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# Jiang Zemin's Discourse on Intellectuals: The Political Use of Formalised Language and the Conundrum of Stability

Maurizio MARINELLI

**Abstract:** This article focuses on the specific forms of power that are embodied in the properties and functions of formalised language, as it was used by Jiang Zemin in crucial political documents on the Party's policy towards intellectuals. This inquiry illuminates various possibilities for the normalisation and inculcation of formalised language in the understudied decade of the 1990s, when the mantra “without stability, nothing can be achieved” became a tautology. The internal constitution of the selected texts is examined with an eye to the dialogic interaction with the production and reception of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping's political discourses on intellectuals (Mao 1942; Deng 1978). The analysis of language practices and discursive formations in a comparative perspective sheds light on the respective socio-political and historical contexts. It also reveals the extreme involution-devolution of formalised language in the Jiang Zemin era, when “preserving stability” was reaffirmed as a crucial concern of the Party leadership with the ultimate aim of preserving its monopoly of power.

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**Keywords:** China, Jiang Zemin, intellectuals, formalised language, stability preservation, speech, claimed reality

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## Introduction

难道因为中国人的素质太低，所以不配享有更美好的生活吗？请你相信，说这话的人，他自己的素质就很低；难道因为中国的独特国情，所以不能给民众以太多自由吗？请你相信，说这话的人，他自己就是国情；难道中国最需要的真的不是自由，也不是人权，而是稳定吗？在这里，我请你相信，说这话的人，他自己就是不稳定的因素。

Chinese people don't deserve a better life because "the quality of the Chinese people" is low. Believe me, people who say this are themselves of low quality. The Chinese people should not be given too much freedom due to China's "unique situation". Believe me, people who say this are themselves perpetuating China's "unique situation". Stability is what China needs the most, not freedom, not human rights. Believe me, people who say this are themselves contributing to instability (Murong 2011).

Stability in China can be seen as a policy or a party-state position that is sustained by institutional arrangements, bureaucratic structures, and governmental practices (Heberer and Schubert 2009). But, foremost, stability is also a political discourse of power that has developed over time in combination with a socio-political ideal appealed to by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CCP's concern for "preserving stability" is profoundly reflected in the nexus between formalised political language and ideology, beginning with Mao Zedong's 1974 emphasis on "stability and unity" (安定团结, *anding tuanjie*) (Mao 1998), although "without giving up the class struggle", until the most recent paraphrase orchestrated by Hu Jintao with his emphasis on the "harmonious society" (和谐社会, *hexie shehui*) (Hu 2005; Holbig 2009).

In the post-Mao era, Deng Xiaoping both reiterated Mao's articulation of his message stressing *anding tuanjie* and amplified it (Deng 1980a: 219, 1980b: 318). Deng first coined the slogan "stability overrides everything else" (稳定压倒一切, *wending yadao yiqie*). Just a few months before the Tiananmen movement and its tragic epilogue, during his conversation with U.S. President George H. W. Bush, on 26 February 1989, Deng argued:

In China the overriding need is for stability. Without a stable environment, we can accomplish nothing and may even lose what we have gained. [...]. China is now in a period when it must concentrate on economic development (Deng 1989).

After 4 June 1989, the need to preserve stability, indeed, became the predominant feature of the CCP's political and economic priorities. Exactly one year after the event, Deng's slogan became a mantra: *Wending yadao yiqie* was selected as the emblematic title of the *Renmin Ribao* editorial on 4 June 1990. A few months after Deng Xiaoping's death, Jiang Zemin in his speech to the 15th CCP National Congress, which was held in Beijing, 12–18 September 1997, echoed Deng's idea and made it ascend to another form of absolute *sine qua non*: “Without stability, nothing can be achieved” (没有稳定, 什么事也干不成, *Meiyou wending, shenmeshi ye ganbucheng*). Jiang has become identified with this slogan, which postulates the axiomatic link between the triad of reform, development and stability:

It is of the utmost importance to correctly handle the relations between reform and development on one hand and stability on the other so as to preserve a stable political and social environment. *Without stability, nothing can be achieved* (Jiang 1997).

As the first Chinese leader unable to claim the revolutionary credentials of his predecessors and the first technocrat to ascend the political pantheon, Jiang's primary responsibility was to safeguard the CCP legacy and institutionalise the reforms promoted by his predecessor, Deng Xiaoping. Therefore, Jiang's absolute statement on preserving stability coincided with the idea of preserving the regime of truth based on the axiom of the Party's monopoly of power. Regime maintenance was for Jiang the *sine qua non* to pursue in order to attain the objectives of national development, as demonstrated in the speech that he pronounced on the 20th anniversary of the launching of the “reform and opening up” (改革开放, *gaige kaifang*) political program. On 18 December 1998, Jiang said:

Stability is the basic premise for reform and development. *Without stability, nothing can be achieved* [...]. In the process of carrying out reform, opening-up, and developing a socialist market economy, contradictions among the people may notably increase, and some may even become increasingly prominent [...] We need to nip those factors that undermine social stability in the bud, no matter where they come from (把一切不稳定的因素消灭在萌芽, *ba yiqie bu wending de yinsu xiaomie zai mengya*) (Jiang 1998).

