

## Intelligentsia in the Crosshairs: Xi Jinping's Ideological Rectification of Higher Education in China

China is in the midst of an ambitious rectification campaign. Since 2014, Xi Jinping has launched an aggressive effort to reassert party ideological controls over art, culture, and higher education that had partially slipped during the more relaxed atmosphere of China's post-1978 reform era. Within Chinese universities, intellectuals are facing intensified pressures for political conformity—through political education, funding pressures, and direct repression. Such efforts resemble the early stages of the campaign to re-establish party dominance over the bar and legal profession in the early 2000s. These pressures are likely to steadily worsen in the near future, with significant negative implications for intellectual life in China.

Within the party, Xi has been elevated ideologically to a level far exceeding that of his predecessors and approaching that once reserved for Mao. Constitutional limits on his tenure as state president have been removed; tacit limits on his role as general secretary of the CCP have been toppled. Within society at large, party power is steadily flowing back into areas from which it had retreated. Religion is one example. As Richard Madsen notes in the September 2019 issue of the *China Leadership Monitor*, party authorities have adopted a much more aggressive policy aimed at “Sinicizing” religion in China—with Islam and Christianity as key targets.<sup>1</sup> After Xi's 2016 speech to the party conference on religious affairs stressing the need for tighter controls, a flurry of actions followed: absorption of the State Administration of Religious Affairs by the party's United Front Work Department, tough new controls over religious expression, heightened efforts to “Sinicize” religious buildings (for instance, by removing Arabic lettering or motifs from Islamic mosques or removing crosses from Christian churches), and escalated repression of individual congregations.

As the CCP has reasserted its power throughout society, the fields of art, culture, and higher education have been targeted. Xi's 2014 speech on culture and the arts (在文艺工作座谈会上的讲话) set the tone.<sup>2</sup> As James Garnaut points out, this marked a crystal-clear call for a rectification of culture—particularly given the direct invocation of Mao Zedong's well-known 1942 Yan'an Forum speech (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话) stressing the need for the arts to serve party policy (a speech that was widely distributed and invoked during the Cultural Revolution).<sup>3</sup> Party authorities subsequently followed up Xi's speech with a slate of implementing directives. For example, the 2015 Opinion of the Party Central Committee on Promoting the Flourishing Development of Socialist Literature and the Arts (中共中央关于繁荣发展社会主义文艺的意见).<sup>4</sup> Key points include:

- Demand for tighter party leadership over the fields of art and culture;
- Establishing a new political line—elevating “traditional Chinese culture” (中华优秀传统文化) alongside Marxism as a guiding principle for culture and the arts;
- Emphasizing that both culture and art should stress patriotism and China's “own” heritage, while avoiding an excessive focus on “foreign” cultural products.

Universities have been specifically targeted. In 2014, the General Offices of the party Central Committee and the State Council issued an opinion on strengthening ideological education in higher education.<sup>5</sup> Just as in other fields, it emphasized the need for 1.) tighter party control within educational institutions, and 2.) heightened emphasis on both socialism and “traditional culture.” Among others, specific measures to be adopted included:

- Strengthening political training sessions for faculty;
- Greater focus on molding the social sciences—journalism, law, economics, political science, sociology, ethnic studies—to be politically correct;
- Standardizing textbooks that are used within disciplines.

### **Tightening Control over the Intelligentsia**

Consistent with the large-scale rectification of the arts, culture, and higher education, Beijing is steadily tightening control over China’s intelligentsia. Such developments have drawn attention in the West. Media reports have tended to focus on specific cases of repression—the sanctioning of a critic of one-party rule at an elite Chinese university or the shutting of a Beijing think-tank espousing liberal democratic values.<sup>6</sup>

However, political tightening is not only directed at liberal voices among the intelligentsia. Party authorities remain deeply wary of any organized dissent—whether on the left or the right, and whether from ordinary citizens or from well-connected insiders.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the sanctions on individual academics are merely the tip of the iceberg. They are part of a much more comprehensive reassertion of control. To fully appreciate how this is taking place, it helps to take a close look at how the reins are being tightened within higher education.

#### *1.) Renewed Emphasis on Ideology*

The 2014 central party decision reflected a deep sense that the relaxation of ideological controls in China’s reform era had created a dangerously lax situation in which party ideology was no longer taken seriously, and that in turn had allowed harmful alternative belief systems to spread—particularly on college campuses. As a result, one of the key messages that party authorities are now attempting to drill into the intelligentsia is that ideology is back, and that it matters.

