



Uio • University of Oslo

China's New Discourse: The Confidence of Unlimited Responsibility

*A case study of Professor Zhang Weiwei's ideas
and his call for a new discourse of Chinese
confidence in the book and TV show China Now.*

Magnus Lomax Bjerke

Chinese Culture and Society

30 credits

Institutt for kulturstudier og orientalske språk (IKOS)

14.06.2021

Abstract

This thesis explores how ideology is constructed in China today. The influential public intellectual and professor at Fudan University, Zhang Weiwei has written a book and starred in a TV series that both discuss ideas and aim to construct a new discourse of confidence in the Chinese system. Subsequently, Zhang has used the show to apply these ideas to the interpretation of different countries' handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the increase in tensions between China and the United States, and the ideological competition implied by comparisons to a new Cold War, this thesis treats Zhang's book and show as a case study of how ideas of political legitimacy and confidence are constructed and communicated in China today. The thesis has two main parts: firstly, it will provide an overview of the main ideological trends amongst intellectuals participating in defending the current system of one-party rule under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in China; secondly, it will analyse Zhang Weiwei's discourse as an example of how these ideas are communicated to the public and used to interpret current affairs in a way that aims to enhance confidence in the Chinese system of government. Some ideological trends were noted to be prevalent in the studied literature and Zhang's discourse. These include an appeal to *Chineseness* as a justification for legitimacy; claims of essential differences between Chinese and Western culture; an insistence on substantive measures of democracy being *true* democracy, and advocacy for the superiority of measurements of good governance; and calls to *repoliticise* the state as a mechanism to increase state capacity to work in the interest of the people without being hindered by the law. In conclusion, we can see Zhang portraying the Chinese concept of unlimited responsibility of the sovereign as a progressive solution to the problems of the West. This is presented as common sense, and China's handling of the pandemic is viewed as proof that China displays superior values. Finally, although Zhang's discourse fits well with Party ideology and plays a legitimating role, he provides useful insights into an alternative discourse in a way very different from official propaganda.

Foreword

The choice to write about ideological discourse and Zhang Weiwei's ideas came about quite naturally through a combination of my interests in political philosophy, cross-cultural communication, and language learning. This allowed me to immerse myself in Chinese sources and explore how ideas are communicated to understand the global pandemic and China's role in the world. It is my hope that this thesis can be of some use to those interested in understanding how current events are interpreted to build confidence in the Chinese political system.

I am very pleased to have been given the opportunity to spend this final semester working as a Graduate Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). I would especially like to thank Hans Jørgen Gåsemyr, Kristin Fjæstad and Ole Jacob Sending from NUPI for providing excellent support during this slightly abnormal time, and for their valuable feedback on earlier drafts. Seminars, picnics and digital coffee breaks with my fellow master students were also both helpful and enjoyable in the otherwise somewhat lonely process of writing a thesis.

To my two supervisors at the University of Oslo, Mette Halskov Hansen and Vladimir Tikhonov, thank you for your valuable feedback and admirable patience. I fear I did not make sufficient use of your collective expertise, but I hope this humble piece of work might live up to your expectations.

Thank you to Kit Lee for patiently providing native-speaker assistance whenever I encountered difficulties in translation. Any potential mistakes that might remain are fully of my own making. Also, a very special thanks to my Grandmother Judy Lomax, who took the time to provide her valuable proofreading services in between updating her guide to sailing the coast of Norway and Svalbard, a touch of gardening and a weekly boost of chemo. And finally, thank you to my parents for their endless love and support throughout what has become a substantial number of years as a student. Finishing this thesis is a satisfying end to that journey.

Magnus Lomax Bjerke

Oslo, June 14, 2021

Table of contents

China's New Discourse: The Confidence of Unlimited Responsibility	1
Abstract	2
Foreword	3
Table of contents	4
Introduction.....	6
Zhang Weiwei and China Now	9
Chapter 1: Methodology & Theoretical framework.....	13
1.1 Methodology	13
Episode selection	13
1.2 Theoretical framework.....	16
Discourse analysis	16
Ideological analysis	18
Chapter 2: Ideology in Xi's China.....	24
2.1 Official ideology.....	25
2.2 The quest for <i>Chineseness</i>	27
2.3 Socialism with Chinese Characteristics	30
2.4 The New Left and Chinese Democracy	32
<i>True Democracy</i> – representative or representational?.....	32
2.5 Statists and the Rule of Law.....	34
Carl Schmitt and the State of Exception	36
2.6 Summary - Making sense of China and the World.....	40
Chapter 3: Analysis of <i>China Now</i>.....	42
3. 1 Looking back on the year 2020 – Polarization and pandemic politics.....	42
3.2 The New Discourse – Building confidence in China by deconstructing the West	43
Pandemic politics and Thought Liberation	45
3.3 The New Discursive Paradigm - democracy or good governance?	48
The contest over <i>True Democracy</i>	49
3.4 Chinese characteristics and Western misunderstanding.....	50
Understanding the Chinese Communist Party.....	53
Chinese Wisdom.....	54
3.5 Authority and responsibility.....	56
Chinese solutions to Western problems	56

State of Exception – for the greater good.....	60
The Pandemic as Proof of Concept.....	62
Responsibility and Superior Values.....	63
Conclusion	66
Bibliography	69

Introduction

“We are not afraid of competition. Especially not of competition between political models... China, you must be confident! Let us pass the hat of diffidence to our adversaries.” This is a quote from Chinese public intellectual Zhang Weiwei 张维为 in 2015 calling for Chinese people to have confidence in their own system of government and dare to stand up to the challenge posed by Western discourse.¹ China must, he urged, stand up and influence international political discourse and norms. Fast forward to 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has tested governments all over the world, and China, the first country to deal with the virus, was able to return to a semblance of normality before the United States and many of its European allies. According to Zhang, “2020 is the year where the United States lost its magic, and China and the world realised it isn’t special.”² What does this mean for Chinese confidence and the relationship between the world’s two major powers?

In the years leading up to the pandemic tensions between China and the United States had been rising. At the beginning of the outbreak negative views on China in the West were at their highest point since the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, and after the Trump presidential campaign in 2016 put critique of China as a central issue and initiated a trade war, being “tough on China” had seemingly become a bipartisan issue in in the 2020

¹ Zhang Weiwei, “张维为: 中国人, 你要自信! Zhang Weiwei: Self-Confidence Matters (a Chinese view on the rise of China),” *The Chinese Way* by Zhang Weiwei, January 18, 2021, YouTube video, 18:53, [\(61\) 张维为: 中国人, 你要自信! Zhang Weiwei: Self-Confidence Matters \(A Chinese Perspective on The Rise of China\) - YouTube](#) (accessed 15 May, 2021).

² Zhang Weiwei, “Episode 51: What sort of problems are Western countries encountering in their efforts to control the virus? Zhang Weiwei analyses the self-inflicted consequences of Western arrogance and prejudice. (第 51 期: 西方国家在抗“疫”中遭遇了怎样的困境? 张维为解读西方的傲慢与偏见给自身带来的影响),” *China DragonTV Official*, March 30, 2020, YouTube video, 44:14, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFJQxommPLY&t=1860s> (accessed 15 May, 2021).

presidential race.³ Headlines stating “China and the USA are engaged in a new Cold War,” or similar sentiments have not been uncommon during this time.⁴

Meanwhile, in China the focus is on countering what is perceived as hegemonic efforts by the United States to block China’s further development interests. Accompanying this increase in tensions in the relationships between China and the US is a harsher diplomatic tone from the Chinese side. This so-called “Wolf warrior diplomacy,” (given its name from a popular, nationalist, Chinese action film titled *Wolf Warrior*) stands in contrast to more generic internationalist platitudes often heard in official Chinese discourse.⁵ As is to be expected, this is portrayed as a proof of China’s increasingly adversarial nature in the US, whereas in China it is often portrayed as the country standing up for itself and pushing back against foreign meddling in China’s sovereign affairs.⁶

The spectre of a new Cold War implies ideological competition. Although today’s situation is probably far from as serious as the previous Cold War, there are evidently substantive ideological disagreements regarding governance models and sources of political legitimacy. Central to the ideological debates, however, is a subtle contestation of normative concepts. As the title of Yu Keping’s (俞可平) popular book *Democracy is a Good Thing* (2011) suggests, almost everyone agrees with this statement - but there are many different ideas of

³ Mohamed Younis, “China, Russia Images in the U.S. Hit Historic Lows,” *Gallup News*, March 1, 2021, [China, Russia Images in U.S. Hit Historic Lows \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com/news/2021/03/17/senate-bipartisanship-china-schumer-476406) (accessed 13 May, 2021); Andrew Desiderio and Marianne Levine, “Bipartisanship in a Divided Senate? On China, Perhaps,” *Politico*, 17 March, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/17/senate-bipartisanship-china-schumer-476406> (accessed 13 May, 2021); Gerald F. Seib, “Amid Polarization, Bipartisanship Emerges on China, Big Tech,” *the Wall Street Journal*, 10 June, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/amid-polarization-bipartisanship-emerges-on-china-big-tech-11560177194> (accessed 13 May, 2021); Bonnie Girard, “A Bipartisan Congressional Group Supports Trump’s Tough-on-China Approach,” *the Diplomat*, 5 April, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/a-bipartisan-congressional-group-supports-trumps-tough-on-china-approach/> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

⁴ Laura Trevelyan, “Is the world entering a new Cold War?” *BBC News*, 22 September, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54244011> (accessed 13 May, 2021); Robert D. Kaplan, “A New Cold War Has Begun,” *Foreign Policy*, 7 January, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/07/a-new-cold-war-has-begun/> (accessed 13 May, 2021); Gideon Rachman, “A new cold war: Trump, Xi and the escalating US-China Confrontation,” *Financial Times*, 5 October, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/7b809c6a-f733-46f5-a312-9152aed28172> (accessed 13 May, 2021); Jonathan Marcus, “US-China relations: Beyond the “Cold War” Cliché,” *BBC News*, 17 March, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56382793> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

⁵ Zhu Zhiquan, “Interpreting China’s “Wolf-Warrior” Diplomacy,” *the Diplomat*, 15 May, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

⁶ Li Qingping, “Upright voice needed globally against Western public opinion hegemony,” *Global Times*, 15 April, 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221187.shtml> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

what constitutes *true* democracy. Similar questions arise regarding different understandings of human rights, freedom of speech and rule of law. The way these concepts are popularly understood, talked about, and related to systems of authority and legitimacy are part of ideological discourse.

Since 2012, Xi Jinping has on several occasions called for China to increase its soft power and contest “discourse power” (*huayuquan* 话语权).⁷ He has highlighted the importance of “telling a good story and spreading China’s voice” in order to gain influence and recognition internationally.⁸ In the midst of this atmosphere of tension and Xi’s calls for increased discourse power Zhang Weiwei published a book and starred in a new TV show, both titled *China Now*. He calls for the “deconstruction of Western discourse” and the construction of a confident “new discourse” for China.⁹ According to Zhang, it is not enough for China to make great achievements and act successfully. Rather, he says, Chinese people “also have to speak successfully. We must explain China clearly. Behind that lies confidence in the path and confidence of language. Only then can China’s rise be smooth and wonderful!”¹⁰

To get a better understanding of how ideology is constructed in China today, this thesis studies the content of Zhang Weiwei’s call for a new discourse in the context of the increasing tensions between China and the United States and the covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, it will provide an overview of the main ideological trends amongst intellectuals participating in defending the current system in China. Secondly, it will analyse Zhang Weiwei’s discourse as a case-study of how these ideas are communicated to the public and used to interpret current affairs in a way that enhances confidence in the Chinese system of government.

⁷ Elsa Kania, “The Right to Speak: Discourse and Chinese Power,” *Center for Advanced China Research*, 27 November, 2018, <https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2018/11/27/The-Right-to-Speak-Discourse-and-Chinese-Power> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

⁸ Xinhuanet, “Seize international discourse power, efficiently spread China’s voice – Analysis of Xi Jinping’s thought on external propaganda work” (把握国际话语权，有效传播中国的声音 – 习近平外宣工作思路理念探析), *Xinhuanet*, 6 April, 2016, http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:nQlx6j3z3-4J:www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/06/c_1118542256.htm+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us (accessed 13 May, 2021).

⁹ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now (zhe jiu shi zhongguo 这就是中国)*, (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2019), 86.

¹⁰ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 86.

Zhang Weiwei and China Now

Professor Zhang Weiwei 张维为 is the star of the show China Now. He is well-known for writing and talking about the nature of the so-called *China Model* (*zhongguo moshi* 中国模式) and calling for confidence in China's own system of government. In addition to being a professor of international relations at Fudan University, a research fellow at the Chunqiu institute and a member of the Communist Party, Zhang has written a popular trilogy on the nature of China and has made many appearances in international forums speaking eloquent English and drawing upon his international experience as a translator for Deng Xiaoping.¹¹ From his earlier work in English we can see an interest in the effects of ideological trends in China on economic reform policies, especially in the transition from an orthodox, anti-market doctrine under Mao to the more elastic and pro-business one under Deng.¹² In Zhang's trilogy he argues that predictions regarding Chinese economic and political future based on orthodox views will not hold due to China's extraordinary status as a "civilizational state," and that the ideas China has used can be viewed as a sort of alternative political wisdom to what has been on offer in the West.

Since 2019 Zhang Weiwei has been given what amounts to his own talk-show hosted by 中国东方卫视官方频道 China Dragon TV Official. This is a provincial TV-station that is viewed across the entire country. The professor speaks on a topic related to China's place in the world for 30 mins or so followed by a discussion with a guest or a Q&A with a live audience. The title of the show, *China Now*, (the more accurate translation from Chinese "*zhe jiu shi zhongguo* 这就是中国" is "this is China") sums up quite clearly that the lectures are about making sense of China. In the opening jingle we hear Zhang's voice say "We are not afraid of competition. China, you must be confident."¹³ The host then invites the viewer to

¹¹ Zhang Weiwei. *The China Wave: rise of a civilizational state*. (World Century Publishing Corporation, 2011); Zhang Weiwei. *The China Horizon: the glory and dream of a civilizational state*. (World Century Publishing Corporation, 2016); Zhang Weiwei. *China Awakens*. (Shanghai people's publishing house, 2014). (中国触动: 百国视野下的观察与思考. 上海人民出版社, 2014.) (Chinese version only).

¹² Zhang Weiwei, "Ideological trends and economic reform in China, (1978-1993)" (PhD diss., University of Geneva, 1994); Zhang Weiwei, *Ideology and reform under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1993*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

¹³ In Chinese: "women yidian dou bu pa jingzheng, zhongguo ni yao you zixin, 我们一点都不怕竞争。中国, 你要有自信."

join in an open discussion and debate in order to “Study, understand and evaluate China.”¹⁴ The first episode of China Now was posted to YouTube on May 9th, 2019, and as of May 2021 had approximately 490 000 views. At the same time, the show had a total of approximately 40 million views on the popular Chinese streaming platform Bilibili 哔哩哔哩. One of the topics of the first episode was the detention of Huawei CFO by Canadian authorities, which happened on 1st December 2018. This recent timeframe means that the topics discussed are relevant for an understanding of the portrayal of current events in China and the world, and so the debates must also be considered in a wider context of increased criticisms towards China in the international press.

Zhang has been posting shorter videos on a personal YouTube channel called “The Chinese Way by Zhang Weiwei.” (*Weiwei daolai* 维为道来 in Chinese) since January 18th, 2021. As of May 2021, the channel has over 1 million views and approximately 23 000 subscribers. The videos posted here are “talking-head” style videos averaging 5 minutes or so focused on foreign affairs. The style and tone are noticeably more confrontational than in China Now, and most episodes contain a critique of the USA. This channel is connected to the larger media group Guan Video 观视频工作室 (they are also partners in producing *China Now*). Their YouTube channel states they offer a point of view “you will never find on Western mainstream media.”¹⁵ (Other affiliated channels include editor of the Global Times, Hu Xijin 胡锡进).

What makes Zhang Weiwei interesting and different from many other Chinese intellectuals is his willingness to communicate to a popular audience, both in China and abroad. His style of presentation is relaxed and humorous, and he mixes the use of statistics and numbers with anecdotes from regular life and popular culture. He often references his travels abroad, having visited a great many countries in his career, and brings a comparative lens to his analysis. He is also completely fluent in English and often appears on Western media and

¹⁴ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, episode 1,” China DragonTV Official, January 8, 2019, YouTube video, 04:39. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OCq_zu_XDQ&t=3s&ab_channel=GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4 (accessed 13 May, 2021); In Chinese: “*dudong zhongguo, liaojie zhongguo, dingwei zhongguo* 读懂中国，了解中国，定位中国。”

¹⁵ Guan Video 观视频工作室, “About,” <https://www.youtube.com/c/GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4/about> (accessed 13 May, 2021).

participates in roundtable discussions in international forums. The overall impression is of a man who is highly competent, well-intentioned, scholarly, and internationally experienced. The main point with this description is to point out that Zhang Weiwei is by no means a jingoistic “hawk” or any other kind of crass personality one might expect to take nationalistic positions in favour of a more self-confident foreign policy.