This article<sup>1</sup> addresses the political discourse on preserving stability (维稳, *weiwēn*), through the analysis of crucial political documents selected from numerous speeches that Jiang Zemin delivered on the Party's policy towards intellectuals in the period 1990–1999. This was the decade when Jiang's discourse on preserving stability was skilfully articulated to demonstrate the line of continuity with Deng Xiaoping, and the respect of his legacy, especially with regard to the role ascribed to intellectuals within Party politics (Deng 1979).

The compound word *weiwēn* is an abbreviation for 维护社会稳定 (*weihu shehui wending*, preserve social stability), but the conundrum of what kind of stability is being preserved lies between the social and the political since the ultimate goal of *weiwēn* is, as poignantly argued by political scientist Yu Jianrong, to preserve the exclusiveness of the CCP's political power. Yu Jianrong has coined the concept of “rigid stability” (刚性稳定, *gangxing wending*) (as opposed to “resilient stability”, 韧性稳定, *renxing wending*) to describe China's state of stability, the premise of which is “an exclusive and closed nature of government power”. Yu Jianrong traces the origin of this power back to the historical legacy of Imperial China:

For rulers, stability is always the ideal objective and state of affairs. In China traditionally, emperors pursued the ideal of a flourishing nation in which the people lived at peace as an ordered and harmonious whole (Yu 2010).

Yu argues that:

The combination of stability as the overriding priority – and as an official evaluation criterion – and authoritarian political power has hardwired a political logic of pressure throughout China's current political system (Yu 2010).

At the same time, the Chinese government aims to infuse “complete social calm” through state violence, a rigid control of ideology and an absolute governmentality of any form of social organisation. It is therefore axiomatic that any emerging seed of opposition (that is petitions, demonstrations, strikes, etc.) has to be “nipped in the bud” and condemned as an act of disorder and chaos. The aim of “preserving stabil-

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ity” is to preserve the political power of the CCP. This became particularly clear during the Jiang Zemin era.

My focus derives from the fact that Jiang's discourse on intellectuals has been understudied, despite the fact that it is extremely important, as this article intends to demonstrate, in understanding the relationship between the political use of formalised language and the conundrum of stability highlighted by Yu Jianrong. From the perspective of political language, the analysis of Jiang Zemin's discourse reveals that Jiang avoided taking sides and instead used rehashed clichés and a slogan-like language in order to preserve the prerogatives of the elite. This political strategy had inexorable consequences on the political language, resulting in what I call a progressive devolution, and led to a critical disconnection between language and reality.

## Chinese Political Language: The Story of a Progressive Devolution

In the Chinese historical tradition the “correctness of language” (正名, *zhèngmíng*) has always been considered a source of moral authority, official legitimacy and political stability (Makeham 1994; Yang 2007). Political language has therefore been vested with an intrinsic instrumental value: its control represents the most suitable and effective way first to codify, and then widely convey, the orthodox state ideology.

During the Maoist period, Chinese political discourse was characterised by what Michael Schoenhals (1992) defines as “formalised language”. The “newspeak” developed and used by Party officials was a restricted code. It consisted of “correct” formulations (提法, *tífǎ*), and aimed to teach the “enlarged masses” (大众, *dàzhòng*) how to speak and, ultimately, how to think. As Ludwig Wittgenstein (1961) poignantly argued, words and sentences have the power to limit “expression of thoughts”, because the boundaries of language indicate the boundaries of one's world.

It will therefore only be *in* language that the limit can be set, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense (Wittgenstein 1961: 5–6).

Robert Jay Lifton has investigated the conformity mechanism generated by a “loaded language”. Lifton argued that:

The language of the totalist environment is characterised by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorised and easily expressed (Lifton 1989: 429).

He interprets totalist language as a system that is: repetitiously centered on all-encompassing jargon, prematurely abstract, highly categorical, relentlessly judging, and to anyone but its most devoted advocate, deadly dull.

In my work, I consider formalised language as a discourse. In this article, I focus on Party policy towards intellectuals and explore how certain patterns and discursive formations (Foucault 1979: 153; Pêcheux 1981a: 15–18, 1981b: 143–148) are used and reproduced in the documents that defined and presented this policy. I argue that there has been a progressive involution-devolution of formalised language from the Maoist period to the post-Mao era. After Mao Zedong's death, under new political leadership, political language has progressively witnessed an inexorable "hollowing out", that reached its climax with Jiang Zemin's political discourse on intellectuals.

The term involution literally indicates the action of enfolding or entangling something, and alludes to a change of shape or degree, usually implying a move from higher to lower. The concept of involution is associated with the ideas of elaborateness, intricacy, or abstraction.