Within schools, this has meant heightened emphasis on mandatory political education classes. Chinese students note that classroom hours devoted to such classes have increased in recent years. And party leaders are seeking to improve and update political education classes so as to better hold student attention.<sup>8</sup> Top leaders are lavishing praise on teachers of political and ideological classes. At a March 2019 symposium directed specifically to such faculty, Xi personally called upon them to “deliver the country’s mainstream ideology and directly respond to false ideas and thoughts.”<sup>9</sup>

Within society at large, Beijing is also stressing the revival of ideology. Naturally, this message is being delivered to party members. In May 2019, Xi, kicking off the latest nationwide party propaganda campaign, focused on the need for all members to “stay true to our founding mission” (不忘初心, 牢记使命).<sup>10</sup> But the authorities have specifically singled out intellectuals. In July 2018, party organization and propaganda officials launched a “patriotic education” campaign directed at the intelligentsia—including non-party members.<sup>11</sup> It calls on party officials to promote activities in schools, enterprises, and research institute, mandating that all intellectuals learn from the patriotic example set by an earlier generation (such as one of the founders of China’s nuclear program, Qian Xuesen), and their spirit of “When the party tells me to go somewhere, I strap on my backpack and do so.” (党让我们去哪里, 我们背上行囊就去哪里). That campaign has unfolded systematically during the past year, with non-party intellectuals at schools and institutes throughout China called upon to attend meetings underlining the above message and calling on them to express their fealty to the party and state.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.) *Censorship*

Within classrooms, Beijing has moved to revive self-censorship by faculty.

One early marker: the 2014 *Liaoning Daily* incident. In November of that year, the provincial newspaper published an article titled: “Teacher, Please Don’t Talk Like That About China: An Open Letter to Teachers of Philosophy and Social Science.” The article revealed that in the wake of the 2014 party decision (discussed above), reporters visited classrooms at twenty colleges in five cities. The article criticized professors for holding excessively negative attitudes toward China and for vocalizing them in class. It flagged as a root cause:

“a lack of political recognition (政治认同). Some teachers are wont to share their superficial “impressions from overseas study,” praising the Western “separation of powers” and believing that China should take the Western path. Openly, they question the major policy decisions of the CCP’s Central Committee, or even speak directly against them. They one-sidedly exaggerate problems of corruption, social inequality, social management, and other areas.”<sup>13</sup>

This initial salvo marked the opening move in a steady party campaign to tighten controls over speech in China’s colleges. Use of student informants and video cameras in universities has escalated. New 2018 Ministry of Education work directives have strengthened the need for all K-12 teachers to maintain the correct political orientation (坚定政治方向).<sup>14</sup> And the party has systematically tightened its bureaucratic controls over China’s colleges. Some have been highly public displays of power with respect to specific schools, such as the parachuting of a former official from the Ministry of State Security to run Peking University amid a burst of student labor activism in fall 2018 (see below).<sup>15</sup> Less noticed has been the steady revival of the role of the party disciplinary apparatus (with its accompanying black-box norms and emphasis on political discipline) too supervise all state government employees (including professors).<sup>16</sup>

## 3.) *Funding*

State authorities have yet another lever to wield with respect to academics: funding. Take state funding of social science research. Each year, China's National Social Science Foundation (NSSF) promulgates lists of designated research projects (课题) for which Chinese academics are invited to submit applications in order to receive funding. Similar lists are published by provincial authorities (such as Shanghai) and specific ministries (such as the Ministry of Justice).

Monetary awards linked to these projects are not insignificant. For example, the NSSF's 2019 list provides for grant awards ranging from 200–350,000 RMB (US \$30–50,000).<sup>17</sup> But far more important is the extent to which success in applying for a state-funded research project is intimately tied to the metrics used for professional advancement. For a junior academic, applying for (and being awarded) a state-funded research project is often among the required criteria (alongside numbers and quality of academic publications) for promotion within their institutions. For more senior professors, it may be a crucial asset in their efforts to obtain a coveted position at a more prestigious university in Beijing or Shanghai.

