectuals.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has tightened social and ideological control since his rise to power and subsequent centralisation of power in the Communist Party of China (CPC).[2] Xi announced that the Chinese media must serve the party in February 2016 (Xinhua, 2016). The publisher

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2 Zhao noted that 'Xi is trying to revive Communism as an official ideology' and his explanation for this is 'Communism's demise amid the reforms' (Zhao, 2016, p. 83).

and top editors of the liberal Chinese journal *Yanhuang Chunqiu* (炎黄春秋) were either dismissed or demoted in July of the same year. The liberal-leaning site Gongshi Wang (共识网, Consensus Net) was shut down that October after accusations of disseminating incorrect thinking. The upgrading of China's internet surveillance and the introduction of its 'social credit system' have been considered to be part of a series of comprehensive policies aiming at strengthening social control.[3] The same trend has also been reflected in the strengthening of ideological control over university education and establishment intellectuals.[4] Why then has the Xi administration decided to strengthen control over establishment intellectuals at this particular juncture?

This chapter observes the changes in China's political and social control under Xi Jinping from the Chinese government's policy towards establishment intellectuals, university teachers in particular. This chapter asks why and when an authoritarian state chooses to strengthen control over intellectuals. It focuses on the CPC's policy towards establishment intellectuals under Xi and explores the most applicable explanation for this policy shift.

This chapter consists of three sections: the first focuses on the CPC's existing social control system over institutions of higher education to observe how it has been able to control establishment intellectuals—university teachers in this case—and what institutional and policy changes have occurred under Xi. The second section investigates the methods of repression and co-optation that the CPC has employed towards establishment intellectuals during this period. The third section reviews previous research on the cyclical model of state–intellectual relations and proposes a new model of 'dual methods in state–intellectual relations' to explain shifting state–intellectual relations in China.

3 The 'social credit system' is a national reputation system developed by the Chinese government. The system was fully implemented in 2020 and manages the rewarding and punishment of citizens on the basis of their economic and personal behaviour. The social credit system has been described as the concretisation of the mass surveillance system depicted in *1984*, George Orwell's work of dystopian fiction.

4 Scholars have adopted the term 'establishment intellectuals' to distinguish intellectuals in the PRC from their Western counterparts, who are understood to be independent of state or commercial interests. Cheek and Hamrin (1986) defined establishment intellectuals as leading figures who were both high-level intellectuals and high-level party cadres. Scholars have continued to adopt this term, as Cheek (2015a) indicates, to reflect 'the focus on government service or at least working with the government that has characterised public activities of China's writers and thinkers into the 21st century'.

A system of social control over university education

It is true that the professionalisation, pluralisation and liberalisation of China's economy since the 1990s has allowed intellectuals to pursue careers in other industries and suffer less direct CPC control. Establishment intellectuals who work in universities, however, are still subject to CPC control from branches of the party stationed on campus and certain changes in state policy.

Chinese universities are managed very differently from those in Western countries. The basic principle of higher education is to emphasise 'a socialist higher education development with Chinese characteristics under the leadership of the Party committee' (Xu & Zhu, 2019, p. 39). The main management system in Chinese universities is the Presidential Accountability System under the leadership of the University Committee of the Communist Party (UCCP) with the UCCP playing a leading role in decision-making (Bao, 2010, p. 61, figure 1).

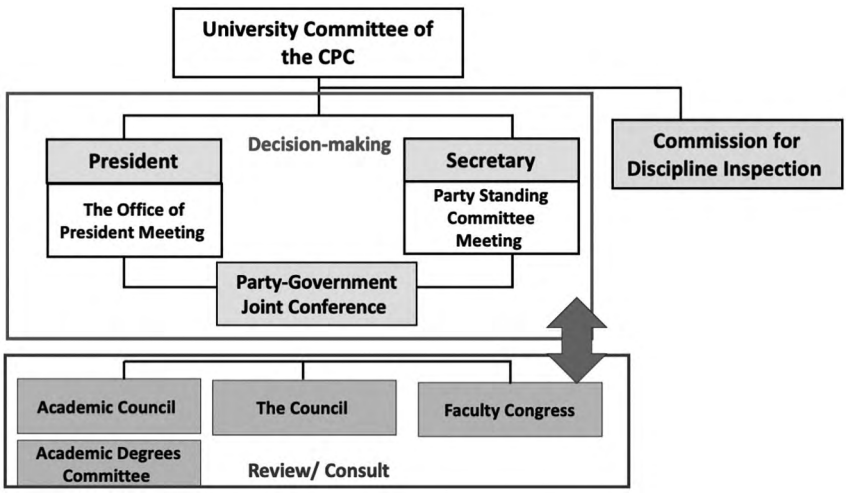

Figure 5.1: The system of decision-making in public Chinese universities
Source: Translated by the author from Bao (2010, p. 61).

Of course, the UCCP both determines and influences the management of university professors and administrators, including their recruitment, punishment and dismissal. Chinese economist Xia Yeliang (夏业良), for instance, was dismissed by the School of Economics at Peking University (PKU) in October 2013, and it was widely suspected that his dismissal had been politically motivated. University officials denied the charges and claimed that the decision was based entirely on Professor Xia's poor teaching evaluations. However, an email from Communist Party Secretary Zhang Zheng (章政) at the PKU School of Economics in August 2013 was sent to Xia warning him to withdraw his name from the petition in support of detained New Citizens' Movement activist Xu Zhiyong (许志永) and to write a written explanation for this matter. It did not include any mention of his teaching or scholarship. Although Zhang did not explicitly link Xia's signing of the petition to the faculty vote on his appointment, he did conclude the message by reminding him of the pending decision. Two months later, the faculty voted to dismiss Xia.[5] Another case also demonstrates the power of party officials on campus. Stephen Morgan had served as associate provost on the engineering faculty at the Ningbo branch of the University of Nottingham since 2016. Communist party officials at the school requested Professor Morgan's removal from the management board, saying an essay he had posted online that was critical of the 19th Party Congress had embarrassed the university (Feng, 2018a).

Although university presidents do share in school leadership to some degree, it should not be surprising that even the appointment and dismissal of university presidents is determined by the CPC. For example, the State Council and Central Committee of the CPC have the authority to appoint and dismiss university presidents under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (MoE) or other central ministries. The local government and CPC committees have the authority to appoint and dismiss university presidents under the supervision of provinces, autonomous regions and directly controlled municipalities (Bao, 2010, p. 50, table 2.5). Therefore it is highly likely that presidents carry out their responsibilities under the direction of the party committees.

5 The *Chronicle of Higher Education* obtained this email and published their correspondence (Fischer, 2014).

Overall, the leadership of the UCCP has demonstrated that 'in this structure, the political and ideological system of the Communist Party is integrated with the administrative and management structures at each level of the university' (Liu, 2017, p. 273).[6] In addition, informal pressures applied by party officials within universities (e.g. party 'loyalty checks') have also significantly dominated the decision process there (Hu & Mols, 2019, pp. 718–19). Accordingly, the CPC has been able effectively to extend its control over both institutions of higher education and establishment intellectuals.