The term devolution literally means "to roll downward" or "to fall". In the context of social and political sciences, devolution implies transfer of authority or duties to a subordinate or substitute, or a process of passing down power from a central entity to local units, through successive stages. In the context of biological science, the term refers to a generally discredited idea that species or attributes may "degenerate" into more "primitive" states. I use both senses of the term "devolution" to investigate the political discourse during the post-Mao era and, more specifically, the politics of language in defining the Party's policy towards intellectuals and "preserving stability". What has emerged during the last 32 years is a progressive struggle for the survival of a certain kind of political language, along with the increasing emergence of subjective forms of expression, while formalised language, especially during the Jiang Zemin's era, has become progressively abstract and disjointed from any kind of "claimed reality". I use the term "claimed reality" in a Lacanian sense. The dominant political, cultural and mainstream media network

structures reality for us. Therefore, “claimed reality” refers to reality as people perceive it. It is a “virtual symbolic order” that Jacques Lacan calls the “big Other” (Lacan 2001).

## Learning from Yan'an

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy towards intellectuals was initially set by Mao Zedong, with his “Speeches at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art” (在延安文艺座谈会上的讲话, *Zai Yan'an wenyi zuotan huishang de jianghua*), delivered on 2 May and 23 May 1942 (Mao 1942; McDougall 1980).

Mao gave the Yan'an speeches in the middle of the “rectification movement”, which engaged the Party for three years from the enlarged meeting of the politburo in September 1941 until 1944. Mao's fundamental goals in Yan'an were to define a common and coherent Party policy program and, consequently, to make the audience of his speeches adhere, both ideologically and stylistically, to orthodoxy. Attaining these goals was essential for the unification of the country under the Party's rule, and simultaneously affirmed Mao's personal power. Yan'an was the supreme moment in the formation of what David Apter and Tony Saich described as “a self-sufficient world of language, signs, and symbols in which only the initiated can belong” (Apter and Saich 1994: 99). The “initiated” had to learn, and learn by heart, Mao's “theory and practice”. This consisted not only of new semantic categories, but even more so of discursive formations that embodied a new way of seeing and a new way of thinking, both about the wider world and about China's self-positioning in that world. Ultimately, Mao's discourse embodied a whole new system of values and beliefs. Mao exploited the potential expressiveness of the Chinese language, together with powerful metaphors and metonymies, to create what Apter and Saich describe as:

a code out of elements of a semiology that enables the narrative to endow gesture, acts, dress, dwelling, and above all, language and literacy with the power of signifiers, while the teleology arranges the signifieds within a revolutionary frame (Apter and Saich 1994: 99).

Yan'an is the benchmark in defining a style that exhibits the way in which grammatical resources built into the Chinese language are used as tools of empowerment. The Yan'an speeches imply a correspondence between the signifiers and the signifieds, or, in Chinese epistemological terms, a connection between the triad of correct name (名, *ming*), correct



speech (言, *yan*), and reality (实, *shi*). Confucius taught that the art of government was based on the precept of giving correct names to things and acting accordingly:

If names (名, *ming*) are not correct (正, *zheng*), then speech is not in accordance with the truth of things. If speech (言, *yan*) is not in accordance with the truth of things, then affairs (of the state) cannot be carried on with success (Legge 1960, Analects 13: 3).

Confucius argued that good government is obtained only when all duties, defined by their names, are performed. This is the reason why, when one of his disciples asked: “What does it mean to govern?” Confucius gave an univocally clear answer: “To govern means to rectify the names” (Legge 1960, Analects 12: 17).

Under Mao, the Confucian theory that connects “correct names” with correct governance was systematically implemented through vertical propaganda. A set of rules and conventions shared by the speaker (Mao) and the listeners defined a logocentric model that represented a claimed reality. These rules were so pervasive that they became encoded in patterns, style, syntagmatic bonds and lexical items typical of formalised language. Speech then followed the expressive devices of regulated discursive formations. It was inculcated from the top-down and carried an intrinsic performative power. The linguistic behaviour and metalinguistic acts of every individual were supposed to accord with what was required of them. The new socialist man’s way of seeing and speaking was supposed to meet a criterion of formal correctness. This was based on a claimed “harmony” between the name and the reality, and expressed by a codified and correct speech that had to be memorised and reproduced (Marinelli 2009).