To get a further impression of how Zhang is perceived by a Chinese audience we can take a quick look at some comments on Zhihu 知乎. (Similar to Quora, it is a website where netizens ask questions, and the most popular responses are voted up by users). In the top three answers to the question “What should one make of the show China Now?” (“如何看待”这就是中国”这个节目”) they all recommend the show. They also comment on Zhang’s international experience and commend him on communicating clearly and distinctly; appealing to facts; not vilifying or glorifying; for providing a balanced comparative perspective, and for being “endlessly better than previous official propaganda clichés.”¹⁶ Another common thread in the responses is the expression of annoyance with those who propose the “simplistic” view that Western institutions will solve all of China’s problems. While this is far from enough to draw any conclusions, it does suggest that Zhang’s discourse might appeal to a wide range of people and he is not generally considered to be a “court intellectual” who predictably disseminates what the authorities want. Nevertheless, he does engage with large questions concerning the future of society at large, and thereby somewhat fits the traditional Chinese image of a scholar official, providing support and guidance to the state.¹⁷

Historically, Chinese intellectuals have also been characterised by a tradition of what Gloria Davies calls “worrying (*youhuan* 忧患) about China.”¹⁸ The term *youhuan yishi*, often translated as “crisis mentality” or “worrying mentality” has a long history among Confucian literati, from the Song-era to moral concern for China’s plight during the Opium Wars, to the somewhat despairing tone of 1980’s intellectuals pondering the question “what can we do

¹⁶ “如何看待这就是中国这个节目,” Zhihu, <https://www.zhihu.com/question/314941319?rf=308363722> (accessed 25 May, 2021).

¹⁷ Jerome Grieder, *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History*, (New York: Free Press, 1981), 2.

¹⁸ Gloria Davies, *Worrying about China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 16.

about China?”¹⁹ Zhang stands out, then, in his discourse of national confidence without indulging in nationalistic jingoism.

The expressed purpose of the show is to gain a critical understanding of China, but a large amount of time is spent on discussing the United States and “the West” more broadly. Of the first 88 episodes, 35 of them had either “the West” or “America” in the title. This comparative perspective enables Zhang to deconstruct the West and construct a relatively positive image of China at the same time. It is not stated explicitly, but Zhang, and the Chinese media more generally, use “the West” to mean the liberal democratic countries of North America, Western/Northern Europe, and New Zealand and Australia. This is also how the term will be used in this thesis.

¹⁹ C. T. Hsia, “Obsession with China: The Moral Burden of Chinese Literature,” in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 533-554.

Chapter 1: Methodology & Theoretical framework

1.1 Methodology

This thesis contains two main parts: firstly, a chapter providing an overview of some notable trends among intellectuals arguing in favour of the current Chinese system; finally, an analysis of Zhang Weiwei's discourse and ideas in the book and TV series *China Now*. The analysis was largely structured around how Zhang's discourse relates to the ideas discussed in chapter two, and further considered them in light of the events of the year 2020.

The analysis is based on the book *China Now* and a selection of episodes from the TV series. The book was published on August 1st, 2019 and elaborates on many of the topics covered in the TV series. Both the book and the series are in Chinese, so the translations are my own.

In order to focus on the content of Zhang's discourse, the analysis only covers Zhang's speeches. The Q&A portion, discussion with host and guests, and the speeches of guests on the show have therefore not been included in the analysis. However, these portions can provide interesting additional context to those wishing to dive deeper into the subject matter.

Episode selection

The case study focuses on a limited selection of episodes. The content of the episodes can be sorted into two main categories: general ideas, and commentary on current events. A selection of episodes from each category have been chosen based on the perceived relevance of their titles to the study of ideological content and the discourse of Chinese confidence Zhang is participating in.

Conceptual framework

The following episodes have been selected as sources for analysing Zhang's main conceptual framework:²⁰

²⁰ The English titles are my own translations.

- Episode 4: Zhang Weiwei interprets China's "great state" model. Great state confidence makes the impossible possible. (第4期: 张维为解读中国大国模式 大国自信让不可能变可能)
- Episode 6: Zhang Weiwei boldly analyses the system of socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Making known the way of governance behind China's rise. (第6期: 张维为大胆解析中国特色社会主义制度 中国崛起之治国之道大公开!)
- Episode 7: Analysis of the history of the Chinese Civilizational state. What is the difference between Western modern civilization and Chinese historical civilization? Will the rise of China be able to maintain its unique historical civilization? (第7期: 中国文明型国家历史进程大解析 西方现代型文明与中国历史性文明有什么不同? 中国崛起是否应坚持独有的历史性文明?)
- Episode 31: Socialism has markets, Capitalism has plans. Professor Zhang Weiwei dissects the reasons why market fundamentalism won't work. (第31期: 社会主义有市场 资本主义有计划 张维为教授剖析市场原教旨主义为何行不通?)
- Episode 32: "Chinese Socialism" is a success-producing magic weapon! Zhang Weiwei deeply analyses why China is not a "state capitalist" country. (第32期: "中国社会主义"才是制胜法宝! 张维为深度解析为何中国不是"国家资本主义"?)
- Episode 33: Why do we say Chinese ideas are plentiful and wonderful? Professor Zhang Weiwei examines the reasons why Chinese ideas might influence the world. (第33期: 为什么说中国理念既丰富又精彩? 张维为教授解读中国理念可能影响世界的原因)
- Episode 42: Analyse the degrees of political correctness in China and the West, examine Europe and America's double standards. Zhang Weiwei and Huang Zhixian jointly discuss what is true freedom of speech? (第42期: 分析中西方社会"政治正确"程度 检验相同情况下欧美的双重标准 张维为与黄智贤共同解读什么才是真正的言论自由?)
- Episode 52: What style of thinking does China's political wisdom use in exploring systems of government? Listen to Professor Zhang Weiwei discuss national governance from the angle of "the way of governance" (第52期: 中国的政道智慧以什么思维模式探索政体? 听张维为教授从政道的角度谈国家治理)

In addition to the selected episodes, the analysis of general ideas also contains references to the book *China Now* and two English language videos. These last two videos are a

conversation between Zhang and the economist Joseph E. Stiglitz, where they talk about the current state of American society; and an interview with Zhang on the Canadian show Munk Dialogues where he is asked to give an analysis of China and the United States from a Chinese perspective.

Current affairs: Confidence in tackling the pandemic.

The section on commentary on current affairs focuses on episodes about different experiences with tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. The show has been covering this topic since the beginning, providing analysis in real-time as the events have been unfolding, so it provides us with a large amount of content on how the handling of the pandemic has been used as a reason for China to be confident in its system over the course of the years 2020 and 2021.

The first mention of the pandemic appeared in episode 46, and there have been 15 episodes in total that featured the pandemic in the title of the episode.

The following episodes have been selected based on the relevance of their titles:

- Episode 46: Zhang Weiwei investigates the characteristics of China's model of virus prevention and its implications for the world. (第 46 期: 张维为解读探讨中国推动抗疫模式的特点 探讨中国抗疫对世界的意义)
- Episode 51: What sort of problems are Western countries encountering in their efforts to control the virus? Zhang Weiwei analyses the self-inflicted consequences of Western arrogance and prejudice. (第 51 期: 西方国家在抗“疫”中遭遇了怎样的困境? 张维为解读西方的傲慢与偏见给自身带来的影响)
- Episode 61: Comparison of the different virus prevention results of China and America's different models of political institutions and governance. Zhang Weiwei and Ji Canrong interpret the factors behind the failure of America's virus prevention efforts (第 61 期: 对比中美两国不同政治制度和治理模式下产生的不同抗疫结果, 张维为与金灿荣一起解读美国抗疫失败背后的种种因素)
- Episode 63: What precious values have been displayed by China's virus prevention efforts? What traditional cultural genes and modern aspects lie behind these values? Zhang Weiwei and Fan Yongpeng give you answers (第 63 期: 中国在抗“疫”过程中展现了哪些宝贵的价值观? 这些价值观背后又有着哪些传统文化的基因和现代性? 张维为、范勇鹏为你解答!)

- Episode 75: What benefits does the success of China’s virus prevention model have for the development of China? Exploration of China’s new ideological liberation. (第 75 期：中国抗疫模式的成功对中国发展有何重要作用？张维为携手吴新文一起探讨中国新的思想解放)
- Episode 86: Looking back on the important events of 2020, not a single one failed to reveal Chinese confidence! Let Zhang Weiwei and Li Bo make you feel China’s victory in 2020 (第 86 期：回溯 2020 国内外大事件，无一不透露着中国自信！让张维为，李波带你感受 2020 的中国心胜)
- Episode 87: Why is China able to become a place with a vibrant economic society during the process of fighting the virus? Listen to Professor Zhang Weiwei talk about how the world has had its eyes opened regarding China. (第 87 期：中国经济为何能在全球疫情下成为一个经济社会生活满血复活的地方，听张维为教授谈谈世界睁眼看中国)

References to the episodes are provided with a link to the appropriate clip on YouTube.

Timestamps are included in the reference.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The main subject of this thesis is the study of ideas and ideological narratives and identifying what ideas Zhang’s “new discourse” emphasises as important for understanding China and the world. For this purpose, tools from discourse and ideological analysis have been useful.

Discourse analysis

The field of discourse analysis is largely rooted in the ideas of Michel Foucault (1926-1984). By *discourse* Foucault meant “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment.”²¹ For our purposes, this might refer to the language used in justifying the legitimacy of the CCP or criticizing liberal norms. According to Foucault, the particularity of

²¹ Stuart Hall, “The work of representation,” in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 72.

a discourse governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about, and influences how certain ideas are put into practice in social relations.²² At a certain point in time, different ways of defining the acceptable and intelligible way of talking about a subject will be dominant and appear in different parts of society. Whenever these “discursive events” refer to the same object, share the same style and support a similar strategy or institutional pattern, then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation.²³ In the context of Chinese discourse on national confidence and regime legitimacy we can assume from the outset that several actors who all argue in favour of strengthening the People’s Republic of China’s current party-state system will be part of the same discursive formation. Regarding Zhang Weiwei, we can link his discourse and ideas to those of other actors engaged in studying and talking publicly about China’s future.

As an analysis of discourse and ideas, it is not the purpose of this thesis to critically evaluate the veracity of the presented facts or try to ascertain the *real* meanings behind the discourse. The analyst must work with what has actually been said or written, or conspicuously left unsaid. The analytical work, then, lies in “exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality.”²⁴

Identifying “the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality” can tell us something about a group’s understanding of causal relationships. It affects what kind of meaning one ascribes to different social phenomena, and thereby it can tell us something about what one might do to achieve some specific end, or how one might judge a specific action in a certain context. For example, whether one views the institution of private property as generally beneficial to the least well-off in society or as the root of their problems will necessarily influence one’s normative judgements on the desirability of wealth distribution policies in society. Again, the question of the validity of these beliefs about causal relationships would remain outside the scope of discourse analysis, but it does tell us something about the underlying vision and discursive formation the speaker is engaging in. So, when Zhang claims that China’s history has been mainly peaceful and harmonious, this may be true or false, but we are focusing on the fact that it is presented as reality and the

²² Hall, “The work of representation,” 72-73.

²³ M. Cousins and A. Hussain, *Michel Foucault* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), 84-85. Quoted in Stuart Hall, “The work of representation.” In *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 73.

²⁴ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 22.

further implications of this piece of knowledge for a social vision. Discourse analysis can thereby help in the wider analysis of how Zhang Weiwei is communicating ideas of confidence in the Chinese system to the public. This is part of ideological discourse.

Ideological analysis

There are many different definitions of ideology, and the study of ideologies is the subject of much academic debate.²⁵ Typically, it is a word associated with one of the large “isms” of the 20th century, such as Communism, Liberalism, Fascism or Socialism. From a Marxist perspective, ideology is an oppressive feature of a class-divided society that works in the interest of the ruling class and will be non-existent in a communist utopia.²⁶ Although there are many different conceptions in discourse analysis, a dominant conception of ideology has a similarly pejorative connotation. Discussing the ideas of the Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser, Jørgensen and Phillips write that he “defines ideology as a system of representations that masks our true relations to one another in society by constructing imaginary relations. Thus, ideology is a distorted recognition of the real social relations. Althusser claims that all aspects of the social are controlled by ideology, which functions through the “repressive state apparatus” and the “ideological state apparatus.”²⁷ According to this understanding, the goal of analysis is to get beyond the ideological misrepresentations of reality. To have an ideology is therefore synonymous with being out of touch with reality.

In Jonathan Leader Maynard’s article “A map of the field of ideological analysis” he gives a summary of several different ways of defining and analysing ideologies in more neutral terms. For example, Michael Freeden thinks of ideologies as fulfilling “a vital and ubiquitous political need: providing the frameworks for people to understand their political worlds. They are built from concepts which are ‘essentially contested’, whose content is both indeterminate and disputed.”²⁸ Given this conceptual indeterminacy, this understanding views ideologies as being essentially characterised by the different ways they “decontest”

²⁵ Jonathan Leader Maynard, “A map of the field of ideological analysis,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, no. 3 (2013).

²⁶ Jonathan Wolff and David Leopold, “Karl Marx,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2021 Edition, (Stanford University, 2021).

²⁷ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 15.

²⁸ Maynard, “A map of the field of ideological analysis,” 302.

their component concepts and impose on them particular meanings. As representatives of two rival ideologies today, we can note that the United States government and the government of the People's Republic of China both proclaim to believe in the importance of equality, fairness, freedom, and democracy, but it is the particularities of the definitions and the varying degrees of significance attached to them that constitute the most important ideological differences. Much of the ideological work in China revolves around claiming ownership of these concepts or critiquing the interpretations of the other side, and it is exactly in this discourse Zhang Weiwei participates.

When making the case for the ubiquity of ideology within the realm of politics, Freedman highlights the following considerations. First, by politics we understand “any human interaction that involves power transactions, the ranking and distribution of significant goods, the mobilization of support, the organization of stability as well as instability, and decision-making for collectivities that includes the construction of—or resistance to—political plans and visions.”²⁹ Furthermore, we can only access the political world through decontesting the contested conceptual arrangements that enable us to make sense of that world. That is the essence of the ideological act, or thought-practice, and it is performed equally by regular actors in a political system, indeed, “by all who endeavour to fashion or react to the political world around them by developing languages of public participation rather than of investigation.”³⁰ From this we can see that Zhang Weiwei's program performs a distinctly ideological function. He makes a case in defence of, and thereby mobilises support for, a particular political system, and simultaneously constructs a vision of confidence in the *China Model* and provides intellectual weight to resistance to the perceived encroachment of Western (mainly American) meddling and hegemony. Although his explicit purpose is to investigate and use a comparative perspective to better understand China and the world, he also uses a language of participation as all his ideas build on a common understanding situated in a particular social context and the final judge of the validity of an idea is often the extent to which it can be said to be native to the culture in which it is being discussed. The participatory element is also revealed in the fact that ideological discourse must necessarily build upon the background of already existing political vocabulary, the understanding of which will be affected by the different variations of meaning a certain collective has ascribed

²⁹ Michael Freedman. “Ideology and political theory.” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 18, DOI: 10.1080/13569310500395834 (accessed 13 May 2021).

³⁰ Freedman, “Ideology,” 18.

to it through previous processes of contestation.³¹ To understand Zhang's call for a new discourse it will therefore be necessary to provide an overview of the main trends in ideological discourse in China that lay the foundations for his comments.

Social Visions and Common Sense

The ideological nature of discursive content may be revealed by that which is being taken for granted as common sense. The analyst may therefore not only observe what is being overtly challenged by speakers but also what is being presented as if it were unchallengeable.³² Arguments will then often appeal to values that are seen as acceptable by all, appealing to what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca called the "universal audience."³³ Furthermore, the analyst should be mindful of gaps in the discourse, not merely looking for themes that are presented as common sense but also for what is commonsensically left unsaid and what is presumed to be beyond controversy.³⁴ That is, the axiomatic assumptions of the given discourse.

This account of ideology can also be conceptualised as a vision of how the world works and what constitutes legitimate power relations within it. In his book *A conflict of visions* Thomas Sowell characterises social visions as a "sense of causation."³⁵ A vision is, in the words of Joseph Schumpeter, a "pre-analytic cognitive act."³⁶ It is more like a hunch or gut-feeling than an exercise in logic or factual verification. These come later and feed on the raw material provided by the vision – *if* causation proceeds as our vision conceives it to, *then* certain other consequences follow, and theory is the working out of what these consequences are.³⁷ According to this understanding facts do not "speak for themselves." They speak for or against competing theories. Facts divorced from theory or visions are mere isolated curiosities. More importantly, social visions set the agenda for both thought and action, as

³¹ Freeden, "Ideology," 18.

³² Michael Billig, "Discursive, Rhetorical and Ideological Messages." in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, edited by Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates. (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 220.

³³ C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971).

³⁴ Billig, "Discursive," 220.

³⁵ Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological origins of political struggles*. (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 6.

³⁶ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 80.

