

# Transformation of Ideological Discourses of China on *People's Daily* (1977-2003)

Course Project of MACS 30200

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## **Abstract**

After the death of Mao in 1976, the official discourses of the Chinese state have been broadly observed to become less ideological. However, there is rather limited literatures studying the ideological transformation of China, especially by using quantitative methods. Encountering with the emerging social movements and changing social economic condition, how did the official discourses of China change? In attempt to maintain the social stability and ideological coherence, how did the authoritarian state deploy different strategies of discourse? This essay aims to apply the computational content analysis of the most influential Chinese newspaper, *People's Daily*, to study the ideological transformation of China. To interpret the de-Maoification and de-radicalization of the state ideology, social economic data was linked with the result of content analysis to examine how social movements and economic growth influence the ideology of the Chinese state.

## **Introduction**

In attempt to maintain social control, how do authoritarian states respond to emerging social movements and changing social economic condition? For years, these questions have attracted scholars working in social movement studies as well as political sociology broadly defined. This project mainly focuses on one of the authoritarian response strategies: discourse deployment. More specifically, I intend to examine changes of ideological discourses of Chinese authoritarian government in response to economic growth and emerging social movements. How do such authoritarian discourses become less ideological over time? What discourses does the authoritarian government deploy before and after movement events? By addressing these specific questions in the case of China during 1977 to 2003, I seek to advance current understanding of transformation of ideological discourses of China.

By using computational content analysis, I first identify the ideological words from the official newspaper of the CCP, *People's Daily*, and then categorize the ideological words to analyze the trends of ideological change from 1977 to 2003. Consistent with the previous literatures, my result indicates that the official discourses of the CCP become less radical during 26 years — the terms relating to Maoism and Communism were gradually replaced by weak ideological words, which are characterized in an arbitrary semantic space. To explain the transformation of official discourses, I examine the hypotheses proposed by previous literatures, which argue that economic growth and social movements shape the Chinese official ideology.

## **Literature Review**

The official discourses of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have been widely observed to become less ideological during the post-Mao era. In the CCP's official media, the ideological terms featured in the Mao era, such as class struggle, proletariat, and revolution, gradually

disappeared. Instead, the CCP's discourses put more emphasis on economic prosperity, social stability and "socialist material and spiritual civilizations" (Brown, 2012). In addition, although, the CCP occasionally staged political and ideological campaigns to attack the unorthodox Marxist and liberal intellectuals in the 1980s, after the legitimacy crisis of 1989 Tiananmen Pro-Democratic Movement, the Chinese state held a more laissez-faire attitude toward cultural productions, and deployed a much less ideological official discourses. For example, in 2000, President Jiang Zemin proposed the theory of "Three Represents" which stressed that the legitimacy of the CCP's ruling was based upon the "advanced social productive forces", "the progress of China's advanced culture" and "the fundamental interests of the majority". In 2005, President Hu Jintao's theory of "Harmonious society" signaled a more typical shift in the CCP's governing philosophy from radical ideology to overall societal balance and harmony.

The de-Maoification or de-radicalization of ideology of the CCP, has been explained by scholars from two previous perspectives, majorly focusing on how the state and political elites influence the ideological transformation. Given that the radical Maoist ideology hinders the development of the market economy in China, one of the prevalent accounts views the de-radicalization as an inevitable consequence of the economic reform led by the state (Dirlik and Meisner, 1989; Selden, 1993; Fewsmith, 1994). Therefore, the official discourses became less ideological as the economy grows since the CCP launched the economic reform during the early 1980s. Building upon the political economic accounts for the de-radicalization of the state ideology, some sociologists emphasize the significant impacts of institutional intellectuals and professional counter-elites outside the institutions on the decline of Maoism. Following the tradition of Theda Skocpol's state-centered view, sociologists analyze how the non-institutional intellectuals interact with the political elites to construct the new official ideology, and to justify the economic reform, which deviates from the Maoist dogma on

Communist economy (Misra, 1998; Ding, 2006).

However, both of these two accounts have some difficulties in explaining the changes in ideological discourses of the CCP. The first account proposed by the political economists, simplifies the ideological struggles within the party-state, and that between the party-state with society. It implies the CCP's official discourses changed from the radical Maoism to the less radical socialism in a linear manner, and thus ignores the twists and turns in such transformation. This can be seen in several ideological campaigns during the mid-1980s, in which the Maoist language, such as "bourgeois liberalization", was still used by the CCP to oppose any heretical economic and political activities and plans. Therefore, this account cannot explain why only after 1989, the state-led political and ideological campaigns no longer occur in China. On the other hand, the second account mainly relies on the significant roles of intellectual elites in constructing the political ideologies, but neglects how the ordinary people influence the official discourses of the CCP, especially in the recurrent social movements in the 1980s. More importantly, although this account successfully points out the contradiction between the logic of economic reform and the Marxist-Maoist doctrines within the state's ideology, it simply argues that such contradiction directly leads to the failure of fashioning a new ideological consensus (Misra, 1998), and thus fails to explain why in the alleged "ideological vacuum" (Lin, 1993) the Party-state still succeeds in prolonging the social stability.