Thirty-seven years later, on 13 October 1979, in a historical context that had changed completely, Deng Xiaoping delivered a famous speech entitled “Greeting words to the Fourth Congress of Chinese literary and art workers” (Deng 1979: 207–214). This speech was made ten months after the ratification of the program for the “four modernisations” (agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence), which had been launched during the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP (18–22 December 1978). Deng’s speech set the scope of the Party’s “opening up” in the cultural sphere. It demonstrated the Party’s willingness to rehabilitate intellectuals in order to gain their support for its new policies, while at the same time clearly showing that requests for a so-called “fifth modernisation” (democracy) were unacceptable (Wei

1997; Seymour 1980). Nevertheless, Deng's political discourse on the Party's policy towards intellectuals had passed a point of no return. On 24 May 1977, Deng Xiaoping argued:

We must create within the Party an atmosphere of respect for knowledge and respect for talented people (尊重知识, 尊重人才, *zunzhong zhibishi, zunzhong rencai*). The erroneous attitude of not respecting intellectuals must be opposed. All work, be it mental or manual, is labour (Deng 1977: 54).

Deng reiterated this view at the opening ceremony of the National Conference on Science, held in Beijing on 18 March 1978. In this speech, he announced that instead of the policy of “uniting with, educating and remoulding intellectuals”, Chinese intellectuals had to be considered “part of the working class” (Deng 1979: 105).

In my previous work, I have compared and contrasted Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping's political language and the relevant discourses. Concentrating on the stylistic and expressive patterns of their most important speeches, I have shed light on the main features of the form of the “Mao Zedong system of thought” (思想, *sixiang*) and the “Deng Xiaoping theory” (理论, *lilun*). By highlighting symmetry and asymmetry, convergence and divergence, I showed a progressive evolutionary-involutionary transition from the Maoist era to the post-Mao period (Marinelli 2009). There was a widening gap between the name and reality, due to the dissolution of any possible connection between the political speech and the symbolic order representing reality. Analysis of Jiang Zemin's political language during the transition from Deng's leadership to Jiang's ascent to power, especially with regard to the discourse on intellectuals, demonstrates that this gap became wider and, ultimately, unbridgeable. The widening of the gap between name and reality also had an impact on the discourse of “preserving stability”, since it invalidated any other possible contributions that intellectuals could have offered, with the exception of supporting the Party to attain the goal of “stability overrides everything else”.

## Jiang Zemin's Speeches on Intellectuals

It is not easy to identify one single, crucial document that embodies the CCP's policy towards intellectuals in the post-Deng period. I refer in particular to documents issued under Jiang Zemin, the leader who held the three key posts in the Chinese political universe: General Secretary of

the Chinese Communist Party (1989–2002), President of the People’s Republic of China (1993–2003), and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (1989–2004). Analysing these dates, it is clear that Jiang Zemin’s ascent to power began at the time of the Tiananmen crisis. Effectively, the final leadership transition, and the passing of the torch to Hu Jintao, occurred during the Sixteenth National Party Congress (8–15 November 2002). With the incorporation of the “important thought” (重要思想, *zhuyao sixiang*) of Jiang Zemin’s “three represents” (三个代表, *sange daibiao*) into the Party Constitution in November 2002, and into the State Constitution by the National People’s Congress in March 2003, Jiang Zemin secured his place in history (Zhongyang jiwei bangongting and Zhongyang jiwei yanjiushi 2002; Fewsmith 2003). Scholars such as Lam (1999) and Gang and Hu (2003) have analysed Jiang Zemin’s political work and thought, but less attention has been paid to Jiang’s language as a discourse. The analysis offered in the following pages concentrates on Jiang’s political discourse on intellectuals. The current investigation is based on a group of documents collected under the name “Intellectuals and the spiritual civilisation” (知识分子与精神文明, *Zhishifenzǐ yu jingsheng wenming*). The documents have been grouped under two categories: “The great historical mission of the intellectuals” (知识分子伟大的历史使命, *Zhishifenzǐ weida de lishi shiming*) and “Respect knowledge, respect talented people” (尊重知识, 尊重人才, *Zunzhong zhishi, zunzhong rencai*) (Jiang 1999a: 313–332).

## The Mission of the Intellectuals

Building on Deng Xiaoping’s emphasis on the crucial role of intellectuals and the importance of their contribution to the cause of the “four modernisations”, Jiang Zemin spoke of “the great historical mission of the intellectuals”. As a faithful successor to Deng, Jiang argued that this mission harks back to the beginning of the “new China” on 1 October 1949. But when he analysed the “key factors” of their contribution, he referred only to Deng Xiaoping and obliterated Mao Zedong:

After the foundation of the new China, intellectuals became a part of the working class. They have been dynamic on every battlefield, and have made an enormous contribution to the creation of the socialist material and spiritual civilisations. The construction of modernisation is essentially based on economic competition between the countries and nationalities of the world; and modern economic competition es-

essentially consists of both competition in science and technology and the competition of intellectuals. As comrade Deng Xiaoping has stated, in order to carry out modernisation, the key factors (关键, *guanjian*) are science and technology, and the foundation (基础, *jichu*) is education. It does not matter whether we look at the development of science and technology, or the development of education – neither of them can be realised without great efforts by intellectuals. We must rely wholeheartedly on the working class, including intellectuals, who are a part of the working class. If intellectuals do not participate and we do not bring their activism into full play, it will be impossible to accomplish the construction of socialist modernisation (Jiang 1990a).

