

Ideological Indoctrination under Xi Jinping

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The CCP under Xi Jinping's leadership has launched the most sustained and comprehensive program of ideological indoctrination in the post-Mao era. By issuing new rules and revising old ones on ideological education in the party, propaganda work, education, and patriotic education, the party apparently seeks to use ideological indoctrination to strengthen Xi's personal authority, demand strict political loyalty from its officials and members, tighten control in the mass media and on college campuses, and mobilize nationalistic support from the public. Although the program is being implemented through administrative measures, its reliance on coercion and material incentives belie the challenge facing the party to carry out ideological indoctrination in a highly materialistic society. This program reflects the regime's insecurity about the erosion of its members' ideological commitment and political loyalty. The backward-looking nature of the party's program of ideological indoctrination is symptomatic of its poverty of ideas, even as the party struggles to project a forward-looking vision. The outcome of this program is likely to be political ritualization and feigned loyalty that are more common in a regime in decay than in a regime undergoing reinvigoration.

China under the rule of Xi Jinping has witnessed several momentous changes, such as the dismantling of collective leadership, the return of strongman rule, the institutionalization of purges in the form of anti-corruption prosecutions, the intensification of repression, an expansionist foreign policy, and the precipitous decline in U.S.-China relations. One of these changes that has received relatively little attention is systematic indoctrination aiming to impose strict ideological control and censorship on the elites and members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the media, educational institutions, and society at large. The efforts by Xi's party and government to restore the preeminence of ideology are noteworthy because these attempts represent a complete departure from the party's de-emphasis on orthodox ideology in the post-Mao era. Judging by its scope, duration, intensity, comprehensiveness, and institutionalization, it is apparent that ideological indoctrination, in the service of strengthening Xi's personal authority and enforcing Leninist organizational discipline, now constitutes a key component of the party's new survival strategy.

To be sure, Xi's predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, also launched ideological indoctrination campaigns, such as those associated with the so-called "Three Represents," (三个代表), "Promote Study, Politics, and Righteousness (讲学习, 讲政治, 讲正气), and "Preserve the Progressiveness of CCP Members" (保持共产党员先进性). But for the most part, these efforts were episodic, ritualistic, short-lived, and inconsequential. In contrast, Xi's efforts to impose ideological indoctrination are not only more ambitious in scope and systematic in implementation but also more institutionalized in terms of embedding ideological indoctrination in the organizational rules of party and state institutions.

As with the adoption of an expansionist foreign policy and intensification of social control, the revival of ideological indoctrination under Xi certainly bears the imprint of China's new strongman (who has tirelessly emphasized the centrality of ideological indoctrination in his speeches) and reflects his deeply held Leninist and nationalist convictions. But mobilization of the party-state in the formulation and implementation of the most intense and sustained ideological indoctrination project in the post-Mao era undoubtedly has important political objectives. Even a casual reading of the party documents on ideological indoctrination and propaganda work, some of which will be analyzed below, convey the unmistakable impression that, aside from hoping to reinvigorate the appeal of orthodox Communist ideology (primarily Leninism rather than Marxism), the party under Xi is attempting to achieve substantive political objectives. In particular, the purpose of these efforts is to enshrine Xi's ideas, mostly expressed in a series of important speeches since he came to power in late 2012, in the ideological canon of the party, thus promoting Xi's personal authority and facilitating the establishment of a personalized leadership cult based not only on raw power but also on ideological originality and appeal. In addition to augmenting Xi's power and image as a thinker, current ideological-indoctrination efforts also attempt to exact a high degree of political loyalty from party officials and the military and to impose coercive ideological control over the media and the education sector. To win the support of the Chinese public in an era of escalating strategic rivalry with the United States, the CCP has injected nationalism into its campaign of ideological indoctrination to broaden its appeal.