Strengthening ideological control over the education system under Xi

Since Xi assumed office in 2012, Beijing has tightened its ideological grip over higher education. This section provides a brief description of institutional and policy shifts in the educational system under Xi.

Institutional changes and an emphasis on the leadership of the party

Since assuming the leadership of the CPC, Xi has emphasised strengthening party leadership and party construction in the education sphere. The CPC Central Committee issued a *Decision on Deepening the Reform of the Party and State Institutions* in March 2018, which included a decision to establish a new Central Leading Small Group for Education Work (中央教育工作领导小组, *zhongyang jiaoyu gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*) (LSGEW). The duties of the LSGEW include designing policies in education to strengthen party leadership over thought and ideological work; monitoring the national development strategy, medium- and long-term plans, principal policies and reform programs; and finally, coordinating and solving major problems. The LSGEW secretariat has been integrated with the MoE (Xinhua, 2018), indicating that the CPC has upgraded the priority of education work.

6 Liang (2017) reviews the rise and decline of the C9 as an advocacy group for China's elite universities and demonstrates the rigid regulatory environment of the university sector.

To strengthen party leadership, the General Office of the CPC Central Committee issued a document in October 2014 entitled *Implementation of Views on Sustaining and Improving the Presidential Responsibility System under the Leadership of the CPC at Universities*. The document defines the UCCP as the core of the university leadership system and clearly delineates its responsibilities:

> To carry out the policies of the CPC; to make decisions on the fundamental management system, important matters relating to reforms, teaching, research, human resources and other affairs that directly affect the interests of the staff; to lead the work of ideological, political and moral education; to strengthen the construction of the UCCP at a faculty level; to lead the discipline inspection within the Party, the Trade Union, the CYLO, Student Union and other mass organisations. (Zhonggong Zhongyang Bangongting, 2014)

In addition, the CPC Central Committee issued a revised *Chinese Communist Party Regulations on Basic Level Organisation Work in Ordinary Institutions of Higher Education* on 22 April 2021. The notice requires that party committees of all levels should put party-building in colleges and universities in a prominent position while upholding and strengthening the party's overall leadership over colleges and universities (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Guofangbu, 2021).

Even joint ventures have not been excepted from the strengthening of party-building in universities. The MoE issued a directive from the CPC Organisation Department in October 2017 requiring that party secretaries in each education joint venture between Chinese and overseas universities be given vice-chancellor status and a seat on the board of trustees (Feng, 2017).[7] The Organisation Department oversees appointments to top party and government posts. It also issued a directive in 2018 mandating that foreign institutions include a clause that supports the establishment of internal Communist Party committees in any application to set up a joint venture university (Feng, 2018b). These are signs that the CPC has ordered foreign-funded universities to instal party units and grant decision-making powers to party officials.

7 Although joint venture administrators say the rules have not yet been formally implemented after they resisted, most joint venture branch campuses have in practice operated since their founding with a party secretary from their partnering Chinese university on their management boards (Feng, 2018a).

Policies related to ideological control over university education

These policies have also demonstrated that the CPC has not only overseen a drastic political tightening over Chinese schools but has also strengthened its ideological control over teachers and students on campus.

Beijing's policy of strengthening ideological control began in 2013. In April of that year, the General Office of the CPC's Central Committee issued *The Briefing on the Current Situation in the Ideological Realm*, also known as Document No. 9. According to the version released by *Mingjing Monthly* (明镜月刊), it specifically addresses seven issues that were seen as problems and needed to be eliminated. These included the promotion of Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society, neoliberalism, the West's idea of journalism and historical nihilism as well as questioning the reform and opening and the socialist nature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The document was confidentially circulated to CPC cadres throughout China, and these seven topics were banned within universities. It was therefore also referred to as the 'seven banned subjects' (七不讲, *qi bujiang*). On 4 May, the Organisation Department, the Propaganda Department and the CPC Leading Group of the MoE issued *Opinions with Regard to Strengthening and Improving the Thought and Political Work on Young Teachers at Higher Education Institutions*. It declared, 'Some young professors confused in political and ideology belief have found their professional sentiments and ethics degraded, thus, they can't serve as a model of virtue' and stressed that the relative authorities at various levels must strengthen management and control (Quanguo Gaoxiao Sixiang Zhengzhi Gongzuo Wang, 2013).

During the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference held on 19 August 2013, Xi Jinping stated that 'ideological work is extremely important work for the Party', cautioning against weak ideological work by saying: '*The disintegration of a regime often starts from the ideological area* [emphasis added], political unrest and regime change may perhaps occur in a night, but ideological evolution is a long-term process.' On intellectuals, he remarked that 'there has been a tendency for a small number of people to drift away from the Party and the government and there are even a few people harbouring dissent and discord against the Party' (Xinhua, 2013). When Liu Yunshan (刘云山) spoke at the conference, Xi interrupted and

added that 'a small number of reactionary intellectuals spread rumours around, attack and slander the Party's leadership, socialism and the regime. We must strike strictly' (Hai Tao, 2013).

According to the *New York Times*, the CPC issued a directive Document No. 30 in 2014 as a follow-up to Document No. 9. It demanded the cleansing of Western-inspired liberal ideas from universities and other cultural institutions (Buckley & Jacobs, 2015). In October 2014, the Central Committee issued a directive titled *Opinion Concerning the Further Strengthening and Reforming of Propaganda and Ideological Work at Universities under the New Circumstances*, which aimed at forcefully raising the ideological and political quality of teachers in higher education and demanded that universities 'firmly resist infiltration by hostile forces, closely grasp leadership and discourse power in higher education ideology work and work incessantly to consolidate the guiding position of Marxism' (Zhongguo Zhengfu Wang, 2015).[8]

In October 2014, Xi's comment to 'never allow eating the Communist Party's food and then smashing the Communist Party's cooking pots' began to appear on party and university websites in October (Buckley & Jacobs, 2015). During the 23rd National Work Conference on Party-Construction in Higher Education in December 2014, Xi called for better 'ideological guidance' in Chinese institutes of higher education, saying that universities should 'shoulder the burden of learning and researching the dissemination of Marxism' (Xinhua, 2014).

In January 2015, Chinese Education Minister Yuan Guiren (袁贵仁) wrote an article in the elite party journal *Qiushi* (求是, Seeking Truth) in which he indicated that 'young teachers and students are key targets of infiltration by enemy forces' and that 'some countries' fearful of China's rise 'have stepped up infiltration in more discreet and diverse ways'. Hence Yuan called for a ban on textbooks that promote Western values and ordered universities to add classes on Marxism and socialism (Yuan, 2015).

8 This opinion was circulated in October 2014 but made public in January 2015.

The CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the *Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities under the New Situation* on 27 February 2017, emphasising the party's leadership of colleges and universities, strengthening ideological and political work and underscoring the need to improve the ideological and political quality of teachers (Xinhua, 2017c).