Naturally, research awards also play other functions as well. They serve an important signaling function regarding Beijing's attitudes and values toward academia. And they feed into faculty politics. (Any American academic who has had to listen to innumerable discussions regarding how to judge and reward a colleague's publication of an article in the *Harvard Law Review* versus a string of op-eds in the *Washington Post*, receipt of a Ford Foundation grant, or successful creation of a community service organization will immediately appreciate the latent tensions.)

With that in mind, take a look at the NSSF's 2011 list of research projects in the social sciences.<sup>18</sup> It is divided into different fields (such as history, sociology, and applied economics). Each field is followed by a number of designated research topics, for which academics are invited to craft applications for potential funding. (One example from the Chinese history section: "Land Issues in North China during the Qing Dynasty.")

Naturally, the division of fields reflects China's political system. On the long lists of research projects for law (158 designated projects) and management (103), one finds entire sections devoted to Marxism/Socialism (26 projects) and party history/party building (党史/党建) (32). Many individual projects bear the stamp of party priorities (such as religious studies projects devoted to atheism). Astute observers will also detect a genuflection in the direction of China's top leader at the time, Hu Jintao. In four fields, the first project listed invokes Hu's namesake political philosophy—the scientific theory of development (科学发展观). (For example, in law, "Research into Comprehensively Implementing the Scientific Theory of Development in Constructing a Legal System.")

All of this reflects the political realities of academic funding in China's one-party state. But it is also important to see what is *not* explicitly political. Delve deeper into the 2011 list of research topics and one finds large numbers with titles that would not be out of place on a comparable list elsewhere in the world—whether demographic research into the employment prospects for university graduates or studies of poetry among the Chinese diaspora.

Now flip to the parallel list for 2019.<sup>19</sup> Several differences are immediately apparent. First, the number of awards to the most "political" fields have surged. Total project grants for

Socialism/Marxism (72) and party history/party building (74) have doubled or tripled compared with 2011. Grants for the other major fields such as law (101) or management (99) have stagnated or declined. Note the extent to which the number of awards in the field of sports (in which Xi Jinping has taken a specific interest) has *quintupled* (rising to 103).

The imprint of China's top leader on academia is even more apparent if one examines the topics of research projects in each field. This is a second key difference. No longer is it simply a question of detecting occasional references to the top leader's pet political philosophy in a few projects. Xi's name is literally stamped all over research projects in every field. In Marxist studies alone, some 15 awards alone (out of 75) are devoted to some version of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.<sup>20</sup> Out of a total of twenty-three fields of study, there are only eight (including linguistics, library science, and archeology) in which the first-listed project does *not* explicitly bear Xi's name.

Third, there appears to be a "deepening" of political terms within individual fields. Take archeology. Of the nine research topics on the 2011 list, none involve any obviously "political" terms (at least to this author's eye). In contrast, at least two (of 34) archeological projects on the 2019 list do. One explicitly invokes Xi's signature project of "One Belt, One Road." The other (not coincidentally, the first one), references the "New Era" (although without mentioning Xi by name).

There is yet a fourth difference between the two lists. Since 2018, the NSSF has begun a practice of dividing research projects into two types—"specific" topics (具体条目) and "general direction" (方向条目) topics. Relevant instructions give far more leeway to the latter than to the former, specifying that the project topic simply sets out the general scope of the research to be funded—applicants themselves are instructed to design their own specific research questions. Prior to 2018, that more liberal language was used for *all* research proposals. Now large swathes of projects (in 2019, 42 out of 71 in Chinese literature, and 20 out of 95 in philosophy) have been designated in the more restrictive, "specific" topic category. Uniformly, that also happens to correspond to the more clearly ideological ones. Every single research project invoking Xi Jinping's name, for example, has been designated as a "specific" topic.

If one senses that all of this is a political rectification of higher education in China, that is because that is exactly what it is. Chinese authorities themselves say so. The 2019 NSSF instructions note that they are aimed at implementing the 2017 Central Committee opinion on building the social sciences with Chinese characteristics. And that in turn is a direct product of the 2014 opinion (discussed above) on strengthening ideological controls in higher education. In other words, what one is seeing here is the precise transmission belt by which broader ideological and political trends produce a specific alteration to state policies—namely, shifts in academic research funding for all social sciences in China.