³⁷ Sowell, *Conflict of Visions*, 6.

they fill in the necessarily large gaps in individual knowledge and lay the foundation for that which is granted as *common sense*.³⁸

The role of rationally articulated ideas in concrete actions by leaders and institutions might be quite modest, yet the atmosphere in which such decisions take place may be dominated by a particular vision. Commenting on the role intellectuals have played throughout history, Sowell writes that “it has not been so much by whispering words of advice into the ears of political overlords as by contributing to the vast and powerful currents of conceptions and misconceptions that sweep human action along.”³⁹ We can then keep the following question in mind when studying Zhang’s ideological discourse; what are the main conceptions and misconceptions that he is communicating to the audience, and how do they contribute to an underlying vision?

The important function of ideology and social visions, then, is acting as the filter through which we render moral judgement on social facts that culminate in a more or less dominant conception of what is accepted as common sense. The fact of observing a beggar on the street might cause one person to condemn society for not having provided for him and feel it to be a moral outrage that society does not guarantee him housing and a job, whilst yet another person, animated by a different vision, might say, like Sumner in “The Forgotten Man,” that “a drunkard in the gutter is just where he ought to be, according to the fitness and tendency of things. Nature has set upon him the process of decline and dissolution by which she removes things which have survived their usefulness.”⁴⁰ In the context of debates on political legitimacy in contemporary China, the different emphasis one might put on the value and meaning of culture, history, territorial size, and a host of other factors, might all have an impact on how people *commonsensically* evaluate their lives and relations with institutions of power.

Ideology and authority

Acceptance of political authority largely relies upon ideological recognition. Institutional discourses derive their authority and legitimacy from the normative expectations and

³⁸ Sowell, *Conflict of Visions*, 7.

³⁹ Sowell, *Conflict of Visions*, 8.

⁴⁰ William Graham Sumner, *The Forgotten Man, and other essays*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 465.

collective meanings that provide the institution in question with its *raison d'être* (such as “working in the interest of the people” or for the “rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation”). One could say, like Alexander Wendt, that “Institutions are fundamentally cognitive entities that do not exist apart from actors’ ideas about how the world works.”⁴¹ The legitimacy of an institution in society is thereby determined by the extent to which it conforms to the expectations of the dominant vision. It can be explicitly formulated, but most of the time it is more akin to a feeling. As Gloria Davies writes in “Making Sense Through Ideology,” “continued collective participation in institutional practices is essential for the maintenance of rules and norms of conduct and communication, and for the ways of seeing and acting they produce to “feel right” to the participants. For it is only when the institutional practices in question feel right that they can remain (ideologically) authoritative.”⁴²

Zhang’s *imaginative map*

To reiterate, we are treating ideology as an interrelated set of concepts, assumptions, norms, values and ideas that (1) provides an explanatory account of reality and (2) outlines a path for political action and change. This, in turn, requires ideological systems to contain programmatic elements, such as claims about the role of the state or socio-economic arrangements on the one hand and epistemological elements, such as assumptions about the nature of truth, knowledge or human nature, on the other. In this sense, ideologies work as what Freedden calls “imaginative maps” that draw together facts that might themselves be disputed and hint towards the direction of legitimate and illegitimate claims to authority virtue.⁴³

By analysing the interpretation of current affairs and the communication of Zhang’s ideas to a general Chinese audience, it is the intent of this thesis to get a clearer picture of the *imaginative map* that is being created in China today. By identifying a coherent set of concepts, assumptions, norms, values and ideas, and the ways in which they are used to

⁴¹ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics.” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 399.

⁴² Gloria Davies, “Making Sense Through Ideology,” in *Law and the Party in China: ideology and organisation*, ed. Rogier Creemers and Susan Trevaskes, (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 73.

⁴³ Freedden, “Ideology,” 19.

create a particular explanatory account of reality, we can learn how the discourse in this show participates in the ideology legitimising the Chinese state.

Chapter 2: Ideology in Xi's China

In an appearance on the Canadian show *Munk Dialogues*, Zhang Weiwei was asked about the ideas driving Communist China's development and view of the world. The main point Zhang wanted to impart to his English-speaking audience was that China was socialist, not communist, and regardless, the West should not be worried about that because what China follows is a "sinified" version of communism and was not merely "another Soviet Union."⁴⁴ Furthermore, the difference between one-party and multi-party systems are not important. The important part is whether the system is capable of producing political power that can represent the whole; and for this, the Communist Party of China has been an extremely positive force, Zhang said – "if you don't know this you will not understand China."⁴⁵

The creation of a political discourse that can understand and explain China and the CCP in a positive way, both to Chinese people and foreigners, is an important part of the Party's quest for legitimacy. Suffering from the unoriginality of a Leninist one-party system with roots from 1920-30's Russia and Europe there has been a shift towards *relegitimising* the CCP through the use of traditional strands of Chinese belief systems, revitalized and presented in a new political context.⁴⁶ Everything is being "Sinified." Exactly what it means for an idea to be *Chinese* has come to be characterised by an appeal to the exceptionally "all-encompassing" nature of Chinese culture. At the same time intellectuals relying on critiques of liberalism and the economic inequality brought about by globalization have come out in support of one-party rule based on ideas of increasing state capacity and empowering the sovereign to exercise absolute authority and work in the name of the people. These are some of the main intellectual trends underlying ideological debates in China today.

⁴⁴ Munk Dialogues, "Zhang Weiwei," TheMunkDebates, November 26, 2020, YouTube video, 19:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCxsgTShFQc&t=1151s&ab_channel=TheMunkDebates (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁴⁵ Munk Dialogues, "Zhang Weiwei," 13:50.

⁴⁶ K. Brown and U. A. Bērziņa-Čerenkova, "Ideology in the Era of Xi Jinping," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 23, (2018): 327, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-9541-z> (accessed June 13, 2021).

2.1 Official ideology

Even though the age of revolutionary fervour under Mao is long gone, the Party has maintained an evolving ideology as a set of statements about reality as seen from China's vantage point, which at least served to forge Party unity, to answer hard questions facing the Party⁴⁷ Many China experts argue that since Xi Jinping became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, China has become distinctly more assertive and ideological.⁴⁸ This conclusion was provided with a particularly direct form of evidence from leaked Party documents in the now infamous "Document 9," that was publicized in April 2013.⁴⁹ The key elements of the communique were a warning from the political leadership to guard against seven political "perils," including "constitutionalism, civil society, "nihilistic" views of history, "universal values," and the promotion of "the West's view of media."⁵⁰ It also called on Party members to strengthen their resistance to "infiltration" by outside ideas, renew their commitment to work "in the ideological sphere," and to handle with renewed vigilance all ideas, institutions, and people deemed threatening to unilateral Party rule. Xi himself said in a 2013 speech that "the disintegration of a regime often starts from the ideological area. Political unrest and regime change may perhaps occur in a night, but ideological evolution is a long-term process. If the ideological defences are breached, other defences become very

⁴⁷ Wu G.G., *Paradoxes of China's Prosperity: Political Dilemmas and Global Implications*, 244. (London: World Scientific, 2015), 244.

⁴⁸ Stein Ringen, *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016): 4243; Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, "Ideology.;" Elizabeth C Economy, *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 10; Carrie Gracie, "China's Xi Jinping consolidates power with new ideology," *BBC News*, October 20, 2017, [China's Xi Jinping consolidates power with new ideology - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/health-42111111) (accessed June 13, 2021); Chris Buckley, "Xi Jinping Thought Explained: a new ideology for a new era," *New York Times*, February 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/world/asia/xi-jinping-thought-explained-a-new-ideology-for-a-new-era.html> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁴⁹ Economy, *Third Revolution*, 38.

⁵⁰ "Document 9: a ChinaFile Translation," November 8, 2013, [Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation | ChinaFile](https://chinafile.com/document-9-a-chinafile-translation/)

difficult to hold.”⁵¹ These statements were subsequently followed by calls for greater ideological control over Chinese Universities and the media.⁵²

Accompanying discussions on the evolution of Party ideology, there is a great deal of attention paid to the way in which the CCP is planning on changing international norms and standards.⁵³ At the Communist Party of China’s 19th National Congress in October 2017, Xi Jinping declared new mid-century goals, including China becoming “a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence,” and he described China as “moving closer to the centre of the world stage.”⁵⁴ In the same speech, Xi further argued that Socialism with Chinese Characteristics was “blazing a new trail” for other developing countries seeking to modernize and maintain their sovereignty. This focus on sovereignty is a recurring theme that underlies the idea that China’s normative challenge is mainly concerned with establishing a world order that is “safe for autocracy,” where universalist claims about individual rights do not jeopardize the authority of the Chinese Communist Party or inspire criticism of its internal policies.⁵⁵

Is the CCP likely to be able to influence international norms and discourse? In her book *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*, Elizabeth C. Economy concludes

⁵¹ Elizabeth C. Economy, *the Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 42.

⁵² Economy, *Third Revolution*, 39.

⁵³ “Global China: Global Governance and Norms,” Brookings Institution, October 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/product/global-china-global-governance-and-norms/> (accessed June 13, 2021); Reza Hasmath and Jennifer Hsu, “How Chinese Norms Are Going Global: From human rights to good governance, Chinese norms are spreading. How should Western governments react?” *The Diplomat*, November 16, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/how-chinese-norms-are-going-global/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁵⁴ Xi Jinping quoted in Daniel Tobin, “How Xi Jinping’s ‘New Era’ Should Have Ended U.S. Debate on Beijing’s Ambitions,” U.S. – China Economic and Security Review Commission, April 27, 2020, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/testimonies/SFR%20for%20USCC%20TobinD%2020200313.pdf> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁵⁵ Jessica Weiss, “A World Safe for Autocracy? China’s rise and the future of global politics,” *Foreign Affairs*, July, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-06-11/world-safe-autocracy> (accessed June 13, 2021).

that “Xi Jinping’s effort to prevent foreign idea and influences from permeating Chinese society and his campaigns to inculcate a stronger moral code within the party both reflect a singular weakness in the CCP’s leadership: the ability to project an attractive and compelling ideology.”⁵⁶ Economy wrote this line in 2018. Since then, the world has seen two more years of political polarization in the United States and the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has brought about challenges to governments all over the world. If supporters of the Chinese system are successful in creating a link in people’s minds between the expression of their ideology and system and positive results in the face of a global pandemic and criticisms of systemic issues in Western countries, the ideology might well seem more compelling, both to the Chinese people and others around the world.

The engagement of ideological discourse with the interpretation of current events provides us with fascinating questions with important implications for the development of Chinese society and international norms. Are Chinese leaders more competent than Western leaders? Did China implement the best policies in the face of the pandemic? Does successful handling of a crisis confer more legitimacy than democratic elections? It is in this realm Zhang Weiwei’s lectures in *China Now* exists, making sense of a worldwide crisis in a way that strengthens his central thesis that not only should China be confident in following its own path based on different values than those that are prevalent in the West, but that Chinese people should also be confident in the potential of their values being superior and providing valuable contributions to global civilization.

To better understand the conceptual framework for Zhang’s proposed *new discourse* the rest of this chapter will be dedicated to exploring the ideological trends pushing a *sinified* view of why the Chinese system and the CCP are an example of good governance and innovative ideas.

2.2 The quest for *Chineseness*

Many ideological discussions in China are characterised by a search for *Chineseness*. In “Sino-Speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History.” William A. Callahan examines the trend of an emerging discourse that appeals to China’s unique history as reason

⁵⁶ Economy, *Third Revolution*, 42.

for China's particular development, as well presenting an essentialized Chinese civilization that is culturally determined to rule Asia, if not the world. He calls this new form of discourse, *Sino-speak*, and dubs its proponents "neo-orientalists" because they impose a strict East/West geo-cultural framework reminiscent of a reversed form of Orientalist projects of the past.⁵⁷

The *Sino-speak* literature is full of determinist statements of "inevitables" and "inconceivables" that tell us what China can and cannot do, such as "it is inconceivable that Chinese politics will come to resemble those of the West"⁵⁸ Martin Jacques, author of the popular book *When China Rules the World*, makes the case for the natural authority and legitimacy of a unified Chinese state stemming from its claim to be the protector of a unique civilization and set of cultural traditions.⁵⁹ Similarly, Liu Mingfu 刘明福 in *The China Dream* 中国梦 argues that a world order led by China will be benevolent, since benevolent rule, or *wangdao* 王道, is an intrinsic characteristic of traditional Chinese culture.⁶⁰

The appeal to China's alleged peaceful culture has become a central part of Chinese foreign policy, and it is created by mixing facts with myths through selective use of the country's vast historical and cultural experiences.⁶¹ This can be seen in Hu Jintao's concept of *harmonious world* in the "China's Peaceful Development Road" white paper of 2005. It states that the Chinese nation has always been a peace-loving one and that Chinese culture and spirit has always featured their longing for peace and pursuit of harmony.⁶²

Strains of *Sino-speak* and *Chinese Exceptionalism* can be found within mainstream Chinese academia as well. In her book *Conditional Democracy: The Contemporary Debate on Political Reform in Chinese Universities*, Emilie Frenkiel notes that there seems to be a widespread consensus that since China is a country with "a drive to civilization", and "endowed with its own civilizational assets," it is therefore necessary to adopt a "unique regime for a unique culture."⁶³ Similarly, Gloria Davies documents several Chinese thinkers who maintain that the difference between Western and Chinese culture is of an essential

⁵⁷ Callahan, "Sino-speak," 37.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Zhang, *China Wave*, ch. 3. Kindle.

⁶⁰ Callahan, "Sino-speak," 39.

⁶¹ Zhang, "Chinese Exceptionalism," 306.

⁶² Callahan, *China Dreams*, 47.

⁶³ Frenkiel, *Conditional Democracy*, ch. 6. Kindle.

(*benzhi* 本质) rather than a temporal (*shijian* 时间) nature. They argue that the West simply does not understand many Chinese concepts. For example, the “centralist” (*jiquan* 集权) view of political power in the Chinese tradition is misinterpreted due to the Western belief in the phrase “absolute power corrupts absolutely.”⁶⁴ Some argue that, granted, this might be true of Western culture, but it does not hold true for China’s Confucian culture. In Chinese culture, on the other hand, centralised power should be disaggregated into the mutually constraining and beneficial relationships between “the sovereign” (*jun* 君) and “the people” (*min* 民), in which the sovereign is obliged to act on behalf of the people and the people, in turn, are obliged to be loyal to the sovereign.⁶⁵ From this centralised perspective the proponents of *Chinese essentialism* can make the case for the wisdom of traditional Chinese concepts of governance, such as “acting on behalf of the people” (*wei min* 为民), “pacifying the people” (*an min* 安民), “protecting the people” (*baomin* 保民), “gaining the people’s hearts” (*demin* 德民), and “cultivating the people” (*yang min* 养民).⁶⁶ One famous example of a scholar popularizing traditional Chinese concepts is Yan Xuetong 阎学通. In his popular book *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* he explains China’s intentions on the international stage using traditional concepts, such as closeness (*qin* 亲); credibility (*cheng* 诚); beneficence (*hui* 惠); inclusiveness (*rong* 容).⁶⁷ What is more, these are seen to be intrinsically Chinese and explain why Western international relations theories will not apply to the Middle Kingdom.

It is important to note that in many interviews with Frenkiel scholars were more interested in discovering the essence of that which is *Chinese* rather than theorizing about an abstract political ideal. For example, Kang Xiaoguang 康晓光 argues his proposed system based on Confucianism is ideal for China because “Chinese culture values communitarianism,” but no other argument for the desirability of communitarianism is made.⁶⁸ It is apparently enough to

⁶⁴ Davies, *Worrying about China*, 138.

⁶⁵ Davies, *Worrying*, 138.

⁶⁶ Davies, *Worrying*, 138.

⁶⁷ Yan Xuetong, *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁶⁸ Frenkiel, *Conditional Democracy*, ch. 6. Kindle.

point to the myth, or narrative, of the “essence of Chinese culture” as justification for establishing a certain political system, and according to some analysts, forms of this view have become so accepted that citations of ancient Chinese sayings and the use of traditional concepts are now practically a prerequisite for Chinese leaders’ policy speeches.”⁶⁹

The quest for *Chineseness* has many different interpretations – and for some that multitude of answers is indeed a key part of *Chineseness*. Citing a political manifesto written by Beijing-based scholars Zhang Yiwu, Zhang Fa and Wang Yichuan penned in aid of promoting *Chineseness* as the “core of a new discursive framework,” Davies writes “Chineseness possesses a breadth of vision that accommodates all things... In all matters material and spiritual, [Chineseness] does not discriminate between socialism and capitalism, East and West, old and new; it is interested only in whether a thing is of benefit or harm. All beneficial things should be appropriated [*nalai*] and passed on whereas all harmful things should be put aside and rejected.”⁷⁰ In this view, the defining characteristic of *Chineseness* is its pragmatism and boundless potential. Incorporating the beneficial and doing away with the harmful is also closely connected to the widely used practice of adding “with Chinese Characteristics” to abstract concepts.

2.3 Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

A symptom of the quest for *Chineseness* is the common practice of describing the Chinese system of government as “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.” Here, also, the *Chineseness* implies an all-inclusive attitude to whatever is useful. One of the scholars who have written extensively on the topic is Jiang Shigong 强世功. Jiang is no mere Party propagandist and is worth paying attention to. He is a well-respected legal scholar and professor at Peking University Law School, focusing on constitutional law.⁷¹ His work on Chinese constitutionalism has been discussed by international scholars, culminating in a special 2014 issue of the research journal *Modern China*.