Mao Zedong's name has disappeared. This absence is conspicuous in all the speeches by Jiang Zemin on the Party's policy towards intellectuals. The only reference is indirect, not to Mao as a political leader, but to "Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought". In the speech "Patriotism and the Mission of Our Nation's Intellectuals" (爱国主义和我国知识分子的使命, *Aiguozhuyi he woguo zhibifenzhi de shiming*), given on 3 May 1990 at the Public Meeting of the Youth of the Capital for the commemoration of the May Fourth Movement, Jiang reiterated the continuity with Deng Xiaoping, expressing his commitment to raising the status of intellectuals. Jiang reinforced the concept that intellectuals are an integral part of the working class, but he also emphasised that:

Among the ranks of the working class, intellectuals represent the part which predominantly engages in mental activities, and they play an irreplaceable function in socialist modernisation, bearing a heavy social responsibility [...] if intellectuals do not participate in (socialist) construction and the victory of the reform policy, both become truly impossible (Jiang 1990b).

Jiang continued:

During the experience of the construction of modernisation and the reform and open-door program, we have realised very profoundly that, if we make a comparison with any previous historical period, the Chinese people have never done anything like today, in the sense of making such broad and urgent demands of their intellectuals (Jiang 1990b).

In the final part of his speech, Jiang emphasised that intellectuals were expected to "diligently study" Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought, to strengthen their "sense of national pride" and, ultimately, "to adhere to the fundamental line of the Party" (Jiang 1990b).

## “Revitalise China through Science and Education”

A fundamental asymmetry between Jiang Zemin’s discourse on intellectuals, and the discourse that Mao initiated with the Yan’an speeches, is Jiang’s continuous and consistent use of the term *zhishifenzhi* (知识分子, intellectuals), instead of the previously more common *wenyi gongzuozhe* (文艺工作者, artistic and literary workers), which was used to differentiate them from those intellectuals engaged in the science and technology field. In Jiang Zemin’s speeches, the term *zhishifenzhi* seems to have absorbed this dichotomy, but without necessarily eliminating it or bridging the gap.

During the Third National Conference on Science and Technology, held in Beijing from 25–30 May 1995, Jiang Zemin coined the slogan “Revitalise China through science and education” (科教兴国, *kejiao xingguo*). During the first conference of this kind, held in 1956, Mao Zedong had put forward the slogan: “Strive to develop science” (向科学进军, *xiang kexue jinjun*). At the second conference, held in March 1978, Deng Xiaoping had declared that “the intellectuals are part of the working class”, while stressing the idea that “science and technology are productive forces” (科学技术是生产力, *kexue jishu shi shengchanli*). At the third conference, when Jiang Zemin coined the slogan “Revitalise China through science and education”, he positioned himself in a line of continuity with Deng Xiaoping, in particular. He said:

The scientists and the technicians are important pioneers of new productive forces, and important propagators of scientific knowledge. They are the backbone of the construction of socialist modernisation. To implement the strategy of “Revitalising China through science and education”, talented people are the key factor (Jiang 1990b).

In using the term *zhishifenzhi* at a time in which “Revitalise China through science and education” was one of the key slogans, Jiang referred primarily, and often exclusively, to intellectuals engaged in the science and technology field. These intellectuals were required to demonstrate their patriotism towards and support of the Party’s policy.

Jiang Zemin’s slogan *kejiao xingguo* implies an inversion between the subject and the object, which emphasises the objective that the country aims to achieve. In other words, science and education must be first revitalised by the country. This indicates the commitment by the government to invest financially in scientific research and improve educational institutions (Jiang 1995).

In a speech given on 24 April 1992, Jiang Zemin emphasised the importance of “revitalising science and technology” (振兴科技, *zhèngxīng kējì*). He also uses the expression *kejì yìshì* (科技意识), which could be translated as “ideology of science”. This speech appears generic and ambiguous. However, Jiang’s speeches demonstrate that the improvement of *kejì* (science and technology) is strictly connected to the ostensibly interrelated goals of GDP growth and economic development (Jiang 1990b). Thus science and technology are indirectly presented as one of the fundamental preconditions for social stability, and, by extension, as a contribution to the authority of the CCP and its monopoly on power.

From a linguistic point of view, the agency of the party-state is indicated both by the parallel structure and by continuous use of the all-encompassing plural personal pronoun “we”:

Speeding up the training of excellent scientific and technological talents is an extremely urgent strategic task. *We* must bring into full play the important role of existing scientific and technical personnel. *We* must create a social environment which allows every individual to fully display his talents and use every talent to its utmost; unceasingly improving their working and living conditions; and fully stimulating their enthusiasm and creativity. *We* must conscientiously implement the “Outline for the Reform and Development of Chinese Education”; vigorously develop education in accordance with the tendency of scientific and technological development and the needs of our country’s construction of modernisation; deepen the reform of the system of organisation for education; train and bring up millions of young talents in the scientific and technological sector; and build up great troops of scientists who will cut across the twentieth century [...] *We* must pay great attention to the training of young academic trailblazers and technical forerunners who will cross the twentieth century. *We* must do our best to create the environment and the conditions to let outstanding young scientific and technological talents, especially the most outstanding, come into the open. *We* should appoint them to key positions where they will assume important responsibilities. *We* should make them grow healthy in practice [...].