In order to overcome the limitations of the two previous perspectives and to further our understanding of the de-radicalization of the state ideology in a much broader social political context, scholar may refer to the works of sociology of social movement. From this view, the change of state ideology could be seen as a strategy of authoritarian government to repress the social movements and claim the legitimacy of the political regime.

To date, one of the few studies that focus on the relationships between official discourse

of authoritarian state and movement trajectory is Zhao (2000)'s illuminating article. Zhao argues that during the Tiananmen Square Protest in 1989 participants used discourses rooted deeply in traditional Confucius culture of China, partly because moral-based state legitimacy in the 1980s made movement participants receptive to culturally and morally charged movement activities. He further presents the connections between state legitimacy and movement trajectory in his following book (2001). Zhao argues that, influenced by societal needs, the legitimacy of Chinese government gradually shifted from ideology-based (*i.e.*, state legitimacy based on puristic Communist ideologies and individual ideological loyalty) to performance-based (*i.e.*, state legitimacy based on improvement of individual living standards and national economic performance) in the 1980s. Accordingly, during recurrent social movements in the 1980s, the authoritarian government deployed different official discourses to reflect different legitimacy bases and cater to new societal needs. Inspired by Zhao's and others' work, our project aims to trace discourse change of Chinese authoritarian government over a relative long period of time (see more details in the next section) and use computational methods to provide more accurate descriptions and dynamics of change.

In this essay, I propose that both economic growth and social movements may contribute to the change of the state ideology. There are two hypotheses I intend to examine: first, as political economists argue, (*Hypothesis I*) *as economy grows, the official discourses of the Chinese state become less ideological* (Dirlik and Meisner, 1989; Selden, 1993; Fewsmith, 1994); secondly, according to the sociology of social movement, and especially Zhao's theory of the legitimacy transformation, (*Hypothesis II*) *in response to recurrent social movements, stronger ideological discourses are deployed by the Chinese state, but later are gradually replaced by weaker ideological discourses, to reflect new societal needs* (Zhao, 2000 and 2001).

## **Data and Methods**

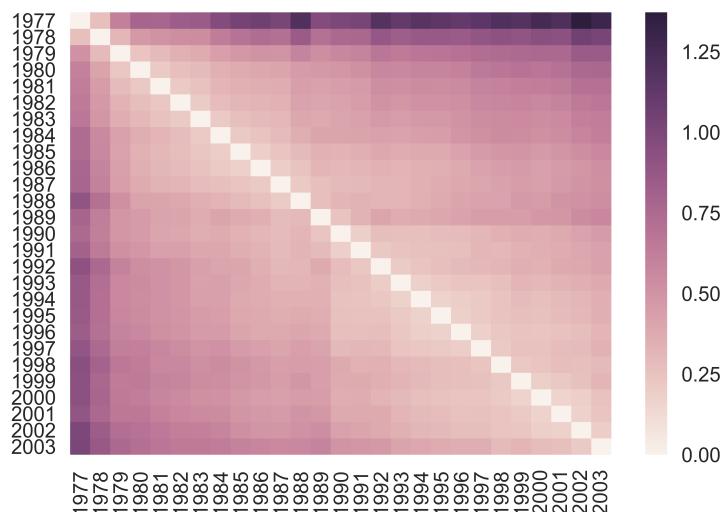
To accurately capture the trends of the official ideology of China, this work constructed the text corpus by using the news reports from *People's Daily*. As previous researchers have pointed out, the *People's Daily*, the mouth-piece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does offer us opportunities to investigate the official discourses of the autorotation state during the late 1980s for two reasons (Frank, 1990; Wu, 1994). First, *People's Daily* is published worldwide with a circulation of 3 to 4 million, and thus is the most influential official newspaper of the Chinese government. Second, the CCP always signals its attitudes toward certain social and political issues through this paper. For example, during the Tiananmen student Pro-Democratic movement, the government published the notorious editorial “Firmly Stand Against the Counter-revolutionary Turmoil” on April 26<sup>th</sup> of 1989 to intimidate the participants of the movement. Also, after the crackdown of the Tiananmen movement, series of news reports and editorials on the *People's Daily* were meticulously framed to construct a counter-traumatic narrative of the massacre, and to attack the student leaders and intellectual elites as “a small handful of people” who intend to overturn the Socialist institutions.

In addition, to focus on the most ideological propaganda of the CCP, I intend to use only the articles on the front pages of People's Daily, since these articles were majorly editorials and the most significant news reports, which are edited by the chief-editors assigned by the Publicity Department of CCP. Moreover, to examine the ideological transformation after the death of Mao at 1976, I chose the time frame of the newspaper starting from 1977.