In the essay “Philosophy and History: Interpreting the ‘Xi Jinping Era’ through Xi’s Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP,” Jiang Shigong defends one-Party rule and

⁶⁹ Pillsbury, *Hundred-year Marathon*, ch. 6. Kindle.

⁷⁰ Davies, *Worrying*, 94.

⁷¹ Jiang’s Beijing University website is available at: <https://www.law.pku.edu.cn/sz/zzjs/hl/1910.htm>

the Communist tradition under the leadership of Xi Jinping in what aims to be an authoritative statement of the new political orthodoxy. His essay covers much ground and attempts to clarify the meaning of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (SCC). To Jiang, SCC consists of a handful of basic principles and ideas that must be continually explored and developed in practice over time. In his words, “‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ is not adding Chinese characteristics to an already defined ‘socialist framework.’ Rather, it uses China’s lived experience to explore and define what, in the final analysis, ‘socialism’ is. For this reason, ‘socialism’ is not ossified dogma, but instead an open concept awaiting exploration and definition.”⁷²

Jiang concludes with a bold vision for the future based on an explicit appeal to *Chinese exceptionalism*. The Sinification of communism, according to Jiang, does not mean that China has a concrete model that challenges different ways of doing things but rather aims at absorbing all positive elements from throughout the world from its basis in Chinese civilization and tradition. This is exceptional because “while Western culture consistently attempts to arrive at the resolution of any antagonism in favour of one of the original positions, Chinese culture consistently seeks out and finds the unity within the antagonism, which results in a pluralism based on ideas of harmony.”⁷³ China will quietly change the world and, ultimately, will create a new order for human civilization that both transcends and absorbs Western civilization. In this process, Jiang writes, “China will truly display a sort of cultural self-confidence and political maturity.”

According to this view, a political authority should not be bound by strict procedures. Indeed, socialism can never be defined by a set of procedures, because it is constantly evolving and undergoing a process of definition. Since the CCP is the entity in charge of leading this process, any dilution of its authority would be problematic. This disregard for procedural norms is a common feature of an intellectual grouping called *the New Left* that focuses on

⁷² Jiang Shigong, “Philosophy and History: Interpreting the ‘Xi Jinping Era’ through Xi’s Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP,” *Reading the China Dream*, 2018, <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-shigong-philosophy-and-history.html> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁷³ Jiang, “Philosophy and History.”

state capacity, substantive definitions of democracy and challenging Western liberal conceptions of rule of law.⁷⁴

2.4 The New Left and Chinese Democracy

Since the 2000's, the thinkers associated with the New Left have taken up the role of establishment intellectuals, serving or supporting the Party.⁷⁵ Their focus is mainly on the substantive nature of the state, calling for flexibility in sovereign power to increase the state's capacity to work in the interest of the people. According to Cui Zhiyuan 崔之元, one of the main proponents of the New Left, China needs to maintain the capacity for "institutional innovation" in order to secure socialism defined as "economic democracy and political democracy."⁷⁶ This, Cui claims, is *popular democracy* (*renminzhuquan* 人民主权) which "guarantees that the organization of all economic institutions will be constructed and regulated to pursue the interests of the greatest number of people."⁷⁷ The members of the New Left are thereby in the forefront of contesting the meaning of *true democracy*.

True Democracy – representative or representational?

The general trend in Chinese debates on democracy is to focus on substantive definitions and the idea of a distinctively Chinese conception of democracy.⁷⁸ Emilie Frenkiel concludes that most scholars are united by a sense of patriotism and the conviction that the purpose of the state is to defend the *general interest* of the people, and that while most scholars claim to

⁷⁴ The New Left are largely defined by their concern for questions of economic inequality and social justice that they blame on neo-liberalism and China's market reforms. They tend to advocate for some form of "third way" way system that blends the socialist classics with modern critical theory (many of them studied in the West). For links to English translations of works by many influential intellectuals associated with the group, see David Ownby's website, "Reading the China Dream:" <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/new-left.html>

⁷⁵ Shi Anshu, Francois Lachapelle and Matthew Galway, "The recasting of Chinese socialism: The New Left since 2000," *China Information* 32, no. 1 (March 2018): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18760416> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁷⁶ Shi, "The recasting of Chinese socialism," 142.

⁷⁷ Shi, "The recasting of Chinese socialism," 142.

⁷⁸ Frenkiel, *Conditional Democracy*, introduction. Kindle.

believe that China will become democratic they have their own diverse conceptions of what *true* democracy is and reject an unconditional adoption of Western democratic institutions.⁷⁹

The quest for *true* democracy is mainly concerned with criticising Western liberal standards and arguing for the legitimacy of different institutional designs based on different cultural experiences. Two of China's leading New Left intellectuals and main proponents of *democracy with Chinese Characteristics* are featured in the book *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China*; Gan Yang 甘陽 and Wang Shaoguang 王绍光.⁸⁰ In the essay “Liberalism: for the aristocrats or for the people?” Gan Yang provides a defence of “mass democracy” as a “third-way-ism” meant to “transcend radicalism and conservatism simultaneously.”⁸¹ Stating the need to “reject using liberalism to negate democracy; reject invoking the English Revolution to discredit the French Revolution; reject citing Burke to discredit Rousseau; and reject using all of them to negate twentieth-century Chinese revolutionary history,” Gan guides the reader through a broad array of Western thinkers.⁸² His aim is to demonstrate that the tension between elitist and mass forms of liberalism have been evident all throughout the Western liberal tradition, and that there is little reason to argue that liberalism will work any better in China.

Whereas Gan takes a philosophical approach, Wang tackles the issue of Chinese democracy from a political science perspective.⁸³ In Wang's essay “Representative Democracy and Representational Democracy” he provides a critique of American style electoral democracy that would not be out of place at any American University. This kind of *representative* democracy (in Chinese he calls it *daiyixing minzhu* 代议性民主) fails to provide authority and accountability, he argues, and is therefore a modern betrayal of the original meaning of

⁷⁹ Frenkiel, *Conditional Democracy*, ch. 6. Kindle.

⁸⁰ Gan Yang (b. 1952) is a major figure in the thought world of contemporary China. He studied at Western philosophy, first at Peking University and subsequently at the University of Chicago. He is currently dean of the Boya Institute at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou and holds concurrent positions at Tsinghua University and other institutions. Wang Shaoguang (b. 1954) is emeritus professor of government administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and a Schwarzman scholar at Tsinghua University.

⁸¹ Gan Yang, “Liberalism: for the aristocrats or for the people?” in *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel, Timothy Cheek and David Ownby, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 213.

⁸² Gan, “Liberalism,” 210.

⁸³ Wang Shaoguang, “Representative Democracy and Representational Democracy,” in *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel, Timothy Cheek and David Ownby, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 222.

democracy as the people being the masters of their own affairs.⁸⁴ Wang takes a step further and provides a robust defence of *representational* (he calls this *daibiao minzhu* 代表民主) democracy, which is what he claims is being developed in China. By “representational,” he means that despite its “non-democratic forms” Chinese democracy can respond to the wishes of the people in an effective manner.⁸⁵ This is a substantive conception of democracy, and Wang argues that this is how the Chinese people themselves understand and appreciate the concept. The Chinese people’s main concern, he says, is “good governance,” and there is “more emphasis on content and substance than form and procedure.”⁸⁶ As long as public opinion can be said to view the state in a favourable way and experience their needs as being met the system can claim to be practising representational democracy. In the conclusion of his essay Wang includes a quote from a Taiwanese scholar who comments positively on the Chinese state’s capacity to be responsive to the people's needs: “because of China’s particular cultural tradition and revolutionary legacy, as well as because of the particular position it occupies in the world, it is currently constructing an alternative system of public discourse regarding political legitimacy, charting its own course of political modernization.”⁸⁷

Together, Gan and Wang’s essays provide a foundation for confidence in exploring alternative models of political legitimacy grounded in an affirmation of the value of democracy. Wang proposes a framework that is, in theory, able to deal with constant change in an effort to improve the quality of its governance – much in the same way Jiang Shigong conceptualizes Socialism with Chinese Characteristics as a process that absorbs all that is beneficial.

2.5 Statists and the Rule of Law

A crucial part of political ideology is the understanding of the rule of law and the legitimate exercise of sovereign power. Law has played an important part of CCP rhetoric since the Communiqué of the seminal Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee in 1978.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Wang, “Representative Democracy,” 233.

⁸⁵ Wang, “Representative Democracy,” 235.

⁸⁶ Wang, “Representative Democracy,” 229.

⁸⁷ Wang, “Representative Democracy,” 257.

⁸⁸ Jacques DeLisle, “Law in the China Model 2.0: Legality, Developmentalism and Leninism under Xi Jinping,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 103, no. 26 (September 2016), 68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1206299> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Ever since, Party leaders have issued their own slogans calling for rule of law in various ways. Jiang Zemin called for “ruling the country by law” (*yifa zhiguo* 依法治国) and “building a socialist rule of law state” (*jianshe shehuizhuyi fazhi guojia* 建设社会主义法治国家); Hu Jintao labelled the constitution a “fundamental” (*genben dafa* 根本大法) and inviolable law to be implemented by all state and private entities; and Xi Jinping declared on the anniversary of the 1982 constitution that China “must firmly establish throughout society the authority of the constitution and the law.”⁸⁹

The CCP has long claimed to be striving towards deeper implementation of the “Rule of Law”. In Chinese 法治 *fazhi* more closely resembles *Rule by Law*, and reveals the instrumentalist approach the CCP has taken to the development of law in China. This has become especially apparent in the Xi-era, with Party documents declaring law “an important tool/device” (*zhongqi* 重器) for governing the country, proclaiming the “rule of law” and “Party leadership” to be “identical/inseparable,” and ordering stronger and better Party leadership in rule-of-law work.⁹⁰

The intellectual roots of the instrumentalist view of the law can be found in the ideas of a group often referred to as *Statists* which have become very popular among the New Left. The statist three main ideas can be summarised as the superiority of political sovereignty over the rule of law, a critique of the *judicialization* of politics and the need to *repoliticize* the state, and a critique of universalism and an assertion of *Chinese Exceptionalism*.⁹¹ The liberal conception of the rule of law is concerned with constraining sovereign power within legal norms. The concept of *rule by law* on the other hand, views sovereign power as being free from the constraints of the law. Exceptions to the norm become possible because power has subsumed the law under itself, and exceptions become a systemic feature of the legal order.⁹²

Whereas debates in the 1990’s revolved around the desirability of market reforms or welfare protection, in the 2000’s the main controversy shifted from *liberty vs. equality* to *law vs.*

⁸⁹ DeLisle, “Law in the China Model,” 76.

⁹⁰ DeLisle, “Law in the China Model,” 81.

⁹¹ Sebastian Veg, “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals: Law, Sovereignty, and “Repoliticization,”” *The China Journal*, no. 82. (July 2019), 23, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1086/702687> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁹² Flora Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, (Leiden: BRILL, 2010), 23.

politics.⁹³ The proponents of state sovereignty view the discretionary powers of the state as above, and superior to the constraints of the constitution. This view is connected to a tradition of political thought in China, which Peter Zarrow has described as “the view that the state – the institutions of governance – is the ultimate locus of sovereignty, self-legitimizing, and the highest source of good.”⁹⁴ According to Sebastian Veg,

“As constitutionalism became the new referential for liberals in the early 2000’s, a rival discourse developed among authoritarian legal scholars who sought to reclaim the law as a tool for a type of governance that prioritizes ideology (“politics”) and sovereignty (the power of the state) over liberal principles, although it remains ostensibly rules-based (thus co-opting and incorporating the ideal favoured by constitutionalists.)”⁹⁵

Carl Schmitt and the State of Exception

Many of the legal scholars, and other statist intellectuals, engaged in the advocacy of establishing new norms prioritizing state sovereignty over the law were greatly inspired by the ideas of Carl Schmitt.⁹⁶ Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) was a conservative German legal, constitutional, and political theorist. Schmitt is often considered to be one of the most important critics of liberalism, parliamentary democracy, and liberal cosmopolitanism.⁹⁷ He has become quite a controversial figure due to his active involvement with Hitler’s National

⁹³ Charlotte Kroll, “Reading the Temperature Curve: Sinophone Schmitt-Fever in Context and Perspective,” in *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss in the Chinese Speaking World: Reorienting the Political*, ed. Kai Marchal and Carl K. Y. Shaw (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017), 109.

⁹⁴ Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885–1924*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4.

⁹⁵ Veg, “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals,” 26-27.

⁹⁶ Xi Libin, Haig Patapan, “Schmitt Fever: The use and abuse of Carl Schmitt in contemporary China,” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 1, no. 18 (January 2020), 130, <https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moaa015> (accessed June 13, 2021).

⁹⁷ Vinx, Lars, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), “Carl Schmitt,” <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/schmitt/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Socialist Party, providing an influential defence of the legality of Hitler's seizure of power and being bestowed with the title of State Councillor of Prussia.

Schmitt is most famous for his line "the Sovereign is he who decides on the exception." By *exception*, Schmitt means the appropriate moment for stepping outside the rule of law in the public interest.⁹⁸ In a state of emergency, then, the sovereign must have the power to act. As a source of legitimacy for the sovereign, Schmitt appealed to ideas about equality and the "will of the people."⁹⁹ These in turn rely upon his concept of the *friend-enemy distinction* lying at the heart of politics. For Schmitt, political equality meant a relationship of co-belonging between the ruler and the ruled. As long as both ruler and ruled were *friends* with identical values and views about who the enemy was, a polity was democratic. Schmitt thereby argued that the parliamentary system is inconsistent with democratic principles because it is insufficient for expressing the will of the people. In this sense, a dictatorship, though illiberal, is not necessarily anti-democratic.¹⁰⁰ At once one can see parallels to Gan and Wang's ideas regarding democracy as an expression of the will of the people, and to the allegedly *Chinese* idea of reciprocal relations between the ruler and the ruled.

This idea of empowering the sovereign to carry out the will of the people has a long history with Chinese leadership and poses a problem for principles of separation of power.¹⁰¹ In fact, any dilution of discretionary sovereign power can be portrayed as definitely *anti-democratic*. Such a sentiment has been expressed explicitly by the CCP:

"Separation of power is not a democratic principle; rather, it represents the elites' rule against the rule of the people. China does not practice separation of power because we seek the most thorough and extensive people's democracy. All powers belong to the people, and all state power must be exercised in a unified manner by the People's Congress, and must never be shared by any other organs. All other organs, such as judiciary and inspection, are generated by the People's Congress and are accountable

⁹⁸ Vinx, "Carl Schmitt."

⁹⁹ See Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship: From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle*, trans. Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ Xi, "Schmitt Fever," 139.

¹⁰¹ Perry, "The Populist Dream," 906.

to it, being placed under its supervision. There is a division of duties, but no separation of power.”¹⁰²

This is an expression of the populist view that the goal is to empower government to carry out the *will of the people*, not restrain it by suppressing power within a cage of judicial procedures. In Flora Sapio’s book *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, she lays out the following thesis, that reveals the influence of Schmittian-inspired principles in China’s legal structure: First, a zone of lawlessness is part of the legal order in China. Second, a zone of lawlessness is part of normality. Third, the zone of lawlessness exists to protect sovereign power from alleged or actual threats.¹⁰³

An important theme developed by the statist is the critique of the judicialization *sifahua* 司法化 of politics, defined by the active involvement of courts in interpreting the constitution and developing a jurisprudence of constitutional rights.¹⁰⁴ These scholars provide theoretical resources justifying the supremacy of politics over law. As early as 2003, Jiang Shigong called constitutional review a Trojan horse for constitutionalism (and ultimately regime change). He argued that the constitution should not only be *sifahua*, but also *politicized* (*zhengzhihua* 政治化).¹⁰⁵ The law according to Jiang, “limits the acts of the masses through coercion” so the politicization is necessary to “mobilize the masses” in the name of democracy. A commitment to regular legal procedure in a time of emergency, according to this view, may well run counter to the interests of the people, and therefore a higher common good requires the use of flexible legal measures.¹⁰⁶ The case for this kind of system is often made in China by appealing to the people’s substantive needs and makes the claim that public order, clean governance and a fair provision of public goods – not abstract normative principles – are the actual concerns of citizens.¹⁰⁷ Again, we see that *democracy*, defined as a substantive condition provided for the people, can be viewed as a justification for maintaining a *zone of lawlessness*.

¹⁰² Pan, “Toward a Consultative,” 23.

¹⁰³ Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Veg, “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals,” 35.

¹⁰⁵ Veg, “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals,” 36.

¹⁰⁶ Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, 7.

Most political systems contain mechanisms by which one might temporarily suspend the legal order, but the systemic exceptionalism of Chinese law contains mechanisms that can be used to suspend rights even in the absence of a general suspension of the legal order.¹⁰⁸ One of the main justifications for this *zone of lawlessness* in China is the need for the legal system to preserve a space of flexibility to cope with emergencies, just like the current Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁹ We can also draw parallels to lockdown measures in various cities, and the “re-education camps” in Xinjiang as examples of situations where citizens ordinary legal rights have been suspended in the name of some higher goal defined by the Party.