None of the above is to suggest that the space for research in China has been completely choked off. There are still many research topics on the 2019 list that are not explicitly political. And as always, many Chinese social science researchers will find ways to cloak useful research in carefully coached language to satisfy the prevailing political dictates of the time.<sup>21</sup> But any academic in China is going to look at that list and get the message. And that is going to have a range

of effects on behavior. Meaningful research will be driven into higher and higher levels of abstraction and nuanced framing, progressively restricting it to narrower and narrower audiences. Research will be driven in even more anodyne directions. Controversial subjects will be avoided like the plague. And a wave of academic opportunists willing to spout the prevailing political line in order to advance their careers (and dethrone their academic rivals) will find increasing opportunities to have their moment in the sun.

#### 4.) *Direct repression*

Just as party authorities have tightened their grip over government officials, so too have they ramped up controls over the lives of Chinese academics. University officials above a certain level have been required to hand over their passports. Required bureaucratic approvals for holding international conferences have multiplied. And the importance of political background checks (政审) is steadily being reasserted in the hiring of new teachers and professors.

For those specific academics who fail to heed (or deliberately ignore) Beijing's signals regarding the need for tighter ideological controls, party authorities have even more direct and targeted methods. These include: the shutdown of social media accounts, visits from public security officials to deliver warnings, denial of the ability to travel overseas, bars on the ability to publish academic works, and the cutting off of salary and teaching responsibilities. After Tsinghua University law professor Xu Zhangrun denounced Xi Jinping's policies in a scathing series of essays, he was suspended in spring 2019 and placed under investigation. Repression is not limited to those who have taken such highly public positions. As Beijing has ramped up its emphasis on both political discipline and the use of student informants, there has been a steady increase during the past two years in reports of schools sanctioning professors as a result of their students reporting on them for politically incorrect commentary in the classroom.<sup>22</sup> Below are just a few other examples, drawn from the 2019 report on academic freedom in China published by the U.S.-based NGO Scholars at Risk:

- Xu Chuanqing (April 2018)—suspended from teaching at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture after students reported comments she made comparing the study habits of Japanese and Chinese students.
- Zhai Juhong (May 2018)—suspended from teaching at South Central University of Economics and Law in Hubei for allegedly commenting on the 2018 elimination of term limits for Xi Jinping's role as state president
- You Shengdong (June 2018)—fired from Xiamen University after his students reported to university officials that he had made “politically inappropriate” comments.<sup>23</sup>

Naturally, Chinese authorities can also resort to even more severe sanctions. In 2018, Marxist students at a range of Chinese universities came under intense repression for their efforts to organize and engage in collective action in support of striking workers in Guangdong province. Authorities launched a wave of detentions, arrests, and disappearances of student leaders. Key leaders, such as Peking University student Yue Xin, have not yet resurfaced. But students at a range of elite Beijing schools subsequently reported being compelled by officials at their schools

to watch videotaped self-confessions made by the disappeared leaders as a tool to dissuade them from further activism.<sup>24</sup>

## Historical Parallels

The signals now being sent to higher education and the intelligentsia at large are not new. They look uncannily similar to those sent during the early stages of Beijing's move to tighten the clamps on the legal field over a decade ago.

Back in the early 2000s, party authorities began to take a close look at the Chinese bar, particularly in the wake of increased activism by a cadre of public interest lawyers (for example, the 2003 Sun Zhigang incident). In 2005–6, the decision was taken to tighten party controls. First came the relevant central party proclamation (in that case, a crucial 2005 speech by Luo Gan, then head of the party political-legal apparatus). Then, the propaganda roll-out. Officials sent signals to both government and society at large—namely through the 2006 Socialist Rule of Law campaign re-emphasizing party supremacy and warning against the infiltration of Western ideas.<sup>25</sup>

Subsequent years saw the new political line tied to a range of professional criteria and sanctions. One example: the national judicial exam that is required for all new lawyers and judges. Implemented in 2002, it was a signature reform of the late 1990s and early 2000s rule-of-law reforms emphasizing the need for a more professional Chinese bar and judiciary. Consistent with those goals, early versions of the exam were relatively apolitical. Applicants were tested almost exclusively on subjects such as civil, commercial, and criminal law. But as scholars Rachel Stern and Björn Ahl have documented, authorities altered the exam's content after 2007. Explicitly political content—such as the content of speeches by party authorities—was added.<sup>26</sup> Even if the total amount of political content (and the exam points tied to it) remained relatively low, it amounted to a very clear and visible sign to all aspiring legal professionals: don't think that your legal careers, and the field of law in general, are somehow independent of party politics and ideology.