To ensure that these policies were executed correctly on campus, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) toured 31 of the best universities across China for a 'political check-up' from 28 February to 27 April 2017 (Xinhua, 2017a). The report accused 14 of ideological weakness for not making the effort to teach and defend Communist Party rule (Denyer, 2017). The CCDI published 'rectification reports' on eight top-tier universities in August, and seven have set up a 'teachers' affairs department' under their Communist Party committees with the aim of improving 'ideological and political work among teaching staff' (Gan, 2017). Tsinghua University did not mention the party department in its report but said that it had set up a leading group on ideological and political work among teachers headed by its party secretary (Zhonggong Zhongyang Jilü Jiancha Weiyuanhui, 2017).

The party further issued the following policy documents aiming at intensifying the implementation of Xi Jinping Thought in universities: *Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of the Ideological and Political Work System in Colleges and Universities*, issued in April 2020 (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu, 2020), *Textbook of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era for Students*, issued in 8 July 2021 (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu, 2021a), *Notice of the National Textbook Committee on Printing and Distributing Guideline to Teaching Materials for the Course of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, issued in 21 July 2021 (Guojia Jiaocai Weiyuanhui, 2021a) and *Notice of the National Textbook Committee on Printing and Distributing the Guidelines for Teaching Materials of 'Party Leadership' Related Content into the Curriculum of Universities, Primary and Secondary Schools*, issued on 26 September 2021 (Guojia Jiaocai Weiyuanhui, 2021b). While the main purpose of these documents is to consolidate Xi's authority, they also reflect the party's strengthening ideological control over all levels of the education system.

The policies above demonstrate Xi's resolve to strengthen ideological control over university education and teachers in keeping with his remarks to the 19th Congress that 'Party, government, army, society and education—east and west, south and north, the party leads on everything' (Xinhua, 2017b).[9] In this context, the following section focuses on the CPC's approaches towards establishment intellectuals, instructors and academics in Chinese universities.

Policies towards intellectuals

As with most authoritarian states, the CPC has extended its control over intellectuals using methods that include both repression and co-optation. This section focuses on the implementation and policy changes of these methods under Xi.

Repression: Demotion or dismissal

Since the CPC began to emphasise ideological control over university teachers in 2013, university authorities have taken retaliatory actions against scholars. These have included investigations, suspensions, terminations and the revocation of credentials. Such consequences act as a warning to other members of the intellectual community to avoid the expression of certain values or inquiries into the current social and political climate.

As table 5.1 demonstrates, university academics suffered retaliation from university authorities for opinions articulated in class or on the internet. Several points can be noted from these cases.

9 This remark was written into the CPC Constitution (Xinhua, 2017d).

Table 5.1: List of dismissed or disciplined professors

Data/year	Professor	University	Punishment	Reason claimed by the university	Suspected reason
Oct 2013	Xia Yeliang (夏业良)	PKU (北京大学)	Dismissal	Inadequate teaching evaluations and substandard research	Co-author of Charter '08 and outspoken liberal scholar
Dec 2013	Zhang Xuezhong (张雪忠)	East China University of Political Science and Law (华东政法大学)	Dismissal	Conduct such as spreading his political ideas to colleagues and students, violation of the moral norms of teachers	Called for constitutionalism; defended members of the New Citizens' Movement; revealed the 'seven banned subjects'
Nov 2015	Liang Xinsheng (梁新生)	Lingnan Normal University (岭南师范学院)	Removed from his post (行政撤职)	Publishing 'radical opinions' on his Weibo account that had been a 'bad social influence'	[Unspecified]
Jan 2017	Deng Xiangchao (邓相超)	Shangdong Jianzhu University (山东建筑大学)	Forced into retirement	'Mistaken comments online'	Posted controversial comments about Mao Zedong online
Jul 2017	Tan Song (谭松)	Chongqing Normal University (重庆师范大学)	Dismissal	'Regular adjustments (正常调整)'	Research into CPC land reforms in the 1950s (challenging official CPC historiography)
Aug 2017	Shi Jiepeng (史杰鹏)	Beijing Normal University (北京师范大学)	Dismissal	'Mistaken comments online which have a negative impact on society'	Called Mao Zedong a 'devil' and the CPC 'bandits' on social media
Aug 2017	Li Mohai (李默海)	Shandong Institute of Industry and Commerce (山东工商学院)	Suspended from his position	'Mistaken comments online which have a negative impact on society'	Criticised government propaganda and patriotic netizens via his Weibo account

Data/year	Professor	University	Punishment	Reason claimed by the university	Suspected reason
Mar 2018	Cheng Ran (成然)	Xiangtan University (湘潭大学)	Demoted and demerited	Reported by students for 'inappropriate speech' in class that had a negative impact	Used information and pictures from foreign media; criticised the CPC and the leader of the nation in class
May 2018	Zhai Juhong (翟桔红)	Zhongnan University of Economics and Law (中南财经政法大学)	Dismissal	Reported by students for 'inappropriate speech' in class that had a negative impact	Criticised the abolition of term limits
May 2018	Xu Chuanqing (许传青)	Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture (北京建筑大学)	Administrative penalties	Reported by students for 'inappropriate speech' in class	Complained that students did not work hard enough and compared them with a Japanese student she had taught
Jun 2018	You Shengdong (尤盛东)	Xiamen University (厦门大学)	Dismissal	Reported by students for 'inappropriate political speech' in class	[Unspecified]
Jul 2018	Wang Gang (王刚)	Hebei Engineering University (河北工程大学)	Dismissal	His discourse violated the moral norms of teachers	Frequently criticised government on WeChat
Jul 2018	Christopher Balding	PKU's HSBC School of Business (北京大学汇丰商学院)	Discontinued appointment	'A normal academic employment decision'	Criticised Chinese censorship and lobbied Cambridge University Press to unblock articles it had censored at Beijing's request
Aug 2018	Yang Shaozheng (杨绍政)	Guizhou University (贵州大学)	Suspended, then dismissed	'Mistaken political comments online'	Published an article estimating the cost of maintaining the CPC's apparatus

Data/year	Professor	University	Punishment	Reason claimed by the university	Suspected reason
Sep 2018	Zhou Yunzhong (周运中)	Xiamen University (厦门大学)	Dismissal	'Mistaken political comments online'	Made inflammatory comments about the Chinese nation and Confucianism online
Sep 2018	Hu Hao (胡浩)	China University of Labour Relations (中国劳动关係学院)	Dismissal	Reposted information about the Hong Kong 'Occupy Central' demonstration on Weibo and 'promoted the idea of the liberalisation of capitalism, the rule of law system and democratisation' in the classroom	As claimed by the university
Oct 2018	Zhao Siyun (赵思运)	Zhejiang Uni. of Media and Communications (浙江传媒学院)	Severe internal party warning	'Inappropriate speech' in a welcoming ceremony, which had a negative impact	Resurrected and defined the concept of the 'public intellectual' in a welcoming ceremony for new students
Mar 2019	Xu Zhangrun (许章润)	Tsinghua University (清华大学)	Suspended his research and teaching credentials	[Unspecified]	Posted an article titled 'Our current fears and expectations' [我们当下的恐惧与期待, Women dangxia de kongju yu qidai] criticising the abolition of term limits and the restoration of a cult of personality
Mar 2019	Tang Yun (唐云)	Chongqing Normal University (重庆师范大学)	Stripped of teaching credentials and demoted	Reported by students for his speech in class, which was deemed by the authorities to be 'injurious to the country's reputation'	[Unspecified]

