VIDEOS OF WORSHIP

A multimodal critical discourse analysis of Xi Jinping's ideology and its recontextualisation in propagandistic music videos

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Abstract

År 2012 och 2013 tog Xi Jinping över ledarrollerna för Kinas Kommunistparti, den Centrala Militärkommissionen och Folkrepubliken Kina. Detta maktskifte påbörjade en centralisering av den makt som sedan Deng Xiaopings tid hade delats av det översta ledarskiktet. De senaste åren har en debatt angående den ökande dyrkan av Xi börjat ta form, påskyndat av den mängd propaganda som tillkommit under hans första mandatperiod. Syftet med den här studien är att undersöka hur ideologiska aspekter av Xi Jinpings diskurs transformeras i propagandistiska musikvideor för att förverkliga en personkult omkring honom. Det hyllande elementet är genomgående och återfinns i samtliga fyra videor som undersökts i denna studie.

Studien består av tre analyser som baserats i tre motsvarande teoretiska ramverk. Den första analysen introducerar de kontextuella aspekter som är viktiga för studien i sin helhet, t.ex. olika intertexter och nyckelord inom Xis diskurs samt förklaringar av begreppen "propaganda" och "personkult" (diskurshistoriskt perspektiv). I den andra analysen undersöker jag videorna utifrån de idémässiga, interpersonella och textuella funktionerna ur Kress och van Leeuwens (2006) visuella grammatik. Den tredje analysen tar itu med hur ideologiska aspekter transformeras ("omkontextualiseras"). Då studien följer ett multimodalt ramverk är jag intresserad av hur detta sker inom språkliga, visuella och auditiva semiotiska resurser.

I den avslutande diskussionen visar jag hur videornas diskursiva struktur används för att skapa och bibehålla en personkult omkring Xi. Mina slutsatser visar hur de fyra videorna bygger upp ett till synes positivt narrativ där diverse aspekter av Xis diskurs står i fokus. Detta framhävs med hjälp av ett eller flera centrala objekt som ämnar underlätta åskådarens läsning av videon. Jag finner också att det utvalda materialet fokuserar på den del av Xis diskurs som betonar "konstruktionen av ett måttligt välmående samhälle". En stor del av de representationer som återfinns i videorna är relaterade till nyckelord som "jämlikhet" och "patriotism", vilket ofta sker med hjälp av symboler (t.ex. flaggor) eller olika semiotiska resurser (gester, klädsel, ansiktsuttryck etc.). Slutligen föreslår jag ett nytt koncept för att bättre beskriva videornas struktur: "multimodalt propagandanarrativ".

　　2012、2013 年起习近平为中国共产党中央委员会总书记、中央军事委员会主席与中华人民共和国主席。权力移交让邓小平时代以来的集体领导减少下来，大权独揽起来。随著习近平第一届任期中宣传越来越多，关于颂习的争论出现。本文分析的是习近平话语中的思想方面在宣传性音乐视频中如何实现个人崇拜的问题。视频都有"歌颂习近平"的内容。

　　本论文包括三个分析部分与三种理论框架。第一个分析介绍对论文的重要语境方面，例如习近平话语中的互文性、关键词与"宣传"和"个人崇拜"的观念（语篇-历史分析方法）。第二个分析中本人从 Kress & van Leeuwen（2006）视觉语法来调查视频中的意念功能、人际功能和篇章功能。第三个分析谈的是思想方面如何抽象化（"再语境化"）。本论文使用一种多模态性的框架，试图了解语言、视觉与听觉的符号资源如何再语境化。

　　在结论中本人将展现视频中的话语结构如何创造出习近平的个人崇拜，并且推波助澜。根据结语，这四个视频建立一个好像积极的叙事似的，注重习近平话语中的一些方面，於此有一、二个主要的事物便於观察者观看视频。本人还发现此份研究资料中会注重习近平话语中强调"全面建成小康社会"的部分。大部分的表征跟"平等"和"爱国"的关键词有关系，常常被各种象征（例如旗帜）和模态（例如手势、衣服、脸色，等等）实现了。最后，为了更好地形容视频的结构，本人建议新的观念："多模态宣传叙事"。

关键词：个人崇拜，习近平，视觉语法，再语境化，多模态批评性话语研究

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In this study I explore my most prevalent research interests—propaganda, multimodality, and discourse analysis—that has developed over the course of my graduate years at the University of Gothenburg. I am thankful for my three-time supervisor, Fredrik Fällman, as his assistance, encouragement, and criticism has proved invaluable for me to cultivate my personal research interests and academic skills. He also introduced me to the first video of the material, which eventually resulted in this very thesis.

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Contents

Introduction

In November 2012, a new era began for the world's most populous nation. Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 stepped down from his posts as general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), and Xi Jinping 习近平 took his place. In April 2013, the transition of power was finalised when Xi took office as President of the People's Republic of China (PRC)—his ascension to power was complete, but there was much left to be done. The period leading up to his assumption of power and the immediate years that followed were characterised by a crackdown on corrupt Party officials, both high and low ranking ('tigers and flies'), both civilians and military. He made moves to put his own people in favourable positions and himself in direct control of a number of newly created groups and committees, which has led to the centralisation of authority and an increasingly 'strongman' political situation. As of today, the number of officials purged in Xi's anticorruption campaign is estimated by scholars to be around 20,000–30,000 (Lorentzen & Lu, 2018; Sinica Podcast, 2019). However, an article in The Economist (2015) puts the number of indicted officials at 100,000. Certain high-profile individuals that have been removed from power stand out. The same year as Xi came to power, Chongqing party secretary Bo Xilai 薄熙来 was removed from office and sentenced to life in prison. His political career came to a sudden end after his wife was implicated in the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood, which became global news and a major scandal for the CPC. Since then, the most important figures removed in Xi's campaign include Zhou Yongkang 周永康, former member of the CPC's Politburo Standing Committee (the PSC, a small group of the CPC's most powerful members), Ling Jihua 令计划, one of Hu Jintao's top aides, and generals Xu Caihou 徐才厚 and Guo Boxiong 郭伯雄, both former vice-chairmen of the CMC and the previous administration's top ranking military officials (Li Cheng, 2016; An, 2014; Sinica Podcast, 2019).

Interpretations of the anticorruption campaign vary between two general explanations. Either, Xi is looking to remove his political competitors by purging their networks and allies, which would consolidate his power. Or, he is actually seeking to strengthen the Party's capacity to govern according to its "Leninist authoritarian" model after decades of economic reform have led to widespread and unhindered corruption—Lorentzen & Lu (2018: 32) finds

evidence of both interpretations. Yet, intentions and goals notwithstanding, there is a rising consensus among sinologists and China analysts that the concentration of power in Xi's hands is becoming very reminiscent of how Mao Zedong 毛泽东 ruled China. That is, by 'charismatic authority' and a 'cult of personality' (Lüqiu, 2016). Based on this presupposition, I investigate how Xi's up-and-coming personality cult is multimodally realised in a selection of propagandistic music videos.

Who is Xi Jinping? He is the son of Xi Zhongxun 习仲勋(1913–2002), a 'first-generation' communist revolutionary and later high-ranking political official. Xi Jinping is part of the fifth generation of leadership and a so-called 'princeling'.[1] These are children to high-ranking politicians who often serve as 'secretaries' (*mishu*) to their fathers' old comrades who occupy senior positions within the government apparatus (a sort-of mentor-protégé relationship; Li Cheng, 2016). In his early career (1979–1982), Xi served as *mishu* to Minister of Defence Geng Biao 耿飙, who served with Xi Zhongxun in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Before joining the CPC in 1974 and advancing through its ranks, however, Xi was 'sent down to the countryside' to his home province of Shaanxi (1969–1975) during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when his father was purged from office. Xi Zhongxun was rehabilitated in 1978 by Deng Xiaoping's 邓小平 administration.

Xi Jinping served as governor in the Fujian and Zhejiang provinces and as Party secretary in Zhejiang and Shanghai before being selected for the PSC at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC) in 2007. In 2008 he became vice-president of the PRC and his subsequent rise to the top became a certainty. He is the current head of both Party, state, and military. The relationship between these three entities is that of profound interconnectedness, but in the end it all serves to legitimise the CPC's absolute control over China. The PRC is a one-party state governed by the CPC, as specified by the PRC constitution (see Xinhua, 2018a). The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is controlled by the CMC whose organisational structure is twofold—it is subservient to a joint Party and state leadership. This means that the PLA is under de facto control by the CPC, while being the official state military since the founding of the PRC in 1949; its chairman is also traditionally the general secretary of the CPC (Jiang, Hu, and Xi).

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[1]The leadership generations can be summarised as: Hu Jintao (fourth), Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (third), Deng Xiaoping (second), and Mao Zedong (first).

I have based my research on earlier work from established and well-known scholars with a combined input from Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) and sinology (Chinese studies). I have, to the best of my ability, used first-hand material and primary sources to support my claims and interpretations. I have used clearly defined theoretical and methodological tools in my analysis, all of whom are widely accepted in their individual disciplines. And I have selected and analysed material that I consider to be of contemporary importance and relevance. Furthermore, no ethical complications have been encountered during the course of this study—all individuals mentioned by name in the text are either known professionals or otherwise public figures.

Previous research on the topic of Xi's personality cult include articles by Susan Shirk (2018), who analyses the conditions that led to the emergence of a cult of personality despite the measures put in place by Deng's government; Luwei Rose Lüqiu (2016), who discusses the themes of rhetoric and ritual and the possibilities and constraints the CPC faces when attempting to construct a cult; and Yin Liangen & Terry Flew (2018), who argue that the cult is predominantly society-driven and bottom-up instead of state-driven and top-down. As it stands, the majority of scholarly work is concerned with explaining existing parameters, underlying conditions, and future outcomes. Although both Lüqiu and Yin & Flew briefly discuss online music videos praising Xi, there are few instances where these are systematically analysed. This highlights a gap in the current literature—we need to know more about the actual resources and structure used in these videos; what modes of communication are used, how are these videos praising Xi, and what particular features serve which particular function?

In this thesis I will begin to fill this gap. First, by suggesting a theoretical framework that can explain the videos' composition while simultaneously critiquing their problematic relationship with reality. Secondly, by describing how ideological aspects of Xi's discourse are represented via the social practice while continuing to critique any propagandistic element. And lastly, to provide new means by which we can understand the discursive structure of the videos. All of this is done from a normative standpoint of how society 'ought to be' according to universal values of what is 'just' and 'fair'.

In the end, I hope to have shed some new light on this bleak yet very rich material—bleak in the sense that it shows a troubling trend for the coming years of Xi's second term, and rich in the sense that it is descriptive of past, current, and future sentiments regarding the cult of

personality phenomenon in a Chinese context. If Xi continues to govern after his second term ends in 2022, which he is expected to do, there might be a need to reevaluate the importance of propagandistic music videos' role in legitimising his and the CPC's authority over China.

Specific aim and research questions

In this thesis I investigate the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi Jinping by focusing on recontextualisation of ideology in four propagandistic music videos. I adopt an interdisciplinary framework with insights from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies (MCDS). As will be explained below, this allows for a comprehensive critique of all verbal and non-verbal semiotic modes. The overall aim is to lay bare the internal discourse structure of these videos, how they contribute to the personality cult, and what modes of communication—linguistic, visual, or auditory—are used in the process.

The initial context analysis aims to provide a basis for these elements. It defines the scope of Xi's ideological intertexts and keywords that are detailed in the subsequent analyses. The video analysis provides a systematic investigation of each video's composition based on the framework of visual grammar by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006). In the recontextualisation analysis I take these findings and subject them to four different processes of abstraction—substitution, deletion, addition, and rearrangement—to understand how these function with regards to the realisation of a personality cult. In the concluding discussion I explain the results according to the model of critique provided by the DHA and attempt to formulate a way forward for future research and theoretical advancement.

The forthcoming research questions are based on a hypothesis that certain modes and their connection to recontextualisations in the videos can be seen as characteristic for the ideological aspects in question. That is, particular modes are preferred in conjunction with particular processes of recontextualisation to reach the desired outcome or effect.

I try to answer the following primary research question, which will be accomplished by following its two sub-questions:

How are the videos contributing to the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi Jinping?

i.   What are the relevant features of the observable modes, i.e. the linguistic (written and spoken text), the visual (settings, symbols, colour, gestures, gaze, etc.), and the auditory (voice, musical instruments, and sounds) aspects of the videos?

ii.   How are the recontextualisation processes of substitution, deletion, addition, and rearrangement used to depict Xi Jinping's ideology as existent in these features?

By analysing how Xi's ideology is interacting with different semiotic resources I can hopefully shed some light on how these have been mobilised to promote his personal political discourse and narrative. But, most importantly, provide a better understanding of instances where his ideology is part of problematic representations of the social practice. The aim of this thesis is justified because an understanding of contemporary video propaganda and its applications can contribute to how we perceive propagandist messages in general. Understandably, propaganda is not limited to textual sources; people with intention to control or hinder public opinions and discourses will use every tool at their disposal to achieve this, which includes video and audio. In this thesis, the central topic is Xi's personality cult, and it is analysed from a critical perspective on discourse. By focusing on how this topic is realised in a multimodal setting, we will further our knowledge of which verbal and non-verbal resources are used for this objective, which in turn will simplify how we discuss the subject and provide assistance for future, more detailed studies.

Theoretical framework

In this thesis I analyse four propagandistic music videos. They are called "How Should I Address You?" (hereafter: V1), "To Follow You is to Follow the Sun" (V2), "I Give My Heart to You" (V3), and "To Be an Upright Man for a Lifetime (The Hopes of President Xi)" (V4). V1, V2, and V4 are literal propagandistic music videos, while V3 is an instalment from the China Central Television (CCTV) 2015 Lunar New Year Gala. They all have one thing in common—they include some form of representation of Xi Jinping. The video medium contains channels of communication other than the purely textual—what is spoken or written (Fairclough, 2013)—which calls for a theory that accounts for multimodal analysis. Underlying this entire study is the scholarly 'field' of CDS, which is an interdisciplinary approach towards the analysis of discourse and its plethora of related subjects. It is influenced by research in linguistics, political science, social psychology, to name a few (van Dijk, 1993).

The theoretical framework employed here is also interdisciplinary. It provides insights from the Discourse-Historical Approach which draws upon CDS through a historical lens, allowing the researcher to put increased emphasis on important context (Wodak, 2001a, 2001b; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). The first subsection on the DHA will introduce and explain some aspects and definitions considered to be common ground for all CDS, most notably regarding critique, ideology, power, and context (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The DHA is combined with two distinct frameworks from Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies. Both MCDS and CDS are founded in several important studies from many different disciplines. In this thesis I use linguistic tools first developed by Michael Halliday (1974, 1994). The 'metafunctions' of his Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) inspired the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2001, 2006), who extended it to include frameworks for 'visual grammar' and 'multimodal discourse'. The subsection on MCDS delves into, first of all, precisely this grammar of visual design, which provides the study with appropriate means for analysing semiotic resources. The metafunctions from SFG are denoted as the ideational function, the interpersonal function, and the textual function.

Secondly, it provides an explanation of how the critical element is integrated into multimodal study. It is primarily concerned with the aspect of recontextualisation (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; van Leeuwen, 2008; Machin, 2013). It signifies a process of abstraction of the social practice, which occurs via substitution, deletion, addition, and/or

rearrangement of different elements. It also briefly explains intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016: 27–28). Both of these terms are central to CDS. They denote a connection between the text in focus and other texts and how discourses are 'open' and 'fluid' and constantly reference other discourses.

The Discourse-Historical Approach

As I have mentioned above, the DHA relies on a 'critical' analysis of discourse. It adheres to the socio-philosophical tradition of critical theory and is committed to several types of interconnected critique. Ruth Wodak (2001a, 2001b, 2009) explains how CDS need not evaluate what is right or wrong, but should rather concern itself with exposing potential irregularities and contradictions within the observed discourse. The DHA is characterised by its emphasis on historical and contextual background. It also concerns itself with the diachronic change of genres of discourse and uses social theories to explain these contexts.

It is essential for critical studies of discourse to explain the normative 'choices' and why certain interpretations are preferred over others. There is an ever-present need to be transparent, self-reflective, and self-critical towards one's own analysis and its institutional position (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). In accordance with this view, the goal of CDS is not merely scientific advancement, but also betterment of political and social practice. To side with the disadvantaged, the underprivileged, and those taken advantage of is the duty of every morally responsible scholar. Although this might seem controversial or potentially biased, it is justified within CDS because it is explicitly stated and should be repeatedly emphasised throughout one's research (van Dijk, 1997a; Kress, 1990, 1996).

The critique formulated in this thesis is from a normative standpoint. First of all, it is worth noting some earlier observations regarding the theoretical practice of CDS that is of importance to the present context. The Cultural Discourse scholar Shi Xu (2014), among many others, has been vocal about the need for CDS to acknowledge dissimilar cultural values and perspectives. He exemplifies this by contrasting Chinese analytical practice with the so-called 'Western-oriented' tradition of CDS. There is always a risk of the research becoming ethnocentric when there is a supposed 'gap' between theory and material. However, Sayer (2009: 783) sees this as extending beyond the problem of ethnocentrism and points to scholars' nervous view towards a critical standpoint as stemming from "an evasion of the issue of conceptions of the good, an ethics".

How do we approach this dilemma in light of the propagandistic and worship-like nature of the videos? The abundance of contributions to Cultural Discourse Studies mentioned by Shi Xu (e.g. Said, 1978; Hall, 1996; Pardo, 2010) notes the importance of a localised and diversified perspective. The objective in this thesis is to identify the ideological elements within the videos, which is done by taking an explicit standpoint against problematic representations of social practices. By placing the videos in the historical contexts of personality cult and propaganda they will, hopefully, be less prone to ethnocentric observations stemming from any westernised point of view. Note that a full historical account is unfeasible as it is arguably closely interlinked with modern Chinese history as a whole. Instead, the particular contexts have been selected on a basis of importance for propagandistic music videos.