Since there is no ready-to-use text corpus of *People's Daily* available on-line, I scrape the raw texts from this electronic resource (<http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb>), which includes all the news reports of *People's Daily* during 1949 to 2003. As for the dataset of this project, I collect all reports in the front page of People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese

Communist Party, between January 1, 1977 to December 31, 2003. This dataset includes around one million of article reports over 26 years, which is appropriate for the study of official discourses before and after the key movements. To segmentize and tokenize the Chinese texts, the specific Python package, *Jieba*, was subsequently used, and particular non-substantive words, namely the “stop words”, were removed from each news report following the general procedures widely applied in the literatures (He *et al*, 2014). After tokenization, the text corpuses of the same individual months or years were combined together to constitute a new corpus under that month or year.

In the preliminary examination, I employed the Kullback–Leibler (KL) divergence analysis on yearly corpus to see how the word distribution of each year vary compared to its preceding year. The heat-map of the similarity between each two years shows that the word distribution gradually evolves from 1977 to 2003 (Figure 1.), and year 1989, when the Tiananmen Pro-Democratic Movement occurred, is a turning point for the transformation of word distribution, which means after 1989, the word distribution is much similar to that of 2003 (on the heat-map, the color after 1989 is lighter than the color before 1989). After reducing the dimension of KL-divergence data, the similarity distances of individual year’s corpus are plotted in Figure 2, which also confirms this point.



**Figure 1.** Heat-map for KL-divergence for word distribution from 1977 to 2003 on *People's Daily*.



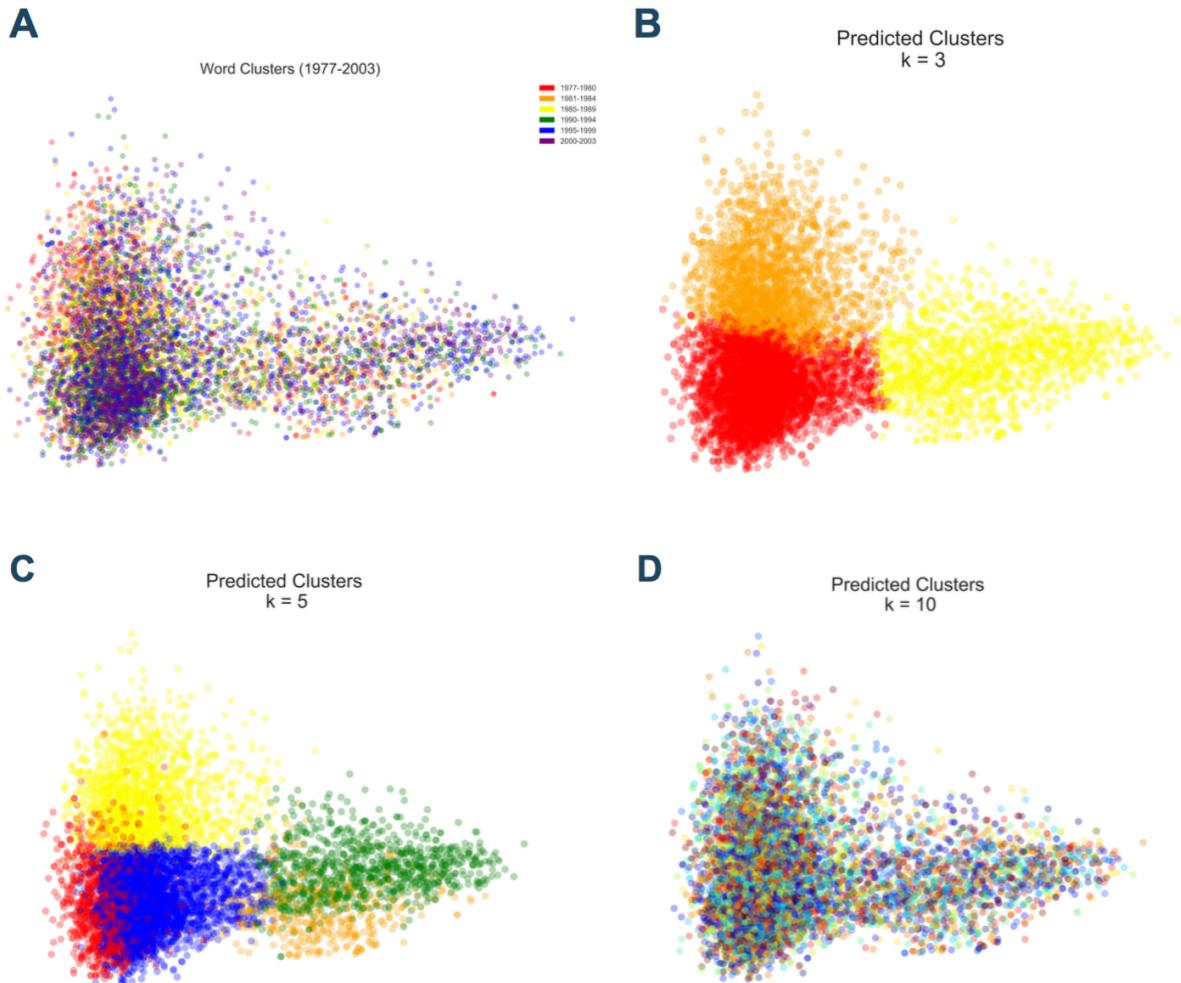
**Figure 2.** Similarity plot for word distribution from 1977 to 2003 on *People's Daily*.