Data/year	Professor	University	Punishment	Reason claimed by the university	Suspected reason
Aug 2019	Zheng Wenfeng (郑文锋)	University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (电子科技大学)	Suspension from teaching for two years	Reported by students for his 'incorrect' comments on social media, saying 'ancient China did not have substantial innovations'	As claimed by the university
Oct 2019	Cao Jisheng (曹继生)	Shanxi University of Finance and Economics (山西财经大学)	Administrative penalties	His 'inappropriate remarks' in a WeChat group violated the 'Ten Guidelines for Professional Behaviour of College Teachers in the New Era' ('Ten Guidelines')	[Unspecified]
Oct 2019	Liu Yufu (刘玉富)	Chengdu University of Technology (成都理工大学)	Teaching certificate revoked	For his 'inappropriate remarks' on social media and in class	His criticisms in a QQ group about Xi ending term limits
Dec 2019	Li Zhi (李志)	Sichuan University of Science and Engineering (四川轻化工大学)	Administrative penalties	His 'inappropriate speech' violated the Ten Guidelines	[Unspecified]
Feb 2020	Chow Pui Yee (周佩仪) (from Hong Kong)	University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (中国社会科学院大学)	Dismissal (immediate termination)	Students reported her 'inappropriate remarks' on a WeChat group, which violated the Ten Guidelines	Claimed that China's political system caused the mishandling of COVID-19
Jun 2020	Liang Yanping (梁艳萍)	Hubei University (湖北大学)	Stripped of her CPC membership and suspended from teaching	For her 'wrong remarks' about Japan and Hong Kong	Voiced support for Fang Fang, the author of Wuhan Diary

Data/year	Professor	University	Punishment	Reason claimed by the university	Suspected reason
14 Jul 2020	Xu Zhangrun* (许章润)	Tsinghua University (清华大学)	Dismissal	For the accusation of soliciting prostitution and his articles violating the Ten Guidelines	For his article 'Imminent fears, immediate hopes', criticising government's handling of COVID-19 and the rule of the CPC
17 Aug 2020	Cai Xia (蔡霞)	Central Party School (中央党校)	Stripped of her CPC membership and her retirement pension cancelled	'There are serious political problems in her discourses which maliciously smeared the image of the country'	Criticised Xi and the CPC
28 Apr 2021	Li Jian (李剑)	Hunan City University (湖南城市学院)	Suspended from teaching	Reported by students for his 'hasty generalised remarks' about Japan and his conduct that violated teacher ethics	His remark that 'the Japanese strive for excellence' in the classroom

* The media reported that Xu was under house arrest after he published an essay entitled 'Viral alarm: When fury overcomes fear' condemning the Chinese government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak. He was detained on 6 July 2020 for one week for the accusation of soliciting prostitution. Tsinghua University used this accusation as excuse to dismiss him.

Source: Compiled by the author from media reports and information provided by the Twitter account Zhongguo Wenziyu Shijian Pandian (中国文字狱事件盘点) @speechfreedomcn.

First, cases where academics were dismissed or disciplined by university authorities have increased since 2017. Among the 26 cases investigated, two occurred in 2013, one in 2015, four in 2017, nine in 2018, six in 2019 and four in 2020.[10] Around two-thirds of these happened in 2018, and two reasons may explain the difference. First, political changes often provoke discontent among intellectuals. 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era', simply known as Xi Jinping Thought, was affirmed as a guiding political ideology of the CPC in its 19th Congress in October 2017. At its closing session on 24 October, the 19th Party Congress approved the incorporation of Xi Jinping Thought into the Constitution of the CPC. Since then, the CPC has further urged Chinese universities to intensify ideological education with an emphasis on the study of Xi Jinping Thought. On 11 March 2018, the National People's Congress passed a constitutional amendment that lifted term limits on the presidency. Many scholars were concerned about these political changes, and some of them expressed their grievances and worries about the change. Hence the leadership of the CPC and Xi Jinping faced more criticism in 2018. Moreover, in October 2017, the head of the Propaganda Department was changed from Liu Qibao (刘奇葆) to Huang Kunming (黄坤明), an official considered to be a close associate of Xi.[11] While Liu Qibao was still in office, inspectors from the disciplinary commission had issued a report on 9 June 2016 that publicly berated the Propaganda Department for not taking firm enough control of the internet, the media, the arts and the nation's universities. It is reasonable that the Propaganda Department began to strengthen ideological control over universities after Huang Kunming assumed its leadership.

Second, professors were dismissed or disciplined in seven cases because their students had reported them to university authorities. This relates to surveillance and monitoring methods on campus. Methods include closed-circuit television (CCTV) and student informants. Some universities have installed CCTV systems in lecture halls and other facilities, claiming that they would be used as tools to improve teaching, learning and student behaviour. Scholars, however, expressed concerns about the system being used to restrict their lectures and classroom discussions (Scholars at Risk [SAR], 2019, p. 26). CPC officials in universities and state security bureaus have used student informants to monitor and report scholars and students

10 Refer also to 'Table of Incidents' in the appendix in *Scholars at Risk* (2019).

11 Huang had worked with Xi in Fujian province where Xi served as governor. When Xi was appointed party committee secretary in Zhejiang, Huang moved there as well. When Xi rose to become party leader, Huang was again transferred from Zhejiang to the party centre as deputy head of the Central Propaganda Department.

who cross the line (SAR, 2019, p. 26). According to a *Global Times* report, Shandong Normal University employs one student as a student information officer for each major, and these student information officers monitor education quality and collect the opinions of students about their teachers. Student information officers who do their jobs well are given material and spiritual encouragement (Zhang, 2018). Student information officers might also have the prospect of a future in politics (Ng & Sing, 2018). Student informants are recruited in various ways. For example, at Wuhan University of Science and Technology, officials recruit student informants on the basis of their academic performance and ideology while officials at Dezhou University in Shandong province work with the Domestic Security Department to recruit and train student informants (Xi et al., 2019; Xiao, 2010). It is clear that throughout China, the lectures of university teachers have been under strict surveillance and monitoring.