Although it is tempting to see the party's concerted efforts to reinvigorate the role of ideology in the lives of its members and the Chinese people as a proactive move, a close examination of the party's own justifications for launching the current campaign reveals the regime's deep-seated insecurity and vulnerabilities, such as its fear of the loss of ideological commitment among its members, doubts about the durability of one-party rule among the elites, the seductiveness of materialism, the lax organizational discipline, and the growing appeal of Western values. This curious mix of the aggressiveness of the campaign and its underlying insecurity raises the question whether Xi will be more successful than his less ideologically fervent predecessors in inculcating doctrines, values, and ritualistic practices that were largely discarded and considered obsolete in the post-Mao era.

The Framework of Ideological Indoctrination

The framework of Xi's ideological indoctrination program was constructed in a series of documents issued by the Central Committee of the CCP, the State Council, and the party's Organization and Propaganda Departments during the past six years. As an indication of the status of these documents as part of Xi's comprehensive plan to transform the party, the specific documents on ideological indoctrination are part of Xi's comprehensive program to rewrite the rules and regulations governing all aspects of the CCP.¹ The party's first five-year plan under Xi to revise existing rules and promulgate new rules, covering the period from 2013 to 2017, was released at the end of November 2013.² The plan specifically refers to promulgating new Rules on Managing the Education of CCP Members (党员教育工作条例) and revising the Interim Rules on Cadre Education and Training (干部教育培训工作条例 (试行)). In terms of its objectives, the plan aims to "improve party rules governing work in the ideological realm. The construction of intra-party rules on propaganda and ideology are to be strengthened to

institutionally enhance, improve, and safeguard the party's leadership in the ideological realm. The principle of the party's control over the media must be preserved. Methods and rules to manage the news media and media workers are in need of improvement. Management of the Internet and the new media must be strengthened.... Rules governing the ideological battlefield and rules controlling all types of academic associations, study groups, and private social-science research institutions must be improved so as to reject channels of dissemination so erroneous ideas and proposals."³ In February 2018, the party released its second five-year plan, which places a priority on promulgation of "Rules on Propaganda Work" (宣传工作条例) and revision of the "Rules on Political Work in the PLA" (中国人民解放军政治工作条例).⁴

In addition to publishing new or revised rules on ideological work to be carried out mainly within the party, the CCP Central Committee also issued opinions (意见) that are, in effect, policy guidelines or directives on propaganda for the media, education, and the arts. In the formulation and implementation of policy to enforce ideological conformity in the education sector in general, and higher education in particular, the CCP's Organization and Propaganda Departments, as well as the Ministry of Education, were collectively assigned to issue the relevant documents.

Taken together, these documents constitute the policy framework of Xi's program on ideological indoctrination. We briefly describe and analyze below the most noteworthy provisions in the key documents that have been issued during the last six years.

In general, the CCP's documents on ideological indoctrination may be divided into three categories. The first category includes documents to promoting ideological commitment and maintain ideological education within the party. The second category includes documents to promote ideological loyalty to the party and Chinese nationalism among the Chinese people. The third category includes documents to cultivate pro-party ideological values and to enforce ideological conformity in the education sector, in particular in the colleges and universities.

Ideological Indoctrination within the CCP

Judging by the number of new or revised documents issued under Xi, it is evident that the top priority of the program on ideological indoctrination is to reinvigorate the ideological commitment of CCP members and their political loyalty not only to the party but also to Xi as the "core leader." Here we briefly summarize and analyze three key documents in terms of their political importance.

1. "The CCP Center's Opinions on Strengthening the Political Construction of the Party" (中共中央关于加强党的政治建设的意见)

This document, issued in January 2019, constitutes a broad guideline on strengthening the party's organizational discipline and ideological education. Although most of the document contains typical "party-speak" on the importance of political loyalty, ideological purity, and organizational rules and practices, it is notable for the justifications it provides for imposing tight organizational rules and enforcing ideological and political loyalty. The beginning of the document, although lauding Xi for "eradicating concealed serious political perils within the

party” (消除了党内严重政治隐患), warns that the “political problems in the party remain fundamentally unresolved. The problem of some party organizations, cadres, and members neglecting politics, downplaying politics, and ignoring politics are relatively prominent. Some even deviate from the direction of socialism with Chinese characteristics” (党内存在的政治问题还没有得到根本解决, 一些党组织和党员干部忽视政治、淡化政治、不讲政治的问题还比较突出, 有的甚至存在偏离中国特色社会主义方向的严重问题). In an apparent reference to the widespread superstitious practices within the party, the document declares that the party must “resolutely prevent the replacement of faith in Marxism-Leninism with faith in ghosts and gods and the replacement of faith in truth with faith in money” (坚决防止不信马列信鬼神、不信真理信金钱).⁵