In the following sections, the monthly corpus collection was analyzed by the approach of term frequency-inverse document frequency (Tf-Idf), or each word of the whole corpus was vectorized by word embedding approach to do the further semantic analysis. First, through Tf-Idf and K-means clustering, the ideological words were extracted from the original one million unique words. Second, the ideological words were further clustered and projected into an arbitrary semantic space, and thereby strong ideological words and weak ideological words were classified. Third, each month's strong or weak ideological words were counted and weighted. Finally, each month's frequency of strong ideological words, as the index for each year's ideology, were linked with social economic data, such as social movement, GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and CPI (Consumer Price Index). China's monthly macro-economic data were obtained from the online database curated by Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (<https://www.frbatlanta.org/about/atlantafed.aspx>).

## **Identifying the Ideological Words**

Although *People's Daily* is always viewed as a powerful ideological apparatus for the CCP to deliver its political propaganda, there are still lots of articles contain non-political contents, and also not all the words or phrases are deployed to express ideological claims. Also, there are around one million articles with one million unique words in the corpus, it is necessary to concentrate on merely those ideology-related words and articles to save time and energy. Therefore, the first task in this project is to extract the ideological words from corpus of *People's Daily*. According to previous literatures, there are two possible methods to achieve this goal. One is the hierarchical clustering method to deal with the vectorized terms, and the other is to perform the K-means clustering on the term-document matrix (Mou *et al*, 2015). Two methods were both tried on a randomly selected small corpus (around 5-8% subset of the whole corpus). However, I found the hierarchical clustering always offered an unevenly distribution of words in each cluster: some clusters may contain 80-90% of all the words, but some may only have one to ten words. As for the K-means approach, first, I transformed corpus into a term-document matrix by Tf-Idf approach. Then, to reduce the dimension of data, a Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was implemented to provide a two dimensional subspace for the term-document matrix. Finally, the K-means clustering algorithm was applied to roughly classify the terms.

As Figure 3 has shown, different settings of K-means approach have been tried, and through minimizing the mean squared error (MSE), the optimized clustering number is 5. By this way, around 2000 terms in the red cluster (Figure 3-C) were selected out, most of which are highly related with ideology, containing the words, such as Socialism, Communism, Revolution, Anti-revolution, Work, Spiritual Civilization, Primary Stage (of Socialism), and so on.



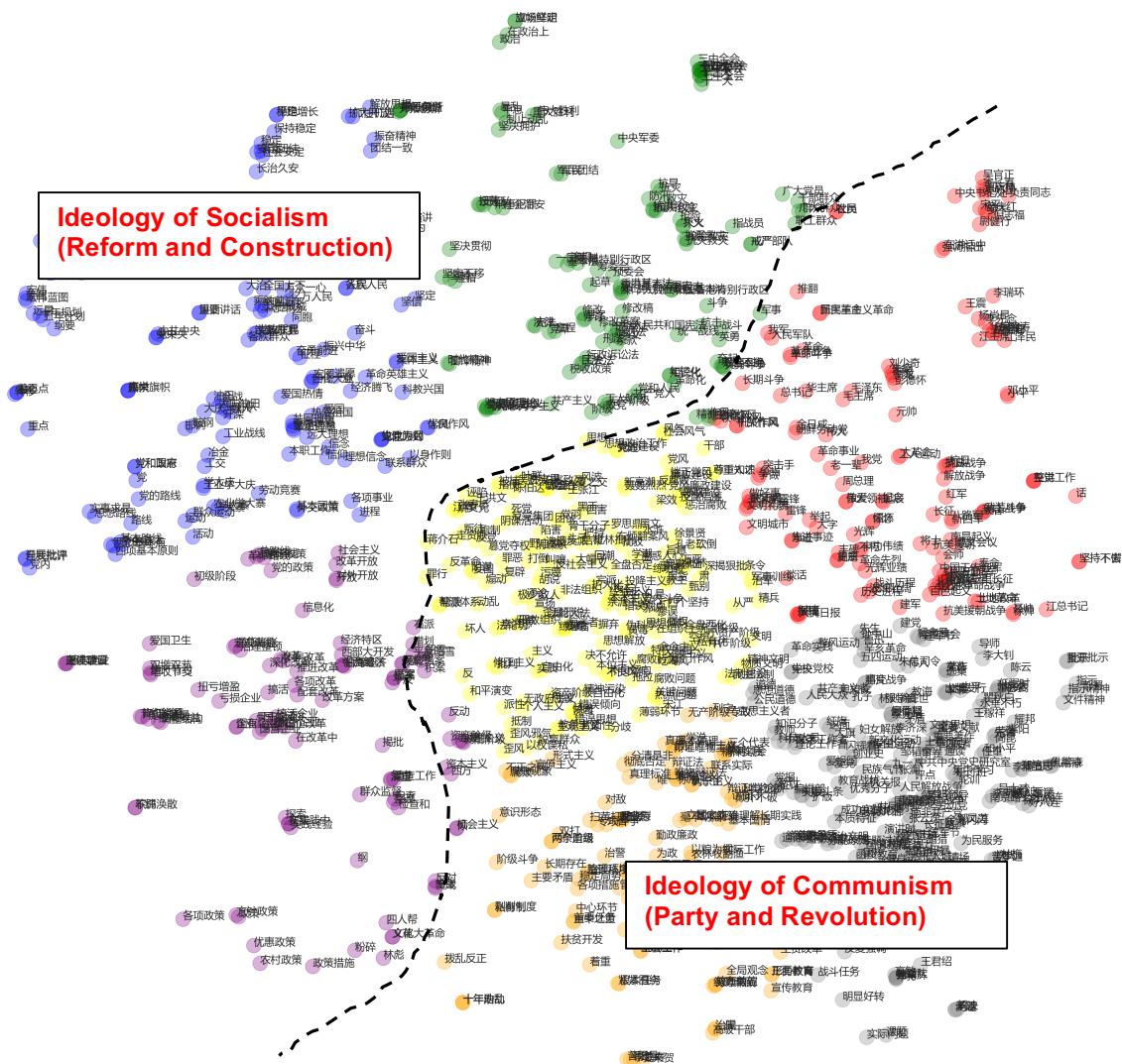
**Figure 3.** K-means clustering on the PCA reduced term-document matrix, with clustering number  $k = 3, 5$  or  $10$ .