Third, professors were dismissed or disciplined in nine cases because they supported social movements, advocated liberal ideas or criticised the CPC or Mao Zedong on social networks such as Weibo and WeChat. Although some of them did not use their real names, it has been easy to track their identities through the introduction of the Real-Name System (实名制, *shimingzhi*). In addition, the Chinese government has increased its capabilities for internet surveillance in order to heavily restrict and monitor internet activity. Authorities have not only employed staff at Chinese social media and internet companies but have also made use of advanced technology systematically to monitor popular social media platforms and blogging sites and review content across China's web space (PEN America, 2018, pp. 33–4; SAR, 2019, p. 26). Professors in these cases were mostly reported by overzealous netizens or staff employed by the authorities. Some Weibo accounts of prominent government critics were closed. For example, the public WeChat and Sina Weibo accounts of PKU law professor He Weifang (贺卫方) were blocked, and he was banned from applying for new ones. He announced in May 2017 that he would no longer resist these bans by 'reincarnating' (Wade, 2017).

Fourth, the number of forbidden topics has increased since the CPC strengthened its ideological control. Forbidden topics formerly included the 'three Ts' (the autonomy of Tibet, Taiwan's status and the Tiananmen Square protests), democratisation, the rule of law and criticism of the government. From the cases of Deng Xiangchao, Xu Chuanqing and Zhou Yunzhong, it can now be seen that even criticising Mao Zedong, the Chinese nation or Confucianism, or comparing China with other nations can be reported

by netizens or students. In Zhao Siyun's case, he had declared that China's education system had failed to nurture creativity, innovation and concern for society in its students, calling for students to think independently and embrace the concept of the 'public intellectual'. Although they did not advocate democracy or criticise the regime, these remarks are now taboo as well.

Moreover, several universities explicitly mentioned that the remarks of the teacher had violated the 'Ten Guidelines for Professional Behaviour of College Teachers in the New Era' (Ten Guidelines), a regulation released by the MoE in November 2018. These remarks most likely violated two rules in the guideline that require a teacher's behaviour to '[a]dhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping's new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, support the leadership of the Communist Party of China and implement the party's educational policy' (Rule 1) and 'not to publish and forward wrong opinions through classrooms, forums, lectures, information networks and other channels, or to fabricate false information and bad information' (Rule 3) (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu, 2018).

Fifth, the strengthening of repressive policies against intellectuals has been sustained for longer under Xi. In the 1980s, the government alternated between relaxation and the repression of intellectuals in its policy, with periods of repression being shorter than those of relaxation. Since Xi came to office, the CPC has been strengthening its repressive policies. Although Xi softened his remarks on intellectuals in 2016,[12] the government actually ramped up its repression of university teachers in 2017 and 2018. The current policy adjustments on repression might have become a new standard: the CPC has drawn a new 'red line' and there may be no relaxation, at least not to the degree before Xi's rise to power.[13]

Sixth, the most recent target of censorship has been criticism of the CPC's handling of COVID-19. As shown in table 5.1, Chow Pui Yee maintained that China's political system was responsible for the slow response to COVID-19 and predicted that it would inevitably result in more social problems. Liang Yanping came under attack online after voicing support for Fang Fang (方方), the author of *Wuhan Diary*. Moreover, retired Hainan University professor Wang Xiaoni (王小妮), who has shown support

12 Xi demanded that party committees and the government 'reduce interference in intellectuals' creative work and allow them to concentrate their efforts on their job' (Xinhua, 2016a).

13 The strengthening of repressive policies under Xi has upset some returnee Chinese intellectuals who have opted to leave China and go overseas again (Kennedy, 2019, p. 1051).

for Fang Fang and Liang, is under investigation by the university. Chen Zhaozhi (陈兆志), a retired professor at the University of Science and Technology Beijing, had stated that COVID-19 was not a 'Chinese virus' but a 'Chinese Communist Party virus' and was arrested by Beijing police on 14 April. Additionally, legal scholar Zhang Xuezhong was arrested on 10 March (and released in May) for his open letter saying that 'the outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 epidemic was a good illustration of backward Chinese governance' (AsiaNews, 2020; Sharma, 2020).

Co-optation: Linking research funding with political loyalty

The distribution of research funds may serve as one of the methods employed by the CPC for its co-optation of intellectuals.

The encroachment of the CPC and its networks into research funding dynamics is significant in China. National research funding is distributed to research projects that speak directly to the party's vision and needs or to applicants showing loyalty to the CPC. The National Planning Office for Philosophy and the Social Sciences (NPOPSS) has been the highest authority in the funding of social science research and provides the largest and most prestigious grants. As figure 5.2 shows, the NPOPSS is directly within the orbit of the CPC propaganda system and is run by the head of the Propaganda Department, a member of the Politburo (Holbig, 2014, pp. 17–18).

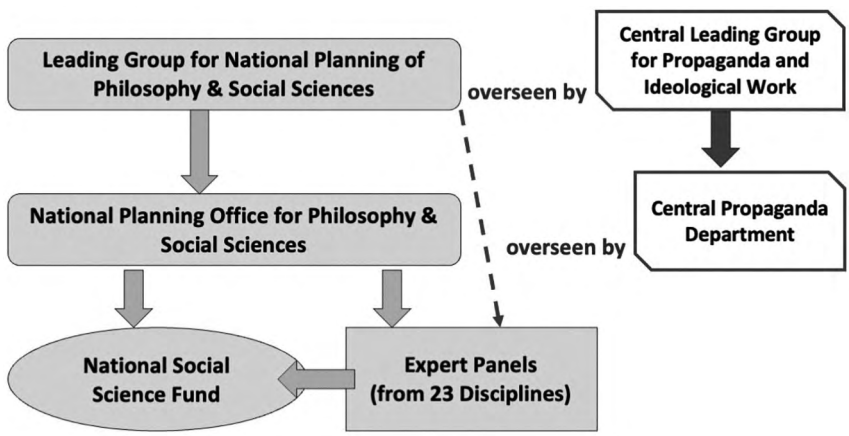

Figure 5.2: Social science research funding inside the propaganda apparatus

Source: Holbig (2014, p. 19).

The selection of research proposals is based on a review of expert panels. However, the recruitment of expert panel members has received criticism for its lack of transparency, and final decisions might be dominated by considerations of the institutional and personal backgrounds of the applicants (Holbig, 2014, pp. 20–1). Academics in elite universities have complained that 'too many research enterprises are controlled by administrators and governmental officials who are sometimes one and the same, given that Chinese universities are run to a great extent by the government' (Jarvis & Mok, 2019, p. 34).[14] In addition to a lack of transparency in research funding, academics have also expressed their grievances about their inability to pursue a full range of research and publishing options in terms of academic freedom and entrenched hierarchies typically based on seniority, party connections or *guanxi*, as opposed to academic merit (Jarvis & Mok, 2019, p. 34). Moreover, funding schemes may serve as a factor contributing to self-censorship at universities. Elizabeth Perry pointed out that the CPC's lavish funding of elite public institutions of higher education 'is surely a key reason for the notable quiescence of the Chinese academy' (Perry, 2015, p. 28). Furthermore, the party may also withdraw research funding as punishment. The media reported the withdrawal by the NPOPSS of funding granted to Yin Zhenhuan (尹振环), a professor at the Communist Party School in Guizhou Province, because authorities found that the research results of his publication on Laozi had serious political problems (Ding, 2019).