The normative critique of social practice in the videos is based on the ideas that society ought to be just and fair, and that it is concerned with 'human well-being' and 'basic needs'. This is not always the case—what is considered 'fair' or 'just' in one society might be heavily recontextualised in another (Fairclough, 2013). The differences regarding the notion of 'legality' in the West and the PRC aptly illustrates this—how the PRC government controls China's judicial system is vastly different from a Western liberal democracy. Based on this, the critique "assesses what exists, what might exist and what should exist" and serves to highlight "gaps between what particular societies claim to be … and what they are" (ibid: 7). This brings us back to the three-dimensional critique in the DHA. These are:

- *Text or discourse-immanent critique* which focuses on the normative problematization of contradictions within the structure of a particular text or discourse, e.g. the discrepancy between what is described in a text and what reality actually depicts; "What are the differences between claims and reality, and are these differences necessary … contradictions?" (Herzog, 2016: 287). It seeks to answer questions like: "What does this mean?" and "How does this make sense?" (Wrbouschek, 2009: 39).

- *Socio-diagnostic critique* which is concerned with "demystifying propagandist, populist, etc. discursive practices" (Forchtner, 2011: 3), and requires the researcher to clearly state their specific standpoint. Wodak (2001b: 64–65) explains how the researcher makes use of their "background and contextual knowledge and embeds the communicative or interaction

structures of a discursive event in a wider frame of social and political relations, processes and circumstances".

- *Prognostic/retrospective critique* aims at reconstructing the contemporary 'situation' by referring to common principles such as "human rights or the rejection of suffering" (Forchtner, 2011: 3). Like socio-diagnostic critique, this also requires the researcher to be transparent with their motive and values (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

This conceptualisation is adopted to provide a comprehensive frame for critiquing the semiotic resources in focus. These types of critique are important for the coming analysis, but are rarely explained extensively in MCDS literature. Hopefully, by including such a description, the aims and motivations of all critique will become more transparent.

I use this model to critique ideological aspects of Xi Jinping's discourse. So what exactly do I mean by 'ideology'? Both this notion and the concept of 'power' need clarification. CDS strives to expose hidden and unconscious worldviews, those that remain unchallenged in society. Ideological elements of Xi's discourse might not be hidden, but they are certainly not explicit in every single representation in the videos. As Wodak & Meyer (2016) explain, it is how ideologies work in everyday scenarios that scholars of CDS want to describe. Xi's discourse is being observed to permeate an increasing amount of social spheres in the PRC, which will be illustrated by the material. The definition of ideology employed will echo what the DHA denotes as a full ideology—for example, Communism—which in this case is 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Such an ideology is made up of three models: "a representational model of what society looks like … a visionary model of what society should look like in the future … [and] a programmatic model of how the envisioned society should be achieved 'on the path' from the present to the future" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016: 25). These models are well suited for explaining the ideological aspects of Xi's discourse. The Chinese Dream and the Two Centenary Goals of 2021 and 2049 explicitly state what China's role will be in the near future. And the keywords, or Socialist core values, provides us with conditions of how society is today, on the way towards those goals.[2]

Ideologies are important for the constructing, altering, and upholding of unequal power relations. This is accomplished via discourse, and sometimes even by restricting access to certain types of discourse. The influence on power relations by ideology directly connects it

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[2] The centennial goals are referring to the 100-year anniversaries of the CPC (2021) and the PRC (2049).

to the concept of power. Power is both a result of and means to exert discourse; they are discrete from each other in the sense that they overlap (Fairclough, 2013). Power often relates to imbalanced relationships between different social entities and often involves some form of negative procedure that benefits the dominant party (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). The 'power to shape desires and beliefs' in order to impede potential discontent is of particular importance when placed in relation to propaganda (Lukes, 2005). The fact that Xi's personal political theory—'Xi Jinping Thought'—was incorporated into the constitution at the 19th Party Congress in 2017 makes him the most influential leader since Mao Zedong with regards to Party rhetoric and policy.[3] Furthermore, it is defined as 'power behind discourse', which means the often 'inexplicit' or 'hidden' force that has influence to manipulate the discourse in focus. It is different from 'power in discourse', which instead signifies more direct and overt power relations, for example the unequal relationships between teacher/student and doctor/patient (Fairclough, 2015).

Discourse is also overlapping with the notion of context; "[c]ontext features not only influence discourse, but also vice versa: discourse may typically also define or change such context characteristics" (van Dijk, 1997a: 19). It can be further defined as "[s]omething we need to know about in order to properly understand the event, action or discourse. Something that functions as background, setting, surroundings, conditions or consequences" (van Dijk, 1997b: 11). By focusing on the context of discursive phenomena, we also need to take into account the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of a particular text or discourse. Intertextuality notes how text always refers to other texts, so-called 'explicit intertextuality', e.g. when a news article cites or references a specific academic study or judicial document; something that can be visibly traced back to its source (Flowerdew, 2016). In the same sense, interdiscursivity—also denoted as 'implicit intertextuality'—shows how discourses often indirectly refer to other discourses via texts or other signs (Fairclough, 2015). By defining discourses as 'discourse about x' (i.e. topic-related), then we can observe how different discourses refer to common sets of topics or sub-discourses and how they are communicated via shared types of genres (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). Each use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity draw upon past resources to create meaning, but they also influence future

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[3]Xi Jinping Thought was coined and enshrined in the Party constitution during the 19th NCCPC in October, 2017 and later enshrined into the state constitution during the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) in March, 2018 (see Xinhua, 2017b; Klimeš & Marinelli, 2018); By denoting Xi Jinping's personal narrative as 'thought' (*sixiang*), on par (or slightly below) with Mao Zedong, he is symbolically raised above his predecessors, none of whom achieved such elevated status for their political theory.

discourse (Flowerdew, 2016). The discursive connection between Xi and the leaders that came before him therefore remain an important factor because it might facilitate an understanding of any implications for future CPC and PRC leadership and ideology. This will not, however, be included in the present endeavour due to limitations on time and scope (see Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018, for a brief overview of Hu Jintao and the implications of his rule for Xi Jinping; see also Chai, 2003, for an explanation of ideology during the Mao-Deng-Jiang-Hu eras).

Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies

I will now explain what is meant by the term 'multimodality'. It has become essential to communication as a whole, seeing as how different modes occupy certain 'affordances' and 'constraints'—what they can and cannot do—that language in itself do not. So what is a mode? It can be seen as a 'type' or 'channel' of communication. And it is the combination of such types that form the notion of multimodality. Spoken or written texts are merely two out of countless modes of communication. But even texts can be multimodal; words and sentences can be spoken in ways that accentuate certain aspects of meaning, i.e. by using volume, intonation, emotion etc. Written texts can display meaning in other ways than only the semantic content by ways of font, size, colour, and so on. These ways of relaying meaningful information are what a formal theory of social semiotics refers to as 'modes' (Kress, 2010).

Michael Halliday's (1978, 1994) semiotic approach is adopted in this thesis because it serves as a suitable base for critical studies of multimodality and consists of a full theory of communication. As mentioned above, Halliday's theory suggests that semiotic modes have three distinct 'metafunctions' that they fulfil. These are the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions explained below (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Kress, 2010).

- *The ideational function* involves representations of "meanings about actions, states, events in the world", how objects/things are related to processes and how these can be visualised (Kress, 2010: 87). It aims to illustrate who is doing what within discourse. This is explained further by certain relationships within images being (a) *narrative,* depicting events or actions, (b) *classificatory,* representing objects in relation to each other, and (c) *analytical,* how different parts relate to a larger structure (Jones, 2012; Gee, 2010). This

applies to both pictures and videos, the latter being significantly more nuanced due to the sequential orientation of visual elements.

- *The interpersonal function* primarily relates to the relationship between producer and recipient which is achieved indirectly by means of visual representations. That is, how the producer chooses to construct the intended message and its influence on the viewer's perception of the image. For instance, during China's early modernisation, the idea of intimacy between Mao Zedong and the common people was easily transmitted by using the visual genre of 'propaganda art' and the modes included in painting and illustration rather than written text alone. This approach was successful due to the high illiteracy rate in China at the time (Landsberger, 1994; Figure 1).

- *The textual function* is concerned with spatial placement of visual elements and how this can be modified to manipulate how the observer 'reads' an image. The consensus is that changing a layout (e.g. switching places between image and text from left to right and vice versa) creates a different meaning, even though no new resources have been added. Because of the sequential aspect of the material, textual placement also becomes increasingly nuanced via modes that include movement, e.g. angle or gesture (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Figure 1. *Follow the communist party forever, follow Chairman Mao forever*. This poster is used to illustrate the people and Mao's supposed intimate relationship. (People's Fine Arts Publishing House, approx. 1972).

As of today, Critical Discourse Studies as a heterogeneous field of research is well established. However, the trend of analysing multimodality from a critical perspective is not yet on par with the rest of CDS and is still relatively young in comparison (Machin, 2013, 2016). Theo

van Leeuwen is usually credited as one of the most important scholars for this interdisciplinary unison between semiotics and discourse analysis, and has recently had an entire book devoted to his personal approach (see Zhao, Djonov, Björkvall & Boeriis, 2018). In this new addition to MCDS, van Leeuwen's (2008) idea of recontextualising social practice is reaffirmed, positioning a method to "(1) analyse the semiotic practice into its components and then (2) identify how it has been transformed in discourse through the use of verbal and/or non-verbal resources" (Djonov & Zhao, 2018: 8–9). This statement of purpose for MCDS is reinforced in several recent studies (see Hansson, 2018; Archer & Björkvall, 2018; O'Halloran et al., 2018) and will be echoed in this thesis as well.

As the literature explains, the notion of recontextualisation is of utmost importance when studying ideological aspects of the social practice. Van Leeuwen's theory of recontextualisation, as it developed throughout the last decades, entails a process of abstraction, or transformation. It is by examining these processes of abstraction in the chosen material that lets us understand how the underlying ideological positions have manifested in the discourse. As introduced in van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999) and then developed further in van Leeuwen (2008) and Machin (2013) among others, representation always involves recontextualisation, recontextualisation always involves transformation, and transformation involves substitution, deletion, addition, and rearrangement. Thus, semiotic representation—representation by words, images, sounds, music etc.—entails a substitution, deletion, addition or rearrangement of different parts of the 'thing' being represented (the social practice). Focusing on the discourse and ideology of Xi, these will be deployed in the material as:

- *Substitution* of parts of the social practice with representations that aims to promote a preferable narrative and dispute 'facts'; something will be displayed as something else (Hansson, 2018). For instance, the hardship endured by various ethnic minorities in the PRC is substituted by elements that completely neglect to include any negative aspects. Instead, the depiction consists of seemingly 'harmonious' minorities, positioning them as an integral part of a uniform Chinese identity. It can be seen as an attempt to 'generalise' the complex relationship between the party-state and the large amount of minorities in the PRC as 'one and the same'; all ethnic groups are 'happy and content'.
- *Deletion* of linguistic, visual, or auditory elements that would portray the actor, activity, setting etc. in an unwanted or negative way. It removes any potential links between

supposed negative element and its perpetrator. This can be exemplified in almost all the early CPC propaganda art, which depicts the Cultural Revolution as something grandiose, positive, and successful while excluding all the despair and suffering, (Figure 2; Powell & Wong, 1997). It is impossible for a representation to include all aspects of the social practice it portrays, so it is important to ask what has been deleted and why (Machin, 2013).

- *Addition* is similar to deletion—cues can also be added to represent parts of a social practice in a desired or positive fashion. For example, by explaining or justifying aspects prone to critique and by shifting away attention (Hansson, 2018). Addition functions according to ways of legitimisation, providing purpose, displaying reactions towards something, and also evaluation of certain aspects as good or bad (van Leeuwen, 2008; Machin, 2013).

- *Rearrangement* of the order in which events take place. This can make it look like a certain negative occurrence did not result from a particular action, or vice versa. This has obvious implications when doing video analysis, seeing as how imagery is subjected to sequencing of events ('montage'; Eisenstein, 2004 [1929]) that otherwise would have no apparent connection. It is also important for the visualisation of relationships between social actors. It can be used to display actors as either more or less powerful than in reality (Hansson, 2018).

Figure 2. *Bombard the capitalist headquarters (the Great Cultural Revolution will shine forever group painting).* A poster depicting a particular event of the Cultural Revolution as something grand and positive. It neglects, however, its violent and negative impact. (Cultural Revolution Collective Painting Creative Group, 1976).

Methodology

Important to the notion of critical discourse is its interdisciplinary approach. Theory, methodology, method, and research practice should all draw from a multidisciplinary supply of tools to make the analysis more effective and make possible an interdisciplinary application of its results (van Dijk, 2008; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). It should also be grounded in prior empirical analyses, which implies a circular model in which the study moves back and forth between theory and discourse/text (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The methods I apply in this thesis follow the threefold model of critique of the DHA. First of all, I conduct a concise context analysis that includes necessary historical information. Secondly, I introduce the material and subject it to a text and discourse immanent critique that highlights any objectively problematic elements of the representations. Thirdly, I analyse recontextualisation processes and simultaneously employ a socio-diagnostic critique, which aims to lay bare any propagandist or populist influences within the social practice. And lastly, I discuss the results and subject them to a prognostic and retrospective critique, in order to provide a better understanding of current conditions and to possibly change them for the better.

This study will undertake a detailed analysis of the linguistic, visual, and auditory modes in four propagandistic music videos. Not all of these videos are 'music videos' per se, but all include some combination of the aforementioned modes. These are introduced in the first video analysis, which will be preceded by the context analysis. In the context analysis I introduce elements of importance to Xi's ideology, most notably the Chinese Dream and Four Comprehensives intertexts, as well as the 12 Socialist core values as keywords in Xi's discourse. These are supported by a rundown of the 'personality cult' and 'propaganda' phenomena in a Chinese context. The two video analyses themselves will focus on Halliday's (1994) metafunctions and van Leeuwen's (2008) notion of recontextualisation respectively. The selected videos are introduced separately, after which the analysis is split into four subsections, each focusing on one of the aforementioned processes of abstraction.

Regarding the material, the videos were initially selected on a basis of production value and official status—they are all 'serious'; they do not degrade the personality cult by their low quality (Lüqiu, 2016)—however, this turned out to be of lesser importance for this study. I only viewed each video 1–2 times before I opted to include it, to minimise any analytical

presumptions or bias. Any potential similarities or dissimilarities are purely coincidental and to be seen, if highlighted, as products of the analysis.

This thesis will not include a genre analysis due to limitations of time and scope. There will be no systematic evaluation of the videos' generic aspects, i.e. participants and their subject positions, social identities, etc. Analysing generic aspects of material from within the PRC is often problematized by the difficulty in obtaining reliable information (and the occasional absence of such). There is also almost no transparency whatsoever with regards to CPC and PRC institutions.

In this study I make no claims regarding the intentions or choices behind any linguistic, visual, or auditory mode or its representation in the material. However, this is not necessarily an issue for critical studies of multimodality: our tools already *do not* allow us to discern how observers will receive these videos, nor allow us to make any conclusions about the choices of producers (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Analysis

This thesis consists of three distinct analyses, one regarding context and two regarding multimodality. In the first one I seek to provide contextual background to certain important aspects of the selected material, such as their worshipping and propagandistic nature towards Xi Jinping. It will provide an outline of Xi's discourse, including important features of his personal theory and terminology. Thereafter, it will deal with propaganda in a Chinese context—its historical value and discursive structure—to establish parameters by which the videos will analysed. Lastly, a backdrop to the 'cult of personality' phenomenon will be given to explain how these 'songs of praise' function as manifestations of Xi's personal discourse. Such instances of personality cult can be sanctioned by party-state organs (as was the case with Mao Zedong), they can be forcibly restrained, or they can be passively encouraged or allowed. One-man rule and personality cults seem to be connected to a degree (Lüqiu, 2016). What are the conditions of Xi's cult?

The second analysis is directly concerned with analysing the multimodal communication within the videos. Each video combines linguistic, visual, and auditory modes to construct a coherent and meaningful context. My intent is therefore to lay bare some of the less apparent meanings and how they are transmitted. Even if the videos' ideological messages are somewhat detectable, not every element or its particular importance can be observed by a single viewing. The tools provided by the selected theoretical framework are well suited for highlighting and interpreting such elements, especially with regards to different 'information values' (see p. 35). The videos are examined separately to allow for a structured overview of the material. The generic aspects are not subjected to analysis, however they are equally relevant and potent when it comes to dissemination of ideology.

In the third analysis I deal with the recontextualisation of Xi's ideology into the represented social practices. The objective is to research how different elements are utilised to realise parts of Xi's personal discourse and ideology as it has been conceptualised within the context analysis. It is of interest to observe what aspects of ideology that have been abstracted in the videos as this helps to explain the how the processes themselves function. This section shifts the focus from the videos themselves to the processes, introducing these in a sequential order (with occasional overlapping and repetition).

Context analysis

To be able to correctly understand how the selected material fit within their respective contexts and the context of Xi's personal discourse as a whole, there are a couple of features that needs to be examined beforehand. This section will introduce several areas of importance, based on 'first readings' of these videos as powerful in highlighting the historical and social event or practice in question (see the historiographical approach by Flowerdew, 2016). These first readings of the videos yielded a number of core contextual aspects.