However, this clustering method encounters two fundamental problems: first, in the “cluster of ideological words”, there are still lots of terms not related with ideology, such as We, People, Beijing, Speech and so on; second, it is obvious some important ideological words, such as “Three Presents” (the political guide during the period of President Jiang Zemin), “Scientific Outlook on Development” (proposed by President Jintao Hu, which stressed the sustainable development, social welfare) and others were not included in this cluster. To solve these problems, I applied the KL-divergence algorithm to find the words which distinguished the corpus in successive years, and combine the unique words (~400 words) with the “ideological cluster”. Thereby, emerging political slogans and ideological

claims were collected into this new cluster, including “Three Presents”, “Scientific Outlook on Development”, “Three Demands”, “Falun Gong”, “The theory of Deng Xiaoping” and so on. To filter the non-ideological terms, the word embedding model was first trained by the whole monthly corpus. Through the vectorization of terms by word embedding approach, the co-occurrences of terms were statistically characterized (window = 5) and a semantic space of terms was constructed (each word with 400 dimensions). According to the full word embedding model, the cosine similarity of around 2400 words were examined, and thus only those words with higher similarity were kept in the cluster. Finally, there were 1404 words remained in this pool of ideological words.

In order to characterize the words in this ideological pool, I performed the K-means clustering again on the cosine similarity of words (Figure 4, clustering number = 7). According to the clustering result, blue cluster includes words, such as Economic Construction, Maintaining Social Stability, “Four Cardinal Principles”,...; green cluster includes Party and People, Communism, Revolutionize, Working Class, Class Struggle,...; red cluster includes names of the Party’s leaders, Party’s conferences, and historical events of the Party, such as the revolutionary uprising before 1949; grey and yellow cluster includes some political propaganda, such as, Patriotism, Serving the People and so on; orange cluster include strong ideological words used to attack the political enemies, such as Anti-revolutionary, Bourgeois liberalization, Conspiracy, Anti-Party, Anti-Socialism, ... ; the purple cluster includes words related with reform, such as Reform and Opening-up, Socialism, Construction and so on. The clustering result has shown there is certain tendency that the conservative Communist ideology were highly possible to be clustered in to red, grey, orange and yellow clusters, while the relative moderate ideological words, such as Economic Construction, Reform, Modernization, were likely to be clustered into the blue, purple and green clusters. Although the word clustering can provide us some insight to the data we

processed, the clusters themselves do not have any sociological meaning, and thus hard to be further interpreted. Therefore, in the next section, I attempt to project the words into a two-dimensional semantic space to further characterize those words.



**Figure 4.** K-means clustering for the vectorized “ideological terms” in word embedding model. (Due to huge amount of Chinses words, I did not include English translation into this graph)

## **Projecting the Ideological Words into Two-dimensional Semantic Space**

To assign the sociological meaning to the ideological words which I have classified from the previous section, I construct an arbitrary two-dimensional semantic space by using the tool provided by Word2Vec Python package. For the first dimension of two-dimensional semantic space, I consider whether the ideological words are more similar to the Communist ideology or to the Socialist ideology. By examining the cosine similarity of the word “Communism”, I found that the most similar words to it are related with belief and faith, such as the Lofty Ideal, the Unbreakable Faith, while the words strongly associated with “Socialism” are those words or phrases related with economic construction, and the Socialist faith does not appear in the first fifty most similar words to it. This finding may indicate that in the political context of China, Communist ideology impose a clear telos to Chinese people, while the Socialist ideology, that stresses the economic growth, remove that coercive and ultimate aim from the Communist discourses. Therefore, I suggest to name this dimension as a dimension of telos, which refers to whether the ideological words have a clear collective goal for the Communist utopia.