Crucially, the changed official signals with respect to law and lawyers occurred far in advance of the widespread use of far much repressive measures—such as the 2015 mass arrest of hundreds of public interest lawyers. In other words, authorities first chilled the environment, sending clear signals to prompt the vast majority of people within the targeted group to recognize (and submit to) the new political line. Only later did officials move to significantly ramp up pressure on the small minority of those who refused to submit. Teng Biao, one of China's most prominent public interest lawyers, is a good example. He experienced a progressive escalation of repression as a result of his activism—inability to obtain grants or promotion within China's University of Political Science and Law, initial suspensions from teaching in 2008–9, refusal to renew his bar license, followed by a series of police abductions, before being fired and driven into exile after 2012.<sup>27</sup> Others have faced similar treatment. Some outspoken professors, such as Xia Yeliang and Qiao Mu, have also been driven overseas after losing their academic positions. Other once-vocal public intellectuals, such as legal academic He Weifang, have remained within China (and at their universities) but at the price of becoming almost completely mute.

Naturally, what differentiates current policies is their scope. No longer are calls for ideological tightening emanating from one part of China's bureaucracy (such as the political-legal apparatus). Nor are they aimed at a single field (such as law) or restricted to activists (such as public interest lawyers and civil society workers). Rather, as the party directives discussed above indicate, the calls are now coming directly from the very top of China's political system. They are being directed at the entire spectrum of art, culture, and the social sciences. And they are targeting all of those who speak and think—the intelligentsia at large.

## Ramifications

The ongoing rectification of culture and academia, and the party's tightening grip over the intelligentsia, are tied to a fundamental political decision: to turn China away from reform-era norms and back in the direction of its pre-1978 Maoist past. This raises a whole host of first-order questions about China's direction in the years to come. With respect to domestic politics, three are particularly worth flagging.

First, how much worse could this become for Chinese academics? For example, at what point does a Chinese professor appear on national television to issue a forced self-confession (akin to those made by public interest lawyers and journalists) for political deviation in their classroom teaching? Will regular censorship and occasional firing of Chinese faculty steadily mutate into disappearances and criminal trials for subversion?

Second, how much deeper will this go? As this author has argued elsewhere, there has been a steady reflux in party power and control throughout both state and society since the early 2000s—first in more *public* facing fields such as law and media. The current tightening—over culture, religion, and education—now reflects a decision to revive party sinews in more *private* fields of human endeavor.

But does it simply stop there? Could China find itself pulled yet farther backwards and experience a revival of yet other Maoist practices? Might China experience a much deeper re-politicization of family and personal life? Alternatively, might the intense political controls currently being applied in Xinjiang steadily migrate toward eastern China—starting with Hong Kong and areas with significant Christian populations?

Third, at what point does all of this begin to shake the foundations of political and social order? Remember what China's last experience of extreme politicization looked like. Artists venerating mangos blessed by Mao. Agricultural specialists studying fraudulent models thrown up by political hacks. Politicians competing to outdo (or eliminate) each other based on slavish expression of loyalty to the top leader.

Do all of those trends begin to come back? Will the wave of re-politicization that has already enveloped art, culture, and the social sciences start to swallow wider and wider swathes of intellectual life in China? Say, the college entrance exam (*gaokao*)? Might the 2020s see textbooks on genetic research and artificial intelligence according to Xi Jinping Thought begin to proliferate within Chinese science classrooms?<sup>28</sup>



## About the Author



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<sup>1</sup> Richard Madsen, “The Sinicization of Chinese Religions under Xi Jinping,” *China Leadership Monitor*, September 1, 2019, at <https://www.prleader.org/sinicization-of-chinese-religions>

<sup>2</sup> 人民日报, 习近平在文艺工作座谈会上的讲话, October 15, 2015 (text of speech delivered on October 15, 2014), at <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2015/1015/c64094-27699249-2.html>

<sup>3</sup> James Garnaut, “Engineers of the Soul,” text of 2017 speech available on the Sinocism website, at <https://sinocism.com/p/engineers-of-the-soul-ideology-in>.