At the end of the day, the ideal of rule of law and legal legitimacy are contested topics, and the CCP will need to work hard to challenge the dominant liberal conception. As Randall Peerenboom writes,

“China lacks the soft power to challenge the global dominance of the liberal democratic conception of rule of law. Liberals will continue to push for reforms consistent with the globally dominant conception, and critics at home and abroad will, fairly or unfairly, continue to assess reforms and measure China against the standard of liberal democratic rule of law.”¹¹⁰

If China wishes to influence the dominant standard, much might then rely upon the extent to which people perceive a link between the Party reserving an unchallengeable degree of political flexibility to act and China’s degree of success relative to countries that espouse liberal legal norms. Highlighting the alleged success of political action at home whilst critiquing the detrimental effects of judicialization abroad serves to construct such a link.

¹⁰⁸ Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Sapio, *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Randall Peerenboom, “Fly High the Banner of Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics: What does the 4th Plenum Decision Mean for Legal Reforms in China?” *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 7 no. 1 (September 2015), 72.

2.6 Summary - Making sense of China and the World

The ideas discussed in this chapter provide some of the conceptual background for understanding Zhang Weiwei's call for a new discourse. Many of the ideas that would seem to pose an explicit challenge to liberal norms, such as the call for a centralised authority above the law, are explained by an appeal to their *Chineseness*. As Zhang said on the Munk Dialogue; communism has been *Sinified*, and if you do not get this you will not understand China.

As we have seen, the appeal to *Chineseness* has become one of the dominant justifications and sources of legitimacy for the current Party-system. This also incorporates varying degrees of claims of Chinese exceptionalism (or *Sino-speak*, as Callahan dubbed it), that praise the intrinsically benevolent and peaceful nature of Chinese culture. Furthermore, Chinese civilization is defined by its *all-encompassing* nature, that appropriates that which is useful, and therefore eventually, thinkers like Jiang Shigong claim, will "create a new order for human civilization that both transcends and absorbs Western civilization." Also, due to what they argue are fundamentally different ways of thinking between Western and Chinese civilization, an understanding of the nature of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (which is constantly in the process of being defined through China's lived experience) is possibly beyond the capabilities of most Westerners.

Further justification for confidence in the Chinese system is found in the New Left intellectuals' critique of liberalism and their affirmation of judging *true democracy* by completely substantive measures of good governance. As they claim the act of governing for the good of the people demands state capacity and a sovereign unbound by the cumbersome procedural norms of the law, they have found inspiration in calls to *repoliticise* the state in thinkers such as Carl Schmitt.

With the help of these ideas the CCP has taken upon itself the authority to lead and define what Socialism is and, ultimately, what it means to be Chinese. As there is no direct competition in China with which one can compare the Party's performance, international comparisons become all the more important. A show like *China Now* could therefore be viewed as playing an important role in communicating ideas to the public and providing a lens through which to view China's system in a comparatively positive light. These ideas

interact with the imaginative maps of ordinary people in Chinese society and influence their common sense of the legitimacy of authority and their country's place in the world. As a public figure, respected both in China and abroad, we can learn a lot about the developments of popular ideas by observing how Zhang makes sense of the world.

To get a clearer picture of how ideology is created and communicated in China today, we now turn to an analysis of Zhang Weiwei's ideas and discourse in both the book and the show *China Now*.

Chapter 3: Analysis of *China Now*

3. 1 Looking back on the year 2020 – Polarization and pandemic politics

In an end of year episode of *China Now*, meant to recap the year 2020, Zhang looks back on the challenges presented by the Covid-pandemic with an air of confidence. His leading statement: if China's system cannot conquer the virus, nobody can.¹¹¹ The apparent chaos in the West and China's handling of the pandemic is highlighted as a major reason to have confidence in the Chinese system - "What is system confidence? THIS! What is a great country? THIS!"¹¹² As noted in the introduction, 2020 is apparently the year where the United States lost its magic, and China and the world realised it is not special. Conversely, Zhang's triumphant tone implies that the year 2020 is the year China and the world realised how special China is.

The major theme in this episode is a recurring one throughout Zhang's discourse; the idea that China values the human right to life and acts as a responsible authority whilst Western governments have done the opposite. Further commenting on the American government's apparent lack of care for the lives of its citizens, Zhang suggests an amendment to the Chinese translation of the Black Lives Matter slogan "black people's lives are also lives" (*hei ren de ming ye shi ming* 黑人的命也是命) to the more general "American people's lives are also lives" (*meiguo ren de ming ye shi ming* 美国人的命也是命).¹¹³ The message is clear: America is in no position to lecture China on human rights violations when there are so many problems to be dealt with at home. The West should mind its own business rather than criticise China.

¹¹¹ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 86: Looking back on the important events of 2020, not a single one failed to reveal Chinese confidence! Let Zhang Weiwei and Li Bo make you feel China's victory in 2020 (第 86 期: 回溯 2020 国内外大事件, 无一不透露着中国自信! 让张维为, 李波带你感受 2020 的中国心胜)," China DragonTV Official, (no date listed), YouTube video, 07:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm8CMthpasw&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHSG3QEIfbW&index=16&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹¹² Zhang, "Episode 86," 07:00.

¹¹³ Zhang, "Episode 86," 05:30.

This theme of Western hypocrisy and “mind your own business” mentality is a well-known part of Chinese discourse, but in Zhang’s show there is a new twist. Whereas previously the focus would be on the relative differences in priorities and needs between China as a developing country and other more developed countries, implying that China might one day become like the United States when it reached a certain level of development, now Zhang is explicitly proclaiming the Chinese systems merits, and even superiority over Western democracies. This is being done in a calm, rational manner (accompanied by soothing music and a receptive audience) and an appeal to facts over ideology. Paired with the well-known Chinese narrative of a righteous rise after the “hundred years of humiliation” and with an underdog status in an international community dominated by Western ideas and discourse, it is an understandably attractive vision for a Chinese audience.

3.2 The New Discourse – Building confidence in China by deconstructing the West

Zhang Weiwei believes China needs to construct a new system of discourse. This is the underlying theme in both the book and the television series *China Now*. It is not enough for China to make great achievements and act successfully. Rather, he says, Chinese people “also have to speak successfully. We must explain China clearly. Behind that lies confidence in the path and confidence of language. Only then can China’s rise be smooth and wonderful!”¹¹⁴

The expressed purpose of the show is to have a first-rate intellectual show that is open and capable of discussing any and all questions.¹¹⁵ Explaining China’s new predicament, Zhang

¹¹⁴ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 86.

¹¹⁵ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 87: Why is China able to become a place with a vibrant economic society during the process of fighting the virus? Listen to Professor Zhang Weiwei talk about how the world has had its eyes opened regarding China. (第 87 期: 中国经济为何能在全球疫情下成为一个经济社会生活满血复活的地方, 听张维为教授谈谈世界睁眼看中国),” China DragonTV Official, January 4, 2020, YouTube video, 43:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y093fy5X0QQ&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinH5kG3QEIfbW&index=15&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

quotes Xi Jinping, saying “in 1949 with the establishment of New China, we solved the problem of suffering attack (*ai da* 挨打); with the success of Reform and Opening Up we solved the problem of suffering hunger (*ai e* 挨饿); in today’s new age of the rise of China we need to solve the problem of suffering insults (*ai ma* 挨骂).”¹¹⁶ Zhang can therefore be said to be attempting to solve China’s particular problem of the day: suffering criticism by the West.

These insults come from the West but also from people within China who are steeped in what Zhang calls “the hegemonic system of Western discourse.”¹¹⁷ It is therefore important, he writes, for China to liberate herself from Western discourse by deconstructing it (*jiiegou* 解构) and constructing (*jiangou* 建构) a new one of her own. He advocates constructing a comprehensive, penetrating and powerful system of discourse. Comprehensive and penetrating in its ability to explain China’s accomplishments and problems in a way regular people in China and abroad can understand; and powerful in its ability to counter the challenge posed by Western discourse.¹¹⁸ As a haunting reminder of what happens if a country completely imbibes the critical discourse of the West, Zhang uses the fall of the Soviet Union. The greatest lesson for China, therefore, is that not having a self-confident discourse able to provide a moral justification for its system is an existential danger.¹¹⁹

“Forceful and lofty” discourse

In the book, Zhang frequently uses Ren Zhengfei 任正非, CEO of Huawei, as an example of “forceful and lofty (*zhidi yousheng* 掷地有声)” Chinese discourse. In the same way Zhang portrays Huawei as having claimed its place in the world despite the efforts of competitors, China must do the same on the international stage:

“The rise of China’s discourse faces an unavoidable obstacle just like the rise of Huawei faced an unavoidable obstacle. Huawei’s obstacle was Western technological monopoly, but through its own unremitting efforts Huawei was able to

¹¹⁶ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 86.

¹¹⁷ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 86.

¹¹⁸ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 87.

¹¹⁹ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 85.

break that monopoly and demand the respect of its competitors. What is in the way of Chinese discourse? Western discourse, behind which lies the entirety of Western political and cultural soft-power. But this obstacle we definitely must overcome, and we definitely will overcome.”¹²⁰

That many people still find it hard to defend the Chinese system Zhang blames on the “deep infiltration” (*shentou* 渗透) of Western human rights discourse. This has led many defenders of the Chinese system to adopt what Zhang views as a bad strategy. The correct answer to accusations of human rights abuse and lack of political rights in China is not, he says, to make the weak argument that China is a developing country that cannot be expected to adhere to the superior moral standards of Western countries. This cedes the moral high ground to China’s competitors. The stronger approach, Zhang argues, is to view the world from a Chinese perspective and judge the United States according to the United Nations human rights standard.¹²¹ If the US is to point a finger at “alleged human rights abuses” in China, their government must first answer for the abuses committed by launching the Iraq War.¹²² Claims by the United States that they are worried about human rights abuses are thereby treated as a hypocritical smokescreen by a nation dealing in double-standards – “the West’s meddling in the name of human rights has led to turmoil. An important part of solving the problem of “suffering insults” is to dare to talk about human rights in the rest of the world and point out the negative human rights consequences of the West’s so-called human rights diplomacy.”¹²³

Pandemic politics and Thought Liberation

The global Covid-19 pandemic has presented Zhang with a golden opportunity to point the critical spotlight on the West, and he presents China’s handling of the pandemic as a watershed moment for the spread of China’s new discourse. The system confidence he claims has come about as a result of this is part of what he calls a “Thought Liberation” (*sixiang*

¹²⁰ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 107.

¹²¹ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 88.

¹²² Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 88.

¹²³ Zhang Weiwei, *China Now*, 124.

jiefang 思想解放).¹²⁴ This liberation is cast as part of a process of “de-americanization.” Having witnessed so much dysfunction in America, the Chinese people have, according to Zhang, received a great confidence boost in their own discourse and values because it has “in the minds of the great majority of Chinese, forced the Western world and Western discourse off its sacred place. This is the great thought liberation that will effectively push the Chinese people towards the centre of the global stage of economics and politics.”¹²⁵ Not only does Zhang predict that China’s handling of the virus will strengthen its position in the world, but he also claims it will have a correspondingly serious impact on American institutional influence: “This pandemic might be able to thoroughly change American culture and politics... Truly, this corona pandemic challenges the health of humanity, at the same time it also challenges humanity’s political institutions and cultural ideas.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 75: What benefits does the success of China’s virus prevention model have for the development of China? Exploration of China’s new ideological liberation. (第 75 期: 中国抗疫模式的成功对中国发展有何重要作用? 张维为携手吴新文一起探讨中国新的思想解放),” China DragonTV Official, October 12, 2020, YouTube video, 06:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maidMcAOTII&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=27&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹²⁵ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 63: What precious values have been displayed by China’s virus prevention efforts? (第 63 期: 中国在抗“疫”过程中展现了哪些宝贵的价值观? 这些价值观背后又有着哪些传统文化的基因和现代性? 张维为、范勇鹏为你解答),” China DragonTV Official, July 1, 2020, YouTube video, 21:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YxWNoCeGs8&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=39&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹²⁶ Zhang, “Episode 63,” 12:10.

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, one of Zhang's main claims was that the Chinese people are increasing in cultural self-awareness.¹²⁷ The effect of this self-awareness is that people demand the right to pursue their own path and hold fast on the notion that "China's actions don't need the West's approval!"¹²⁸ Indeed, the importance of sovereignty, independence and Chinese characteristics can be said to be at the heart of Zhang's new discourse:

"The actions of socialist China don't need the approval of capitalist America, just like how China speaking Chinese doesn't need the approval of the English-speaking world. This is commonsensical. We developed the atomic bomb, the hydrogen bomb, and did the United States approve? Of course not. But if China needs to develop it will develop... The reasoning is really very simple. Socialist China is an independent, sovereign country. The People's Republic was fought for. China has its own unique political system, its own unique system of national defence, its own unique system of science and technology, it has the world's most complete industrial system, so if China did not have this capability how would it rise to today's position? How would it accomplish today's comprehensive rise?"¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 7: Analysis of the history of the Chinese Civilizational state. What is the difference between Western modern civilization and Chinese historical civilization? Will the rise of China be able to maintain its unique historical civilization? (第 7 期: 中国文明型国家历史进程大解析 西方现代型文明与中国历史性文明有什么不同? 中国崛起是否应坚持独有的历史性文明?)," China DragonTV Official, February 25, 2019, YouTube video, 03:45, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79r_p07UWiU&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=95&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹²⁸ Zhang, "Episode 7," 06:20.

¹²⁹ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 32: "Chinese Socialism" is a success-producing magic weapon! Zhang Weiwei deeply analyses why China is not a "state capitalist" country. (第 32 期: "中国社会主义"才是制胜法宝! 张维为深度解析为何中国不是"国家资本主义"?)," China DragonTV Official, August 26, 2019, YouTube video, 23:00,

Zhang believes that given time the Chinese model will not only be able to compete with the West but will also prove superior.¹³⁰ Although the West's discourse still holds the moral high-ground internationally, Zhang says "I believe that time and history is on our side, and eventually the entire world will develop in this direction. The Western system also needs to reform and develop in this direction, otherwise it will decline even faster."

What we can see is a clear cultural and national confidence that portrays the handling of the pandemic as proof of its superiority. Indeed, the implications of the moment are such that Western countries must give in to a shift of "humanity's political institutions and cultural ideas" in favour of China's superior model. One of the core elements of this model, for Zhang, is his proposal of a new discursive paradigm in evaluating governance.

3.3 The New Discursive Paradigm - democracy or good governance?

Zhang's most catchy point can be summarised by his call to abandon the discursive paradigm (*huayu fanshi* 话语范式) of democracy vs. autocracy in favour of a new paradigm of *good governance vs. bad governance*.¹³¹ Zhang claims that one cannot simply state unthinkingly

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyr2SXXD_ds&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=70&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹³⁰ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 33: Why do we say Chinese ideas are plentiful and wonderful?"

Professor Zhang Weiwei examines the reasons why Chinese ideas might influence the world. (第 33 期: 为什么说中国理念既丰富又精彩? 张维为教授解读中国理念可能影响世界的原因)," China DragonTV Official, September 2, 2019, YouTube video, 20:00,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fRoO_V5nxk&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=69&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹³¹ Zhang, *China Now*, 88.

today, as Churchill did, that “Democracy is bad, but it’s the least bad system.” Bad democracy is just plain bad. Or, as it is formulated in a chapter heading in the book, “only good democracy is good for the people” (*hao minzhu cai shi renmin zhi fu* 好民主才是人民之福).¹³² He believes the seemingly tautological point that “only good democracy is good ” is a useful tool because it “forces a clearer examination of Western discursive monopoly”.¹³³ Furthermore, he points out that this paradigm shift has already become popular among many influential Western academics, and furthermore it promises a greater degree of explanatory value for the future. With the unignorable continued rise of China in the future, Zhang is confident that this piece of Chinese discourse will influence the evolution and development of global political institutions.¹³⁴

The contest over *True Democracy*

The final problem with universal values, according to Zhang, is the implicit assumption that democracy is easily definable. At a glance, one can observe that there are many different institutional arrangements in different democracies, so how does one measure whether one is more democratic than the other? Political systems need to be understood in their proper context: “the Western democratic system is a product of Western societies’ unique culture and history. They are part of “local knowledge.””¹³⁵ Another way of deconstructing Western discourse, Zhang says, is to make concrete abstract concepts. For example, democracy sounds nice in the abstract, but if applied to the specifics of the American political system where large money interests seem to control the system, it does not sound so ideal anymore.¹³⁶

Just like the New Left, Zhang believes it is important to challenge the Western discursive monopoly on the meaning of democracy. His general discussion is very similar to that of Gan and Wang, covering the main points regarding substantive democracy and related Chinese concepts, but he adds one interesting conceptualization. He proposes borrowing the three-part categorisation of Abraham Lincoln, describing government “of the people, by the people, for the people.” (*minyong* 民有, *minzhi* 民治, *minxiang* 民享).¹³⁷ How do we measure

¹³² Zhang, *China Now*, 113.