The other dimension of this semantic space, I consider whether the ideological words are associated with the class struggles or with the social stability and cooperation. It is not abnormal to find that in the Socialist ideology, when the economic construction and modernization of the country was emphasized, it became less possible for those words such as Working Class, Class Struggles, and Revolution to appear on People’s Daily. On one hand, the political elites in China are attempting to save China from the ruins left by the Cultural Revolution, and viewed the market economy rather than the class struggles was the only correct solution. On the other hand, encountering with the challenges from the conservatives of the CCP, who are adherents to the Maoist doctrines, and the liberalist intellectuals, who

criticized the economic reform was too slow, the CCP's leader repeatedly argue that the reform of China needs a relatively stable social condition. For example, after 1989 Tiananmen Movement, the CCP published an editorial entitled as "Stability Overrules Everything" on the front page of People's Daily, in order to restore the shattered legitimacy. Therefore, I suggest to construct a dimension of Zero-sum in the semantic space, which denotes whether an ideological word is much closer to the struggle/revolution (zero-sum) or distant from it.

By constructing the two-dimensional semantic space, I plot the ideological words in it with highlighting clusters of words based on K-means approach (Figure 5). The X-axis refers to the dimension of telos: much closer to the Communism, the more telos imposed by the CCP on the ideological words; much closer to the Socialism, the less telos would be associated with the ideological words. The Y-axis refers to the dimension of Zero-sum: much closer to the top, semantically more similar to the words related with Class Struggle and Revolution; much closer to the bottom, semantically more similar to the words, such as, Social Stability and Construction. Therefore, the words falling into the third quadrant (left lower corner) are those ideological words that are less likely to be associated with the strong Communist telos and Class Struggles, but are more likely to be associated with the Socialist ideology and economic reform and construction. On the other hand, the words falling into the first quadrant (right upper corner) are more likely to be the words related with the Communist ideology which stressed the class conflicts and ultimate social political goal. In order to simplify our analysis in the next step, I categorize the words in the third quadrant as weak ideological words, and the words in the first quadrant as strong ideological words (Table 1). As expected, by this categorization, most of words in the blue cluster are weak ideological words, while most of words in the yellow cluster are strong ideological words.