In addition to requiring CCP members to adhere to a strict schedule of party organizational activities and political rituals (such as recitation of the membership oath (入党誓词) and commemoration of all “political birthdays (过政治生日), the “Opinions” call for a sustained and in-depth effort to disseminate “loyalty education” within the party (在全党持续深入开展忠诚教育). In implementing this effort, the party is to “promote revolutionary culture, pass on the red genes, and guide party cadres and members to lead as firm believers in the core values of socialism” (发扬革命文化, 传承红色基因....引导党员干部带头做社会主义核心价值观的坚定信仰者).⁶

2. “Rules on Managing the Education of CCP Members” (中国共产党党员教育管理工作条例)

Originally intended to be issued before 2018 according to the first five-year plan on revamping CCP internal rules, the “Rules on Managing the Education of CCP Members” is a new document that was officially promulgated in May 2019.⁷ It specifies the content and process of ideological education of CCP members. According to the document, education of CCP members must focus on political theory (政治理论), which includes basic ideological doctrines of Marxism and foundational knowledge about the party (党的基本知识). Political education also stresses strict compliance, in both thought and action, with party discipline, rules, and the CCP Center with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core” (在思想上政治上行动上同以习近平同志为核心的党中央保持高度一致). Other elements of political education of CCP members include indoctrination about the party charter, rules, discipline, and principles (党章党规党纪, 党的宗旨), party history, and current affairs concerning the world, China, and the party (世情国情党情). Even though the document mentions intellectual knowledge and technical skills (知识技能教育), they are relegated to the last item on the list of the content of political education for CCP members.

Such education is to be carried out through regularized political rituals, such as meetings of all members and party cells, and “party classes” (党员大会、党小组会和党课). The “Rules” mandate that each party branch (党支部) convene a meeting each month to organize group study sessions focusing on a party-related theme and other party activities. Reflecting the party’s intention to utilize technology to implement its ideological indoctrination, the “Rules” call for the establishment of a database of personal information on CCP members and a system of

managing information about all CCP members in the country (健全党员信息库, 加强全国党员管理信息系统建设). Armed with such information, the party will analyze and evaluate, in real time, the conditions of the rank-and-file in the party and the work of political education (对党员队伍状况和党员教育管理工作进行实时分析研判).⁸ This specific provision appears to indicate that the CCP leadership will deploy technological means to monitor whether its members are actively participating in its indoctrination program. The rollout of a “red app,” “Study the Great Nation” (学习强国), in January 2019 seems to be part of this agenda. According to *The Washington Post*, the app, which was developed by the Propaganda Department with support from Chinese tech giant Alibaba, contains propaganda videos and speeches by Xi. CCP members have been ordered to download and regularly “study” the content of the app. More than 100 million users (most of whom are presumably CCP members, which at last count (2019) numbered 90.5 million-strong) registered within the first three months after the app was introduced. According to technology analysts, the app has a feature that allows the party to monitor its users. In October 2019, about 10,000 journalists in Beijing were ordered to take part in a test on the app about their knowledge on Xi’s thought. In the future, the tests will be expanded nationwide and the test-takers will be scored.⁹