In the future, *we* should continue to recommend the worthy and the able, beginning with the overall situation of the scientific and technological cause, which is flourishing and prosperous. *We* should push forward in the frontline the outstanding young scientific and technological talents, and support their groundbreaking work. *We* should develop the spirit of discarding old ideas while bringing forth new ones.

The use of the plural personal pronoun we (我们, *women*) responds to the tactic of “inclusiveness”: in using we, the Party documents seem to take it for granted that the intellectuals are univocally in accordance with the Party line and embody the Party spirit.

There are two more traditional rhetorical tropes in this speech: the emphasis on youth, which harks back to the New Culture and May Fourth Movements, and the idea of state patronage of intellectual activities that contribute to the success of the nation.

Jiang Zemin’s emphasis on a “great historical mission” for intellectuals (Jiang 1990a) echoes the classical idea of the historical and political mission of the scholar-officials. However, Jiang’s concept reveals a loss of the traditional ethical connotation and privileges the patriotic contribution of the intellectuals to the renaissance of the nation.

According to the Confucian tradition, the scholar-official had the duty to be concerned with public affairs: to paraphrase Fan Zhongyan (989–1052), a prominent statesman and literary figure of the Northern Song dynasty, the scholar-official should “be the first person to show concern and the last one to enjoy comforts” (Fan 2002).

This famous statement is also mentioned by Jiang Zemin (1990b). This is the epitome of the symbolic and emotional capital of the traditional Chinese scholar, whose role is embodied in the syllogism *dushu zuoguan* (读书做官, study to become an official), and indicates a symbiotic relation between intellectual status and public function (Davies 2009; Marinelli 2012). This dyad is defined within a logocentric model of representing a claimed reality, which requires literati to perform their duty in accordance with the Confucian theory of “correct names” (正名, *zhengming*) (Legge 1960, Analects 13: 3: 1–5). This is both the fundamental tenet of successful governance and the fundamental source of political legitimacy.

Zhang Xudong has observed that after the Tiananmen crisis, intellectuals were replaced with new bureaucratic and technocratic elites, who stood by the government despite its loss of moral authority (Zhang 2001). Jiang Zemin played a key role in this. He saw the scientific elite as a stabilising force that could help to pre-empt a legitimacy crisis in the wake of the Tiananmen massacre. This group of scientific intellectuals was the target audience of Jiang Zemin’s speeches.

## The Style of Political Language

Jiang Zemin's linguistic register is schematic and formulaic. It is a slogan-like, highly generic and vague style. This is very different from Mao's argumentative style, which was characterised by long paragraphs full of concrete examples, conveying definition and stability (Marinelli 2009). Jiang Zemin's register is much closer to Deng's, which it seems to mimic. It is a collection of scattered thoughts that reiterate Deng's rehabilitation of the intellectuals and their "fine traditions" (优良的传统, *youliang de chuantong*): the tradition of "loving their country", the tradition of "uniting with the people", and the tradition of "struggling hard amid difficulties" (Jiang 1990a).

In the Chinese hierarchy of "correctness" (正, *zheng*) of political orthodoxy, after Mao Zedong's *sixiang* (思想, usually translated as "thought" but more appropriately as "ideology"), what followed was Deng Xiaoping's "theory" (理论, *lilun*), and then Jiang Zemin's *guannian* (观念), which literally means "ideas, concepts, viewpoints" but could also be translated as "thoughts". *Guannian* is a compound word combining "observation" (观, *guan*) and "reading aloud/ study" (念, *nian*). It need not imply an overall systematic vision of Mao-style "theory and practice". It (*guannian*) refers rather to a sequence of scattered thoughts, not necessarily organised into an ideological theory. Jiang Zemin's political discourse appears to "mix and match" sentences and ideas previously elaborated by Deng and, to a lesser extent, by Mao. Jiang assembled these "viewpoints" like a puzzle of words. His speeches reveal the use of language as a discourse much more than a tool of communication, and consist of what appears to be a repetition of the same words and expressions over and over. There is no more correspondence between name and reality, although some of his speeches still reveal a strenuous attempt to maintain the standardised enunciation format. An example of this technique is the speech that Jiang Zemin gave on 13 May 1999, in which the key words were: "upholding stability above all" (坚持稳定压倒一切, *jianchi wending yadao yiqie*) and "the brutal aggression of the NATO forces led by the United States" (Jiang 1999b: 1–4).