¹³³ Zhang, *China Now*, 118.

¹³⁴ Zhang, *China Now*, 89.

¹³⁵ Zhang, *China Now*, 104.

¹³⁶ Zhang, *China Now*, 106.

¹³⁷ Zhang, *China Now*, 108.

government for the people? Zhang points to the official statistics of poverty alleviation in China over the past 40 years and, conversely, the lack of increase in wages in the US over the same period.¹³⁸ What about “of the people”? Here he makes the case that China has a deep tradition of “common people’s culture (*pingmin wenhua* 平民文化) and that of the people who make up the governing institutions, 90% of them come from a “common” background.¹³⁹ On the other hand, the U.S., Zhang says, is run by a tiny elite, with common people having close to no influence on policy making. As for “government by the people,” this, Zhang says, is a question the entire world is trying to figure out. As a result, Zhang’s conclusion is clear: “If the West wants to focus the definition of democracy on the procedural elements of “universal suffrage and multi-party elections” then China will shift the focus to the exploration of substantive democracy. We should begin with the goals and results of democracy.”¹⁴⁰

The suggested new paradigm shift provides us with some insights regarding Zhang’s vision. First of all, he seems to be in complete accord with the New Left critique of procedural democracy and advocacy of measuring the quality of governance, regardless of procedural structures. This is presented as common sense, in contrast to the dogmatic prejudice of those who insist on democratic procedures regardless of outcomes (or so Zhang portrays it). Implicit in this critique and focus on *good governance* would seem to be a great confidence in the authorities’ ability to accurately measure the outcomes of specific policies. What is absent is any seeming consideration for the possible limitations of centralised decision-making procedures.

3.4 Chinese characteristics and Western misunderstanding

Zhang is also engaged in defining the ways in which China is exceptional and what constitutes real *Chineseness*. One of the most important characteristics of China, according to Zhang, is its status as a *Civilizational state*. In an episode on this topic, he explains that it refers to “a country like ours which has an ancient culture that has continued for thousands of

¹³⁸ Zhang, *China Now*, 108.

¹³⁹ Zhang, *China Now*, 109.

¹⁴⁰ Zhang, *China Now*, 111.

years and almost entirely overlaps with an enormous country. This is her uniqueness. I may even say that this feature is somewhat like a gene. It fundamentally decided the blueprint of China's political system, its way of development and its behavioural pattern."¹⁴¹ Today, we are told, China has become a modern state through arduous work, and has managed to construct a unified governance system, taxation and a judiciary, but many of the old traditions haven't disappeared. On the contrary, they have been maintained and further developed - that is one of the characteristics of a Civilizational state.¹⁴² Furthermore, Zhang's thesis is that since a Civilizational state such as China inherits abundant historical and cultural legacies it will not follow in the footsteps of other countries and is able to absorb the advantages of other civilizations without losing its identity.¹⁴³

One of these exceptional aspects of Chinese cultural identity that are emphasized is the narrative of peaceful expansion in China's history.¹⁴⁴ Contrasted with this is a long list of the

¹⁴¹ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 6: Zhang Weiwei boldly analyses the system of socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Making known the way of governance behind China's rise. (第6期: 张维为大胆解析中国特色社会主义制度 中国崛起之治国之道大公开!)," China DragonTV Official, February 18, 2019, YouTube video, 07:40,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBZPwqow1VM&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHSG3QEIfbW&index=96&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial

(accessed June 13, 2021).

¹⁴² Zhang, "Episode 6," 21:00.

¹⁴³ Zhang, "Episode 6," 21:30.

¹⁴⁴ Zhang Weiwei, "China Now, Episode 4: Zhang Weiwei interprets China's "great state" model. Great state confidence makes the impossible possible (第4期: 张维为解读中国大国模式 大国自信让不可能变可能)," China DragonTV Official, January 28, 2019, YouTube video, 12:00,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5J7CMcwJpA&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHSG3QEIfbW&index=98&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial

(accessed June 13, 2021).

conflicts that have accompanied the rise of Western powers. The success of the West is blamed on wars and imperialism, the slaughter of native peoples, whilst only China, we are told, achieved great power status through relying on her own hard work, wisdom, bravery, and sacrifice.¹⁴⁵ In the conclusion of episode 4, Zhang ends on a victorious note: “China has risen. Material living conditions are better, quality of life is better. It truly is a complete improvement - the key is that these were all achieved through peaceful means, not by means of war. This should truly make us proud.”¹⁴⁶

The differences in cultural and historical experience between Chinese civilization and the West are thereby held up as justification for why apparent disagreements about political norms and values between the two parties might rather be an expression of the West’s inability to comprehend Chinese concepts. As Zhang emphatically states in an episode on the nature of Chinese civilization:

“That which is being developed and revealed today is not something that the simple and crude discourse of the West can describe. Their vocabulary of advanced and developed, democratic and authoritarian, high human rights and low human rights, these are all overly simplistic and crude concepts, incapable of describing the complexity of Chinese civilization. China’s accomplishments are thousands of times more plentiful than these concepts. Anything that can survive unbroken for thousands of years certainly has its own unique attributes and an incredibly great amount of wisdom, so we definitely have to be careful not to use these Western so-called standards of modernity to casually denigrate our own civilization. Rather, we must sincerely protect and rationally analyse all precious material and immaterial cultural heritages and take a look at the benefits and glory these ancient civilizations have already brought us and see what special meaning they might bring to China and the world in the future.”¹⁴⁷

As the modern embodiment of what Zhang calls “the only surviving ancient civilization with a 5000-year cultural history” Chinese concepts are in themselves to be considered a precious cultural heritage of the world. Not only can attempts by non-Chinese to use “non-Chinese concepts” to describe and render a normative judgement on China be said to be crude and

¹⁴⁵ Zhang, “Episode 4,” 13:50.

¹⁴⁶ Zhang, “Episode 4,” 28:30.

¹⁴⁷ Zhang, “Episode 7,” 23:30.

simplistic, but it is also jeopardizing the cultural heritage of the world. This culture, we are told, is characterised by its capacity for learning and absorbing that which is useful, much like Jiang Shigong's version of *sinified* socialism. Furthermore, China stands out due to its exceptionally peaceful history and rise to power. By contrast, Western civilization is cast as being characterized by chaos, war and religious tribalism.

This violent history, Zhang argues, has led to a realist mentality of zero-sum power relations between nations, encapsulated in President Bush's line "you're either with us or against us."¹⁴⁸ Future harmonious relations are dependent on the United States abandoning what Zhang calls "three cognitive mistakes": the belief in the Thucydides Trap; the belief that China is trying to export its model to the world; and that China is seeking a policy of expansionism. Zhang writes that whilst these predictions might hold true for Western countries, they are mistaken concerning China due to her very different culture. We see here an explicit reference to the ideas that the difference between Chinese and Western culture are of an *essential* (*benzhi* 本质) nature and that this has important implications for how they will develop.

Understanding the Chinese Communist Party

Just as Western discourse is accused of being insufficient to understand China, so Westerners are similarly accused of not being able to understand the Chinese Communist Party. Zhang thereby portrays much of the criticism being aimed at the Party as being driven not so much by substantive disagreements, but rather being the fault of Western commentators not having a proper understanding of the Chinese political system. People have been "confused" by Western discourse regarding political systems, and it is therefore necessary, Zhang says, to "use a language everyone understands to explain the Chinese Communist Party."¹⁴⁹

One of the main concepts that people do not understand, according to Zhang, is the difference between a regular political party and the Chinese Communist Party. The etymological clue lies in the word *party*, signifying an organisation that represents the interests of a *part* of society. In a one-party state such as China, on the other hand, the CCP claims to represent the interests of the whole. In Zhang's terminology, this is called a "holistic interest party"

¹⁴⁸ Zhang, *China Now*, 153.

¹⁴⁹ Zhang, *China Now*, 126.

(*zhengti liyi dang* 整体利益党).¹⁵⁰ This kind of system is most suited to China, he says, due to the country's long history and massive size, having undergone a process of "unification of a hundred kingdoms" (*baiguo zhihe* 百国之合). And examples from recent Chinese history, such as the internal competition between warring factions in the aftermath of the 1911 revolution, are, for China's leadership, a "most profound political lesson!"¹⁵¹ Lacking an authority that reconciles different parties in favour of the interests of the whole Zhang tells us can lead to social crisis when no common ground is found, such as with "the Trump presidency in America and Brexit in the United Kingdom."¹⁵²

Chinese Wisdom

Within the civilizational cultural heritage of China, Zhang focuses on three key concepts he believes have had an especially large impact on China's development and will influence the world in the future. These are: seeking truth from facts; people's livelihoods first; and holistic thinking.

The first one, *seeking truth from facts* (*shishi qiushi* 实事求是), is a phrase Zhang uses a lot. Often it is used as an example of vigorous empirical investigation or the opposite of dogmatic thinking. It is also associated with Deng Xiaoping's saying under the reform and opening up process, that "practice is the sole criterion of truth."¹⁵³ Zhang himself characterises the concept as quite similar to the Enlightenment idea of rationalism; both do away with rigid, dogmatic ways of thinking and stress humanities rational capacities, but seeking truth from facts, he says, is an indigenous product of the interactions between Chinese traditional and modern civilization. This means it has avoided many of the Western corruptions of Enlightenment rationalism, such as scientific racism and colonialism.¹⁵⁴ According to Zhang's definition, *seeking truth from facts* demands that all rational activity undergo practical tests in society, and the standard of evaluation is whether these activities have benefited the Chinese people and the common interests of mankind. Because of this, China has become the least ideologically prejudiced country in the world, and its rise has been

¹⁵⁰ Zhang, *China Now*, 126; *zhengti*, meaning "whole" or "entirety" is translated to "holistic" in the English translations of Zhang's earlier books.

¹⁵¹ Zhang, *China Now*, 126.

¹⁵² Zhang, *China Now*, 126.

¹⁵³ Zhang, "Episode 33" 10:00.

¹⁵⁴ Zhang, "Episode 33" 13:30.

peaceful (unlike the rise of the West, which, Zhang reminds us once again, was plagued by war and conflict).¹⁵⁵ What is more, while many countries have been “tricked by Western discourse,” China has not been fooled, due to its reliance on seeking truth from facts.¹⁵⁶ The West talks about the importance of democratization, and Zhang agrees it is hard to disagree, but once one looks at the facts one has no choice but to be sceptical: “why does the entire third world struggle to find a single country that underwent Western democratization that became a modern country, and why do they call for economic marketization everywhere but America itself became the erupting point for the 2008 financial crisis?”¹⁵⁷ This, Zhang says, is the spirit of *seeking truth from facts*.

The second piece of Chinese wisdom is the principle of what Zhang calls *people’s livelihood first* (*minsheng weida* 民生为大). Zhang links this to an ancient Chinese saying he quotes several times in the show; “The people are the basis of a country. When the basis is firm, the country is tranquil (*minweibangben, bengubangning* 民为邦本，本固邦宁). This concept he describes as an important part of why China has historically been more developed than the West and why its leaders have a great sense of responsibility to solve the people’s needs. It is part of the concept of *the mandate of heaven* (*tianmingguan* 天命观) and what Zhang calls the Chinese tradition of populism.¹⁵⁸

The third piece of Chinese wisdom is the idea of *Holistic Thinking* (*zhengti siwei* 整体思维). This is presented as an example of the very down to earth, commonsensical nature of Chinese ideas - the future is complicated, and complicated problems need holistic thinking and long-term planning.¹⁵⁹ In contrast to their Western counterparts who only care about their own constituents and the next election, Zhang says, Chinese politicians have a vision and a plan for the future. What is more, due to the continuous rule of a unified government, they have the ability to carry out the plan for the good of the people.

These three pieces of Chinese wisdom are presented as modern and generous concepts having evolved from within Chinese civilization, but Zhang also highlights how they can help solve

¹⁵⁵ Zhang, “Episode 33” 15:00.

¹⁵⁶ Zhang, “Episode 33” 15:15.

¹⁵⁷ Zhang, “Episode 33” 15:15

¹⁵⁸ This translation of populism, *minbenzhuyi* 民本主义, is more similar to “working in the interests of the people. To describe populism in the Western context Zhang uses a phrase that roughly translates to “fragmenting the people,” *mincuizhuyi* 民粹主义; Zhang, “Episode 33,” 16:30.

¹⁵⁹ Zhang, “Episode 33,” 22:00.

what he calls “the endless political struggles in the West that do not lead to any substantive gains for ordinary people.”¹⁶⁰ Much of what the Chinese system does that is called authoritarian in the West Zhang frames as the necessary actions of a responsible authority to avoid the many problems he claims have been produced by the Western system. For the good of the people, “the Chinese system doesn’t allow the pointless revolving of the political machine.”¹⁶¹

3.5 Authority and responsibility

Chinese solutions to Western problems

Both in Zhang’s general framework for the *new discourse* presented in the book and in the commentary on current events in the series, China’s accomplishments are compared favourably to Western problems. Providing critiques of the political status quo in the USA and the state of global capitalism, however, is not reserved for Chinese intellectuals. Many of the points Zhang makes are similar to points made by progressive intellectuals in the West. For instance, Nobel laureate in economics Joseph Stiglitz has covered much of the same ground Zhang does in his new book *People, Power and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent* (albeit without the conclusion that China’s model is the solution). The US economy is, according to Stiglitz, marked by exploitation of workers and consumers by corporate power that has captured political power. The conclusion of his book is that a new social contract is needed with a new balance between the market, the state and civil society, where the government needs to play an important role providing more regulation and investment. Zhang agrees.

Zhang and Stiglitz met digitally for a moderated discussion on the current state of American society and prospects for future reform. The discussion was published to YouTube by Guan Video on January 5th, 2021.

The discussion mainly took the form of both men agreeing on the diagnosis of America’s problems and Zhang then making the point that China’s system is best suited to overcoming such problems. Stiglitz made the case that there is large consensus as to what should be done

¹⁶⁰ Zhang, “Episode 33,” 18:00.

¹⁶¹ Zhang, “Episode 33,” 21:50.

in the USA, but capital interests get in the way of necessary reform. Addressing the difficulty of passing meaningful healthcare and gun-control laws in the US, Zhang said “in China, thankfully, we have a tradition of supporting *peoples livelihood* through Consultative Democracy, with many rounds of people-to-people consultations.”¹⁶² Zhang asked Stieglitz what the United States is planning on doing with the current form of “excessive legalism,” and how they can expect to push forward necessary reform under the current form of rule of law.¹⁶³ Stieglitz agreed that there is a need for reform and said that the Trump presidency has made Americans understand the limitations of the Constitution, the importance of norms and the fragility of the political system.¹⁶⁴ This sounds like a line taken right out of one of Zhang’s speeches.

In conversations such as the one between Zhang and Stieglitz, Zhang’s confidence in the potential of the Chinese system shines through. As the topic of the discussion was American society, it is not surprising that no time was spent discussing the possible downsides of the Chinese system, but the general impression was that America has many problems and China’s system is effectively dealing with such problems. In a *China Now* episode comparing the virus prevention results in China and the United States, Zhang talks on how China was dealt a bad hand and turned it into a good one, whilst the USA did the opposite. Furthermore, China succeeded because Chinese people are good at listening to criticism from others and reflect over their mistakes, whilst the bombastic American government “doesn’t even listen to its first-rate scientists.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Guan Video 观视频工作室, “Will changing President improve America? Zhang Weiwei in conversation with Stiglitz 换一个总统, 美国就能好起来? 思想者论坛, 张维为对话斯蒂格利茨,” Guan Video 观视频工作室, January 5, 2021, YouTube video, 08:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55ynfPIYRIQ&t=3s&ab_channel=GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4 (accessed June 13, 2021).

¹⁶³ Guan Video, “Zhang Weiwei in conversation with Stiglitz,” 23:30.

¹⁶⁴ Guan Video, “Zhang Weiwei in conversation with Stiglitz,” 27:50.

¹⁶⁵ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 61: Comparison of the different virus prevention results of China and America’s different models of political institutions and governance. (第 61 期: 对比中美两国不同政治制度和治理模式下产生的不同抗疫结果, 张维为与金灿荣一起解读美国抗疫失败背后的种种因素),” China DragonTV Official, June 15, 2020, YouTube video, 05:50, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORAKALQ0A5c&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=41&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%

All the problems of American society that people like Stieglitz identify, from gun control legislation to health care coverage for the poor, are cited by Zhang as justification for the Chinese system: a bill was repealed by the next president - continuous, reliable leadership solves the problem; lobbyists are paying money to politicians to block gun legislation - a strong state with a holistic mindset can push through the bill for the greater good; a worldwide pandemic is threatening the health of everyone in society - ban party politics and infighting so the authorities can focus on solving the most pressing problems for the people.¹⁶⁶

At the same time as portraying China as a country successfully dealing with issues of social justice that many in the United States worry about, Zhang also is not afraid to point out what he calls the excessive political correctness in the West and argue that it reveals how there is more “real freedom of speech” in China. The Chinese government’s control over media institutions and limits on certain topics is thereby cast as a normal and necessary measure to maintain the generous and forgiving nature of Chinese society and guard against the “dull” political correctness Zhang views as being dominant in Western mainstream media.¹⁶⁷

Responsible Planning - “China is Socialist, not State Capitalist”

[E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIAQFh3hn-4&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=60&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial)

(accessed June 13, 2021).