First of all, the discourse of Xi Jinping, which includes aspects surrounding his personal theory, narrative, and terminology. The conceptualisation of 'Xi's ideology' draws primarily on recent studies published in the *Journal of Chinese Political Science* (No. 23, issue 3), particularly an article by Kerry Brown and Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2018) called "Ideology in the Era of Xi Jinping". In the article they establish 12 distinct keywords that characterise Xi's discourse. These keywords correspond with the 12 core Socialist values introduced under Hu Jintao. They provide a viewpoint into Xi's discursive terminology and a suitable base upon which a multimodal analysis can be executed. Understanding of how these core values as representative of Xi's ideology are recontextualised in linguistic, visual, and auditory modes will consequently facilitate our understanding of what types of abstraction are suitable for which particular aspect.

Secondly, the cult of personality phenomenon, as contextual background for the videos in relation to Xi. The act of worshipping an authoritarian leadership has played a significant role throughout Asia during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, perhaps most notably surrounding Mao Zedong in China and Hirohito in Japan. Contemporary instances include the Kim family ruling the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and, more recently, Han Kuo-yu 韩国瑜, the Beijing-friendly mayor of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, who is being criticised by left-wing and pro-Taiwan independence actors to be the subject of a personality cult (Cole, 2019; Hioe, 2019a, 2019b).

Thirdly, propaganda, as an instrument for shaping and containing public opinion, has been a key component in constructing the CPC's hegemony over Chinese society. Visual propaganda, specifically the propaganda poster, was essential to the early recontextualisation of CPC policy that made it accessible to the common people. Its historical context greatly overlaps with the CPC's own history and is naturally too vast to be included as a whole. This

section will attempt to include historical accounts that are relevant to the examined multimodal dimension of the material.

Other aspects were also identified, but less relevant to this study. For instance, both musical and visual genres and their specific contextual backgrounds are worth mentioning. These have not been extensively included due to the absence of a systematic genre analysis. As for music in connection to propaganda and personality cults, it played an instrumental role during the Cultural Revolution where songs worshipping Mao were common (see "The East is Red" or "The Sun is Reddest, Chairman Mao is Dearest"). A brief comparison of personality cult manifestations in music in the Mao and Xi eras is included in the following subsection on propaganda.

The ideological aspects of Xi Jinping's discourse

How do we define Xi's political discourse? It is highly centralised around one major intertextual and interdiscursive source, namely Xi's own political theory, 'Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era' (*xi jinping xin shidai zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi sixiang*; see Goh, 2017 and BBC, 2017). This political theory naturally subsumes a selection of more focused intertexts, such as the 'Chinese Dream' (*zhongguo meng*; possibly 'China Dream'), the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (*yidaiyilu*; BRI) and the 'Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy' (*sige quanmian zhanlüe buju*; The Four Comprehensives).[4] These narrative and culturally important texts are all vital to the greater ideology and utilised as propagandist devices with regards to national identity, unity, economic growth, party discipline, and so on. 'Xi Jinping Thought' as a concrete intertext is a relatively recent development. Therefore, the aforementioned features are detailed independently of this notion. This allows for a time and context-sensitive perspective towards the material—all videos except V2 were published before Xi Jinping Thought became precisely defined. After these areas have been briefly summarised, the keywords proposed by Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2018) will be introduced.

The explanation of the narratives and intertexts mentioned above needs to be tangible and provide real textual sources to refer back to. It is also necessary to recall the fluidity and multitude of layers within the relationship between intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Any

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[4] The BRI's official name is "The Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (*sichouzhi lu jingjidai he 21 shiji haishang sichouzhi lu*).

of the aforementioned features can be either intertextual, by direct visual or linguistic representation, or interdiscursive, by inexplicitly referencing interrelated aspects. The Four Comprehensives is a suitable example. An intertextual relation would explicitly refer to any of its four prongs, whereas an interdiscursive relation might conform to more abstract or indirect methods of representation. These four prongs are internal guidelines that serve the CPC and its ideological hegemony and are employed as intertextual sources for the coming analyses. They denote that party and state activity should:

(1) Comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society,

(2) Comprehensively deepen reform,

(3) Comprehensively govern the nation according to law, and

(4) Comprehensively tighten party discipline.

(BBC, 2015; Garrick & Bennet, 2018).

Regarding the Chinese Dream, Peters (2017) denotes it as drawing upon multiple discursive domains, e.g. the discourses of humiliation, cosmopolitanism, rejuvenation, and so on. He also notes how the Chinese Dream contains intertextual references to the American Dream. However, he explains how they differ from one another in terms of narrative resources, i.e. how PRC leadership draw upon a century of past humiliation as an incentive for future nation building, rather than democracy and pragmatic self-improvement (like the American Dream). The term 'rejuvenation' (*fuxing*) is central to the notion of a Chinese Dream and is described as deeply rooted in Chinese history and closely related to the 'century of humiliation' suffered at the hands of the West and Japan. As a part of the official CPC narrative, this refers to a period in China's collective memory where they were being "attacked, bullied, and torn asunder" (Wang, 2013: 1). The Chinese Dream is meant to bring an end to this perceived suffering; to rejuvenate the Chinese nation. In sum, it is a "major strategic thought' for developing Socialism with Chinese characteristics" in a new era (Wang, 2014: 1). It is an iconic intertext of Xi's first term in office. The first stepping stone on the road towards achieving the Chinese Dream is the centennial goal of 2021, when the creation of a 'moderately prosperous society' (*xiaokang shehui*) will have been realised.

Moving on to the Belt and Road Initiative, it was proposed by Xi Jinping in September and October 2013 and is a global initiative for development of infrastructure, trade, and investment primarily in Asia, Europe, and Africa. A Chinese scholar explains how it has since become "China's major international cooperation strategy to serve its economic development" but argues against its apparent geopolitical aim of expanding the PRC influence sphere (Zhang, 2018: 331). Even though this assessment might be accurate from a certain perspective, it is made complicated by the discrepancy between policy and reality. For example, the PRC's increasingly offensive stance in the South China Sea actively threatens international trade routes despite what the BRI proclaim. The PRC's investment in developing countries might seem benevolent, yet they have been criticised by the International Monetary Fund for having "unsustainable debt levels, predatory lending, and the lack of project transparency" (Gerstel, 2018: 12). This is exemplified by the case of Sri Lanka 'leasing' the Hambantota port to China on a 99 year contract as a consequence of its BRI debt (see Abi-Habib, 2018 and Zhu & Tang, 2018 for contrasting perspectives on this issue). Shanthi Kalathil (2018: 53) frames the problems of the BRI within the larger scope of democracy and authoritarianism:

> When foreign assistance becomes part of broader conversations among and within developing countries, the effect can be to strengthen such core features of democratic governance as citizen voice and participation, media independence, transparency, and accountability. If the institutions driving the development conversation ignore or even undermine liberal-democratic values and concerns, however, the global durability of democratic governance can suffer, corruption can flourish, and authoritarianism can find fertile ground.

It is worth mentioning the United Front Work Department (UFWD), a 'propaganda' body under direct supervision of the Central Committee of the CPC. It engages in influence operations both domestically and abroad, and uses "a range of methods to influence overseas Chinese communities, foreign governments, and other actors to take actions or adopt positions supportive of Beijing's preferred policies" (Bowe, 2018: 3). Basically, its objective is to unite all forces not in direct opposition to the CPC to support the party in some way. It was referred to by Xi as "a 'magic weapon' (*fabao*) to realize the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese People", providing us with an undoubtable connection between the UFWD and the ideological narratives mentioned, e.g. the Chinese Dream and the discourses of humiliation

and rejuvenation (de la Beaumelle, 2017; Brady, 2017). The synergy between the UFWD and economic initiatives such as the BRI via covert influencing of foreign officials, institutions, academics etc. becomes a major factor one needs to consider when dealing with China's supposed 'non-interference' policies.

Socialist core values as keywords in Xi's discourse

Concluding this section on the ideological aspects of Xi Jinping's discourse is a list of keywords proposed by Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2018). From the perspective of discourse studies, an analysis of keywords can be illuminating, especially considering their recontextualisations— "their change over time according to the different social, cultural and political contexts in which they were situated" (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018: 332). The 12 keywords are consistent with the 12 Socialist core values introduced during Hu Jintao's leadership, however, their inclusion in propagandistic contexts have increased substantially since Xi took office. Note that these terms are a part of the CPC's own narrative and not to be taken at face value, but instead subjected to systematic critique by scholars and analysts. The keywords are:

(1) *Fuqiang* ('strong') mostly relates to the desire of a strong and modernised nation, which draws upon the narrative of China's history of humiliation and colonial submission. The CPC leadership has used it to refer to China never again being the object of such aggression. 'Strong' naturally resembles the aspiration towards greatness discussed earlier in the context of 'rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'.

(2) *Minzhu* ('democratic'), in the sense of 'democracy with Chinese characteristics', which is basically a way for the CPC to legitimise their hold onto power. The term is practically recontextualised from its original liberal values to signify "democracy for the Party, by the Party, on behalf of the Party, all of which act as servants of the people they serve" (ibid: 332).

(3) *Wenming* ('cultured' or 'civilised') denotes the continuation of Chinese civilisation and social civility, from before the (debated) Xia dynasty in 2000 B.C. to the establishing of the PRC in 1949. It is a refutation to the suggestion that China is somehow backwards or undeveloped. The terms 'culture' and 'cultural' (*wenhua*) are not used due to them bearing remarkable significance during the Cultural Revolution.

(4) *Hexie* ('harmonious') signifies unity in practice and purpose, but also serves to warn those who would oppose these. In the face of great moral differences, such as material wealth, the CPC wants to do anything to avoid repeating the social divisions of the past, and thus steadily reinforces the goals of creating a "rich, strong, powerful' country" (ibid: 333). As the authors proclaim, it is deeply ironic that nowadays 'to be harmonised' more exactly signifies the 'silencing' of opposing thoughts and ideas (ibid).

(5) *Ziyou* ('freedom') is yet another notion that is recontextualised by the CPC to represent their version of reality. It holds both humanitarian and economic significance, the former relating to the democracy movement of 1989. It is used by Xi, however, only to refer to economically centred freedoms, e.g. travelling and owning property. While this technically means that Chinese people have more freedom now than they previously did, this freedom is also more strictly defined and monitored.

(6) *Pingdeng* ('equality'), according to the Marxist-Leninist convictions of the CPC, is an acknowledgement of the social divides that exists as consequence of the economic reforms and developments. The socialist mission of the Party is to enable a balanced economic growth for all people and to jointly achieve these development goals. The consensus both outside and inside the PRC is that huge inequalities exists.

(7) *Gongzheng* ('justice') that is controlled and defined on the CPC's terms. The notions of justice and legality (keyword no.8) are closely interlinked. They have become more eminent since the opening-up reform of 1978, and people are generally more aware and demanding of justice now than before.

(8) *Fazhi* ('legality' or 'rule of law') which incidentally also translates to 'rule by law', a term used more frequently to explain CPC legal reforms (Shirk, 2018). It is socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics, which does not entail a separation of political and judicial powers as it does in western liberal democracies; the Party always has the final say in constitutional and legal matters. The term is used to assert the value of objective laws above personal networks and influential connections, such as the notions of *renqing* and *guanxi*, which have been frequently used to explain interpersonal relationships in Chinese society (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018).

(9) *Aiguo* ('patriotism') is central for the legitimacy of the CPC. This national pride and loyalty is by necessity also loyalty towards the Party, and having a strong Party and a

strong country guarantees that the era of humiliation never repeats itself. Loyalty towards the Party ensures a future of prosperity for the entire Chinese nation.

(10) *Jingye* ('dedication'), as well as *chengxin* (keyword no. 11), are less frequent terms in official discourse. Dedication refers to how people should devote, not just their loyalty, but a deeper commitment to the aspirations of the CPC to create a "stable, sustainable, rich, strong Chinese state" (ibid: 334).

(11) *Chengxin* ('trust') mainly refers to the trust people have in its leaders (both local and national), needs to be revitalised and deepened. This is central to Xi's anti-graft campaign, whereby he declared the need for a closer connection between the people and its leaders, and to repair the damages done by corrupt Party officials.

(12) *Youshan* ('friendly') is a term that attempts to denote the Chinese people, government, and Communist Party as non-threatening towards the world. It is a central concept for the soft/sharp power initiatives of the PRC since the 2000s.

Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2018) note how these terms often appear in seemingly conspicuous places and without any overarching 'master narrative' by which they can be comprehended. They can be found e.g. on placards and posters throughout cities and on campuses, where an artistic rendition of the 'word' accompany the ideological message, which can be seen in Figures 3 and 4 below. The lack of a contextual narrative does not lessen their importance, and this study argues that neither does the absence of overt intertextual references. The multimodal recontextualisation of these terms in propaganda videos provides us with examples of processes that may result from their usage.

Figure 3. *Wenming.* (Photo: Fredrik Fällman).

Figure 4. *Pingdeng.* (Photo: Fredrik Fällman).

Cult of personality

What is a personality cult? John Plamper (2012: xv–xvi) uses a most basic definition: "the symbolic elevation of one person much above others" and through which "the person who is glorified in a cult comes to be endowed with … 'sacrality'". This applies explicitly to political leaders rather than those within religion or popular culture (movie stars, writers etc). Plamper's (2012) notion of sacrality shares features with the definition of 'charisma' and 'charismatic authority' by Max Weber (1978) employed in this thesis, explained as "resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person" (Yin & Flew, 2018: 82; Lüqiu, 2016). The four principal features of a personality cult are summarised in Yin & Flew (2018: 84–85) as:

(1)   Substituting religion with a 'sacralised' ideology/'political religion', which is observable in this context due to the many facets of Xi Jinping Thought, e.g. its enshrinement into the CPC constitution.

(2)   Employing every possible multimodal resource to dominate every possible aspect of social life. For instance, the mobilisation of slogans, portraits, etc. to shape public opinion. This is consistent with the definition of propaganda used in this thesis.

(3)   Moving away from legal-rational authority towards 'charismatic authority' which is characterised by a general distrust and hostility towards bureaucracies. For example, see Mao Zedong's call to 'bombard the headquarters' and Xi Jinping's anti-corruption crackdown on both 'tigers and flies' (Party officials of both high and low status).

(4)   Using multimedia to foster the cult and 'manufacture' charisma and establish legitimacy.

Is Xi Jinping the subject of a personality cult? Recent scholarly work has extensively investigated this topic to reach the consensus that Xi's leadership is in fact fostering a cult of personality, however, it should be regarded as "society-driven and bottom-up" rather than top-down as in the case of Mao Zedong (Yin & Flew, 2018: 12). Xi is centralising and consolidating power in his own hands, which is being described as a return to personalistic and charismatic rule (Shirk, 2018; Lüqiu, 2016). Whereas the PRC under Hu could be interpreted as capitalist in all but name, Xi's rule is characterised by a revival of ideology and return to the authoritarianism and 'virtuocracy' of the Maoist era. Marxism in the public

sphere is on the rise, while 'Western' or 'universal' values are increasingly suppressed.[5] Within the context of Xi's personality cult, the transition from legal to charismatic authority is seemingly correlating with a transition from collectivised to centralised leadership, which Shirk (2018) asserts as 'cyclical' rather than evolutionary. That is, a simultaneous return to charismatic rule and centralising of power that goes against the supposed linear progress of a modernising country.

In what concrete ways have Xi consolidated his power, and consequently, paved the way for a new personality cult? In 2016, he called for state and party media to devote absolute loyalty to the Party and to him ('official media should take the Party as surname' *meiti xing dang*). He has since then assumed the highest recognition of authority within the CPC—the 'core' of the leadership—beckoning its members to be "closely united around the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the core" (Lüqiu, 2016: 293; Miller, 2016); "For Socialism with Chinese characteristics, the CPC is the core; for the CPC, the Central Committee is the core; for the Central Committee, General Secretary Xi Jinping is the core" (Li Jia, 2016).[6] After the amendment to the constitution to include his personal thought in October 2017, he also abolished the presidential and vice-presidential term limits during the NPC in March 2018, effectively reversing the reforms initiated under Deng Xiaoping in the first decade after Mao's death. He has also established (or have had established for him) a number of new committees and groups which he personally chairs, bringing his total number of chief positions to 12 (see Gueorguiev, 2018: 18; Li Cheng, 2016: 13).

The notion that Xi governs through a personality cult is not appreciated by the party-state. Terms that denote Xi's absolute leadership, such as 'core' (*hexin*) or 'great leader' (*weida lingxiu*), have complicated histories in both foreign and domestic media. They are either censored or omitted, as in the case of the *People's Daily* and Xinhua News Agency not once referring to Xi as 'core' (period between December 1, 2015 and April 7, 2016; Lüqiu, 2016), or submitted to post-publication censorship, as seen by the use of the term 'great leader' in Guizhou provincial newspaper *Qianxinan Daily* (Qiao, 2017c). Lüqiu (2016) notes a connection between the use of 'core leader' and personality cult when representatives of the

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[5] "[U]niversalism, press freedom, judicial independence, civil society, citizens' rights, the historical mistakes of the Party, and cronyism within elite financial and political circles" are considered subversive terms and banned from public discourse (Shirk, 2018: 25).
[6] *Jiu zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi shiye er xin, zhongguo gongchandang shi hexin; jiu zhongguo gongchandang er xin, dangzhongyang shi hexin; jiu dangzhongyang er xin, xi jinping zongshuji shi hexin.*

Chinese foreign ministry in 2016 contacted the *Financial Times* requesting them not to refer to Xi as 'core' because it could implicate that he is promoting a personality cult.