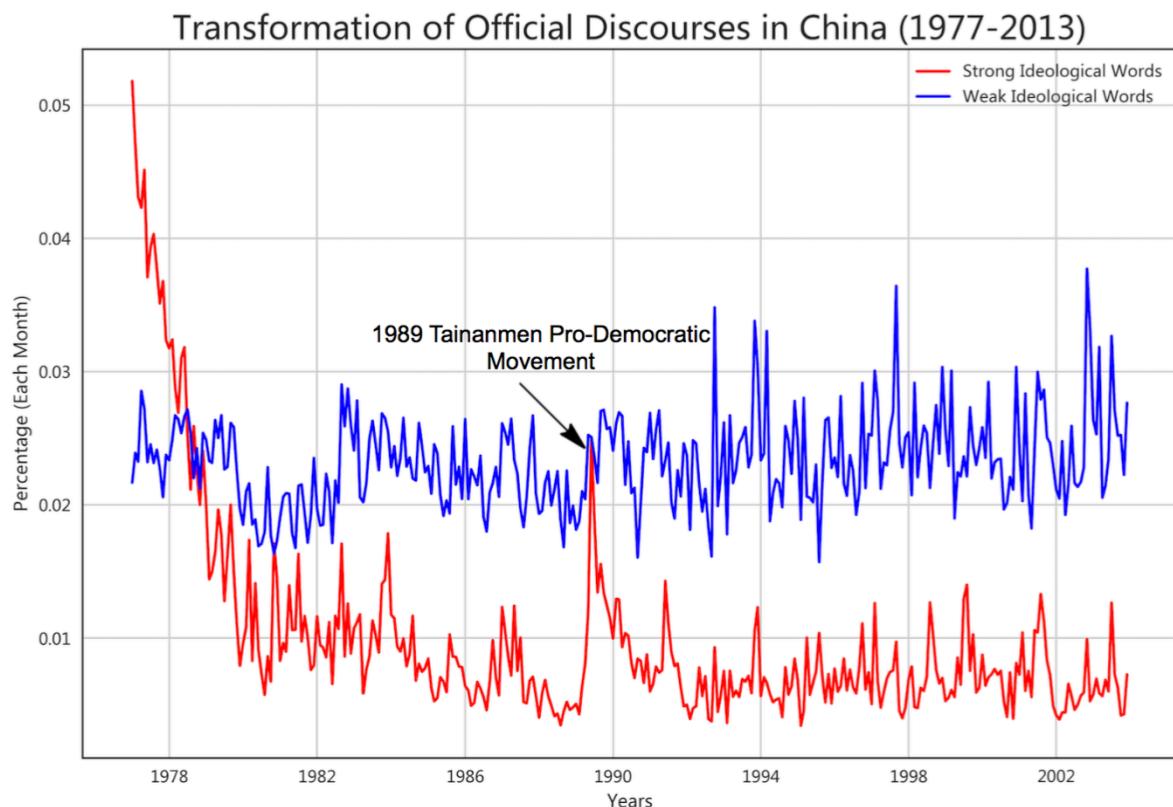


**Figure 5.** Projecting the ideological words to two-dimensional semantic space.

**Table 1:** Exemplary words in the strong and weak ideological categories

Strong (~600 words)	资产阶级自由化(Bourgeois liberalization), 右派(the Rightest), 反革命(Anti-revolutionary), 阴谋(Conspiracy), 四人帮(Gang of Four), 和平演变(Peaceful Evolution), 非法组织(Illegal Organization), 精神污染(Spiritual Pollution), 崇高的共产主义信念(Lofty Communist Faith), 无产阶级专政(Dictatorship of the Proletariat), 阶级斗争(Class Struggles), 毛泽东(Mao Zedong), 新民主主义革命(New Democratic Revolution), ...
Weak (~300 words)	四个现代化(Four Modernizations), 经济改革(Economic Reform), 四项基本原则(Four Cardinal Principles), 一个中心 (One Center), 改革开放(Reform and Opening-up), 中国特色社会主义 (Socialism with Chinese characteristics), 社会主义初级阶段(Primary Stage of Socialism), 三个代表(Three Represents), 爱国主义(Patriotism), ...

In order to examine how the ideology of the CCP on *People's Daily* transformed over time, the total frequency of strong or weak ideology tagged words (weighted by the total word counts) during each month was plotted across time period from 1977 January to 2003 December (Figure 6). According to this plot, it is clear that the frequency of strong ideological words in *People's Daily* drastically decreased from 1977 to 1980, while the weak ideological words steadily increase from 1980 to 2003. During the 1980s, there are several sharp peaks in the frequency of strong ideological words, corresponding to several significant political campaigns launched by the CCP. One of the most remarkable ones was the peak during 1989 to 1990, that denotes the strong ideological attack against the 1989 Tiananmen Pro-Democratic Movement. After 1989, the strong ideology never exceeds the weak ideology in terms of the word frequency.



**Figure 6.** Word frequency plot of strong or weak ideological words across time on *People's daily*.

## **Linking Ideological Transformation with Social Economic Data**

In this section, I attempt to examine the two hypotheses aforementioned by using the monthly frequency of strong ideological words as dependent variable, and GDP, CPI and social movements as independent variables. Macro-economic data of China was obtained from the online available resources provided by Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. In order to take the social movements into consideration, I search for the characteristic words, including Riots, Student Movement, Street Demonstrations in the collected People's Daily news reports and editorials. There were 99 articles containing these target words. After removing the social movements occurring in other countries, 90 articles were identified to be related to the social movements in China. Thus, the corresponding month of each article was recorded, and a binary variable of social movements was coined to represent whether there was social movement occurring or not in a specific month from 1977 to 2003. In addition, since the GDP is much larger than other variables, it was transformed in a logistic form. Moreover, to see whether there is any relationship between the strong and weak ideological discourses in the same month, the frequency of weak ideological words was also used as an independent variable in Model 1.

A simple OLS model was constructed as follows:

$$\text{Strong Ideology} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log(\text{GDP}) + \beta_2 \text{CPI} + \beta_3 \text{Social Movement} + \beta_4 \text{Weak Ideology}$$

The linear regression of this model shows that GDP, CPI, social movements as well as the word frequency of weak ideology are all highly associated with the occurrence of strong ideological words. In addition, the weak ideology has substantial positive relationship with the strong ideology, indicating that the CCP deploys both of the strong and weak ideology to tackle its legitimacy crisis. As expected by the political economist's argument that the official discourses become less ideological as the economy grows, the GDP is negatively associated

with the strong ideology. In addition, there also exists strong and positively association between CPI and strong ideology, suggesting that when the country suffers the deflation, the state is more likely to deploy the strong ideology to maintain its stability. Moreover, when the social movements occur, the state is more likely to deploy the strong ideology to repress them and restore the state's legitimacy. Furthermore, in a reduced model, the internal variable of weak ideology was removed, the influences of the social economic variables are the same. Concerning the R square value, the full model can explain 50% of the ideological transformation. If removing the independent variable of weak ideology, the reduced model can explain around 40% of the change of strong ideological word frequency, suggesting that the social economic data themselves play very significant role in ideological transformation.