¹⁶⁶ Zhang, “Episode 51,” 17:21.

¹⁶⁷ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 42: Analyse the degrees of political correctness in China and the West, examine Europe and America’s double standards. Zhang Weiwei and Huang Zhixian jointly discuss what is true freedom of speech? (第 42 期: 分析中西方社会“政治正确”程度 检验相同情况下欧美的双重标准 张维为与黄智贤共同解读什么才是真正的言论自由?),” China DragonTV Official, September 16, 2019, YouTube video, 07:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIAQFh3hn-4&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=60&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

As we can see from Zhang's conversation with Professor Stieglitz, the *new discourse* relies heavily on a critique of capitalism. It is therefore important for Zhang to stress that China is socialist, not capitalist. He dedicates an entire episode of China Now to refuting the claim that China's model is an example of state capitalism, claiming rather that it is socialist (with Chinese characteristics). Three points are highlighted as being essential. Firstly, he says "China's economic structure has public ownership in the leading position... this is in stark contrast to America's private ownership system."¹⁶⁸ He characterises the current institutional design as a mixed economy - not capitalist. Secondly, in the process of China's development the vast majority of regular people have benefitted - this he paints in contrast to the United States.¹⁶⁹ Thirdly, China has the political power to represent the interests of the whole, and again, he points out that the United States lacks this capability.¹⁷⁰ Of the three, the capability of the central government is given most attention:

"China's leading party is not America's republican party, neither is it the democratic party, it represents an uninterrupted 5000-year great civilization, it takes ultimate responsibility for the destiny of its country and civilization... It is because of this super strong sense of mission and sense of responsibility that makes it produce super long-term plans and development goals for the country... strive towards the goal of great national rejuvenation... this means the China model can control the common defects of the Western model; populism and short termism, extremism... These three features are the most fundamental essence of Chinese socialism. To take this kind of system and call it state capitalism is as comical as taking today's American capitalism and call it American style socialism."¹⁷¹

The defining difference, as stated above, between the systems is the degree of authority, responsibility and purpose of the government, and its capacity to control eventual defects in the system. Within this normative framework, any dilution of executive power or critique of policy may be viewed as getting in the way of the intended outcomes. The Communist

¹⁶⁸ Zhang, "Episode 32," 08:35.

¹⁶⁹ Zhang, "Episode 32," 14:30.

¹⁷⁰ Zhang, "Episode 32," 20:00.

¹⁷¹ Zhang, "Episode 32," 22:00.

Party's ability to make and execute long-term plans and reform itself according to the needs of the time, is consequently cast as the main reasons behind the Party's success.

The superiority of having plans made at the central level is portrayed as absolute common sense, and in the book is only commented on in passing: "what is best, having a plan or no plan? Of course, having a plan!"¹⁷² In the show he elaborates slightly: "China was able to succeed because we had a plan and were able to objectively implement it. Almost all Chinese knew what they had to do during the pandemic. Look at the USA, the whole process was characterised by chaos."¹⁷³ By observing China's handling of the pandemic Zhang says, "we can clearly see that the country that values life is the PRC."¹⁷⁴ This, he claims, is the most precious human right of all that the USA is showing a disregard for: "how do you [USA] have the nerve to accuse China of violating human rights when the USA doesn't care about people's lives?"¹⁷⁵

State of Exception – for the greater good

Zhang's focus on the intention and capacity of the executive puts him right in the camp with the statist advocates of *politics over law*. As one of the keys to China's success, Zhang describes the country as being in a process of continuous reform aimed at securing rule of law in China without succumbing to "excessive legalism" that many countries in the West are suffering from. He doesn't dedicate much time to talking about law and constitutionalism specifically but does express the need for an authority to decide on the *state of exception* for the good of the community: "In 99.9% of cases the rule of law should be applied rigorously, but we must reserve a small space for when the interest of the people is at stake. In these cases, we must, without violating the spirit of the rule of law, make a political decision, or we will be bound by "legalism.""¹⁷⁶ In a massive civilisational state, Zhang says, legalism will lead to large problems. "In other words, China's construction of rule of law must go beyond the Western model of "rule of law" that now has become more like "rule of lawyers" Lawyers work in the interest of the wealthy, and in America they are a large interest group

¹⁷² Zhang, *China Now*, 128.

¹⁷³ Zhang, "Episode 51," 16:30.

¹⁷⁴ Zhang, "Episode 61," 10:00.

¹⁷⁵ Zhang, "Episode 51," 19:50.

¹⁷⁶ Zhang, *China Now*, 165.

that inflict extraordinarily large costs on government”¹⁷⁷ The liberal ideal of the rule of law, then, is portrayed as an ossified system that works against the interests of great majority.

In the book *China Now* there is a short passage on the principle of separation of powers. Zhang’s problem with this principle is that it only applies to the political realm, whilst large capital interests might exert influence over all three branches of government, thereby jeopardizing their independence. This, he claims, is the source of America’s many current problems: “A modern country needs to strike a balance between political power, social power, and capital power... the dominance of capital power is the source of the death of the American Dream... China’s gaze is already far beyond the American system.”¹⁷⁸ The reason China has managed to develop so quickly, he writes, is because “although capital and social power are expanding in China, political power has basically maintained its independence and neutrality.”¹⁷⁹ In Chinese history, Zhang says, depending on the context, the focus may be on rule by law, rule by virtue, non-interventionism or interventionism - but the substantive nature of the executive is always at the centre and above procedural norms.”¹⁸⁰ The ability of the executive to decide on the state of exception, then, is cast as responsible for China having reached its current level of prosperity.

¹⁷⁷ Zhang, *China Now*, 160.

¹⁷⁸ Zhang, *China Now*, 144.

¹⁷⁹ Zhang, *China Now*, 145.

¹⁸⁰ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 52: What style of thinking does China’s political wisdom use in exploring systems of government? (第 52 期: 中国的政道智慧以什么思维模式探索政体? 听张维为教授从政道的角度谈国家治理),” China DragonTV Official, April 6, 2020, YouTube video, 15:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McqdyN6PPPs&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=50&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

The Pandemic as Proof of Concept

In the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic it is safe to say that the manifested form of implementation for the “ideals and purpose” of the Chinese executive have been more on the interventionist side. Zhang points to the apparent results of China’s relative recovery as proof of the true substantial democratic nature of China’s government:

“China’s political system is oriented in substantive democracy. The Chinese party and government system is responsible for the entire nation and its continuation. In economic terms, this is a government with *unlimited responsibility*... The CCP has the political philosophy of “putting people’s lives above all else.” And has strong capacities to organize, mobilize and coordinate.”¹⁸¹

The picture of unequivocal victory over the virus in China and chaotic policy failures in the United States he blames on the difference in political systems, where strictly following procedural norms is equal to being irresponsible:

“America’s so-called democratic system is, after all, merely a procedural democracy – the job is done as long as the government doesn’t violate the procedures. Next time they can elect a new government, and the new government will still act the same way. This is the design of their entire institutions. Of course, America is very good at one thing, that is the power of capital controls the mainstream media. They are good at shifting the focus and making “big problems small, and small problems no

¹⁸¹ Zhang Weiwei, “China Now, Episode 46: Zhang Weiwei investigates the characteristics of China’s model of virus prevention and its implications for the world. (第 46 期: 张维为解读探讨中国推动抗疫模式的特点 探讨中国抗疫对世界的意义),” China DragonTV Official, February 24, 2020, YouTube video, 14:40, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEI2dSiNemg&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYainHskG3QEIfbW&index=56&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

problems at all”. This is, in the end, at the expense of ordinary people, rich people won’t be at risk.”¹⁸²

The true benefits of the Chinese system, as Zhang sees it, is in its assumption of *unlimited responsibility*, and concern for the fate of ordinary people is highlighted as the main justification of executive authority, whilst respect for legal procedures is viewed as being at their expense. What is more, political power is seen as a necessary good to counter the other, more malign forces in society. This is a clear statement of putting the sovereign above the law as the supreme authority on what is best for the people. The suggestion that there should be limits to the amount of responsibility the state assumes can thereby be equated with not caring about peoples’ lives: “Chinese people feel how lucky they are to live in this country that values peoples’ lives, rather than in the Social Darwinist West.”¹⁸³

Responsibility and Superior Values

This alleged Social Darwinist nature of the West is proposed by pointing to the focus on individualism and competition in society and politics, and on how there is a lack of unity both within and amongst Western nations in dealing with the pandemic.¹⁸⁴ Back in China, however, Zhang can speak in an authoritative tone and feel pity for the fractured West while proclaiming that “our Chinese spirit of unity invests in us a sense of superior values.”¹⁸⁵ The appeal to a different set of values he says is beneficial in the struggle to cast off the influence of Western values in China and deconstruct the West’s sense of moral superiority.¹⁸⁶ China should dare to put its own values on the same level as the West, and in some cases, he says, “we can also look down upon Western values – this isn’t arrogance, this is *seeking truth from facts*. We believe from our hearts that Chinese values are even more reasonable, more suitable for the common interest of humanity than Western values.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Zhang, “Episode 46,” 13:32.

¹⁸³ Zhang “Episode 63,” 05:00.

¹⁸⁴ Zhang “Episode 63,” 08:50.

¹⁸⁵ Zhang “Episode 63,” 09:40.

¹⁸⁶ Zhang “Episode 63,” 19:35.

¹⁸⁷ Zhang “Episode 63,” 19:35.

One of the main sources of Chinese confidence Zhang finds in the image of Chinese society being characterised by cooperation and a sense of social responsibility. This makes China stand out in the world, as “towards family, friends, society, countrymen and the entire world, Chinese people have shown a sense of responsibility that Western countries would struggle to reach.”¹⁸⁸ This he connects to the *China Model* and political system, commenting on the “multi-pronged approach” of using citizens, state-owned enterprises, private companies and the government: “Nothing can defeat such a nation, such a party, such a people, such an army, and such a model. China and its political system chose to sacrifice a period of economic downturn in order to shoulder its responsibility for its people and the world.”¹⁸⁹

The importance of responsibility can also be seen through Zhang’s generous usage of the official slogan “Community of Shared Future for Humankind” (*renlei mingun gongtongti* 人类命运共同体). This sense of responsibility Zhang portrays as being a part of traditional culture and a modern spirit where there needs to be a unification of freedom and discipline, and a unification of rights and responsibilities. The West, on the other hand, is portrayed as suffering the consequences of extremist views on individual rights not suitable for coping with the challenges of the future, such as the pandemic.¹⁹⁰ Channelling the official *Chinese* view Zhang declares that “we believe that the political institutions of a 21st century modern country need to have the capacity to react quickly, the capacity to lead and take executive action, the capacity to comprehensively harmonize, the capacity for social mobilization, otherwise its people will not be able to enjoy real, complete freedom and rights.”¹⁹¹

This is the vision of China we are left with: a modern, responsible country that has the authority and capacity to provide the *true* benefits the West claims to value. The image is constructed by comparison to the United States, a society that Zhang portrays as dogmatic, unreasonable, and chaotic. For China, Zhang says, it is important to respect science, but in America “anti-reason and anti-science has long been a tradition... many people are uneducated and don’t believe in evolution, climate change or the coronavirus.”¹⁹² Whether this portrayal can be effective in influencing people’s perception of the relative benefits of

¹⁸⁸ Zhang “Episode 63,” 09:30.

¹⁸⁹ Zhang “Episode 46,” 15:30.

¹⁹⁰ Zhang “Episode 63,” 12:10.

¹⁹¹ Zhang “Episode 63,” 18:30.

¹⁹² Zhang “Episode 51,” 14:35.

political systems and values in China's favour, or whether it is simply a symptomatic struggle against what Elizabeth C. Economy called the CCP's inability to project an attractive and compelling ideology, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Zhang Weiwei is taking an active part in building ideological confidence in China by articulating a commonsense vision of Chinese ideas and institutions. Through his commentary on different countries' handling of the Covid-19 pandemic he has provided an explanatory account of reality and outlined a path for political action that affirms the legitimacy of the Chinese system and prescribes ostensibly Chinese values and ideas as the solution to many of the world's problems. In his discourse, in both the book and the series, he demonstrated a high degree of overlap with the dominant trends in Chinese intellectual discourse, such as appealing to *Chineseness* as a source of legitimacy; emphasizing the essential characteristics of Chinese culture, such as an ability to absorb that which is useful from other cultures; and his critiques of liberal democracy and excessive legalism in the West correspond with those of the New Left statist.

By highlighting the apparent problems of the American system, he portrays the Chinese system as a sort of progressive remedy. He does this by appealing to the basic principles of the United States when he suggests that China has made greater progress in achieving government "of the people, by the people, for the people," and he showcases the confident assertiveness of the new discourse when he proclaims that "China's gaze is already far beyond the American system." Any expression of political disagreement and questioning of authority in the West is held up as further proof of its problems and decline.

The imaginative map he has created is highly reliant on the historical experiences and essential traits of different cultures. Although Zhang states the importance of respecting the diversity of civilizations, his lengthy discussions on the history of Western and Chinese civilizations reveal a definite imbalance. Whereas the history of Chinese civilization is essentialised to create a peaceful, positive image, the history of the West is critically deconstructed to portray it as essentially and uniquely chaotic and violent. Without commenting on the accuracy of either portrayal, the disparities in treatment would seem to present a clear example of Zhang's call to deconstruct the West to construct a new confident Chinese discourse. Most criticisms aimed at China can thereby be dismissed as hypocrisy or a failure to understand a complicated and rich civilization. One of the essential features of this

rich civilization, we are told, is the modern and generous value of balancing rights and responsibilities, and freedom and discipline. The contrasting image of Western focus on individual rights and individual freedom is cast as irresponsible and harmful, and taken as further proof that China's new discourse will be an improvement in the world.

The main point of ideological importance is the conclusion that the superiority of China's system lies in the executive assuming *unlimited responsibility*. This puts politics above the law and is portrayed as the remedy to the problems of the United States and the reason why China has conquered the virus and will succeed in the future. Furthermore, it is justified as Chinese wisdom, embodying the spirit of *the mandate of heaven*. The proposal of a paradigm shift based on measurements of good governance also imply the unrestrained nature of the governing entity. The entire handling of the Covid-19 pandemic can thereby also be portrayed as proof of the efficacy of this system and show that this is the only responsible stance to take that embodies a respect for the ultimate human right to life.

Questions of sovereignty and executive power touch at the heart of ideological questions. What Zhang seems to be implying is that an insistence on the value of procedural democracy over alternative systems like China's, regardless of the real-world outcomes in the face of a state of emergency such as the world has seen in 2020, is an example of dogmatic prejudice. But if all executive procedures are to be judged by the apparent *facts* of the outcomes they produce, the way these facts are interpreted becomes incredibly important. Furthermore, the control of what is presented as fact becomes a vital part of ideological control. The *sense of causation* embodied in a social vision necessarily affects how one judges the outcomes of an executive action since it steers the relative understanding of cost and effect involved in the process. The principle of unlimited responsibility therefore places all the credit, and the blame, for outcomes in society on the sovereign, so the portrayal of relative success becomes an issue of utmost importance for its legitimacy. As a matter of ideological strategy, then, the call to "study, understand and evaluate China" in *China Now* can be said to play an important role in affecting peoples' sense of the legitimacy of authority.

It is also clear that Zhang's discourse fits the narrative of the Communist Party authorities. He has used his platform to contribute in "telling a good story and spreading China's voice," as Xi put it, and the message he has been spreading also serves to provide a language that guards against the "seven political perils" of Western discourse outlined in the leaked Document 9 Communique. Unlike official propaganda, though, the strength of Zhang's

message lies in the fact that he is actively trying to communicate in a language both regular Chinese and foreigners can relate to. What is more, he has been doing this with increasing confidence and presents his ideas as common sense.

Rather than dismiss characters like Zhang and the discourse he conveys as mere propaganda, however, increased exposure of his understanding of the world could have potential for increased cross-cultural understanding. The general impression given by Zhang in English language forums is that despite differences in institutions and systems, China and the Chinese people are reasonable and well intentioned, and there are more nuanced ways of explaining the Chinese system than that encountered in official statements. Regardless of how one characterises different ideologies, it is probably safe to say that the average educated Chinese person knows more about Western society and political norms than the other way around. In such a climate, characters such as Zhang can play an important role in communicating and translating influential ideas in a manner that can at least be said to be different from how they are encountered through Western media. In the context of fears about a new Cold War, those taking a firm position against the ideology of China's new discourse might not welcome increased exposure to such voices, but for those curious to hear different viewpoints this can be viewed as a positive development. Regardless, as the narrative of the worldwide pandemic is being written, the competition for normative influence in the world means that understanding ideological discourse in China is only increasing in importance.

Bibliography

Billig, Michael. 1997. "Discursive, Rhetorical and Ideological Messages." In *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, edited by Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates, 211-221. London: Sage Publications.