In numerous speeches, Jiang Zemin associated intellectuals with "socialist spiritual civilisation" (社会主义精神文明, *shehuizhuyi jingsheng wenming*). This concept was introduced by Deng Xiaoping in December 1980, and has been on the CCP agenda since 1982. Broadly speaking, it encompasses both building a material civilisation (物质文明, *wuzhi*



*wenming*) and fostering people's political consciousness, revolutionary ideals, morality and discipline. These were supposed to reflect the demands of the "new period" (新时期, *xin shiqi*), but have communist ideology at their core. Within the framework of "Deng Xiaoping theory", the discourse of "spiritual civilisation" is an attempt to formulate a master narrative for a "new" social structure, in line with a "new" vision of the future that aimed to enlist mass support to combat the spread of undirected popular culture. Underlying the search for a modernised culture "with Chinese characteristics" (有中国特色的, *you Zhongguo tese de*), the post-Deng era raised broad questions such as: What is the proper course for modern China? And through what combination of Chinese identity and reform can we (the Party) best preserve our self-respect? The new culture was meant to be based on economic modernisation, and reflect it, but also to combat (in the eyes of the leadership) the sleaziness and the negative social aspects of commercialism and consumerism. These issues became the object of intellectual critical inquiry and were widely debated in the 1990s (Davies 2009; Wang 2003).

Various attempts to envision a "spiritual socialist civilisation" failed to coalesce into visual propaganda that could provide clear instructions for popular performance, a form to which the Chinese people had grown accustomed. Analysis of the visual rhetoric of the political posters and slogans that appeared during the new "spiritual civilisation" campaign from 1996 to 1997 demonstrates that visual imagery had fallen into disuse and only words survived, words which were reduced to signifiers that were totally disembodied from the relevant signifieds. The post-Mao era in general, and the 1990s in particular, saw the emergence of an increasing gap between mimicry and reality. As opposed to the simple, single and reasonably predictable propaganda messages of previous decades, visual instructions for behaviour became increasingly multi-layered and confusing, containing conflicting attitudinal stimuli and instructions for "proper" behaviour. For example, "allowing a proportion of people to get rich first" (让一部分人先富起来, *rang yibufen ren xianfu qilai*), or, in its abbreviated version, the "getting rich" mentality, was first hailed as a glorious undertaking with beneficial and educational effects, but has subsequently been deplored as "worship of money".

The predominance of disembodied words in the political campaign for the promotion of a "socialist spiritual civilisation" reveals the disintegration of the claimed relation between the name and the reality via

speech, a correlation which was a major characteristic of political discourse in Mao's China.

Chinese formalised language in the 1990s, of which Jiang Zemin's speeches are an outstanding example, appears more and more detached from the realities of China. The crucial issue is to evaluate:

- whether and to what extent the loss of a shared system of reference associated with a claimed reality can be replaced by a mimetic representation of the political realm, and
- whether the use of language as a discourse is an effective strategy for "preserving stability" and, ultimately, preserving the Party's authority.

## The Key Elements of Jiang's Speeches

A major characteristic of Jiang Zemin's discourse is the absolute lack of any possible visual correlations or any direct examples from his own experience, in sharp contrast to Mao's speeches. There are neither associated images nor indications of "good models" (好榜样, *haobangyang*) to be emulated. Jiang's references to the necessity of respecting and protecting intellectuals remain vague. Even when he said,

The members of the older generation of scientific and technical personnel have especially become models for the development of a spirit of sacrifice, examples of dedicating themselves to the benefit of the people and the interests of the country (Jiang 1991),

he did not provide any examples. This development demonstrates the objective side of the dematerialisation of language, revealing an increasing dichotomy between the name and the reality. In official documents there is a tendency to avoid comprehensive positive behavioural instructions, even though at a popular level the technique of role-modelling continues. An example is the "Top Gun" style fighter pilot, Wang Wei, who was eulogised post-mortem as a national hero after he was killed in a collision with a US navy surveillance aircraft in 2001 (Brookes 2002; Lindsey et al. 2001). Analysis should probably take into consideration the increasingly heterogeneous character of Chinese society in the 1990s, a society in which different social, generational and occupational groups emerged and the so-called "masses" could no longer be treated as an undifferentiated entity.

Another important feature of Jiang Zemin's speeches is that many words belong to a predominantly economic or technological vocabulary, even though some military words survive (mainly 队伍, *duiwu*, meaning "troops", or 思想武器, *sixiang wuqi*, meaning "ideological weapons") (Jiang 1991). There is an overarching emphasis on "science and technology" (科学技术, *kexue jishu*), which demonstrates that the main interest of the leadership is to secure the support of intellectuals in the science and technology field for the economic reform program. Jiang Zemin intended to link *keji* (科技, science and technology, a common abbreviation of 科学技术, *kexue jishu*) with *jiaoyu* (教育, education). He clearly stated that "the key factors are science and technology, the foundation is education" (关键是科技, 基础在教育, *guanjian shi keji, jichu zai jiaoyu*) (Jiang 1990a). The link between these two "concepts" and the expected role of intellectuals is indicated in the formulation: *liangge dou libukai zhibifenzhi de nuli* (两个都离不开知识分子的努力, the two [science and education] cannot exist without the efforts of intellectuals). This statement implies that intellectuals are expected to "do their utmost" in "working hard" and "making great efforts" to enforce these guidelines under the leadership of the CCP.