All four features mentioned above are somewhat realised in the case of Xi Jinping's personality cult. Xi Jinping Thought has become the predominant doctrine within the CPC and studying it is required by its members. This, together with his anti-graft campaign, creates a basis of legitimacy that fuels his centralising of power and increasing focus on his character. Slogans and other visualisations of Xi's ideology are in abundance, visible both throughout cityscapes and in the mass media. And, as we will see in the video analysis, these aspects are involved in manufacturing charisma and in portraying Xi and the CPC in a favourable light.

Propaganda

What is propaganda? The rather straight-forward definition employed here denotes it as systematically manipulating information, public opinion, and otherwise public resources to achieve private objectives; "It is a systematic scheme created by one person or a group in an effort to persuade people on insufficient grounds to believe what it wants them to believe or to act to its advantage" (Taylor, 1942: 562). Visual propaganda can further such means by "translating abstract ideology and policy into stimuli for behaviour and attitudes that are easily understood and imitated by the recipients" (Landsberger, 1994: 15), and musical propaganda, in accordance with Mao's theory that all art should 'serve the people', can also function to mobilise thought in contemporary Marxist-Leninist societies (Perris, 1983).

This section on the Chinese propaganda system will briefly review some of the relevant aspects to the coming video analysis. This topic has been extensively researched from a multitude of perspectives, for instance, propaganda and the media (see e.g. Lynch, 1999; He, 2004), propaganda and sports (Kolatch, 1972; Brady, 2012), propaganda and medicine (Lampton, 1977), propaganda-work in the military (Cheng, 1990; Wang & Brady, 2012), propaganda and economy (Brady & He, 2012; Holbig, 2018), to name a few. This thesis, by focusing on the discourse of Xi Jinping via multimodal representation, needs to provide a contextual background to the role of visual and auditory modes in propaganda as well as the Chinese propaganda apparatus itself.

Propaganda has played a vital role in Chinese politics, especially during the reign of Mao (1949-1976), Hua Guofeng 华国锋 (1976-1978), and since 1989 up until present day, periods characterised by their heavy ideological focus and authoritarian dispositions. During the

Maoist era of 1949-1978 it functioned as an educational and instructional tool that disseminated Mao's thought to the masses. The following 'opening-up period' initiated by Deng in 1978 culminated in the June 4, 1989 crackdown on democratic values. After the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the leadership made clear that in the future the CPC would base its legitimacy not on economic development alone but also on propaganda and thought management (Brady & Wang, 2009). Anne-Marie Brady, professor of political science at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand and a renowned scholar of Chinese politics, identifies four interconnected features of the propaganda system and its inherent networks (ibid; Brady, 2008, 2017):

(1)   China Communist Party cadres and officials stationed in committees on all levels of party and state organisation as well as in non-state organisations with CPC affiliations.

(2)   The political department of the People's Liberation Army that allows the Party to control its military.

(3)   The different spheres of the public sector (i.e. culture, media, academia etc.). Some sectors are directly supervised by the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Propaganda Department (CCPPD) while some are merely 'guided'.[7]

(4)   Mass organisations: e.g. neighbourhood committees, government-operated non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

These connections are relevant to how the analysed material is perceived. It matters in terms of production and publication and other genre-based objects of analysis, although not necessarily when it comes to the modes included in the videos. However, it allows the material to be better defined by emphasising the propagandist element within a certain institution, group, enterprise, and so on. For example, several of the chosen videos are affiliated with CCTV, by which a traceable connection to the CCPPD can be made, thus ascertaining a propagandistic element in the video.

The tradition of visual propaganda and propaganda art in the context of Communist China is well established and largely conforms to the tradition of propaganda and art within Marxism-Leninism-Maoism as it developed in the Soviet Union and revolutionary China.

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[7] The CCPPD (*zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang weiyuanhui xuanchuanbu*) is the Party's organizational body in charge of ideology-related work and information flows. Its main task is "to be in charge of issues to do with the national propaganda, culture, and publishing line, guiding principles, and policies" (Brady, 2008: 15).

Stefan Landsberger (1994: 15), professor of sinology at Leiden University and collector of Chinese propaganda posters note that Friedrich Engels already in 1894 declared visual propaganda (specifically the propaganda poster) to be the principal method of "influencing the proletariat". The visual art form that has facilitated this in both the USSR and the PRC is Socialist Realism, an art style that depicts life both 'as it is', but perhaps more relevant, how it 'ought to be' according to the revolutionary development of contemporary socialist societies (ibid). This form of painting followed certain principles regarding the illustration of Mao and other core symbolism, depicting people not as individuals but as 'types', essentially dehumanising the population and romanticising society (Powell & Wong, 1997). Socialist Realism was employed within multiple mediums, such as magazines, newspapers, leaflets, and comics. The development of the video medium during the recent decades has exponentially increased the capabilities of visually transmitting ideology. Landsberger (1994) explains that, although a substantial amount of propaganda art was consumed during the Maoist era, people did not purchase them for their ideological messages but rather for their aesthetical and decorative aspects. And so, when unideological alternatives became available in the 1980s, people increasingly abandoned the propaganda poster. Although posters and other static visual mediums persist throughout China's vast cityscapes, the predominance of technology and the Internet has arguably contributed to a more nuanced development of propaganda. The idealistic essence of Socialist Realism is continued in the modernising era, which is illustrated in the coming video analysis. The videos' capability of capturing 'real' people acting out 'real' narratives is well suited to the preferred modes of communicating the CPC's ideology.

The development of music, and art in general, as a propagandist tool during the era of Mao was closely linked to socialist thought. Mao personally dictated the goals and boundaries of art in his 1938 speeches at the revolutionary base in Yan'an, which were summarised as his "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art" (Perris, 1983: 6). Later, in 1940, the CPC began broadcasting musical propaganda to the population, consisting primarily of revolutionary songs. The evolution of the musical medium progressed through various phases since then, initially accepting foreign influences only to later reject them completely (the eight model operas of the Cultural Revolution constituted the only acceptable musical work at that time, ibid: 9, 17). However, the analysed videos incorporate 'popular music' rather than revolutionary music. Once again, after the opening-up reforms in 1978, the technological

advancement led to the increasing popularity of pop-music and culture, even resulting in music that symbolically opposes the party-state (as exemplified in songs by the musician Cui Jian; Jones, 1992; Ho & Law, 2012). As of today, propaganda art remains central to the CPC hegemony over Chinese society, as explained by Ho & Law (2004: 150):

> The arts in China are a powerful tool in the government's nationalist propaganda programme: music, painting and literature are used as symbolic systems linked to cultural identity, specific social ideals, attitudes and ultimately to social behaviour.

Video analysis

Propaganda comes in many forms and shapes. One might think that it is the textual—actual written and spoken text—that is the major contributor when influencing public opinion, seeing as this is the most explicit form of language we use to produce and retain information in our daily lives. Subsequently, one might disregard other modes of communication as less important or perhaps even as non-existent. Obviously, certain modes are more well-known or agreed upon than others to transmit ideological messages, such as the mode of colour or the mode of gestures (e.g. 'red' often symbolising socialist ideologies, the Nazi salute symbolising fascist values, etc.). It might also be because not everyone is familiar with some of the less apparent, but equally potent, modes and their roles in constructing, maintaining, but also resisting and subverting, power structures and relations. For instance, many of the auditory modes of music have only been studied extensively within discourse analysis since the beginning of the 21st century. Before this, speech, music, and sound were all separated; speech was studied by linguists, music by musicologists, and sound was generally overlooked (van Leeuwen, 1999). But if music and sound are discursive they can also be ideological, so what role do they play in conveying propagandist messages? In this thesis I assume that music, as multimodal discourses, is subjected to the same processes of transformation as the linguistic and visual modes being examined. Sound in general play an integral part in all of the videos, and works together with the other modes of communication to create a coherent context where the preferred narrative becomes relevant.

Propaganda is often visual. The videos combine both the sequential and spatial aspects of visual representation to construct meaning. They incorporate 'montage', which Sergei Eisenstein (1999, 2004: 77) refers to as 'collision' between film sequences. They are not

simply a combination of auditory modes and static images. Instead, they consist of a flow of progressing visual sequences that serves to accentuate the desired content. It is what we might be referring to in our day-to-day usage of the term 'video'—a combination of sounds, music, speech, and various imagery that make up a so-called moving picture. Rather than including a detailed analysis of each of these 'film sequences', this section will attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of each vide. I will highlight the most interesting montages and segments where the three metafunctions become prevalent. These functions have been developed for study of textual and visual aspects, less so for auditory modes. Consequently, the musical component will be (mostly) analysed in the section on recontextualisation.

As for the somewhat overlapping linguistic and musical components in the videos, all four of them employ the human voice as a core musical 'instrument' and thus as a central part in relaying the intended information. The prosody of song is even combined with regular speech in V1 which consequently puts both of these in contrast to each other. They form separate modes of communication and create different conditions for the creation of meaning. Regular speech and song are further accompanied by subtitles—'written text'—which in turn communicates meaning through several modes other than the textual (its semantic content), e.g. position, size, font, and colour. The Chinese written character and the Japanese *Kanji* has seen their visual appeal and function be the topic of discussion for many years, where it has sometimes been explained as inherently similar to 'hieroglyphics' (see Pound, 1954: 14–17; Eisenstein, 2004: 78–80) or treated as 'exotic' (Bachner, 2014). The visual characteristics of a logographic script certainly have their own set of affordances and constraints in comparison to an alphabetic script. From a western perspective, this might lead to Chinese characters being interpreted as both linguistic signs and as symbols, whereas they nowadays possess no direct link to the original 'object'. For example, the Chinese character for 'mountain' (山 *shan*) no longer depicts an actual mountain. This has to be remembered where the videos include textual elements other than the subtitles—all text that is present before the video is edited and subtitles/other text is added—text is also open to transformation and abstraction.[8]

The material for this study combines the aforementioned linguistic, visual, and auditory modes of communication. This section will provide an analysis of how the videos conform to the three metafunctions of SFG, followed by a section on recontextualisation of ideology in

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[8] For instance, see Choi Kai-yan's (1989) contributions (six in total) to the poster series "Democracy and Freedom" (Hong Kong Designers Association) where he utilizes several modes of the Chinese script to illustrate complex signs and meanings (see IISH/Landsberger Collection).

social practice. The first step of analysing the metafunctions will facilitate the subsequent analysis of ideology by laying bare the social structures and practices in the videos and by explaining how these are realised. This part of the thesis will approach each video separately whereas the section on recontextualisation will focus on each process individually. I am not subjecting the generic aspects to comparison but rather the processes themselves. With this in mind, any comparison of genre within the videos is unintentional and made entirely to highlight potential points of interest rather than drawing any substantial conclusions based on like or unlikeness.

Finally, the model of critiquing the manifestations of discourse is threefold, as suggested by the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDS—it is comprised of text/discourse-immanent critique, socio-diagnostic critique, and prognostic critique. Immanent critique will assist in anchoring and justifying the assumed normative standpoint and to provide a basis for the socio-diagnostic and prognostic/retrospective critiques. Herzog (2016) hypothesise that the utmost universal norm is to avoid human-made suffering, and that this 'superlative' norm can be used to gauge all other norms. He goes on to explain that values which are not compatible with the superlative norm must be rejected, i.e. norms such as liberty or equality are essentially reconcilable with the superlative norm, whilst ideas of ethnic or cultural uniformity are not. For instance, the identity politics in contemporary PRC should be scrutinised to expose any "existence of (silent) suffering" (ibid: 289). The critique forwarded in this section should therefore be regarded as text and discourse-immanent critique; it seeks to explain the 'meaning' in the videos, how they should be understood based on their multimodal composition.

Video 1: "How Should I Address You?"[9]

The first music video is called "How Should I Address You?" (*bu zhi gai zenme chenghu ni*) and is based around a song praising Xi Jinping, depicting and 'narrating' his 2013 inspection visit to the Paibi Township 排碧乡 in the Hunan province. Paibi is a township in Huayuan County 花垣县 in the Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture 湘西土家族苗族自治州, an area where the Miao ethnic group is as most populous. Although the video never mentions Xi Jinping by name, its 'praising' and 'worshipping' nature is visually observable.

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[9] See Appendix for additional information on each video.

The video's constant visual representation of Xi, in conjunction with the text denoting the recipient of praise as 'you', confirms him as the one being addressed. The title of the song is supposedly adapted from a conversation between one of the village elders and Xi upon his arrival to Paibi, the elder being unsure of how to refer to Xi with regards to his political position (Xin, 2016).

The performance aired on 2 February 2016 via the Hunan Television broadcasting of the Lunar New Year events. The video's executive producer is former Hunan Propaganda Department director Zhang Wenxiong 张文雄, who was dismissed from his position in November 2016 on suspicion of taking bribes (Wu, 2016). He was subsequently expelled from the CPC in early 2017 and is currently serving a 15-year jail sentence since August, 2018 (Xinhua, 2017a, 2018b). The lead vocalist is Li Siyu 李思宇. She is supported on-stage by the girl choir "56 Flowers" (*wushiliu duo hua*; note the symbolism of the 56 officially recognised ethnic minorities of the PRC) and a male dance troupe.

The video adopts a celebrative nature, showcasing the scenic landscapes and vistas of Hunan, while simultaneously showing scenes of traditional villages, costumes, and activities of the seemingly poor locals. It is split into two distinct settings where the overarching themes can be summed up as 'combating poverty' and 'celebration'. The first setting is focused on Xi's visit to Paibi, whereas the second one is centred on the extravagant celebration in which the song appears to be performed. Other celebrative processes include scenes of typical Miao-style drumming (which is complemented by the music), people enjoying fireworks, dancing around a bonfire, and sharing home-cooked food, supposedly in Paibi and thus connecting both settings.

The ideational function is noticeably present here. A multitude of narrative processes can be observed throughout the video's three and a half minutes, the predominant one being the almost literal visual narration of Xi's visit to Paibi and his interaction with the townspeople. This is reinforced about halfway through the video. During a short segment where Xi is sitting down with local villagers, the music is toned down while he gives a short speech on the (CPC) objectives for "precisely reducing poverty" (*jingzhun fupin*, see p. 49) in the area. Xi is also frequently depicted as walking, inspecting housing and other areas, listening to elders and holding their hands, and similar processes depicting him as 'down-to-earth' or 'of the people'. These processes are most often visualised by vectors, originating from the participants' gaze towards different objects or each other. For instance, Xi is almost always

portrayed as looking at something or someone, which is often reinforced by a reciprocal vector or by displaying the observed object in a subsequent frame(see V1. 0:47). Furthermore, as Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) has stated, things can also be linked together by 'tree structures'—so-called classificatory relationship—that shows how objects or processes can be put into distinct categories based on their like or unlikeness. This is, with regards to Xi, not as dominant in the video as the narrative format. Based on visual cues it could be argued, however, that Xi is put (or places himself) in the same category as the villagers. He and his companions are dressed in plain, black jackets—customary for these types of visits—which makes their appearance less excessive, meeting the villagers on more agreeable terms. In a similar sense, the representation is also analytical. By depicting Xi on the 'same level' as the villagers, they are joined as parts of a presumable greater whole (Jones, 2012). Yet both of these are not nearly as observable as the narrative format, which is to be expected when noting that the video is presenting a concrete event with clearly defined participants and actions.

The interpersonal function of the video—the relationship between the abstract 'producer' and 'observer'—is primarily involved with the portrayal of Xi's personal traits and activities, 'giving us a glimpse into his tour of Paibi'. As explained above, this type of multimodal analysis is not suited for establishing any intentions behind the meanings within the video, only to provide an interpretation based on how different modes are operationalised. The producer, by portraying Xi as an ordinary man that cares for even the most impoverished citizens, attempts to build a likeable character in the eyes of the observer and foster a more intimate relationship between them, thus reinforcing Xi's leadership role.[10] The viewer is positioned, in relation to Xi, almost in the same way as any of the villagers might be: in close proximity, not looking up or down, gently following or leading Xi through the street. However, the sense of intimacy is reduced by him having no eye-contact nor communicating directly with the viewer, thus clearly positioning the observer outside of the video (the 'voyeur' position; Jones, 2012: 121) and reaffirming the sense of 'getting a glimpse' into Xi's daily activity.

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[10]The video is provincially produced and—as far as we know—not requisitioned by any central CPC body or by Xi himself, signifying at least some level of personality cult towards Xi. Furthermore, Hunan propaganda department director Zhang Wenxiong being targeted by Xi's anti-corruption campaign the same year also has implications for how the video is interpreted.

Regarding the other setting—the on-stage performance—the viewer observes through several cameras, occasionally panning left/right or zooming in/out. This is common for large-scale broadcasted events such as the Lunar New Year Gala. Repeatedly switching back and forth between Xi's visit to Paibi and the performance arguably affects how the viewer perceives both of these instances. They reinforce each other by complementing and covering for their respective affordances and constraints. The video's intended message cannot be communicated by one setting alone. If the video merely showed Xi in a rural community it might be off-putting to have a song in the background without knowing how both contexts are connected. The same applies to the performance concert. The context of the song remains unknown to the audience without any visual cues to Xi's visit. Thus, linking them both together via clever usage of montage lets the viewer ease into the video and to not become immediately discouraged by something that would have otherwise been out of place. Consequently, all of these visual representations allow us to perceive and analyse the observer's connection with the producer. The visual representations employed by the producer utilises such modes that enhances Xi's presence in the video and reaffirms his central role.