<sup>4</sup> 中共中央关于繁荣发展社会主义文艺的意见, October 3, 2015, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/19/c\\_1116871619.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-10/19/c_1116871619.htm).

<sup>5</sup> 新华网, “中共中央办公厅、国务院办公厅印发《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》,” January 19, 2015, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-01/19/c\\_1114051345.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-01/19/c_1114051345.htm). Note that the opinion was originally issued in 2014; this is merely the summary of the text that was made public in 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Jacobs, “Chinese University Defends Outspoken Teacher’s Firing,” *New York Times*, October 23, 2013, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/26/world/asia/chinese-university-defends-outspoken-teachers-firing.html>; Lily Kuo, “Chinese Liberal Thinktank Forced to Close After Being Declared Illegal,” *The Guardian*, August 28, 2019, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/28/chinese-liberal-thinktank-forced-to-close-after-being-declared-illegal>.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in the early 2000s Jiang Zemin moved to suppress criticism of his policies from leftist party insiders, shuttering journals they had relied on to disseminate their views. Jude Blanchette, *New Red Guards: The Return of Radicalism and the Rebirth of Mao Zedong* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Reuters, “China Says Political Education for Students Now Back On Track,” March 16, 2018, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-parliament-education/china-says-political-education-for-students-now-back-on-track-idUSKCN1GS0DI>.

<sup>9</sup> 新华社, “习近平主持召开学校思想政治理论课教师座谈会” at [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-03/18/content\\_5374831.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-03/18/content_5374831.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Xinhua, “CPC Launches Campaign to Stress Party's Founding Mission among Members,” June 1, 2019, at <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201905/31/WS5cf14ae6a3104842260bef34.html>.

<sup>11</sup> 中共中央组织部中共中央宣传部关于在广大知识分子中深入开展‘弘扬爱国奋斗精神、建功立业新时代’活动的通知, June 29, 2018, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-07/31/c\\_1123204091.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018-07/31/c_1123204091.htm).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., 统战部, “温州搞笑党外知识分子‘弘扬爱国奋斗精神 建功立业新时代’报告会在我校举行,” September 26, 2019, at <http://www.wzu.edu.cn/info/1302/6737.htm>.

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<sup>13</sup> David Bandurski, “College Teachers Must Be More ‘Positive,’” *China Media Project*, November 15, 2014, at <http://chinamediaproject.org/2014/11/15/paper-says-college-teachers-must-respect-china/>.

<sup>14</sup> New 2018 Ministry of Education work guidelines require all teachers—from kindergarten to university—to uphold the “correct political orientation” and “Xi Jinping Thought,” and to avoid any speech harmful to the authority of the party Center (党中央权威), whether in class or elsewhere. This represents a notable addition to (and strengthening of) the much more general language in earlier rules, which merely required teachers to be law-abiding, uphold party leadership, and not engage in speech harmful to the party or the country. Compare 教育部关于印发《新时代高校教师职业行为十项准则》《新时代中小学教师职业行为十项准则》《新时代幼儿园教师职业行为十项准则》的通知, effective November 14, 2018,

[http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s7002/201811/t20181115\\_354921.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s7002/201811/t20181115_354921.html), with 高等学校教师职业道德规范, issued on December 30, 2011, at <https://www.xcc.edu.cn/xyrsc/413061/413062/413358/index.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Gerry Shih, “‘If I Disappear’: Chinese Students Make Farewell Messages amid Crackdowns over Labor Activism,” *Washington Post*, May 26, 2019, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/if-i-disappear-chinese-students-make-farewell-messages-amid-crackdowns-over-labor-activism-/2019/05/25/6fc949c0-727d-11e9-9331-30bc5836f48e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/if-i-disappear-chinese-students-make-farewell-messages-amid-crackdowns-over-labor-activism-/2019/05/25/6fc949c0-727d-11e9-9331-30bc5836f48e_story.html).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., BBC, “中纪委部门称加强监督高校教师不当言论,” January 21, 2016, at [https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2016/01/160121\\_china\\_education\\_political\\_inspecton](https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/china/2016/01/160121_china_education_political_inspecton) and “Epilogue” in Carl Minzner: *End of an Era: How China’s Authoritarian Revival is Undermining its Rise* (Oxford University Press, paperback version 2019)

<sup>17</sup> 全国哲学社会科学工作办公室, “2019 年度国家社会科学基金项目申报公告,” at <http://www.npopss-cn.gov.cn/n1/2018/1225/c219469-30487263.html>. Note that these are multi-year grants, often divided among several researchers, for the purpose of carrying out research, conferences, and publications. In the past, it was relatively easy for a given academic to use these funds as a direct supplement to their salaries (particularly through creative use of receipts). But this has become much more difficult with the tighter controls over funding resulting from the anti-graft campaign launched under Xi.