3. “Rules on Cadre Education and Training

Three recent documents provide a revealing glimpse into the party’s new emphasis on ideological conformity and political loyalty among its cadres. In December 2015, the CCP Center issued its “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Work in Party Schools under New Situations” (中共中央关于加强和改进新形势下党校工作的意见).¹⁰ The most notable aspect of this document is its emphasis on Leninist principles. It unabashedly states that “the fundamental principle of the party’s ownership of party schools must be preserved” (坚持党校姓党根本原则), and it stipulates that the primary educational task in party schools is to provide education on party theory and its essence (把党的理论教育和党性教育作为党校教学首要任务). Even though the category of “theory” includes the CCP’s staple of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, it notably excludes any “theory” attributed to Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, or Hu Jintao, but it does include “the spirit of the series of important speeches by General Secretary Xi Jinping,” which should be the top priority (把深入学习习近平总书记系列重要讲话精神作为重中之重). The document defines “the essence of the party,” which should account for no less than 20 percent of the party-school curriculum, as “party ideals, beliefs, principles, history, and revolutionary tradition.”¹¹ The emphases on promotion of Xi’s ideological contribution to the party and on Leninist education were later incorporated into the CCP’s revised “Rules on Work in Party Schools (Administrative Academies)” (中国共产党党校（行政学院）工作条例), issued in October 2019.¹²

The third document is the revised “Rules on Education and the Training of Cadres” (干部教育培训工作条例), issued in October 2015. Compared with the earlier version of the same rules (issued in 2006), these rules regard “virtue” as the most important objective of cadre education and training. Indeed, the wording “prioritize virtue” (以德为先) in the 2015 Rules is not only new but also indicates that the party under Xi places “virtue,” which in the CCP lexicon refers to ideological conformity and political loyalty, ahead of talent or technocratic skills in the education

and training of its officials. Another noteworthy change in the 2015 Rules is the prominence of indoctrination of party officials on the regime's Leninist principles, rules, and traditions. The Rules state that the education and training of cadres must "emphasize the ideals, beliefs, essence, rules, and discipline of the party" (突出理想信念教育和党性党规党纪教育).¹³

An analysis of the CCP's five-year plans, released under Xi's leadership, for educating and training its officials shows that the party has begun to infuse its cadre education and training programs with content aimed to promote Xi's personal authority and to stress the cultivation of Leninist organizational values and practices. A comparison of the two five-year plans on cadre education and training released during the 2001–2010 period and the two five-year plans issued after Xi came to power in 2012 reveals significant differences. While the quantitative requirements, such as the number of hours of education and training required of party officials and the number of officials required to attend various courses are similar during both periods, the objectives and content of their training are dramatically different. In the Jiang-Hu periods, greater emphasis was placed on technocratic skills. But in the Xi period, the focus has clearly shifted to ideological indoctrination. In particular, in Xi's speeches the "party's essence, norms, discipline, and history" (党性党风党纪和党史) are singled out as the "priority content of education and training" (重点培训内容). Another notable difference is the party's position on educating and training officials outside of China. In the five-year plan for 2001–2005, the party sought to annually send 1,000 provincial and municipal cadres to training programs outside of China. In the five-year plan for 2006–2010, the same program of sending party officials for overseas training was affirmed, but no numeric target was set. However, in a document issued by the CCP Organization Department in 2008, it is stated that the party planned to send 200 provincial-level officials and 300 "outstanding" bureau-level officials for overseas training annually.¹⁴

By contrast, the revised "Rules on Education and the Training of Cadres" (干部教育培训工作条例), issued in October 2015, declare that "the work of training (cadres) outside of China must be strictly regulated and improved (严格规范和改进), and the first five-year plan issued under Xi for the 2013–2017 period makes only passing reference to training outside of China, merely stating that the party would "continue to utilize the high-quality training resources outside the borders and improve the work of training outside the borders." The second five-year plan, issued under Xi for the 2018–2022 period, contains no reference to training outside of China. Presumably, the CCP has now ended its program of sending officials to training programs abroad.¹⁵

Mass Propaganda, Culture, and Nationalism

In addition to focusing on officials and party members, the CCP's program of ideological indoctrination also targets the general public. Its resolve and efforts to maintain strict control over the mass media, to guide public opinion (引导舆论), and to cultivate Chinese nationalism can be seen in three important documents, as summarized below.