Brookings. "Global China: Global Governance and Norms." Brookings Institute. Accessed June 13, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/product/global-china-global-governance-and-norms/>

Brown, K., and U. A. Bērziņa-Čerenkova. "Ideology in the Era of Xi Jinping." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 23, (2018): 323-339. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-9541-z> (accessed May 13, 2021).

Buckley, Chris. "Xi Jinping Thought Explained: a new ideology for a new era." *New York Times*, February 26, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/26/world/asia/xi-jinping-thought-explained-a-new-ideology-for-a-new-era.html> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Callahan, William A. *China Dreams: 20 Visions for the Future*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Callahan, William A. "Sino-Speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 33-55.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911811002919> (accessed June 13, 2021).

ChinaFile. "Document 9: a ChinaFile Translation." November 8, 2013. [Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation | ChinaFile](#) (accessed June 13, 2021).

Cousins, M and Hussain, A. *Michel Foucault*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984.

Davies, Gloria. "Making Sense Through Ideology." In *Law and the Party in China: ideology and organisation*, edited by Rogier Creemers and Susan Trevaskes, 64-96. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Davies, Gloria. *Worrying about China: The Language of Chinese Critical Inquiry*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

DeLisle, Jacques. "Law in the China Model 2.0: Legality, Developmentalism and Leninism under Xi Jinping." *Journal of Contemporary China* 103, no. 26 (September 2016): 68-84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1206299> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Desiderio, Andrew and Marianne Levine. "Bipartisanship in a Divided Senate? On China, Perhaps." *Politico*, 17 March, 2021. <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/03/17/senate-bipartisanship-china-schumer-476406> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Dikötter, F. *The age of openness: China before Mao*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Economy, Elizabeth C., *The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Freeden, Michael. "Ideology and political theory." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 1 (2006): 3-22. DOI: 10.1080/13569310500395834 (accessed June 13, 2021).

Frenkiel, Emilie. *Conditional Democracy: the contemporary debate on political reform in Chinese universities*. Colchester: ECPR Press, 2015. Kindle.

Gan Yang. "Liberalism: for the aristocrats or for the people?" In *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel, Timothy Cheek and David Ownby, chapter 10. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Girard, Bonnie. "A Bipartisan Congressional Group Supports Trump's Tough-on-China Approach." *the Diplomat*, 5 April, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/a-bipartisan-congressional-group-supports-trumps-tough-on-china-approach/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Gracie, Carrie. "China's Xi Jinping consolidates power with new ideology." *BBC News*, October 20, 2017. [China's Xi Jinping consolidates power with new ideology - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-china-52481111) (accessed June 13, 2021).

Grieder, Jerome. *Intellectuals and the State in Modern China: A Narrative History*. New York: Free Press, 1981.

Guan Video 观视频工作室. "Will changing President improve America? Zhang Weiwei in conversation with Stiglitz 换一个总统, 美国就能好起来? 思想者论坛, 张维为对话斯蒂格利茨." Guan Video 观视频工作室, January 5, 2021. YouTube video, 43:41. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55ynfPIYRIQ&t=3s&ab_channel=GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4GuanVideo%E8%A7%82%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4 (accessed June 13, 2021).

Hall, Stuart. 1997. "The work of representation." In *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, edited by Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor and Simeon J. Yates, 72-81. London: Sage Publications, 2001.

Hasmath, Reza and Jennifer Hsu. "How Chinese Norms Are Going Global: From human rights to good governance, Chinese norms are spreading. How should Western governments react?" *The Diplomat*, November 16, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/how-chinese-norms-are-going-global/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Hsia, C. T. "Obsession with China: The Moral Burden of Chinese Literature." In *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, 533-554. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Jiang Shigong. "Philosophy and History: Interpreting the 'Xi Jinping Era' through Xi's Report to the Nineteenth National Congress of the CCP." 2018. *Reading the China Dream*. <https://www.readingthechinadream.com/jiang-shigong-philosophy-and-history.html> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Jørgensen, Marianne, and Louise Phillips. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: SAGE Publications, 2002.

Kania, Elsa. "The Right to Speak: Discourse and Chinese Power." *Center for Advanced China Research*, 27 November, 2018. <https://www.ccpwatch.org/single-post/2018/11/27/The-Right-to-Speak-Discourse-and-Chinese-Power> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Kaplan, Robert D. "A New Cold War Has Begun." *Foreign Policy*, 7 January, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/07/a-new-cold-war-has-begun/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Kroll, Charlotte. "Reading the Temperature Curve: Sinophone Schmitt-Fever in Context and Perspective." In *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss in the Chinese Speaking World: Reorienting the Political*. Edited by Kai Marchal and Carl K. Y. Shaw. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2017.

Li Qingping. "Upright voice needed globally against Western public opinion hegemony." *Global Times*, 15 April, 2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221187.shtml> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Marcus, Jonathan. "US-China relations: Beyond the "Cold War" Cliché." *BBC News*, 17 March, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56382793> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Maynard, Jonathan Leader. "A map of the field of ideological analysis." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18, no. 3 (2013): 299-327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2013.831589> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Munk Dialogues. "Zhang Weiwei." TheMunkDebates, November 26, 2020 YouTube video, 1:03:24. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCxsgTShFQc&t=1151s&ab_channel=TheMunkDebates (accessed June 13, 2021).

Peerenboom, Randall. "Fly High the Banner of Socialist Rule of Law with Chinese Characteristics: What does the 4th Plenum Decision Mean for Legal Reforms in China?" *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 7 no. 1 (September 2015): 49-74.

Perelman, C and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971.

Pillsbury, Michael. *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2016.

Rachman, Gideon. "A new cold war: Trump, Xi and the escalating US-China Confrontation." *Financial Times*, 5 October, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/7b809c6a-f733-46f5-a312-9152aed28172> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Ringen, Stein. *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016. Kindle.

Sapio, Flora. *Sovereign Power and the Law in China*. Leiden: BRILL, 2010.

Schmitt, Carl. *Dictatorship: From the Origin of the Modern Concept of Sovereignty to Proletarian Class Struggle*. Translated by Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.

Schumpeter, Joseph A. *History of Economic Analysis*. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Seib, Gerald F. "Amid Polarization, Bipartisanship Emerges on China, Big Tech." *the Wall Street Journal*, 10 June, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/amid-polarization-bipartisanship-emerges-on-china-big-tech-11560177194> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Shi Anshu, Lachapelle, Francois., and Matthew Galway. "The recasting of Chinese socialism: The New Left since 2000." *China Information* 32, no. 1 (March 2018): 139-159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18760416> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Sowell, Thomas. *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological origins of political struggles*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. *People, Power and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.

Sumner, William Graham. *The Forgotten Man, and other essays*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919.

The Chinese Way by Zhang Weiwei. “张维为: 中国人, 你要自信! Zhang Weiwei: Self-Confidence Matters (a Chinese view on the rise of China).” The Chinese Way by Zhang Weiwei, January 18, 2021. YouTube video, 19:30. [\(61\) 张维为: 中国人, 你要自信! Zhang Weiwei: Self-Confidence Matters \(A Chinese Perspective on The Rise of China\) - YouTube](#) (accessed 15 May, 2021).

Tobin, Daniel. “How Xi Jinping’s ‘New Era’ Should Have Ended U.S. Debate on Beijing’s Ambitions.” U.S. – China Economic and Security Review Commission. April 27, 2020. <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/testimonies/SFR%20for%20USCC%20TobinD%2020200313.pdf> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Trevelyan, Laura. “Is the world entering a new Cold War?” *BBC News*, 22 September, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54244011> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Veg, Sebastian. “The Rise of China’s Statist Intellectuals: Law, Sovereignty, and “Repoliticization.”” *The China Journal*, no. 82. (July 2019). <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1086/702687> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Vinx, Lars. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, fall 2019 Edition. "Carl Schmitt." <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/schmitt/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Wang Shaoguang. “Representative Democracy and Representational Democracy.” In *Voices from the Chinese Century: Public Intellectual Debate from Contemporary China*, edited by Joshua A. Fogel, Timothy Cheek and David Ownby, chapter 8. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Weiss, Jessica. “A World Safe for Autocracy? China’s rise and the future of global politics.” *Foreign Affairs*. July, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-06-11/world-safe-autocracy> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Wendt, A. “Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics.” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425.

Wolff, Jonathan and David Leopold. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2021 Edition, "Karl Marx", Stanford University, 2021.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/marx/> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Wu, G.G. *Paradoxes of China's Prosperity: Political Dilemmas and Global Implications*, 244. London: World Scientific, 2015.

Xi Libin., Patapan, Haig. “Schmitt Fever: The use and abuse of Carl Schmitt in contemporary China.” *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 1, no. 18 (January 2020): 130-146.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moaa015> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Xinhuanet. “Seize international discourse power, efficiently spread China’s voice – Analysis of Xi Jinping’s thought on external propaganda work” (把握国际话语权，有效传播中国的声音 – 习近平外宣工作思路理念探析). *Xinhuanet*, 6 April, 2016.
http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:nQlx6j3z3-4J:www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/06/c_1118542256.htm+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us (accessed June 13, 2021).

Yan Xuetong. *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Younis, Mohamed. “China, Russia Images in the U.S. Hit Historic Lows.” *Gallup News*, March 1, 2021. [China, Russia Images in U.S. Hit Historic Lows \(gallup.com\)](https://www.gallup.com) (accessed June 13, 2021).

Yu Keping. *Democracy Is a Good Thing: Essays on Politics, Society, and Culture in Contemporary China*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 2011.

Zarrow, Peter. *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885–1924*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Zhang, Feng. “The Rise of Chinese Exceptionalism in International Relations.” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2011): 305-328.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111421038> (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. *China Now (zhe jiu shi zhongguo 这就是中国)* Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2019.

Zhang Weiwei. “Ideological trends and economic reform in China, (1978-1993).” PhD diss., University of Geneva, 1994.

Zhang Weiwei. *Ideology and reform under Deng Xiaoping, 1978-1993*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Zhang Weiwei. *The China Wave: rise of a civilizational state*. World Century Publishing Corporation, 2011. Kindle.

Zhang Weiwei. *The China Horizon: the glory and dream of a civilizational state*. World Century Publishing Corporation, 2016.

Zhang Weiwei. *China Awakens*. Shanghai people's publishing house, 2014. (中国触动： 百
国视野下的观察与思考. 上海人民出版社， 2014.) (Chinese version only).

Zhang Weiwei. "China Now, episode 1. Head of China Research Institute Zhang Weiwei comprehensively analyses Chinese politics and societal development! What kind of scheme is behind America's abduction of senior Huawei executive? (这就是中国, 第 1 期: 总过研究院院长张维为全方位剖析中国政治， 社会发展 美国绑架华为高管究竟有什么"阴谋"?)". China DragonTV Official, January 8, 2019. YouTube video, 44:14.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OCq_zu_XDQ&t=3s&ab_channel=GuanVideo%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4GuanVideo%E8%A7%86%E9%A2%91%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%AE%A4
(accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. "China Now, Episode 4: Zhang Weiwei interprets China's "great state" model. Great state confidence makes the impossible possible (第 4 期: 张维为解读中国大国模式 大国自信让不可能变可能)." China DragonTV Official, January 28, 2019. YouTube video, 44:48.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5J7CMcwJpA&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=98&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E

[5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBZPwqow1VM&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=96&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial) (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 6: Zhang Weiwei boldly analyses the system of socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Making known the way of governance behind China’s rise. (第 6 期: 张维为大胆解析中国特色社会主义制度 中国崛起之治国之道大公开!).” China DragonTV Official, February 18, 2019. YouTube video, 45:06.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBZPwqow1VM&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAinHskG3QEIfbW&index=96&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 7: Analysis of the history of the Chinese Civilizational state. What is the difference between Western modern civilization and Chinese historical civilization? Will the rise of China be able to maintain its unique historical civilization? (第 7 期: 中国文明型国家历史进程大解析 西方现代型文明与中国历史性文明有什么不同? 中国崛起是否应坚持独有的历史性文明?).” China DragonTV Official, February 25, 2019. YouTube video, 43:53.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79r_pO7UWiU&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYainHskG3QEIfbW&index=95&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 32: “Chinese Socialism” is a success-producing magic weapon! Zhang Weiwei deeply analyses why China is not a “state capitalist” country. (第 32

期：“中国社会主义”才是制胜法宝！张维为深度解析为何中国不是“国家资本主义”？”。” China DragonTV Official, August 26, 2019. YouTube video, 48:13.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyr2SXXD_ds&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAIinHskG3QEIfbW&index=70&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 33: Why do we say Chinese ideas are plentiful and wonderful? Professor Zhang Weiwei examines the reasons why Chinese ideas might influence the world. (第33期：为什么说中国理念既丰富又精彩？张维为教授解读中国理念可能影响世界的原因)。” China DragonTV Official, September 2, 2019. YouTube video, 42:56.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fRoO_V5nxk&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAIinHskG3QEIfbW&index=69&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 42: Analyse the degrees of political correctness in China and the West, examine Europe and America’s double standards. Zhang Weiwei and Huang Zhixian jointly discuss what is true freedom of speech? (第42期：分析中西方社会“政治正确”程度 检验相同情况下欧美的双重标准 张维为与黄智贤共同解读什么才是真正的言论自由？)。” China DragonTV Official, September 16, 2019. YouTube video, 41:31.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIAQFh3hn-4&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAIinHskG3QEIfbW&index=60&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEl2dSiNemg&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=56&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 46: Zhang Weiwei investigates the characteristics of China’s model of virus prevention and its implications for the world. (第 46 期：张维为解读探讨中国推动抗疫模式的特点 探讨中国抗疫对世界的意义).” China DragonTV Official, February 24, 2020. YouTube video, 44:34.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEl2dSiNemg&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=56&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 51: What sort of problems are Western countries encountering in their efforts to control the virus? Zhang Weiwei analyses the self-inflicted consequences of Western arrogance and prejudice. (第 51 期：西方国家在抗“疫”中遭遇了怎样的困境？张维为解读西方的傲慢与偏见给自身带来的影响).” China DragonTV Official, March 30, 2020. YouTube video, 44:14.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfJQxommPLY&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=51&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed 15 May, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 52: What style of thinking does China’s political wisdom use in exploring systems of government? (第 52 期：中国的政道智慧以什么思维模式探索政体？听张维为教授从政道的角度谈国家治理).” China DragonTV Official,

April 6, 2020. YouTube video, 48:43.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McqdyN6PPPs&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAi nHskG3QEIfbW&index=50&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 61: Comparison of the different virus prevention results of China and America’s different models of political institutions and governance. (第 61 期: 对比中美两国不同政治制度和治理模式下产生的不同抗疫结果, 张维为与金灿荣一起解读美国抗疫失败背后的种种因素).” China DragonTV Official, June 15, 2020. YouTube video, 49:43.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORAKALQ0A5c&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtY Ai nHskG3QEIfbW&index=41&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 63: What precious values have been displayed by China’s virus prevention efforts? (第 63 期: 中国在抗“疫”过程中展现了哪些宝贵的价值观? 这些价值观背后又有着哪些传统文化的基因和现代性? 张维为、范勇鹏为你解答).” China DragonTV Official, July 1, 2020. YouTube video, 49:50.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YxWNoCeGs8&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtY Ai nHskG3QEIfbW&index=39&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 75: What benefits does the success of China’s virus prevention model have for the development of China? Exploration of China’s new ideological liberation. (第 75 期：中国抗疫模式的成功对中国发展有何重要作用？张维为携手吴新文一起探讨中国新的思想解放)。” China DragonTV Official, October 12, 2020. YouTube video, 41:50.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maidMcAOTII&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=27&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 86: Looking back on the important events of 2020, not a single one failed to reveal Chinese confidence! Let Zhang Weiwei and Li Bo make you feel China’s victory in 2020 (第 86 期：回溯 2020 国内外大事件，无一不透露着中国自信！让张维为，李波带你感受 2020 的中国心胜).” China DragonTV Official, (no date listed). YouTube video, 46:30.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm8CMthpasw&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=16&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhang Weiwei. “China Now, Episode 87: Why is China able to become a place with a vibrant economic society during the process of fighting the virus? Listen to Professor Zhang Weiwei talk about how the world has had its eyes opened regarding China. (第 87 期：中国经济为何能在全球疫情下成为一个经济社会生活满血复活的地方，听张维为教授谈谈世界睁眼看中国).” China DragonTV Official, January 4, 2021. YouTube video, 47:30.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y093fY5X0QQ&list=PL1OG5YATWAbDEPDNVtYAINHskG3QEIfbW&index=15&ab_channel=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E4%B8%9C%E6%96%B9%E5%8D%AB%E8%A7%86%E5%AE%98%E6%96%B9%E9%A2%91%E9%81%93ChinaDragonTVOfficial (accessed June 13, 2021).

Zhihu. “What should one make of the show China Now?” (“如何看待这就是中国这个节目”). <https://www.zhihu.com/question/314941319?rf=308363722> (accessed 25 May, 2021).

Zhu Zhiqun. “Interpreting China’s “Wolf-Warrior” Diplomacy.” *the Diplomat*, 15 May, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/interpreting-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomacy/> (accessed June 13, 2021).