<sup>18</sup> 全国哲学社会科学规划办公室, “2011 年度国家社会科学基金项目课题指南,” issued December 2010, at <http://www.npopss-cn.gov.cn/GB/219471/219473/14842789.html> (click on 条目).

<sup>19</sup> 全国哲学社会科学工作办公室, “国家社会科学基金项目 2019 年度课题指南,” issued December 2018, at <http://www.npopss-cn.gov.cn/n1/2018/1225/c219469-30487263.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Naturally, this is also directly tied to the proliferation of Institutes for the Study of Xi Jinping Thought at Chinese universities in recent years. These build up institutional allies within colleges throughout the country, who can serve both as advocates for central policies and critics of those who might voice dissent.

<sup>21</sup> Moreover, one can even sense that some in China’s research bureaucracy are balking at the new political line. For example, inside the 2019 NSSF instructions, one finds language suggesting that with regard to the “specific” (and more restrictive) topics, applicants can “make appropriate alterations to the language of the topic” (也可对条目的文字表述做出适当修改).

<sup>22</sup> David Bandurski, “Informants in the Chinese Classroom,” *China Media Project*, September 27, 2018, at <http://chinamediaproject.org/2018/09/27/informants-in-the-chinese-classroom/>.

For an exceptionally comprehensive overview of these trends, see Florence W. Yang, “More Trick than Treat: Xi’s Policy over Establishment Intellectuals,” International Conference on Changes in

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the Chinese Party-State in the Xi Jinping Era (draft paper, Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, Oct. 24–25, 2019, Taipei, R.O.C.). Precisely because Dr. Yang’s work on the subject of Beijing’s escalated repression of intellectuals is so thorough (and definitely should be consulted by anyone with an interest in the subject), the author would like to note that this piece for *China Leadership Monitor* was entirely written (with the exception of minor editorial revisions) before the author had the pleasure of listening to her presentation at the conference above!

<sup>23</sup> Scholars at Risk, “Obstacles to Excellence: Academic Freedom & China’s Quest for World Class Universities,” September 24, 2019, at

[https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Scholars-at-Risk-Obstacles-to-Excellence\\_EN.pdf](https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Scholars-at-Risk-Obstacles-to-Excellence_EN.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Javier Hernández, “China Using Taped Confessions to Intimidate Young Communists, Students Say,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2019, at

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/21/world/asia/china-marxist-students.html>

<sup>25</sup> See Carl Minzner, “The Rise and Fall of Chinese Legal Education,” 36 *Fordham Int’l Law Review* 335, 368–69.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g., Carl Minzner, “The Chinese Bar Exam and ‘The Turn Against Law,’” Chinese Law and Politics Blog, August 29, 2012; Rachel Stern, “Political Reliability and the Chinese Bar Exam,” 43 *J. Law & Society* 506 (2016); Bjorn Ahl, “The Politicization of the Chinese National Judicial Examination 2007–12,” 44 *Modern China* 208 (2018).

<sup>27</sup> Comments by Teng Biao, “What Does the Punishment of a Prominent Scholar Mean for Intellectual Freedom in China?” ChinaFile website,

<http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/what-does-punishment-of-prominent-scholar-mean-intellectual-freedom-china>.

<sup>28</sup> None of the above is particularly difficult to imagine. For example, in the summer of 2019, Zheng Wenfeng, an engineering professor at a Chengdu university, was suspended from teaching for two years after students publicized dismissive comments he had made regarding the “four great inventions” of classical China (papermaking, printing, gunpowder, and the compass), in a private online discussion regarding (and rejecting) proposed final paper topics. Qin Chen, “Chinese Professor Suspended for Dismissing Ancient Inventions,” Inkstone, August 23, 2019, at <https://www.inkstonenews.com/society/college-professor-said-ancient-chinese-failed-innovate-hes-suspended/article/3024110>.