Lastly, by examining the textual function, we can observe how the contrast between left/right, top/bottom, background/foreground, and centre/periphery 'information values' is present with regards to how the observer 'reads' the images (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 177ff). However, the montage frequently flows rapidly enough for the viewer to only focus on the most centred figures or foreground elements ('salience'; ibid: 176–178, 201–203), which in turn affects the affordances and constraints of each mode. The time of each sequence might influence whether or not certain information is processed by the observer without replaying segments. For example, Xi is always in the centre of the image and never in the periphery. On a side note, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006: 195) theorise that this focus of centre/margin in 'Eastern' contexts might be related to "greater emphasis on hierarchy, harmony and continuity in Confucian thinking", and puts this in contrast with the tendency of left/right positioning in western publishing.[11] The video follows this model to a great extent, however it does not utilise the left/right or top/bottom compositional values, which are used to signify given/new and ideal/real information respectively, in a consistent manner. For instance, when

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[11]This thought synergises with the idea of Xi as the 'core', something that also can be traced back to Confucian thinking. Mencius talks of putting the 'person as the core' (*yi ren wei ben*, Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018: 327).

Xi is displayed in a left/right relationship, he is not displayed in either position specifically; he is neither 'given' nor 'new' information. It is therefore perhaps more relevant to observe these instances as having one unified centre within the images, i.e. Xi and the other participant, whether they stand to the left or right, as a central object in the frame (see e.g. V1. 0:45, 0:55).

Video 2: "To Follow You Is to Follow the Sun"

The second music video is called "To Follow You is to Follow the Sun" (*genzhe ni jiushi genzhe na taiyang*), which adopts a worshipping nature towards Xi Jinping, albeit more implicit than the first video, neither mentioning him by name nor including him in any visual representations. The connection to Xi in the song instead becomes concrete when we look closely at the recontextualising processes, which will be discussed further below. The video's release generated much discussion and its connection to Xi was widely reported on by several media (Du, 2017; Global Times, 2017; Qiao, 2017a, 2017b).

The song was presented at a press conference at the National Convention Centre in Beijing on 10 November 2017. The video is jointly produced by The World of Tang Dynasty Network Technology Co., Ltd (chairman is Mao Jun 毛军, who is directly involved in producing the video), the *Huohuo Zhongguoren* Organizational Committee, and CCTV. The lead vocalist is Wang Xiaofan 王筱凡. However, as Qiao (2017c) reports roughly a week later, it did not take long until the video was removed from public outlets. He cites China National Radio who reported that the company behind the song—The World of Tang Dynasty—was being accused of a orchestrating a pyramid scheme. This was supposedly the reason for the video being removed from the Chinese Internet, hence a similar outcome as V1 whose producer was purged. Both scenarios consist of personality cult-type videos that lauds Xi but gets shut down for reasons regarding corruption. Despite not engaging too deeply with underlying intentions during the video analysis part of the thesis, these factors do matter to how we evaluate the personality cult tendencies during Xi's reign.

Regarding this cult of personality phenomenon in a modern Chinese era, V2 is most certainly a top contender for a spot on any leaderboard. It is rich in both linguistic and visual aspects that points towards Xi's political discourse, laying to rest any doubts with regards to whom the song is addressed. Wang is singing 'to Xi': e.g. "The sweat of your brow waters the earth, giving us our harvest of grains and our good health" (*shi ni de hangshui jiaoguan le siji,*

cai you liao wugu piaoxiang xingfu ankang, V2. 1:03). It is complemented by the musical genre of 'mandopop' with its catchy rhythms and melodies, perhaps to give the video a feeling of normality to balance out the otherwise heavy ideological content.[12] The structure of the song is pretty basic, alternating between verse and chorus with repeating grammatical and phonetic patterns. These patterns or 'phrases' are occasionally synced with particular film sequences that are intended to tie together the textual description of some part of Xi's discourse with a visual representation, e.g. "There's still the One Belt One Road, to the delight of the whole world" (*cai you liao yi dai yi lu, wu zhou huanchang*, V2. 2:38) which is sung in parallel with sequences of high-speed trains and modern infrastructure.

This overall theme subsumes two distinct elements and unifies them: the 'celebratory' spirit of the Chinese people is combined with the ideological rigorousness and unwavering faith they possess towards Xi and the CPC. Loyalty to the party seems to be thematic for the entire video and shown as essential for adults as well as youth, for Han-Chinese as well as ethnic minorities (as seen by the traditional clothing, which is used to symbolize these minorities and make them more distinguishable and explicit). In contrast to V1, where the ideational function is largely centred on Xi himself, in this video no explicit visual cue lead directly to him. Instead, Xi is displayed as a part of the CPC (or *as* the Party itself—the 'core'). The actors and actions that are present in the video are therefore preoccupied by establishing connections between themselves and the party-state, which is predominantly illustrated by scenes of people saluting the CPC and PRC flags. Narrative-wise, the video positions us to follow the vocalist Wang across a variety of scenescapes. Her character is used to connect the many different settings in a somewhat abstract way, guiding the observer back and forth between these. She is placed in both the context of celebration and in the context of party loyalty, visibly linking them together as mutually dependent (or at least, 'harmony' or 'celebration' being dependent on the CPC). On a side note, another less obvious narrative is the recurrent inclusion of a female tourist photographing or filming some of these events in the video, simultaneously assuming the role of (another) third party observer of other narratives in the video. This narrative reinforces the educational aspect of the video: this Chinese 'tourist' is learning about all the good things that China (and the CPC) has to offer

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[12] Mandopop, i.e. Mandarin pop-music, an English term similar to 'cantopop' (Cantonese pop-music), both subgenres of C-pop (Chinese pop music; Mitchell, 2006). Moskowitz (2010) points out that the PRC often denotes mandopop produced outside its borders as 'Gang-Tai pop'—*gang* representing Hong Kong (*Xianggang*), *tai* representing Taiwan.

and what it is capable of (by including scenes depicting industrial advancement and military might) which blends together with also taking in China's beautiful landscape.

The classificatory and analytical relationships in V2 are visualised by modes of e.g. clothing, gesture, or setting. Different roles in society (military, workers, cadres, and so on) fulfil different purposes but are all still part of the same unifying 'Chinese identity', they all adhere to the ideology of Xi and the CPC which can be seen, yet again, by their unanimous salute to the CPC and PRC flags.

The interpersonal function's most explicit visual feature in V2 is the interaction between participants and the observer via the camera. A direct link between producer and observer is established primarily by the use of vectors emanating from the participant's gaze and aimed straight at the viewer. This interaction, according to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), is meant to create intimacy and it is inviting the viewer rather than excluding them. It is strengthened even further by facial expressions of smiling, laughing, and other joyous activity. The video also utilises different perspectives, positioning the viewer above, below, and at the same level as the object(s) in focus. This is important for the textual placement of symbols and their information values, where for instance the flags are often viewed from below, even those held between two people at ground level, giving it a so-called 'ideal' value and position. Furthermore, these flag ceremony scenes include vectors between participants and flag, which leads the viewer to read the image towards the flag, despite it perhaps being in the background and not the most salient object in the film sequence (although its bright-red colour amplifies its position). An example of how gaze, gesture, and colour motions us towards the flag is observable in two different rows of sequences, first between 1:18 and 1:23 (Figure 5), and later between 2:59 and 3:07. The camera snaps between different shots of each scene, simultaneously guiding the observer's gaze towards the flag, which we are told to be the object of interest for the participants in the scene. So even though the flag might not be in the centre (or even in the foreground), it is clearly observable how it is positioned as the most important object in those particular sequences. And its position as the 'ideal' (top) in contrast to the 'real' (bottom) is of course noteworthy when it comes to the ideology of the CPC. Although the PRC flag is not the same as the CPC flag, they are largely co-dependent and synonymous (but not interchangeable) in this context.

Finally, the other prevalent 'object' in the video is the lead vocalist, Wang Xiaofan. As mentioned before, she leads the observer through multiple settings, binding them together by

Figure 5. *Three film sequences from Video 2* (1:18–1:23). These help to illustrate the vectors emanating from the modes of gaze and gesture towards the CPC flag. Note that two film sequences (1:20 and 1:21) have been excluded from the figure. The subtitles (originally positioned in the lower margin, outside of the frame) and the Youku logotype (upper right corner, outside of the frame) have also been left out.

her presence in each location and by the co-occurring song and imagery. As an example, she sings of how "the banner will fly even higher" (*cai you liao qizhi feiyang*, V2. 2:54) while images are shown of a rocket launch and an astronaut waving the PRC flag. In light of this, Wang's protagonist role in the video becomes largely that of a mediator for the producer; she conveys the intended message in a (both visually and linguistically) pleasant manner, balancing out the ideology in a way reminiscent of Li Siyu's role in V1. Similar to the CPC and PRC flags, Wang is almost always the most salient feature in her scenes, often by ways of how the camera puts her in 'focus' while e.g. the background remains blurry, or 'out of focus'.

Video 3: "I Give My Heart to You"

The third video, "I Give My Heart to You" (*ba xin jiao gei ni*) is not actually an independent video like the previous ones but a segment in a much longer broadcast. It is taken from the 2015 CCTV-1 Lunar New Year Gala celebrations and is merely one of many 'acts' that appear during the video. It will be considered as a separate entity (a singular 'video') in this thesis due to its contextual aspects. It is not so much the hosts' preceding talk or the other acts that is of interest to this multimodal analysis. As before, it is the way the modes of the visualised social practice realise a particular discourse.

Regarding its production, the opening animation in the bottom-left corner does not assert any specific producer. However, its underlying production and presentation becomes explicit in another way, namely by being featured on CCTV, one of the primary organs for disseminating propaganda within the PRC.[13]In February 2016, approximately one year after this video aired, Xi reportedly visited both Xinhua, *People's Daily*, and CCTV to bid journalists to "pledge loyalty to the Party and to him" (Shirk, 2018: 26). Obtaining and examining any specifics regarding the video's production might prove difficult, as with all internal propaganda work, but at least it could be said to be closely connected to the central government.

The lead vocalists are Warren Mok 莫华伦 and Lü Wei 吕薇. They are supported on stage by the Communication University of China choir. The video begins with them all entering the stage, after which Lü sings the first verse of the song. When combined, the linguistic and

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[13] CCTV was formerly controlled by the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT, 2013–2018), which in turn operated under direct supervision of the CCPPD(Brady, 2008). Since March 2018 and the abolishing of SAPPRFT, all activities concerned with 'publicity'/'propaganda' are handled directly by the CCPPD.

musical modes denote some sort of ballad or 'love song'. This is reinforced by having one male and one female vocalist, which could be used to signify a stereotypical heterosexual couple (same-sex marriages are illegal in the PRC). The positioning of the participants, stage, audience, and cameras make it so as the vocalists sing towards the audience or a non-existent third party, not to each other or the camera. Roughly 1:30 minutes into the song, coinciding with the first chorus, the CCTV broadcast shifts from the stage performance to a row of sequences depicting Xi touring the PRC, interacting with citizens in different contexts and situations (the on-stage screen presumably shows the same thing to the audience). This montage of Xi (who is in nearly every frame) last approximately two minutes, ends with an animation of a swirling red cloth and cuts back to the stage for the last 20 seconds of the act. At a glance, it might not be obvious why this seemingly unrelated montage is paired with a love ballad. When taking the cult of personality phenomenon into account, this combination becomes increasingly relevant and is the main subject of analysis in the video.

The ideational function in V3 is largely concerned with narrative, and to some degree classificatory, visualisations of relationships. Two distinct settings can be identified: there is the on-stage performance, where participants are acting out a rehearsed musical number. Overlapping with this is the montage of Xi, wherein several processes can be observed. First of all, the on-stage narrative is predominantly related to the dispositions of the participants. For instance, Lü sings in a 'soft' tone of voice and with a calm exterior, only moving her body slightly, while Mok uses both his facial expression and his gestures to match his powerful tenor voice type. When Lü starts singing, the woman in the background is appearing visibly 'moved' by the music. Judging by her facial expression she seems almost unable to contain her joy, as if she was having some sort of 'religious' experience. This sense of 'sacrality' (Plamper, 2012) is reinforced by how the choir utilises gestures, poses, gazes etc. (vectors), e.g. stretching their arms upwards (towards the 'ideal'; see the textual function), standing on their knees with their arms stretched forward, hands cupped towards Mok and Lü to illustrate 'giving one's heart away' (reminiscent of a 'praying' or 'begging' posture). Note that the theme is not religious per se—the music is not hymnal, neither the clothes nor the setting are religious—it is merely what the modes succeed in communicating when observed in their particular context.

The second visual narrative consist of multiple scenarios, participants, and actions with Xi as the common denominator in what appears to be (several) trips where he partakes in local

ceremonies and activities. He can be seen interacting with elders, school youth, athletes, officials, and military, participating in routines and meeting ordinary people in general. As previously stated, there is nothing exceptionally out of place within the montage itself. But when it is displayed in tandem with a love ballad, it instinctively evokes parallels with the 'personality cult' and 'songs of praise' of Mao during the Cultural Revolution. This interpretation of acts during the New Year gala is not controversial, it has already been criticised for being more propaganda than actual celebration (see reports by *The Wall Street Journal*; Chin, 2015; Berkitt & Geng, 2016).

In some of these film sequences, a classificatory relationship is once again constructed via the mode of 'clothing'. Xi can be observed as dressed similarly to both school youth and military personnel, which serves to create or maintain such in-group similarities. For instance, by dressing in military uniform, Xi reinforces his role as Chairman of the CMC and as part of this 'category', despite being a civilian and with no past in the military (his uniform carries no military insignias). It is exactly this type of recontextualisation that is of interest to this study. Nonetheless, certain discrepancies between the types of personality cult being represented in the videos are already starting to appear, potentially raising questions based on the official status of the videos rather than their employed modes of communication. Without speculating on any underlying intentions, one should consider why this type of video received an all-clear from the CCPPD and is featured in one of, if not the most, controlled television events in the PRC.

Continuing with the interpersonal function, the most significant visualisation of the relationship between producer and observer is largely similar to V1, where Xi is being portrayed as engaging in the everyday activities of regular people. The main difference is the thematic nature of both videos, especially with regards to the music. The villagers' celebrative and 'grateful' demeanour in V1 is complemented by a sense of 'confessing ones love' and 'self-sacrifice' in V3. The visual aspects of the stage narrative assume this sense of love and adoration towards someone, perhaps towards Xi, perhaps from the perspective of Xi. The subsequent montage, in combination with the chorus, visibly displays a sense of 'committing one's life to the benefit of the country'. All of these combined modes and meanings contribute to how the viewer interprets the video. The producer behind V3, similar to those of V1 and V2, utilises musical modes in conjunction with representations of ideology that provides a 'pop-culture' counterweight to the otherwise propagandistic content of the videos. The modes

in question seem to construct an image of Xi as a 'man of the people', as someone who is not afraid to participate and to contribute 'hands on' towards the well-being of the people.

The textual function is also separable into two discrete, but overlapping, sets of representations. First, that which is added via the process of editing, both abstract (animations, subtitles etc.) and realistic (the montage of Xi), and secondly, that which can be observed independently from this (the stage and its participants). There is also the dimension of what an observer may perceive through this video in contrast to what a member of the audience is able to. For instance, the broadcasted video employs several watermarks, e.g. the CCTV-1 logotype in the top left corner, which the audience is unable to perceive. In contrast, because of how the camera operates, there is no way for us to observe the on-stage screen at all times, thus resulting in an inconclusive perspective concerning the used imagery before and after the montage.

The video amplifies the important elements by use of centre/margin information values, as well as different types of salience and framing devices. The centre is emphasised by Mok and Lü's central placement on stage, by the on-stage screen providing centralised imagery (e.g. the PRC flag, party slogans etc.), and by Xi's centralised position in the majority of montage sequences. Salience between centre/margin and foreground/background by means of tone, colour, and space works to reinforce this 'distance' or separation. Similarly, the video uses framing to emphasise Xi's importance as above that of the stage performance, but also to separate Mok and Lü apart. Ironically, they are only displayed together as a unified 'centre' when they no longer occupy the main focus for the observer, i.e. when the background commands the most attention.

Video 4: "To Be an Upright Man for a Lifetime (The Hopes of President Xi)"

The fourth video chosen for analysis, "To Be an Upright Man for a Lifetime (The Hopes of President Xi)" (*tangtang zhengzheng yi beizi Xi zhuxi jiyu*) is based around poetry written by Xi Jinping, which has been adapted to a musical piece. The verses explain how one should live one's life based on one's own capability and dictates that when you have the ability, you should resolutely do great deeds, but if you do not, doing simple things is just as fine. The video chosen for analysis is, according to the title provided by its uploader on YouTube (Mainland China CPOP MV 2), the official music video for the song. However, another video exists, depicting the song being performed by students of "Beijing NO.35 High School"

(*Beijing sanshiwu zhongxue*) during its 90th anniversary in November, 2013. Both of these are relevant, but I have opted for the 'official' music video due to its higher production value and richness in visual content.

The video was uploaded in 2015, however it appears the song was written shortly before the 2013 performance by "Beijing NO.35 High school". It is made by the Ministry of Culture Centre for Film, Television, and Cultural Exchange (*wenhuabu yingshi wenhua jiaoliu zhongxin*), as stated in the closing frame of the video. The producers are Gao Yanhong 高艳红 and Xu Xiao'ou 徐晓欧.The lead vocalist is Tao Hong 陶红. The video also portrays a substantial amount of school students as participating in the musical routine. It is in fact acknowledged in the video's closing frames that these are students from Beijing NO.35 High School.

As previously mentioned, the video concerns itself with the topic of 'how one should live one's life', albeit from the perspective of Xi Jinping, given the fact that the message can be attributed to him. The information transmitted via the textuality of the video is furthered also by imagery, mainly by signs that symbolise China (e.g. flags, the Great Wall, and traditional 'Chinese' clothing). Musically, the sense of unity and camaraderie among students is achieved by singing in unison, which at the later stages of the video is significantly more accentuated than Tao's own singing. Tao's presence provides the viewer with an 'anchor', similar to the definition used by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) to describe the 'given' information within an image's textual function, i.e. something that is familiar and helps the observer to read the image how the producer intended. Introducing Tao as lead vocalist instead of a student helps to portray the student body as a whole, underscoring their common identity as students subordinate to a teacher and as 'Chinese'.