The utilization of research funding as a method of co-optation has become even more serious under Xi.

On 18 August 2015, the Central Comprehensively Deepening Reforms Commission passed *The Comprehensive Plan of Overall Development of the World First-Class University and World First-Class Discipline Construction*, designed to develop a group of elite Chinese universities into world-class institutions by 2050. In September 2017, the MoE, the Ministry of Finance and National Development and the Reform Commission jointly released a list of select universities and disciplines. Through this 'Double First-Class University Plan' (DFCP) (双一流, *shuang yiliu*]) or 'Double Top University Plan', the DFCP replaced the 211 and 985 Projects launched in the 1990s, incorporating all universities under the 985 Project and introducing Yunnan University, Xinjiang University and Zhengzhou

14 Originally from Rhoads et al. (2014).

University. The institutions for the new plan were selected after a process of peer competition, expert review and government evaluation, and selected universities will receive dynamic monitoring and management (*China Daily*, 2017). Once universities and disciplines are nominated, the government grants significant resources 'to support university activities along with more intensive oversight to monitor progress' (Jarvis & Mok, 2019, p. 33).

The resources offered by the DFCP and the reassertion of party ideology have led various universities to develop disciplines or research projects that are preferred by the CPC. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China's largest funder of humanities research, has also featured Xi Jinping Thought at the top of its list of approved topics for several consecutive years (Hancock, 2017). A 2019 call for proposals from the NPOPSS, for example, sought research that heavily focused on Xi Jinping Thought and the 'spirit of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China' (Quanguo Zhexue Shehui Kexue Gongzuo Bangongshi, 2018). According to Qiao Mu (乔木), a former professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University, scholars who apply with research proposals related to Xi Jinping Thought find it easier to obtain state funding, and many of his former colleagues are manipulated by this and other government 'perks', which include high incomes and better housing (SAR, 2019, p. 16).

Moreover, universities have established research centres dedicated to Xi Jinping Thought to accommodate the new trends. Renmin University, an elite DFCP university, established the first research centre dedicated to Xi Jinping Thought on 25 October 2017. In 2018, the government announced the founding of 10 research centres and institutes on 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' at Tsinghua University, Peking University, the municipalities of Beijing, Guangdong Province, the municipalities of Shanghai, the National Defence University of the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Ministry of Education and the CPC Central Committee's Party School (Xinhua Net, 2017). In 2021, the government announced that seven new research centres had been set up in the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the China Law Society, as well as in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian and Shandong provinces (Xinhua Net, 2021). The research centres at Renmin University of China, Tsinghua University and Peking University were reorganised into institutes (研究院). On 22 November 2021, the Institute of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era at Peking

University announced the establishment of four centres for Xi Jinping Thought in the dimensions of economics, law, foreign policy and ecology (Ning, 2021). In addition to these institutes officially announced by the central government, many research centres and institutions on Xi Jinping Thought have been established in universities in local provinces (Z. Chen, Hou & Sang, 2018).

Furthermore, Peking University, Fudan University and many others have set up undergraduate majors in Marxist theory since 2018. Renowned teachers funded by the Support Plan for the Development of Marxist Disciplines have jointly undertaken 41 national and 125 provincial-level scientific research projects (Global Times, 2020). The MoE announced in December 2020 that the total number of full-time and part-time teachers of ideological and political courses in colleges and universities across the country had reached 106,411, surpassing 100,000 for the first time (Zhongguo Zhengfu Wang, 2020).

The CPC Leading Group of the MoE issued an *Outline of Implementing the Project of Improving the Quality of Ideological and Political Work in Colleges and Universities* in December 2017. The outline urged 'improving the mechanism of teacher appointment' and that 'the evaluation of teaching, professional titles and special awards should set *political thought performance* [emphasis added] and teaching competence as the top priority' (Quanguo Gaoxiao Sixiang Zhengzhi Gongzuo Wang, 2017). The Teachers Law is also under revision—Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said that the revision will focus on strengthening the party's leadership over the work of teachers and ensuring their correct political direction (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jiaoyubu, 2021b). Hence the appointment and evaluation of teachers will be dominated by their record of political ideas; that is, whether they are adhering to the CPC's ideology.

Borrowing Qiao Mu's words, '[t]he government buys scholars and intellectuals' (SAR, 2019, p. 16). If scholars follow the party's rules, they gain abundant research funding and receive appointments without difficulty. On the other hand, scholars who are perceived by the party as troublemakers find it difficult to gain research funding and might lose their jobs due to their poor political thought records. The CPC under Xi has constructed a new 'red line', a mechanism with co-optation that is more tempting and repression that is more threatening.

It is also evident that the methods employed in co-optation and repression have undergone changes. With gradual pluralisation and professionalisation in China, intellectuals have had more professional choices outside the government-provided establishment. The CPC therefore needs to invest more resources to co-opt establishment intellectuals in the name of its new national development projects. For instance, the Xi administration has proposed the DFSP to replace the 211 and 985 Projects. In addition, the development of the internet and information technology industries has given intellectuals many channels to express their ideas and attract the attention of the public. Therefore the CPC is determined to develop its internet censorship methods and punish the unfavourable online discourses of establishment intellectuals.

The rationale behind Xi's policy towards establishment intellectuals

In this section, we first review the existing literature on state–intellectual relations and the 'cyclical model' in particular. On the basis of the explanation provided by these works, we propose a new model of 'dual methods in state–intellectual relations' to explain shifts in the CPC's policy towards intellectuals.

The cyclical model

Among the literature on relations between the CPC and intellectuals in China, studies on the cycles of relaxation and repression are most related to our discussion on recent changes in CPC policy. A number of explanations have been provided for the original cyclical model and the more recent changes from relative relaxation to repression.

Cotton argued that the main factor driving the repression–relaxation cycle was power struggles within the party (Cotton, 1984, pp. 176–7). When there are disagreements among party leaders over a certain issue and conflicts cannot be settled, political debate spreads from the decision-making circle to a wider one. Two groups of leaders manipulate intellectuals into discourse battles, and these intellectuals become the protagonists at the front of the stage with their patrons at the back. The debate continues until a clear political victory is achieved by one side. The losing faction and its combatants, the intellectuals, are suppressed, after which an apparent

ideological consensus emerges. This explanation is highly related to the patron–client approach for its assumption that intellectuals involved in debates are supported by political elites.[15] It might, however, face two problems in a contemporary context. First, it overemphasises the ability of elites to manipulate intellectuals. Second, the role of political debate among intellectuals has become less significant in the policy-making process (Ma, 1998, p. 449).