1. "Rules on Propaganda Work" (宣传工作条例)

This new document was promulgated in August 2019. Although the party has not yet released the full text, an interview with the party's propaganda chief suggests that the new propaganda rules cover a wide range of areas, including "management of (ideological) theory, news media and publications, and construction of ideology and ethics, culture and the arts, and Internet propaganda and information content; and strengthening the party's comprehensive leadership over propaganda work." The Rules also include provisions on funding, monitoring, and accountability.¹⁶ Among other things, the "Rules" require party organizations at all levels to fulfill their responsibilities to perform party propaganda work. They must regularly discuss and implement important propaganda tasks and make annual reports on propaganda work to superior party organizations. Most notably, the "Rules" seek to strengthen party propaganda work at the grassroots level and even to extend its propaganda tentacles into private companies and social organizations. For example, the "Rules" mandate that every party committee in each township (or urban neighborhood) must appoint one official in charge of propaganda; each village (or urban community) must appoint a propaganda specialist; and propaganda departments are to be set up in all CCP organizations in state-owned enterprises and universities. Depending on the circumstances, private firms and social organizations must also appoint propaganda personnel.¹⁷

2. "Opinions on Promoting the Development of Socialist Culture and the Arts" (中共中央关于繁荣发展社会主义文艺的意见)

Issued in October 2015, the "Opinions" contain broad policy guidelines to counter the threat to the CCP's control in the cultural and artistic realm and to its so-called "national cultural security" (国家文化安全). While acknowledging problems such as "distorted values, shallowness, crudeness, and commercialism," the "Opinions" prescribe a nationalist cultural policy. They demand that Chinese culture and the arts should be guided by the core values of socialism, based on the theme of the "China Dream," and sourced from China's outstanding traditional culture" (以社会主义核心价值观为引领, 以中国精神为灵魂, 以中国梦为时代主题, 以中华优秀传统文化为根脉).¹⁸ In terms of content, the "Opinions" place a priority on cultural and art works that glorify the party's history and achievements. According to the document, the CCP will not allow works that expose the party's dark history (works called "historical nihilism" [历史虚无主义]), nor will it allow works that "negate" Chinese civilization, undermine national unity, distort the history of the party and the country, and slander the image of the state (否定中华文明、破坏民族团结、歪曲党史国史、诋毁国家形象). Foreign worship (以洋为尊、唯洋是从) is also roundly denounced. The mission of culture and the arts, according to this document, is to "guide the people to establish and maintain the correct outlook on history, nation, state, and culture" (引导人民树立和坚持正确的历史观、民族观、国家观、文化观).¹⁹

3. "Programmatic Guidelines for Implementing Patriotic Education in the New Era" (新时代爱国主义教育实施纲要)

At first glance, this document, which was approved by the CCP Politburo in September 2019 and publicly released two months later, may appear to be an updated version of an identical document issued by the CCP in August 1994.²⁰ But a careful comparison of the two documents shows that the recent document, which is 25 percent longer than that released in 1994,

champions a more strident strand of nationalism, explicitly equating patriotism with love of the CCP, calling for the application of Xi Jinping Thought in patriotic education, and demanding loyalty to Xi and his centralized leadership. It also introduces coercive measures to promote nationalism. One provision calls for the use of administrative and legal means to “seriously deal with” (严肃处理) acts such as disrespecting the national anthem, flag, and insignia, harming the honor of the heroes and martyrs, and desecrating the “sites of patriotic education.”²¹

Ideological Control and Indoctrination in Higher Education

In terms of timing, the education sector in general, and higher education in particular, was the earliest target of Xi’s program of ideological indoctrination.²² The party’s efforts to enforce ideological conformity in colleges began shortly after Xi assumed power in late 2012. The Organization Department, Propaganda Department, and the CCP organization in the Ministry of Education issued a joint document in May 2013 specifically targeting young faculty in colleges and universities.²³ The “Several Opinions on Strengthening and Improving Ideological and Political Work among Young Faculty in Institutions of Higher Education” (关于加强和改进高校青年教师思想政治工作的若干意见) contains sixteen provisions covering appointment, evaluation, promotion, and disciplinary actions. Universities are ordered to organize young faculty members to study the CCP’s “foundational theories, policies, guidelines, experience, and requirements” (党的基本理论, 基本路线, 基本纲领, 基本经验, 基本要求). The so-called “construction of faculty virtue” (师德建设) is also stressed. Files on “faculty virtue” are to be established and maintained. Although the document does not define what “faculty virtue” is, based on the context it is clear that ideological conformity and political loyalty to the CCP are crucial components of such “faculty virtue.” In the appointment, promotion, and evaluation of young faculty, “faculty virtue,” not academic accomplishments, is the primary criterion (首要标准). Violation of “faculty virtue” will result in instant dismissal (实行师德“一票否决制”).²⁴