The ideational function in V4 is made up of narrative, classificatory, and analytical relationships. The relationship between Tao and the students is a literal visualisation of the 'power in discourse' relations that exist in a teacher/student context (Fairclough, 2015). Tao is portrayed as 'instructing' the students how to sing but also as personally leading this activity. In contradiction to this, however, she appears as standing behind, in front of, and shoulder to shoulder with students and children in multiple settings, giving off a sense of equality between them and her while simultaneously keeping a separate position. The classificatory relationships reinforce this duality—there are instances when Tao and the older students (not the youngest children) are wearing similar outfits, and there are instances when they are not—

they are both displayed as members of the same group, and as unequal with different social positions. There also exists an analytical relationship, albeit more covert and not fully visualised. It relates to the connection between 'students' and the PRC, the students as a part of a larger social network/social structure, which in this case is the PRC and visualised by means of national symbols (e.g. students waving flags, saluting the flag etc.). This analytical relationship would be more observable if the video included other groups, which would accentuate the students as merely one among many to be part of this network, rather than displaying their connection only as 'A related to B via process C' (see Jones, 2012: 73–74 for an example of a visualisation of an analytical relationship).

The interpersonal function in V4 is realised partially by establishing an intimate connection between the participants and the observer. This is observable through the increased use of eye contact with the viewer, especially when the performing agents in the video, apart from Tao, are students, and even more so when they are young children. The interaction between Tao and the observer, however, becomes relatively strained by the apparent effort she puts into her facial expressions which at times comes off as forced or unnatural. Yet, the intimacy is further emphasised by the camera work, giving us close-up shots of the school's internal activity and other scenes where students take part. The symbolism of students carrying out their 'duties' is undoubtedly the most prevalent in the video, both in terms of visual and linguistic modes. It seeks to instil a feeling of harmony and stability within the viewer, knowing that seeing the future generations do their best ('never stop learning' *xuexi bu tingzhi*; V4. 2:19) is a universal message of prosperity that is not as prone to criticism as other ideological visualisations might be.

Concluding the analysis of V4, the textual function is primarily emphasising Tao and the students in their reoccurring settings. The most explicit national symbols, when they appear, are positioned so that the observer clearly notices them, i.e. highly visible in the centre of the foreground. For instance, the PRC flag is featured repeatedly in the introductory scenes in a waving gesture, which automatically commands the observers' attention. In one sequence, it is also positioned in a central position at the top of the frame, which has been described as the 'ideal' value, while the students are positioned at the bottom, as the 'real' value (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). It becomes a natural contrast with the students standing below the raised flag, whereas a reverse placement of both signs would seem unlikely and out of place, both realistically and theoretically.

The spatial arrangement of elements is allocated to both foreground and background. Two examples where both top/bottom and background/foreground information values are utilised can be observed in the opening sequence (Figure 6) and again a third into the video (Figure 7). The first shot portrays children running along the Great Wall in the bottom half of the frame with a scenic view of the nearby landscape occupying the top half, thus emphasising both foreground (bottom) and background (top) as important. The previous notion of top as 'ideal' can be fixed to this scene as well; the Great Wall and its surrounding landscape is representative of China's 'beauty'. The second shot shows a group of construction workers or managers in the foreground (bottom) with a vast hall in the background (top). Once again the workers represent the 'real' that is the Chinese work force, while the massive structure around them represent the 'ideal' economic growth and industrial advancement of the PRC. These two shots use salience, more specifically camera focus, to balance out both spheres of information within the frames. This can also be noticed during certain shots of Tao and students in a room where the walls and stationary are decorated with the lyrics of the song (Figure 8). The Chinese characters become visible foremost via the use of salience and framing, however they do not surpass the participants demand for the viewers' attention. Also, the flowers and branches in the foreground of this particular scene contribute to the framing of Tao and the students.

Figure 6. *Film sequence in Video 4* (0:07), illustrating top-bottom and background-foreground information values. In this shot, the camera moves slightly downwards.

Figure 7. *Film sequence in Video 4* (1:13), illustrating top-bottom and background-foreground information values. In this shot, the camera pans upwards to highlight the background.

Figure 8. *Film sequence in Video 4* (2:18), illustrating 'salience' and 'framing'. The camera angle guides the observer when reading the image.

Recontextualisation of ideology in social practice

The third and final analysis will build upon the previous analysis of the multimodal construction of the videos and subject them to four interlinked and overlapping processes of recontextualisation that explains how the ideological content of social practices is substituted, added, removed, and rearranged out of its original context.

As mentioned in the beginning of the 'Video analysis' section, this thesis follows the three-dimensional critique of the DHA. The video analysis, by employing a text and discourse-immanent critique, sought to lay bare the meanings within the videos and to interpret their semantic contents. This section employs the second critique—socio-diagnostic critique—to expose propagandist elements and to 'demystify' the ideological contents from a normative standpoint (Chilton, Tian & Wodak, 2010; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016).

Substitution

The most notable process of recontextualisation in multimodal discourse is substitution. As explained by van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999: 97), when a representation of something is the same as that thing it could be considered as 'quoting' or 'copying' (i.e. "words represented by

words, actions represented by actions, etc."). Most of the time the representations should be seen as a transformation (recontextualisation) of something into something else. An example used by van Leeuwen & Wodak (1999) is the verbal representation of a participant in a social practice. They analyse 'notices' to immigrants applying for Austrian citizenship after the collapse of the eastern bloc in Europe in 1989, and treat the notice itself as a social practice. They showcase the substitution process in how the applicants are nominally represented in these notices, i.e. the participant of a social practice is represented by only his/her name.

This is especially prevalent in the four videos analysed in this thesis. Xi Jinping is the central aspects in all four of them, however, the focus on him is manifested differently in each video. Xi himself is substituted entirely in both V2 and V4 by other discursive objects. These instances, although inexplicit and interdiscursive, are easily observable and thus beg the question: what purpose do these recontextualisations serve? In V2, Xi is represented nominally by second-person pronouns, and in V4, he is represented in the video title, but he is also implicitly included as the author of the source material for the lyrics. I would argue that, despite the relative absence of direct visual representations of Xi, these videos are effective in realising their connection to him, as I will explain below.

In V1 "How Should I Address You?" one could argue that certain aspects of the Chinese Dream and Four Comprehensive intertexts and some of the keywords are multimodally substituted in the social practice(s) of the video. Both the Chinese Dream, the Four Comprehensives, as well as the keywords 'strong', 'civilised', and 'equality' relate to the objective of constructing a 'moderately prosperous society' for the Chinese nation, a goal formulated in the first prong of the Four Comprehensive strategy. These are referred to indirectly (interdiscursively) by Xi, as seen in his interim speech where he discusses the reduction of poverty:

> When we take charge of reducing poverty we must avoid shouting out big slogans at all costs. We should also avoid setting such overambitious goals. When we attack to reduce poverty we must seek truth from facts, use methods in line with local circumstances, classify and direct, and be precise.
>
> 我们在抓扶贫的时候切忌喊大口号，也不要定那些好高骛远的目标。扶贫攻坚的就是要实事求是，因地制宜，分类指导，精准扶贫。

> (Xi Jinping's speech in V1 "How Should I Address You?" 1:35–1:50).

These remarks can be traced back to the intertexts and keywords mentioned above. The notion of a 'strong' and 'equal' society are echoed by the effort to aid economically underdeveloped areas, and that the means of doing so are sophisticated and 'civilised' by taking specific circumstances into account. Other included keywords are 'harmonious', 'trust', and 'friendly', visualised by e.g. the rendition of Xi as a 'man of the people'. Depicting him as a leader that personally devotes time and effort into visiting a small rural community feeds into the idea that Xi and the CPC and PRC are trustworthy and amicable, both with regards to its own population but also towards those that would criticise it (pro-democracy representatives in Hong Kong or Taiwan, Chinese diasporas, etc.).

Furthermore, the words sung during the chorus also reinforce the intimate connection between Xi and the common people. The entirety of the PRC is substituted by a first-person pronoun, declaring that "I am in your heart, you are in my heart. You love our people, our people love you deeply" (*wo zai ni xin li, ni zai wo xin li, ni ai women laobaixing, women laobaixing shenshen de ai ni*). This could also serve as a substitution of the keyword 'patriotism' (*aiguo*), which literally translates into 'love' and 'country'/'nation'. This is problematized further by the notion of 'harmony', and can also be observed in V2, "To Follow You is to Follow the Sun". The colourful and extravagant dressing belonging to a particular minority group (e.g. the Miao and Yi ethnic minorities in V1 and V2 respectively) is presumably used to represent minorities as living harmonious and celebrative lives within the PRC.[14] This becomes a substitution of all minorities into one definable group. The text is verbally representing the entire PRC population, as explained above, and can from the ideological perspective of Xi and the CPC be said to encompass all minorities as well. This is problematic when considering ethnic minorities such as Tibetans or Uyghurs, who are systematically disadvantaged in their native regions to the benefit of Han-Chinese in the last century (see Wu & Song, 2014; Wu & He, 2016).

V2, besides forwarding the narrative of building a prosperous society illustrated above in relation to V1, also possess intertexts regarding the Chinese Dream and the BRI, both of whom are represented linguistically in the song. As described in the video analysis, the BRI is also visually represented by high-speed railways which exemplify the development of

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[14] Based on acknowledgements from a 'behind-the-scenes' video of the filming of V2, we can determine that it is, in some way or another, associated with the Yunnan, Shaanxi, and Fujian provinces, and the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (see Appendix). This would explain the emphasised diversity of clothing used in the video, since these areas are home to many different ethnic groups.

infrastructure it entails. This is particularly characteristic of the video. It is generally aimed at legitimising Xi's rule by framing his 'good sides' and his part in furthering the PRC economy and society. However, these adorations are often devoid of any concrete meaning or they are heavily substituted themselves. For example, "The sweat of your brow waters the earth, giving us our harvest of grains and our good health" implies that Xi himself is the one responsible for the wellbeing of the people. "Your ideology is radiant and illuminating, making the people yearn to be hard-working and prosperous" (*shi ni de sixiang shanyao zhe guangmang, cai you liao renxin xiang wang, shigan xingbang*) implies a direct connection between Xi's personal thinking and the positive outcomes of decades of economic reforms, a substitution of the political theories of earlier leadership.

The keywords 'patriotism' and 'dedication' are substituted by the actions of saluting and 'swearing' on the CPC flag, both in line with their discursive uses. 'Patriotism' is used to devote loyalty, and the flag being the CPC flag denotes it as loyalty directly towards the Party rather than to the PRC. 'Dedication', as described in the context analysis, refers to the commitment of something more than merely ones loyalty. Whether the action of swearing an oath on the flag (alt. reciting something in unison) should be interpreted as 'dedication' or a lack thereof is open for debate, seeing as it could signify either or depending on the voluntariness of the action. Its narrative function, however, signals a 'patriotic' spirit and 'dedication' towards the aspirations of the CPC. Also relevant to this scenario is whether or not the CPC flag is used as visual substitution for the Party or for Xi Jinping himself. The latter would consequently be a 'deletion' of the CPC entity excluding Xi, making him up to be the only element (the core) that matters or deserves loyalty.

Also present in V2 is a recontextualisation of the keyword 'strong', substituted by military symbolism, most notably by the PLA Navy's flagship vessel, the "Liaoning" aircraft carrier (Figure 9). This sequence of frames display both the specific and general capabilities of the PLA; the ability to launch fighter jets and the existence of trained personnel, as well as the capacity to enforce maritime sovereignty, combat readiness, etc.[15] These are contextualised in relation to Xi Jinping who is the main point of interest in the video. Military might is an effective way of illustrating the power of a state (or in this case, a 'political party'). It is also present in V3, "I Give My Heart to You", along with recontextualisations of 'equality', 'patriotism', 'dedication', 'trust' and 'friendly', by picturing Xi in scenarios where he is

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[15] On a side-note, the Liaoning is Soviet-made and not a domestic product. The PRC plans to have 5-6 operational aircraft carriers by 2030 (Childs, 2018).

Figure 9. *Film sequences from Video 2* (3:48–3:52), depicting the Liaoning aircraft carrier. These scenes are displayed together with the words of the chorus: "To follow you is to follow the sun. The people of China burn bright, the world is even more glorious".

interacting with ordinary people. In the montage, Xi participates in a military ceremony; the military symbolises 'strength'. Both 'equality' and 'patriotism' are overtly stated throughout the montage, similarly to V1, by situating Xi in remote/local areas participating in different actions and by several film sequences where he greets people from various sectors of society. They become substitutions of 'actually providing people with equal possibilities and means to achieve (economic) prosperity': in V3, the 'precise reduction of poverty' that serves the notion of 'equality' is substituted by 'Xi meeting people'. Similarly, 'patriotism' as loyalty towards the PRC and CPC is substituted by 'loyalty towards Xi'.

In V3, the musical modes assist in recontextualising some aspects of the keywords, specifically 'dedication', 'trust', and 'friendly'. The instruments, rhythm, melody, etc. reinforce the linguistically transmitted message: "My motherland, my brothers and sisters, I give my heart to you" (*wo de zuguo, wo de jiemei xiongdi, ba xin jiao gei ni*,V3. 3:52:53). To 'give one's heart to someone' is a powerful symbolism that illustrates complete and utter love or 'dedication' towards the intended object, in this case the 'Chinese nation'. It consequently displays the subject (Xi Jinping) as trustworthy and friendly in his demeanour, 'Xi is deserving of the people's loyalty, trust, and dedication because it is reciprocal'. In a sense, the entire linguistic representation is a substitution of political discourse with 'love-themed' discourse, an abstraction of actual and meaningful explanation regarding the relationship between Xi and the people.

The fourth video, "To Be an Upstanding Man for a Lifetime (The Hopes of President Xi)", takes a different approach in its worship of Xi. There are no direct visual references to him, and the only linguistic cue is his nominal representation in the video title. The observer requires contextual knowledge to understand this connection. An accurate interpretation relies on the fact that the observer knows that Xi is the author of the textual material. Otherwise, the lyrics might be perceived as standard instructions for students and not politicised as a part of Xi's personal narrative.

Guidelines for how one should live one's life are relevant to the 'construction of a moderately prosperous society', and thus representative of the first prong of the Four Comprehensives strategy. The notion that society should be 'moderately' prosperous is supported in the video; the lyrics declare that "When you have the ability, you should resolutely do great deeds. When you lack the ability, you should happily do small deeds" (*ni you nengli shi juexin zuo da shi, meiyou nengli shi, kuaile zuo xiao shi*, V4. 1:10). The text

provides these 'ifs' and 'if nots' repeatedly throughout the video. This pattern is indicative of encouraged modesty or 'harmony' amongst the PRC populace, as well as 'freedom', 'equality', and 'patriotism'; it is both possible and supported for people to strive for greatness, but generally, one should not be afraid to settle for mediocrity or small deeds.

The phrases "we should try our best to avoid doing silly things" (*jinliang bimian zuo sha shi*; V4. 3:06) and "we must determinedly not do bad things" (*jianjue buneng zuo huaishi*; V4. 3:42) are the most explicit attempts at correcting misbehaviour in the text, or as Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova (2018) notes deviating conduct, a 'harmonising' of people who are not acting according to norms. However, the lyrics also provide a seemingly contradictory passage: "when you do not have power, you should do something practical" (*meiyou quanli shi, jiu zuo dian shishi*; V4. 2:37).[16] Here, the collective 'rights' of all citizens becomes substituted and represented as one singular object. It implies that if you lack a certain authority then you can do something about it, which actively blurs the lines between freedoms that are accessible to PRC citizens and those who are not (freedom of press, speech, etc.). Basically, the video seeks to inspire a sense of fairness among equals, although there are those who will excel in life (represented by the number of students who repeatedly appear in the front row and in separate sequences with Tao). The student body, as the portrayed purveyor of the message in the video, is a substitution for Xi. They convey his ideological message for him, and are thus perceived as constructing a 'moderately prosperous society'. This is complemented by scenes incorporating the PRC flag, furthering the 'patriotic' feeling of the video.

Deletion

As pointed out by Machin (2013), no representation can include all aspects of the social practice it represents and it is necessary to examine what has been deleted (participants, actions, settings, times, and so on). The social practices represented in the videos are generically different. This means that, for example, only because the BRI and Chinese Dream narratives are included in V2, that they must have been 'deleted' from V4. This is naturally not the case. The representation of the social practices and what they 'should' and 'should not' include constitutes the basis from which such conclusions can be made—it is expected that in V4, the visual representation includes students due to the social practice involving

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[16]'Power' (*quanli* 权力). The English subtitles in the video mistakenly (?) are translated as 'rights' (*quanli* 权利).

instructions for how one should conduct oneself, rather than imagery of economic and infrastructural development. A deletion of the presupposed aspects would cause suspicion, as would an inclusion of such unexpected items. It is recontextualisation of Xi's ideology as part of the represented social practice that is examined in this thesis. Xi himself is visually represented in the case of V1 and V3, but 'deleted' in V2 and V4; he is textually represented in V4 (albeit only in the title) but completely omitted in the rest. It is the central role of Xi in each video that allows for such a process of recontextualisation.

Following the narrative of Xi in V1, what are the relevant 'deleted' aspects of this social practice? Although he can be seen talking to the inhabitants of the village, none of this conversation can be decoded. And although some of the poverty of the village can be observed in the video, it is merely represented briefly by visual and linguistic objects that supposedly allude to the subpar livelihood of the people, e.g. 'rice jar' (*migang*) or 'pine wood bench' (*songmu pandeng*). The details of the poverty are limited to these few instances, but even then they are not explicitly denoted as such. The only connection to this aspect of the social practice comes from the interim speech by Xi where he arbitrarily lays out the specifics regarding the reduction of poverty. The actual details of poverty—the processes by which a 'comprehensive construction of a moderately prosperous society' will be executed—are deleted.