**Table 2:** Co-efficient of model 1 and model 2.

	Model 1 (with Weak Ideology)	Model 2 (without Weak Ideology)
Intercept	0.05462***	0.06506***
CPI	0.02728***	0.02889***
log(GDP)	-0.00942***	-0.009496***
Social Movement	0.004112***	N/A
Weak Ideology	0.4658***	0.003957***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.51	0.409

$p^{**}<0.05, p^{***}<0.005$

## **Limitations**

This work is only a preliminary study on the ideological transformation of China during 1977 to 2003, and therefore there are several limitations which are supposed to be overcome in future analysis. First, this study categorizes the ideological words by projecting them into an arbitrary semantic space, which may oversimplify the complicated semantic dimensions of the words. My approach focuses on the semantics of words in the whole corpus during 26 years. However, some ideological words may have fluid meaning during time. For example, the word “Socialism”, in the early 1980s, may be still highly associated with strong ideology. Only after the theory of primary stage of socialism was approved by the CCP’s central committee in 1986, “Socialism” may have been shifted from the strong ideological domain to the weak ideological domain, since it was linked with the market economy in official discourses. Another example is “patriotism”. In my analysis, “patriotism” falls into the category of weak ideology, but in the mid-1980s, this word has certain strong ideological meaning for CCP’s official discourses to strengthen its ideological education. Therefore, in the future study, some ideological words with significant shift in its semantics should be carefully considered. A dynamic model for the meaning of the ideological words should be constructed to solve this problem. Second, when performing the linear regression to explain the ideological transformation in China, my model is rather simple which only considers limited social economic variables. This is due to the availability of Chinese economic data. Unlike the comprehensive macro-economic data of the US publicized on line, most of the Chinese economic and demographic data are difficult to approach, especially for the data before 1990. In the future study, I will refer to the statistical yearbook of China, to collect more data, including the urban population, rural population, and other economic and demographic data, in order to see how the other social dimension may influence the

ideological transformation. Third, although I detect the occurrence of social movements through screening the target words in People's Daily, not all the social movements can be covered in this dataset, because on one hand, some social movements might be implicitly stated in this newspaper or not be mentioned on the front page, on the other hand, the CCP keeps silent on some of the social movements, except when they indeed challenged its authority. Therefore, some other resources, such as foreign media, could be taken into consideration to obtain more accurate data about the social movements.

## Conclusion

In this essay, I study the ideological transformation of China by using the front page of *People's Daily* during 1977 to 2003. Through Tf-Idf and word embedding model, I extract the ideological words and categorize them into two subclasses: strong ideological words and weak ideological words. As expected by the previous literatures, the strong ideology in this newspaper indeed decreased since the economic reform launched by the CCP at the late 1970s and early 1980s. To examine how social economic factors can influence the ideological transformation, I build a simple linear regression model and find that as the economy grows, the strong ideological words were less likely to be deployed by the CCP, and were gradually replaced by the weak ideological themes, such as the economic reform and primary stage of socialism.

In addition, as Zhao argues, the social movement has significant association with the deployment of official discourses. During the 1980s, recurrent social movements challenged the authority of the CCP's regime. More specifically, there are majorly two national-wide social movements among them: one is the 1986 Student Demonstration, and the other is the 1989 Tiananmen Pro-Democratic Movement. The 1986 Student Demonstrations took place in

a number of Chinese cities from December 1986 until early January 1987. The demonstrations started in the city of Hefei in Anhui Province before spreading to other cities such as Shanghai and Nanjing. The movement participants were critical of the Chinese government's lack of political reforms. Street demonstrations started to occur in early December, but quickly dissipated under military repression of the state by early January before achieving any of its stated goals. The Tiananmen Square Protests in 1989 were also student-led demonstrations in Beijing in 1989. The movement arose from societal members' dissatisfaction with government's lack of political reforms as well, but it grew into large-scale protests across the country in April and May 1989, involving millions of people. The protests were forcibly suppressed after the government declared martial law in early June. In what became widely known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, troops with assault rifles and tanks killed at least several hundred demonstrators trying to block the military's advance towards Tiananmen Square. In my analysis, first I found that 1989 was a turning point for the word distribution for the articles in *People's Daily*, and second, in response to the social movements, the CCP tends to deploy much stronger ideological words to criticize the participants of the movements, reflecting its political crisis during the mid- to late-1980s. After 1989, the weak ideological terms are finally dominant in the CCP's official discourses.

Finally, I provide a brief reflection on the relationship between the content of the *People's Daily*, the official communist party newspaper, and the authoritarian government of China in the 1980s. It has been well received that content of this newspaper reflected the decisions and wills of the authoritarian state, so we treat the content of the newspaper as discourses of authoritarian government. However, it should be noted that the decisions and wills of the authoritarian state were not shaped by the government *per se*, but also the result of interactions between the state and the society. As demonstrated by the movement events in the 1980s, the discourses did change over time, due to the recurrent interactions between the

state and the general public within multiple emerging social movements. Therefore, we advocate that further research should shed more light on the media-state relations in authoritarian contexts.

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