The “Opinions” also contain incentives for young faculty members. Outstanding young faculty members, in particular key researchers, academic leaders, and those who have returned from study abroad, are to be recruited into the party. To increase the attractiveness of performing the party’s political and ideological work among students, young faculty members are encouraged to take on additional responsibilities as (political) instructors (辅导员) and class leaders (班主任). Those who do not perform such work will likely pay a price since the document states that, in principle, a faculty member’s ideological and political work experience among students is a requirement for promotion.²⁵

At the end of 2014, the CCP Central Committee’s General Office (中共中央办公厅) and the State Council issued a joint document, “Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving Propaganda Work in Institutions of Higher Education under the New Situation” (关于进一步加强和改进新形势下高校宣传思想工作的意见).²⁶ In addition to warning against infiltration by hostile forces (敌对势力渗透), the “Opinions” mandate a systematic program of ideological indoctrination in higher education. Specific provisions include funding priorities for curriculum development on ideological and political theory (优先保障思想政治理论课建设). In connection with talent training, research grants, awards, appointments, and promotions. (在人才培养、科研立项、评优表彰、岗位聘用 (职务评聘) 等方面充分重视思想政治理论课教

师). proper credit, if not preference, is awarded to faculty specializing in ideological and political theory To incentivize faculty to engage in online propaganda work, the “Opinions” call for “exploration of a system to recognize outstanding online articles in the counting of scholarly research for the purposes of appointment and promotion” so as to form a team of online propagandists consisting of students and key young faculty members. (探索建立优秀网络文章在科研成果统计、职务职称评聘方面的认定机制....建设一支由学生和青年教师骨干组成的网络宣传员队伍). Ominously, the “Opinions” explicitly mandate the application of strict political criteria in the appointment of faculty members and call for the study of a system of regularly registering faculty members (要严把教师聘用考核政治关, 探索教师定期注册制度). In addition, a system of monitoring and examining the publications of university presses is to be established as is an annual system of approvals and annual inspections of student organizations (建立高校出版质量监督检查体系, 制定大学生社团的成立和年度检查制度).²⁷

To further augment the party’s program of ideological indoctrination targeting college campuses, in October 2015 the CCP Propaganda Department and the CCP organization in the Ministry of Education issued the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Construction of Propaganda and Ideological Work Teams in Colleges and Universities” (中共中央宣传部中共教育部党组关于加强和改进高校宣传思想工作队伍建设的意见).²⁸

The document lists several key measures to develop a greater propaganda capacity on college campuses. Notable measures include implementation of the party-state’s policy of appointing full-time faculty members who specialize in ideological and political theory, full-time political instructors, class leaders, and teachers of psychological health (落实党和国家关于配备思想政治理论课专任教师、专职辅导员和班主任、心理健康教育教师等方面的要求和规定). The Internet and the new media are also identified as critical areas for ideological education. Research and training will be organized for university propaganda officials, Communist Youth League officials, online commentators, and security personnel. (组织开展宣传部门干部、共青团干部、网络评论队伍以及安全保卫工作队伍研修工作). Preferential treatment will be given to the setting up of about ten “national-level” training centers for propaganda and ideological work in institutions of higher learning and training will be conducted through active use of the Internet and the new media. (重点建设 10 个左右国家级高校宣传思想工作队伍培训基地; 积极运用网络新媒体开展培训). To ensure full implementation, the “Opinions” mandate that funding for propaganda and ideological work be included in the universities’ annual budgets. Every school and university department must designate an official to take charge of propaganda work as well as an official to serve as a propaganda specialist (宣传员).²⁹