As mentioned above, the most notable deletion in V2 is the complete omission of Xi himself, despite the video's unquestionable focus on him. The social practices being represented in the video is also largely centred on Xi. It is a celebration of him and his ideology and therefore more susceptible to recontextualisations of 'deletion' that touch upon e.g. specific intertexts or keywords. Decisions have been made to, for example, include the Chinese Dream and BRI intertexts but exclude the Four Comprehensives. The visual representability of both the Chinese Dream and the BRI are relatively high and less abstract than the Four Comprehensives, which is mostly internal guidelines rather than definite multimodal symbols. The Chinese Dream is also highly abstract and ill-defined, yet it is linked with recognizable multimodal renditions (Figure 10). It uses a standardised font for the three characters *Chinese Dream* (中国梦).

Based on the perception that the represented social practice in V2 is a celebration of Xi and his ideology, however, it is my interpretation that the Four Comprehensives, as well the numerous keywords not included, are *not* deleted, but merely passively omitted from the

Figure 10. *The Chinese Dream.* Note the common symbols between this poster and the ones in Figure 9, e.g. the aircraft carrier, the fighter jets, the rocket launch, the Great Wall, the flags, and the sun. These symbols are related to the Chinese Dream (中国梦), which is written in the top right corner. (Wang, X. (2013).

video. If an analysis were to expand beyond the dimension of 'personality cult' towards Xi, then it would be useful to include investigations regarding substitutions or deletions of classificatory relationships concerning minority identities.

The social practice being represented in V3 is 'Xi committing and devoting himself to the people'. However, the verbal and visual representations are juxtaposed and the context of the 'personality cult' aspect is dependent on them both being perceived in unison. As mentioned earlier, Xi is not represented verbally, and until about 1:20 minutes into the video he remains completely unrepresented visually. It is by incorporating the on-screen montage that the connection between the linguistic and the visual representations become discernible.

The most substantial 'deletions' are the multitude of actions that are omitted as a consequence of constructing such a montage (as is the case for all videos). Although the social practice here is generalised, it can also be diversified to emphasise parts that are

inherently dissimilar, i.e. every singular action or set of actions taking place within the montage can be analysed separately. It is in these instances that certain actions shine with their absence, besides the obvious lack of contextual information. Anyone of these instances needs to consist of several actions. Take the brief row of sequences depicting Xi and a young student dressed in a white shirt and red scarf for example (Figure 11). In this example, we are shown only three actions, (1) Xi assisting the young boy with tying his scarf, (2) the boy performing a greeting, and (3) Xi responding to said greeting. All preceding, simultaneous, and succeeding actions are deleted from the represented social practice. This applies to both this particular social practice—Xi interacting with the student—and to the generalised social practice where Xi is 'devoting his life to the people'. This 2-minute montage provides us with countless examples of such deleted actions, due to the variety of situations depicted. Below I have provided a simplified example of what this particular example might look like, and what actions have been deleted, although not necessarily in the order they are represented ('sequence of events', van Leeuwen, 2008):

(1)   Agents (not represented) establish the boundaries for the ceremony.

(2)   Participants (the boy, other students, teachers, Xi) partake in the ceremony.

(3)   Xi helps or teaches the boy to tie his scarf / the ceremony begins.

(4)   The boy greets Xi.

(5)   Xi answers the boy's greeting.

(6)   The ceremony ends.

By applying this to the generalised representation of the social practice, we can be made aware of the massive amount of actions that are 'deleted' from the video. This naturally applies to all representations analysed here, but it is particularly effective in highlighting gaps in visual recontextualisations that incorporate elements of Xi's ideology. As for the example above, the actions leading up to, and resulting from, Xi's apparent 'devotion' towards the people is secluded.

Continuing on the topic of student/teacher relationships and representation of school-related social practice, the fourth video consists of similar patterns of 'deletion'. The 'power in discourse' is somewhat deleted from the video, based on the fact that the lead vocalist, Tao, acts as a teacher but is occasionally dressed in similar fashion as the students, a would-be

Figure 11. *Three film sequences from Video 3* (3:53:08–3:53:11). The social practice showcased in this sequence only includes three distinguishable actions. The rest are 'deleted' from the representation.

deletion of the particular teacher 'presentation style' if not for the various film sequences firmly establishing Tao's role as 'teacher'.

The differences between the settings of 'education-related' social practice in V3 and V4 are substantial. The former only provides us with a short glimpse, whereas in the latter it occupies the majority of the video. The 'ceremony' in V4, however, might be better understood as a staged performance, utilising tools such as fixed camera angles, synchronised singing and gesturing, etc. This, combined with the fact that Xi is not visually represented, has implications for how the social practice itself is interpreted. That is, one might not be able to discern the specific implications of Xi's ideology for the video at first glance and imagine it to be a regular music video.

The social practice represented visually is, similarly to V3, merely a substitution of the linguistic social practice and not "words representing words" or "actions representing actions" (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). The lyrics of the song, as described in the video analysis, describe a completely different social practice than what is visually represented and constitute the primary connection to Xi. So, what ideological component has been deleted from the social practice of 'instructing people how to live their lives'? Yet again, the scope of the social practice is vast and arguably impossible to grasp in its entirety. For example, the participants, actions, resources, settings, times, eligibility conditions, etc. that are essential parts of such a social practice *must be* 'deleted' due to the incoherence that would result from it otherwise. The implications this has for Xi's ideology is that 'substituted' and 'added' (possibly also 'rearranged') aspects become more prevalent than 'deleted' aspects.

Addition

Opposite to the process of 'deletion' there is also a process of 'addition'—elements are not only removed from the representation; there is also the introduction of new elements. The addition of elements to the representation of the social practice can take place by way of: (1) repetition, (2) reaction, (3) purpose, (4) legitimation, and (5) evaluation (van Leeuwen, 2008). Central to the recontextualisation of ideology as part of the represented social practice are 'legitimisation'—describing 'why' something is—and 'evaluation'—denoting the practice as 'morally good or bad'.

Adding legitimising elements serves to justify the existence of other elements in the representation of the social practice as a whole. The social practices that require less

legitimisation are the most ideological—they have become naturalised and are regarded as common sense (ibid). Legitimisation has been used in the context of personality cults before, e.g. the use of symbolism, colour, etc. to represent the Red Guards loyal to Mao attacking the headquarters of Mao's enemies (Figure 2). These elements provided legitimacy to the represented social practice of 'following Mao's leadership'.

Legitimisation is often connected with evaluation, a description of the social practice as either good or bad. Such evaluations become legitimising when the recontextualisation asserts the social practice as 'morally good'. Morally good refers to religious, societal, or natural laws that, when combined with legitimising discourse, completely rectify the represented social practice and its ideological content. For instance, the visual representation of Mao in paintings from the Cultural Revolution often turned him into a source of artificial light, deifying him and making him a symbol equal to 'the sun'. This aspect of his personality cult served to evaluate his position as morally good (Landsberger, 1996). The following examination of addition will attempt to highlight instances of legitimising and evaluating discourse.

In V1, the narrative and interpersonal functions are aimed at giving the observer a glimpse into Xi's inspectional visit to the Paibi Township. The representation is evaluating the social practice as morally good on behalf of Xi, it succeeds in presenting positive reactions (smiles, applause, etc.), reasons (material poverty, remoteness etc.), and legitimisations (societal needs, political obligations, etc.) to Xi's visit. Participants, actions, and settings are also some of the noteworthy aspects that are evaluated. For instance, the townspeople are 'good' because they are hospitable, grateful, etc. and worthy of Xi's care and attention in lifting them out of poverty. The actions are 'good' because they are celebrative of local norms and traditions ('minority cultures are good'). The settings are 'good' because of the natural scenery (mountains, farmlands, etc. are cornerstones of China's geographical identity) and the modest yet thriving daily life in Paibi.

Similar legitimisations and evaluations are carried out in V2, which also employs participants in minority clothing, actions that celebrate life, and film sequences consisting of landscape vistas and other visually pleasing settings. Although in this video, the discourse used to legitimise the social practice is more explicitly drawing upon religious and natural laws than in V1. In V2, the symbolism of 'the sun' is used to legitimise and evaluate Xi's leadership as comparative to Mao. The use of the sun as a symbol for Mao's leadership is

prominent in both visual and musical propaganda from the Cultural Revolution. See, for example, 'The East is Red' (*Dongfang hong*), the unofficial national anthem of the Cultural Revolution (Kraus, 1989), where the first verse goes: "The east is red, the sun is rising, from China comes Mao Zedong".[17] For an example of how Mao was portrayed as 'sun-like' in visual illustration, see Figure 12 below.

Furthermore, the video also adopts a legitimising stance in film sequences depicting people saluting the CPC. By portraying participants and action in such a manner—people saluting the flag in a ceremonious context—it actively legitimises the CPC. The film sequences are arranged so that the participants and their salute of the flag takes place before the flag is visualised. This puts increased emphasis on the participants and the action; '*the people* is

Figure 12. *The sunlight of Mao Zedong Thought illuminates the road of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. This poster is an example of how Mao was frequently depicted as a source of artificial light, or 'sun-like'. (Shanghai People's Fine Arts Publishing House Propaganda Group, 1966).

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[17] There exists a parody/satire version of this song called "The East is Red Again" (*Dongfang you hong*) where Mao Zedong is replaced by Xi Jinping.

actively legitimising the CPC'. Reversing the sequencing would instead put emphasis on the CPC as 'eliciting' or perhaps even demanding legitimisation.

In V3, the visual montage of Xi and the musical performance constitute two inherently different narratives, and thus two different ways that legitimisation and evaluation might occur. In a sense, the feature of Xi in a setting such as the Lunar New Year performance could itself be interpreted as legitimising, and as Lüqiu (2016) proclaim, this particular act was 'out of the ordinary' due to the fact that, for the first time, it only contained visual cues to Xi. It completely omitted all previous leaders (Mao, Deng, Jiang, and Hu) that were traditionally included. However, it is not so much addition of legitimacy as it is emphasising already existing legitimacy.

In the montage, the addition of eligibility conditions and presentation style to provide legitimacy is the most prevalent process, the most notable portrayal being that of Xi in military uniform. These film sequences consist of Xi interacting with military personnel, acting out several actions that could be considered expected from the commander in chief of the PLA and chairman of the CMC (Gueorguiev, 2018). However, as previously mentioned, Xi does not have any military training. His past experience with PLA operations is limited to his post as *mishu* (secretary) to former Minister of Defence Geng Biao. It is not clear what type of network Xi managed to build during this time, although he has told media that it allowed him to expand his knowledge of military, local, and foreign affairs (Li Cheng, 2016). Naturally, this detail remains implicit in the video and needs to be 'demystified' to fully understand the weight of the representation of Xi in military uniform, which is that, although he lacks military training he maintains unquestionable control over the PLA. A depiction of him in uniform contributes to the legitimacy of this control; an 'addition' of the 'eligibility condition' (the capacity needed to control the military) and 'presentation style' (military uniform as identity marker). Xi is being depicted together with people from all possible sectors of the PRC (similarly to V1), which, when paired with the adoration in the lyrics, functions to evaluate the social practice(s) as morally good.

Similarly to V3, the fourth video also utilises the mode of song to legitimise the ideology of Xi, simply by incorporating his text into the lyrics. Therefore, the genre itself contribute to the legitimisation of the represented social practice (a complete genre analysis of participants roles and identities can facilitate the understanding of this type of legitimisation). This can be said about all four videos, yet the generic particularities in V3 and V4 are arguably the most

potent. In V4, the recontextualisation of Xi's 'text' is minimal. There is almost a direct word-for-word representation of the source material in the video.

Regarding the multimodal recontextualisations in V4, both legitimation and evaluation processes are added to the representation of the social practice. Similar to the other videos, the PRC flag becomes the object by which the participants display their dedication and patriotism, included in actions such as 'waving the flag', 'saluting the flag', etc. From a macro perspective on V4, these ideological 'objects' are placed in the videos' first few frames and then followed by the song and its topics. This sequence of events is effectively a reversed arrangement from the one illustrated in V3 and Figure 5. The connection between the PRC and the represented social practice—instructing students on how to conduct themselves—leads to the rather simple evaluation that education is morally good, which concurrently legitimises and evaluates the PRC and Xi as morally good for providing it.

Rearrangement

Following the framework laid out in detail by van Leeuwen (2008), recontextualisation involves the transformative process of 'rearrangement'. However, it is omitted from Machin's (2013) multimodal introduction (his fourth and final process is 'evaluation'). It entails, according to Hansson (2018), a potential in strategies concerning the representation of social actors/actions. The relation between actor, action, and outcome can be recontextualised so that positive or negative consequences seem to emanate from the action or inaction of a particular agent. As stated in the theoretical chapter, this is prevalent in sequential 'texts' such as written text, speech, or videos. Videos employ what I am referring to as 'montage'—the collision of film sequences (Eisenstein, 2004)—combining the sequencing of texts and the spatiality of images. This warrants some form of arrangement of sequences, yet the utility of this process might also be fulfilled by the aforementioned ways of recontextualisation. The need to RE-arrange might be lessened or null due to the straightforward 'deletion' of any negative elements. This is part of the propagandistic nature shared by all four videos—the overwhelming absence of negative elements. There is no participant, action, setting, nor any other multimodal resource that somehow represents a fully negative element that needs to be justified or recontextualised. Not even the representation of 'poverty' in V1 is constructed in such an unambiguous manner. In this instance, the positive reactions by the local population are primarily elicited by the arrival of Xi. This is the logical order of actions—Xi's arrival

comes first, then the villagers' response—and so rearrangement is not necessarily as important as the other processes (Figure 13).

As observers, we do not get to experience Paibi on a regular day when the poverty has a presumably negative impact on its population. The villagers' reactions, as explained above, help to evaluate the represented social practice, thus serving the propagandist function of the video. The order of film sequences in V1 that seeks to emphasise the townspeople's ecstasy and emotion over Xi's arrival is a principal component for the construction of its intended (or unintended) personality cult sentiment. However, it does not indicate any rearrangement process.

Hypothetically, the use of rearrangement would conform to its applications laid out by Hansson (2018). Rather than being used to confirm or dismiss positive or negative outcomes, its application would be to represent the social relations between Xi and the villagers. This would create a sequence of events that enables the many sub-processes of addition to realise their objectives. The other three videos completely lack this necessity, mainly because of their contrasting visual and linguistic representations. This could be explained by examining the generic characteristics of each video, where the latter three have no need for relations between social actors to be recontextualised via rearrangement. This function, if present, is carried out by the other processes. According to my interpretation, this process is redundant, or at least peripheral, with regards to the realisation of Xi's personality cult.

Figure 13. *Two film sequences from Video 1* (0:27–0:31). Xi's arrival is displayed first. The addition of positive evaluation and reaction is displayed second.

Discussion

This study has focused on the discourse of Xi Jinping and its multimodal representation and recontextualisation in four selected propaganda videos. It employs a three-stage analysis: first, a context analysis that explains ideologically important aspects. Secondly, a video analysis which seeks to deconstruct the videos and explain them according to Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar. And lastly, an analysis of multimodal recontextualisation of Xi's ideology in the represented social practices of the videos. These have allowed for a thorough examination of each video's layout and components and how they contribute to the realisation of the cult of personality that surrounds Xi. This overall aim of the thesis is supported by one primary research question and two sub-questions:

How are the videos contributing to the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi Jinping?

i. What are the relevant features of the observable modes, i.e. the linguistic (written and spoken text), the visual (settings, symbols, colour, gestures, gaze, etc.), and the auditory (voice, musical instruments, and sounds) aspects of the videos?

ii. How are the recontextualisation processes of substitution, deletion, addition, and rearrangement used to depict Xi Jinping's ideology as present in these features?

This section will provide a summarised account of what the previous analyses discovered. Both sub-questions have been approached separately in their respective analysis chapters. Following this format, the conclusions drawn from each analysis will also be presented in a sequential manner, starting with the video analysis and followed by a discussion of the recontextualisation analysis. This requires a restatement of the threefold model of critique adopted from the Discourse-Historical Approach. As of now, this study has employed both text and discourse-immanent critique: discerning 'objective' contradictions and what is different between claims and reality, and socio-diagnostic critique: "demystifying propagandist, populist, etc. discursive practices" (Forchtner, 2011: 3). The coming discussion will seek to apply the third critique—prognostic/retrospective critique—which aims to

transform the current conditions against the backdrop of a normative standpoint and asks "what we should remember" to achieve it (ibid: 11). This means that the emancipatory goals of this study are focused on providing a 'better' and universal way of perceiving the propagandistic representations in the videos. It means that, by subjecting the material to a normative critique according to the DHA model, we can forge a better understanding of the ideological content and prepare for similar, and potentially harmful, instances in other scenarios.

What conclusions can be drawn from the video analysis? By examining the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, we now have a firm understanding of how these are utilised in each video and arguably also how they affect and are affected by their respective contents. It is notable that the videos all use a varied imagery, which often consists of scenic or cinematic views. The overall use of narrative might be the most predominant feature with regards to this; there is almost always something 'going on' in the videos. Whether it is Xi walking through a narrow alleyway, people celebrating around a bonfire, or students carrying out a musical performance, the videos are actively engaged in their use of narrative relationships to explain the intended messages. This becomes noteworthy when considering how the interpersonal function is largely concerned with accentuating a certain aspect of the video as 'positive' in the eyes of the observer. And similarly, the textual function is applied to emphasise a supposed 'centre' of attention for the observer. Taking all three functions into account, the videos become even more transparent with regards to their discursive structure. There exists a narrative which the producer wants to portray in a positive light. This narrative is (more or less) anchored in a central object (e.g. Xi in V1 and V3) that guides both the narrative process and the observer's reading of the video. Simultaneously, this structure engages in recontextualisation that serves a particular ideological goal.