The second explanation is also based on power struggles between two groups. Hamrin (1987, p. 278) observed state–intellectual relations in the 1980s and argued that three factors also contribute to the cycle of relaxation and repression. These are the shifting balance of power among leaders with different policy preferences, competition for influence among groups of intellectuals with different interests, and the linkage between cultural and other policy arenas. In the 1980s, conservative and reformist groups took different stances on the degree of economic reforms and the lessening of ideological control. Reformist elites proposed new reforms, and their intellectuals showed their support with discourses while conservative elites and intellectuals opposed them. As a result, both sides settled on an ambiguous compromise in which reformist elites conceded on ideological issues in exchange for compromises on economic reforms. This accordingly brought a period of repression and the strengthening of ideological control. Hamrin (1987, p. 285) concluded that '[t]he length of the "lulls" between rounds varies, as reformers regain momentum for another surge'.

The difficulty with Hamrin's explanation is that it is based on state–intellectual relations in China in the 1980s, when the struggle between reformist and conservative factions focused mainly on the correct path for development and trade-offs between different policy arenas were therefore more likely. Moreover, the dynamics between state and society, elites and intellectuals, and intellectuals and the public were different in the 1980s from other periods in the history of the People's Republic. Intellectuals in the 1980s were more outspoken about Western values and more negative towards the Chinese nation and its culture. This was partially because they had learned from the Cultural Revolution that self-censorship might result

15 Ma (1998, p. 448) provides a definition of clientelism by citing Caciagli (1991): 'Clientelism refers to a relation of exchange in which a person with higher status (the patron) takes advantage of his or her authority and resources to protect and benefit somebody with an inferior status (the client) who reciprocates with support and services'. Regarding the patron–client approach, Ma provides a detailed literature review.

in more serious consequences when a nation goes down the wrong path and partially because reformist elites had intentionally removed ideological constraints on intellectuals.

The third explanation is that there is a certain amount of ambiguity in the policies of party leaders. Merle Goldman argues that the party utilises intellectuals to explain their policies, construct theoretical foundations and provide policy suggestions on the one hand while at the same time fearing that their criticism of policies and the system will threaten the stability of the regime.[16] Hence the party tightens its control until the intellectuals appear reluctant to produce, then relaxes its controls until its political authority appears threatened. In intervals of relative relaxation, the party permits intellectual debate, Western influence and criticism of the bureaucracy or corruption in order to gain information on veiled social problems. When discussion moves beyond to criticise the system and suggest alternatives, the regime represses with varying degrees of intensity (Goldman, 1993, pp. 286–7; see also Goldman, 1985). However, Goldman's explanation does not clarify exactly when the party adopts a policy shift and does not provide theoretical indicators.

Another problem in the cyclical model is its singular emphasis on repression, as the period of relaxation is seen as one in which repression is either diminished or non-existent. This model tends to overlook co-optation and other methods adopted by the party. The cyclical model was reasonable at the time because it had been developed from the patron–client approach and observations on state–intellectual relations in the Mao and Deng eras.[17] However, professionalisation and pluralisation in society have since given intellectuals more professional choices and spaces for expression, and the party has an increasing need to utilise co-optation methods to manage their behaviour.

16 Merle Goldman is a distinguished historian known for a series of studies on Chinese intellectuals and their relations with the CPC. She adopted the patron–client approach when studying the role of intellectuals under the rule of Mao Zedong and later turned to an approach focusing on the role of dissident intellectuals in China's democratisation after the late 1980s. Regarding Goldman's contributions, Timothy Cheek provides a review and critique (2007).

17 As nearly all institutions were owned by the party-state in the Mao era, most intellectuals accepted appointments and worked within them. Hence the party-state had various methods to control its intellectuals. Moreover, intellectuals tended to seek affiliation with political elites (i.e. patrons). Co-optation was therefore less emphasised in the cyclical model.

The dual methods in state–intellectual relations model

To solve the problems above by introducing the method of co-optation, we develop the 'dual methods in state–intellectual relations model' (the dual methods model) to explain the contemporary policy towards establishment intellectuals in China. In other words, the dual methods model can be viewed as an extension and enhancement of the cyclical model and Merle Goldman's explanation. In addition, most of these explanations are provided by historians who have observed the Chinese party-state's intellectual policies in a wider historical context. On the basis of these explanations, this chapter further explores and attempts to observe the CPC's strengthened control over intellectuals in the context of the existing literature on comparative authoritarians.[18] The dual methods model could serve as an explanatory framework to analyse why and when an authoritarian government decides to strengthen control over intellectuals.

The dual methods model includes three main arguments. First, the party state adopts dual methods, 'repression' and 'co-optation', while adopting more 'repression' on Role B and more 'co-optation' on Role A. As figure 5.3 demonstrates, the roles of an intellectual may be roughly divided into Roles A and B. Those in Role A tend to accept government co-optation and become the mouthpiece of the state, helping to articulate state ideology to the general public. Those in Role B tend to focus on existing social and political problems and urge the government to enact political reforms. Those in Role B tend to be more outspoken and have a greater influence on the general public by pointing out social and political problems in the current political system and advocating institutional reforms or even democratisation. Those in Role B have the potential to lead public opinion and encourage the public to adopt collective action to pressure the government for political reforms.

18 Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) and Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2011) provided a comprehensive theory on the survival of authoritarians. This theory covers many important issues such as a leader's preference for increasing 'the selectorate' and decreasing the winning coalition, the decision to use oppression, and a comparison between authoritarian and democratic regimes.

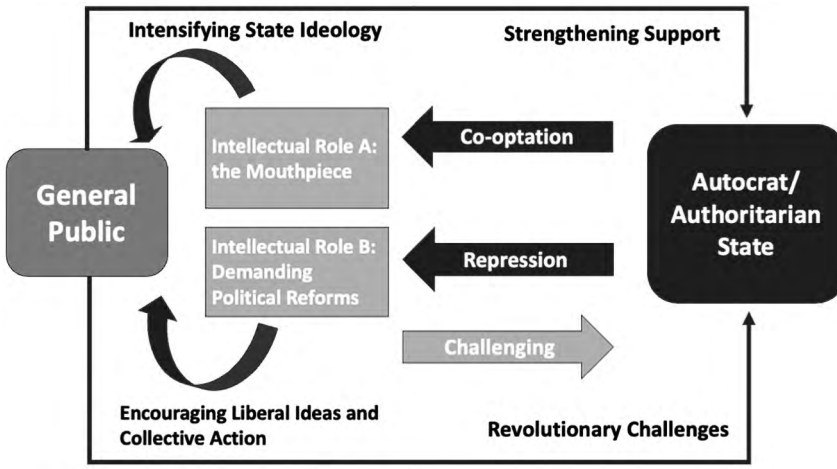

Figure 5.3: The dual methods in state–intellectual relations model
Source: Created by the author with reference to Kou (2019).