Assessment and Conclusion

The above analysis of the CCP’s program of ideological indoctrination suggests that Xi’s government places high priority on this effort to achieve its political objectives. The party is not seized by a sudden intellectual urge to revive orthodox Communist ideology, in particular Marxism. In fact, the purely Marxist substance of the program is quite thin, judging by the near-

perfunctory, albeit obligatory, references to the intellectual founder of communism. The fact that there are abundant references to Xi's ideological contributions, the need for political loyalty and control in terms of ideology and education as well as mobilization of Chinese nationalism indicate that the party's objectives are utilitarian. Specifically, this program seeks to disseminate Xi's ideas through the party's propaganda apparatus in carefully orchestrated campaigns, to establish Xi as a great thinker, and to solidify his authority. By subjecting party officials and members to regularized ideological-indoctrination activities and rituals, this program also attempts to preserve and strengthen the party's Leninist tradition and norms, which will help ensure political loyalty to Xi's centralized leadership. The same program of ideological indoctrination on culture and on college campuses is clearly aimed to counter dangerous liberal Western ideas and to cultivate Chinese nationalism as a source of legitimacy for the party.

The scope, thoroughness, and methodical nature of Xi's program of ideological indoctrination suggests that the party's new survival strategy, aside from repression and sustaining economic growth, consists of promotion of Xi's personal authority on the basis of his ideological contributions to Communist orthodoxy, enforcement of Leninist organizational discipline and norms, comprehensive and tight control over media and culture, and cultivation of Chinese nationalism.

There still remains the question of the likely effectiveness of ideological indoctrination in contemporary China. Two features of Xi's program reveal its weaknesses and the high probability of failure. First, implementation of the program requires the use of both coercive measures and "incentives," indicating that the party itself is aware that ideological indoctrination is unlikely to have genuine effects solely on the merit of its ideas. Second, on the whole this program is backward-looking since its substance is derived from the past—a 19th century ideology few in China genuinely believe in, Leninist organizational practices developed in the early part of the 20th century, and the CCP's pre-1949 revolutionary struggle. This is a reflection of the CCP's poverty of ideas and it demonstrates the party's difficulties in formulating a forward-looking ideological vision other than its nationalist aspirations embodied in its vague but catchy "China Dream."

As such, only coercion and material "incentives" can sustain the program. Xi's personal authority and the party members' political loyalty are likely to rely more on forced compliance and surveillance rather than on genuine ideological conversion and commitment. As a result, as in the late Mao period, activities demonstrative of ideological commitment will be increasingly ritualized and will require that participants feign support.

The most intriguing question is whether Xi and his closest advisers are aware of the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of rekindling ideological fervor in one of the world's most materialistic societies. If they assume that subjecting a party of more than 90 million members and a nation of 1.4 billion people to a program reminiscent of the Maoist era can produce true believers in orthodox Communist values, they may be hopelessly too optimistic. If, however, they think that this program is merely an instrument for achieving narrow political objectives, they are not only cynical but they clearly do not expect the program to achieve much beyond ritualistic compliance and faked loyalty.

Whatever the case, the rapid pace of this program, as indicated by the accelerated issuance of CCP rules and directives on ideological indoctrination during the last few years, shows that the CCP leadership is intent on maintaining its existing course regardless of its efficacy.



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¹ See Minxin Pei, “Rewriting the Rules of the Chinese Party-State: Xi’s Progress in Reinvigorating the CCP,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 60 (June 2019), at <https://www.prclleader.org/peiclm60>

² 中央党内法规制定工作五年规划纲要（2013—2017年），at http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2013-11/27/content_2536600.htm

³ Ibid.

⁴ 中共中央印发《中央党内法规制定工作第二个五年规划（2018—2022年）》，at http://www.xinhuanet.com/2018-02/23/c_1122443711.htm. Whereas the rules on propaganda work were released in 2019, the “Rules on Political Work in the PLA” were initially issued in 1964. Jiang Zemin revised the document in 2003 and Hu Jintao revised it again in 2010. Xi’s revision, originally planned for 2013–2017, still had not been formally released by the end of 2019.

⁵ 中共中央关于加强党的政治建设的意见，at <http://dangjian.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0228/c117092-30906618.html>

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- ²² See Carl Minzner’s essay on repression of academic freedom in this issue.
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