Furthermore, there are also classificatory and analytical relationships that operate within the ideational function. These work to portray participants within the scope of a uniform 'Chinese social identity'. And, according to the aforementioned aspects of each metafunction, this is presupposed throughout all videos. The reason why this is problematic is subject to text/discourse-immanent critique: the cultural, ethnic, religious etc. differences between representations of participants and reality are significant. Technically speaking, the PRC's multiculturalism is reduced to visual spectacle and arguably 'whitewashed' to fit into a Han-Chinese narrative. All of this factor into what is denoted as 'spiritual civilisation', a core facet

of the first centennial goals of 2021, where China aims to have achieved the so-called 'construction of a moderately prosperous society' (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018).

Developing the previous thoughts on the interpersonal and textual functions, these mostly reinforce the outline established by the ideational function. For instance, if the video adopts a celebrative narrative structure, then this will also be emphasised in its construction of producer-observer relationship. Also, the prevalence of centre-periphery in place of meaningful left-right information values indicate that, rather than depicting aspects as 'given' or 'new', the focus often lies with a singular element at one time at the expense of all other elements. When combined with a narrative structure it contributes to the apparent centralising of meaning. It reinforces the often inexplicit assumption that the video contains an ideological message that has one or two objects or aspects as its focal points. These points are most notably the lead vocalists and Xi Jinping, who are responsible for the linguistic and visual links to ideology respectively.

As for the processes of recontextualisation, they all have their own functions that they fulfil with regards to the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi. First of all, substitution is the process most suited for the multimodal recontextualisation of ideology in social practices. It is used to represent aspects that often require a more abstract translation from its monomodal and textual form, as can be seen with most of the keywords. We can begin to decode what aspects of ideology are reconcilable with what modes of communication by examining this substitution. What this tells us is that aspects more closely related to a 'moderately prosperous society' are in focus, which includes the first prong of the Four Comprehensives, the Chinese Dream, and in particular the Socialist values of 'equality' and 'patriotism'. The lack of any substantial representation of the core Socialist values (keywords) 'democratic', 'justice', or 'rule of law', as well as the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th prongs of the Four Comprehensives, is indicative of their importance, or lack thereof. The absence of multimodal recontextualisations in the material does not signify their unsuitability. It does, however, tell us something about the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi—they are nonessential for achieving the desired effect. This is, of course, easily refuted by the emergence of new material—a music video where Xi is praised for his work on reform, rule of law, or party discipline might very well appear in the near future.

The modes most frequently used to communicate the prevalent aspects are all dependent on the visual representation of participants, e.g. body position, gaze, gestures, facial

expression, and so on. These are effective in transmitting the aspects pertaining to the first prong of the Four Comprehensives, to build a 'moderately prosperous society'. This is especially true when the modes are combined to create a narrative, e.g. the montage of Xi in V3. And, when they are further combined with the linguistic modes of written and spoken text that, in one way or another, functions to 'worship' or 'praise' Xi, they reinforce the connection between ideology and charismatic authority. The visual modes provide the basis for ideology, whilst the textual modes are responsible for the connection to a personality cult dimension.

The remaining three processes—deletion, addition, and rearrangement—all have their own ways of contributing to the personality cult essence of the videos, although rearrangement is largely situational. Deletion is primarily concerned with delimiting the observable discursive objects, such as participants or actions—we are only shown the parts of a social practice the producer deems necessary. It, too, functions in multiple different ways. In V1, most of the negative emotions that are expected to result from poverty are deleted. In V2, explicit references to Xi are deleted. They are not merely omitted, due to him being the undoubtable 'topic' of the video. In V3, once again, we are only shown parts of the social practices included. Rather than deleting purely negative aspects, it could be considered to remove those that just do not fit the intended narrative of the montage. And, in V4, most of the day-to-day school activities are deleted in favour of a staged musical performance. Xi is also deleted, apart from the introductory nominalisation. All in all, these uses of deletion functions as expected; the unnecessary or unwanted dimensions of a social practice, as well as those that could have negative impact, are removed. This consequently serves to emphasise the intended positive elements. And, by crediting Xi with these positive influences, the personality cult is ostensibly reinforced.

The process of addition is used to legitimise and evaluate the represented social practices. This naturally contributes significantly to the realisation of a personality cult. The videos are 'positive' and the producers are generally concerned with portraying this as a result from their relation to Xi. Some instances are more definite and explicit than others. In V1, the most basic legitimisations and evaluations are added with regards to participants, actions, and settings. In V2, Xi is being compared to Mao via the 'To follow you is to follow the sun' metaphor and the CPC is legitimised by participants saluting the flag. The montage in V3 serves to provide legitimacy to Xi's leadership role. Similarly to V1, the various resources in V3 are used to

evaluate Xi's role within the social practice as good, due to the fact that he is the type of leader that meets with people from all parts of society. In V4, the legitimation comes from the addition of a school environment. The CPC provides education and the students support the CPC in return, resulting in a mutual evaluation of both parties as 'good'.

Substitution is used for the introduction and incorporation of ideology into the social practice. Deletion is used to compress it, to frame it, and create a comprehensible scope of events. Addition is used to justify it within a larger moral framework, while rearrangement becomes arguably ineffectual in these instances. Substitution, deletion, and addition are all employed simultaneously to reach a desired effect. This effect, independent of the intentions of the producer or the interpretations by individual observers, contributes to the personality cult surrounding Xi.

The videos consist of multiple elements—linguistic, visual, and auditory—which consistently and systematically shape a narrative that, from the assumed normative standpoint, favours problematic representations of reality. The idea is, by following the prognostic/retrospective critique, to conceptualise the results from the analyses in a way that emphasises the videos' internal discourse structure and its characteristics. My intent is to further legitimise critical discourse analysis of actual propagandistic material, which, however overt or explicit it might be, still requires demystifying via systematic analysis.

I will now provide a conclusion regarding the initial research question of this thesis, namely how the videos are contributing to the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi Jinping. I see the hypothesis posited in the beginning of this study as confirmed; certain modes and their connection to particular recontextualisations *are* characteristic for the analysed ideological aspects. But, this does not negate the possibility of them being characteristic for other discourses as well. As explained above, the videos utilise similar 'methods' to reach their desired effects, despite their generic differences and varying levels of official status. I want to propose a concept that, based on these shared patterns, can be used to describe how these videos make up a representation of ideological recontextualisation. I denote this concept as *multimodal propaganda narrative,* which is defined by the following conclusions drawn from the preceding analyses:

(1) There are supposed sequential narrative(s) taking place in each video, supported by narrative, classificatory, and analytical relationships—the ideational function. The

observer can follow a sequence of events throughout the video which can be (more or less) decoded and interpreted similar to how one reads a story.

(2)   The producer seeks to establish an affirmative and positive relation between himself and the observer—the interpersonal function. In the selected material, this becomes apparent by the representation/recontextualisation of Xi Jinping, which assumes a generally celebrative nature.

(3)   There is often a textually central object that guides the observer in reading the video—the textual function. This object is essential to the portrayed narrative, as it provides a constant by which the sequence of events can be traced. Most often, this object is a participant, e.g. the lead vocalist(s) and/or Xi Jinping.

(4)   Ideological aspects are incorporated into the represented social practice by the process of substitution. Substituting monomodal intertexts and keywords with multimodal abstractions are useful when a specific ideological topic or theme needs to be represented. In the case of this study, this 'topic' is Xi Jinping.

(5)   Superfluous or unwanted parts of a social practice are removed by the process of deletion. This serves to delimit the scope of the portrayed social practice so that it becomes comprehensive and manageable. The deleted parts can also be potentially negative aspects of a social practice, i.e. something that would effectively counter the intended outcome of the video.

(6)   Aspects of the social practice are legitimised and evaluated by the process of addition. The selected videos are concerned with adding legitimacy to aspects related to Xi Jinping's ideology and to portray them as 'good'. They achieve this by utilising contrasting modes and social practices, e.g. the love ballad accompanying the visual montage in V3.

These six features will serve as the preliminary definition of *multimodal propaganda narrative.* They are as of now specified to this study and its particular topics, material, and

questions. Hopefully, they can serve as a basis for future studies to develop this concept into a useful tool and to include other types of media and genre, other theoretical standpoints and methodologies, and so on. And as indicated above, its intended application is to better conceptualise the multimodal discursive structure that has been laid bare by the analyses. It encompasses what I have previously been referring to as bottom-up and top-down representations of ideology. This new term, however, does not necessarily distinguish between these two categories. The videos analysed in this study are of varying official status which prohibits a sweeping generalisation of them all being purely bottom-up representations. Therefore, by describing them as multimodal propaganda narratives, we can forego their official or unofficial statuses while retaining the 'representative' explanation. In other words, we can, from a normative standpoint, explain the discourse structure of other material that employs problematic representations of social practices without having to account for the stance of its producer(s) or their underlying intentions. In the context of this study, such representations include: the cult of personality phenomenon, the Belt and Road Initiative, The Chinese Dream, Xi Jinping Thought, etc.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have attempted to illustrate the importance of different modes when relaying propagandist messages. The case I chose to investigate further was the recontextualisation of Xi Jinping's ideology in four musical videos and how these contribute to the realisation of a personality cult towards Xi. I have used an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon both critical discourse studies and multimodal studies to explain elements of the linguistic, visual, and auditory aspects of each video. My aim was to discern how these aspects interact with different modes and contribute to the realisation of a personality cult.

The conclusions provided by the analyses shows how certain modes are preferred when communicating certain features of Xi's ideology. And that the various processes of recontextualisation all have their distinct functions with regards to how these ideological features are incorporated into the videos. The video analysis showed that narrative relationships were preferred and that these often circulated around a central object. It is also essential to portray these relations in a positive fashion. The analysis of recontextualisation showed that substitution was useful when translating abstract ideology from text into other modes. Simultaneously, deletion was used to frame the social practices and addition was used to provide them with legitimacy and evaluate them as 'morally good'.

These findings resulted in the idea of proposing a new concept that could better describe this type of discourse structure. I have formulated the preliminary term 'multimodal propaganda narrative', which I hope will facilitate future endeavours that seek to describe manifestations of ideology as part of social practice. It is not confined only to the particular context of Xi's personality cult. It will, hopefully, be applicable within the greater field of Critical Discourse Studies and serve to demystify and counter problematic discourse on an interdisciplinary scale.

Concluding this thesis are my personal remarks regarding its preparation and execution, as well as my thoughts on forthcoming research on the subject. First of all, I would like to point out that the scope of this thesis poses a problem for the inclusion of the Discourse-Historical Approach, which demands large amounts of time, effort, and funding. On the other hand, the visual grammar and recontextualisation analyses proved to be highly compatible and also resulted in tangible conclusions. For future studies of similar or greater scale, I would suggest to evaluate whether or not an inclusion of the DHA is essential to the topic in question, seeing

as how MCDS is completely viable on its own. Secondly, I would suggest that greater focus be put on the auditory modes of the material. I set out to include the linguistic, visual, and auditory dimensions equally. However, this later proved to be illogical due to the considerable dominance of linguistic and visual modes. The video medium demands that auditory aspects are taken into account. Therefore, future studies should further investigate its importance in the recontextualisation of ideology in social practice.

Lastly, I would like to entertain the possibility of organising a database of multimodal material regarding the personality cult phenomenon in a Chinese context. The material selected for study is only a handful of the videos available on media platforms such as YouTube or Tencent. In addition to this there are songs, posters, speeches, and more that relate to the subject throughout the history of both the PRC and Taiwan. To gather all of these in one place would facilitate these types of studies considerably. Platforms such as YouTube are great online corpora, but are inevitably subject to constant change, and material might appear or disappear on a whim. A database would also ensure that none are lost to censorship.

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List of Figures

Appendix – List of videos

Video 1

Title: "How Should I Address You?" (*bu zhi gai zenme chenghu ni* /不知该怎么称呼你)
Producer(s): Zhang Wenxiong 张文雄
Writer(s): Lü Di 绿地, Jin Sha 金沙, Li Yin 李胤
Composer(s): Meng Yong 孟勇
Performed by: Li Siyu 李思宇, 56 Flowers Girl Choir

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6xpKqrytDI, (Last viewed, 21 May).

Lyrics:

不知该怎么称呼你
你千里万里来到苗寨里
不知该怎么称呼你
你风里雨里走进 走进我家里
摸铺盖 看米缸
一条松木板凳连着我和你

我在你心里
你在我心里
你爱我们老百姓
我们老百姓深深地爱你
爱你爱你

[Xi Jinping speaking to villagers:]
我们在抓扶贫的时候切忌喊大口号
也不要定那些好高骛远的目标
扶贫攻坚的就是要实事求是
因地制宜 分类指导 精准扶贫

不知该怎么称呼你
你把我的手握在手心里
不知该怎么称呼你
你把我的事装进 装进你心里
拉家常 细叮咛
一句精准扶贫暖透我心里

我在你心里
你在我心里

你爱我们老百姓
我们老百姓深深地爱你
爱你爱你

我在你心里
你在我心里
你爱我们老百姓
我们老百姓深深地爱你
爱你爱你
我们老百姓深深地爱你
爱你

Video 2

Title: "To Follow You is to Follow the Sun" (*genzhe ni jiushi genzhe na taiyang* /跟着你就是跟着那太阳)
Producer(s): Mao Jun 毛军 (The World of Tang Dynasty Network Technology Co. Ltd.), *Huohuo Zhongguoren* Organizational Committee, CCTV
Writer(s): Liu Xuanyuan 刘烜榬, Men Xiaokai 门笑凯
Composer(s): Liu Xuanyuan, Zhang Yulai 张玉来, Song Shuhua 宋书华, Song Tianxiang 宋天祥
Performed by: Wang Xiaofan 王筱凡

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CK_1tYyJ-aE, (Last viewed, 27 May).
Behind-the-scenes video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J_wULXX4aY, (Last viewed, 29 May).

Lyrics:

是你的心肠牵挂着村庄
才有了初心不忘 为民着想
是你的真情深爱着大地
才有了江河奔放 杨帆起航

是你的汗水浇灌了四季
才有了五谷飘香 幸福安康
是你的思想闪耀着光芒
才有了人心向往 实干兴邦

跟着你就是跟着那太阳
大地多锦绣蓝天更晴朗
跟着你就是跟着那太阳
人民在欢呼 中国梦唱响

是你的信仰传承着梦想
才有了一带一路　五洲欢畅
是你的力量造就了时代
才有了旗帜飞扬　歌声嘹亮
跟着你就是跟着那太阳
大陆好宽广　美梦在飞翔
跟着你就是跟着那太阳
火火中国人　世界更辉煌

跟着你就是跟着那太阳
大陆好宽广　美梦在飞翔
跟着你就是跟着那太阳
火火中国人　世界更辉煌
火火中国人世界更辉煌

Video 3

Title: "I Give My Heart to You" (*ba xin jiao gei ni* ／ 把心交给你)
Producer(s): CCTV
Writer(s): Huang Shi 黄石, Chen Daobin 陈道斌
Composer(s): Li Xun 李勋, Fu Lei 傅雷
Choreographer(s): Zhang Yang 张阳, Zhang Xiaoxia 张小夏
Performed by: Warren Mok 莫华伦, Lü Wei 吕薇, Communication University of China Choir

Retrieved from

Lyrics:

我深深　深深地爱着你
对你的承诺　从未忘记
多少风雨　生死相依
你的冷暖时刻挂心里

我深深　深深地眷恋着你
我的根在你的土地
光荣梦想因你而美丽
一路走来你给我勇气

把心交给你
将未来轻轻捧起
我的祖国　我的姐妹兄弟

把心交给你

我深深 深深地眷恋着你
我的根在你的土地
光荣梦想因你而美丽
一路走来你给我勇气
把心交给你
换来人间新天地
我的祖国 我的姐妹兄弟
把心(祖国)交给你(我的祖国)

把心交给你
将未来轻轻捧起
我的祖国 我的姐妹兄弟
把心交给你
交给你 交给你

Video 4

Title: "To Be an Upright Man for a Lifetime (The Hopes of President Xi)" (*tangtang zhengzheng yi beizi (Xi zhuxi jiyu)* /堂堂正正一辈子(习主席寄语))
Producer(s): Gao Yanhong 高艳红, Xu Xiao'ou 徐晓欧
Writer(s): Xi Jinping 习近平
Composer(s): Jiang Yanhui 姜延辉
Performed by: Tao Hong 陶红, Beijing NO.35 High School

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCxLvlFMcbE&t=0h0m0s, (Last viewed, 15 May).

Lyrics:

人在年少时 一定要立志
经得起风雨 才能长见识
莫好高骛远稳健才扎实
做事讲诚信 做人讲良知

你有能力时 决心做大事
没有能力时 快乐做小事
你有余钱时 就做点善事
没有余钱时 做点家务事

人活一辈子 要好好深思
当有成绩时 要常照镜子

没有成绩时 学习不停止
私心膨胀时 欲望要节制

你有权利时 就做点好事
没有权利时 就做点实事
当你能动时 就多做点事
你不能动时 回忆开心事

人这一辈子 都会做错事
尽量避免做傻事
坚决不能做坏事
人生就是这回事

人这一辈子 都会做错事
尽量避免做傻事
坚决不能做坏事
堂堂正正一辈子
堂堂正正一辈子
一辈子