As this chapter demonstrates, the government employs dual methods towards intellectuals. It employs co-optation towards those in Role A in various ways that include defining their professions as 'first-class disciplines' (e.g. Marxism studies), granting more research funding and rewarding better treatment or higher salaries. Should these intellectuals show the right amount of loyalty, the government may recruit them into the 'selectorate' or even into the 'winning coalition'.[19] On the other hand, the government uses repression against those in Role B when it judges that their discourses have crossed the 'red line' and called for collective action from the general public. The government can use co-optation and repression interchangeably for both roles, although it might not be quite as effective.

Second, the main goal of the party-state's policy towards intellectual is to train 'loyal' or at least 'self-disciplined' intellectuals. When the government perceives there are too many outspoken intellectuals in Role B and that their influence on society might result in revolutionary challenges or a threat to the state, it strengthens its policy of repression. If not, the government continues its co-optation and recruits loyal intellectuals.

19 Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2011, p. 2) specified that 'the (real) selectorate' is the group that actually chooses the leader. In China, it consists of all voting members of the Communist Party.

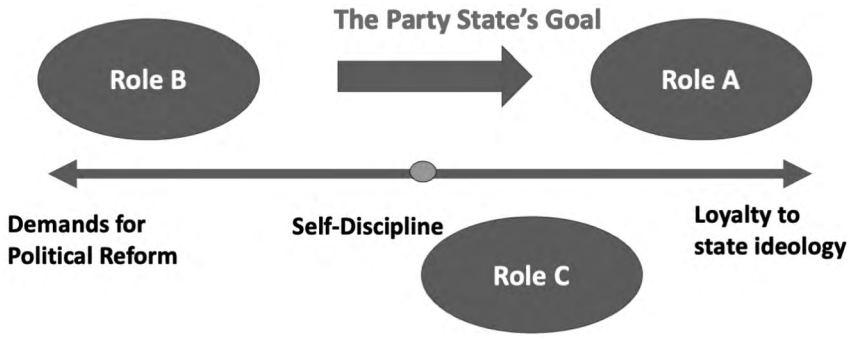

Figure 5.4: The typology of intellectual roles
Source: Created by the author.

Intellectuals may change their roles, and most of them move back and forth in the spectrum between becoming a mouthpiece and demanding political reforms, as figure 5.4 illustrates.[20] In between the two, those in intellectual Role C tend to exercise self-discipline and keep themselves within the government's red lines. Very few intellectuals exclusively demand political reforms, maintain self-discipline or accept social co-optation throughout their careers. Most choose to call for political reforms in periods of relaxation and choose self-discipline or co-optation in periods of repression. The goal of the party-state's policy of strengthening control is to convert those in Role B to adopt Role A or at least Role C.

Third, echoing the repression–relaxation cycle model, when the party-state perceives that the increasing Role B intellectuals start to pose a challenge to the party-state and co-optation alone cannot control Role B intellectuals' behaviour, the party-state intensifies the scope and degree of suppression. It can be viewed as the period of suppression. On the other hand, if the party-state perceives that co-optation alone can train 'self-disciplined' intellectuals, the party-state adopts few suppression measures or restrictions on specific intellectuals or in specific cases, it can be viewed as the period of relaxation.

The suppression itself is not the goal but more a result that reflects the government's lack of confidence that co-optation alone is not alluring enough to dissuade Group B from demanding political reform. Additionally, as the lesson learned from the Cultural Revolution, a long period of ruthless

20 The author would like to thank Professor Ben Hillman, Chien-Wen Kou, Titus C. Chen and two anonymous reviewers for suggestions about the typology of intellectual roles.

suppression with extreme scope and degree might also give intellectuals a serious sense of frustration, which leads to their losing confidence in the socialist political system. Therefore, once the party-state perceives that those in Group B have silenced themselves, it tends to loosen suppression and return to the period of relaxation, which forms a cycle of suppression and relaxation. This framework is applicable to most periods in PRC history.[21]

Questions in this research can be discussed in terms of this framework: when and why does an autocrat or authoritarian state choose repression and tighten ideological control over intellectuals in this case? While co-optation and repression have been used simultaneously on intellectuals adopting different roles most of the time, a leader decides to strengthen ideological control and the level of repression over intellectuals when they perceive that their legitimacy is externally or internally under threat from the criticism of intellectuals and the collective action that they inspire.

Applying this model to Xi's policy over ideology and establishment intellectuals, it can be explained that he increased repression and co-optation (or initiated a period of repression, as the cyclical model argues) in order to urge intellectuals to restrict their discourse and adopt Role A or C. The fundamental reason is that Xi perceived threats from the outspoken behaviour of intellectuals, their advocating of liberal thought and their influence on college students. As Xi's remarks above demonstrate, the CPC is concerned that while political unrest and regime change may perhaps occur overnight, the gradual disintegration of a regime begins from the ideological sphere. The Tiananmen Incident began with college student demonstrations. Yuan's remarks also indicate that the CPC suspects that enemy countries in the West who are fearful of China's rise will step up their infiltration of young teachers and students. The peaceful evolution conspiracy has long been a concern of the CPC. Hence the goal of repression is to prevent possible challenges from society by setting up a new 'red line' or warning intellectuals when they have crossed it.

21 The dual methods of co-optation and suppression can also be observed in state–intellectual relations in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s. Although many pro-socialist intellectuals were arrested under the provisions of the Peace Preservation Law, many of them were coerced to 'ideological conversions'. In the latter half of the 1930s, the Cabinet Research Bureau frequently hired these former leftist converts.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the Chinese Communist Party's policy towards establishment intellectuals under Xi Jinping and explores the most applicable explanation for this policy shift. On the basis of existing literature on this cyclical model, we have proposed a new model of 'dual methods in state–intellectual relations' to explain shifting state–intellectual relations. This model demonstrates that the CPC has employed dual methods of repression and co-optation towards intellectuals adopting different roles. Leaders choose repression when they perceive that their legitimacy is externally or internally under threat from the criticism of intellectuals and the collective action that they inspire.

This is a preliminary attempt to develop a framework that explains state–intellectual relations in China, and there are still some issues left for future research. First, repression might have varying degrees of intensity. What factors influence the degree of repression used by the state? Second, it would be difficult in practice to predict when a leader perceives a threat and decides to repress intellectuals since different leaders can have different notions of what constitutes a threat while also differing in their level of distrust towards them.

To be specific, several factors should be investigated to answer the question of why Xi perceived a threat in the discourses of intellectuals. Were Xi and the CPC intimidated by China's unprecedented integration with the world and its ability to engage Chinese intellectuals and the public with foreign ideas?[22] Do Xi and the CPC perceive any threat or enmity from the international environment? Do Xi and the CPC perceive there to be increasing pressure for political reform or democratisation from society? Was Xi concerned about the response of intellectuals to his centralisation of political power and therefore intent on repressing those who might utter criticism? Psychologically, does Xi distrust intellectuals, or is he simply more sensitive to the encroachment of Western ideology? Further research could help to define what indicators are able to identify a leader's perception of a threat to the regime.

22 Cheek (2015b, p. 319) indicates that although Chinese intellectuals have engaged with foreign ideas for more than a century, their current degree of integration with the world is unprecedented.

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