## The Discourse on Intellectuals under Jiang Zemin

Jiang Zemin often used the character *zhi* fourth tone (智, *intelligence*) from *zhibui* (智慧, *wisdom*). However, when he referred to intellectuals, he used the traditional near-homophone *zhi* first tone (知), from the compound word *zhisshi* (知识, *knowledge*). This is noteworthy because some intellectuals and scholars specialising in "the question of the intellectuals" (知识分子的问题, *zhibifenzhi de wenti*), have emphasised the importance of a new conception of *zhi* (智, stemming from 智慧, *zhibui*) and coined a new term *zhibifenzhi* (智识分子) that replaces the "old" *zhi* (知) with the "new" one (智, *zhi*) (Xie 1999: 2). This debate relates to an old discussion, which harks back to the May Fourth Movement and the appearance of the "new intellectual". Jiang Zemin's use of *zhi* (智) as in "wisdom" need not demonstrate a willingness to take a position in this debate. Nevertheless, I believe that the appearance of this character in his speeches may indicate the necessity of continuing the discussion about the category of "intellectual" and the paradigms of intellectual inquiry in China today.

Jiang Zemin's speeches reveal an unresolved legacy of the past. This is another fundamental premise, strictly connected to the Party's authority and political legitimacy. Jiang clearly wanted to show that his legacy derived from Deng's epochal change in the CCP's policy towards intellectuals, with his formulation, at the second National Conference on Science, that "intellectuals are part of the working class" (知识分子是工人阶级的一部分, *zhishijiefenzi shi gongren jieji de yibufen*). The attempt to construct a further line of continuity lies in Jiang's efforts to assert that this is not an innovation of the Deng era, but has been true since 1949 (Deng 1979: 105; Jiang 1990a). Jiang wanted to demonstrate, in this way, the existence of a shared understanding regarding the status of intellectuals between Mao and Deng, which is hard to prove. Jiang tried to present this as one of China's "fine traditions", a vague and elusive term. Among Deng's speeches concerning intellectuals, Jiang referred many times (Jiang 1995) to the speech epitomised by the slogan *zunzhong zhishi, zunzhong rencai* (尊重知识, 尊重人才, Respect knowledge, respect talented people). As explained before, the speech was delivered by Deng Xiaoping on 24 May 1977, when Deng officially rehabilitated mental labour (Deng 1979: 54).

However, in the speech delivered on 26 May 1995 Jiang seemed to contradict himself by discrediting *zhishi* (知识, knowledge) in favour of *rencai* (人才, talented people), while Deng in his slogan puts "knowledge" before "talented people". In that speech, Jiang stated, "To implement the strategy of revitalising China through science and education, talented people are the key factor" (实施科教兴国战略, 关键是人才, *shishi kejiào xingguo zhanlüe, guanjian shi rencai*). This expression, when analysed in the context of the whole speech (Jiang 1995), seems to demonstrate that Jiang's real intention was to guarantee the Party the support of "personnel trained in science and technology" (科技人才, *keji rencai*), who could contribute, with their inventions and scientific work, to the progress of the country and, as a corollary, to the legitimacy of the CCP. Michel De Certeau proposes a significant distinction between authority and power: "Whatever is credible has 'authority'; whatever is imposed has power" (De Certeau 1997: 87). Jiang Zemin, in his speeches, did not seem to be particularly interested in the work of writers and artists, and there is no reference to any kind of creativity that is not linked to the practical possibility of using the outcome as a tool for legitimisation of Party policy. Jiang's "thoughts" reveal an extremely functional approach: the scientists' support is the sine qua non for strengthening the credibility of the

official representation of the achievements of the economic reform program, and therefore helps to preserve the Party's monopoly of power.

Jiang's speech dated 4 April 1990 clearly reveals his attempt to draw a line of continuity between his ideas and an ill-defined "tradition". Jiang's expression "(Chinese) intellectuals have created their own fine traditions" is a typical example of the double-edged sword of "truth" typical of Chinese political language, and more broadly of political language in general. Perry Link (1999), in his analysis of Chinese language, defines two categories of "truth", the first one is *zhen de zhenli* (真的真理, the real truth) and the other one is *jia de zhenli* (假的真理, the false truth). Link uses these two terms in a thought-provoking article in which he analyses the question of human rights (人权, *renquan*) in China. He argues that any critique of Chinese records on human rights is presented in formalised language as a way to 伤害中国人民的感情 (*shanghai Zhongguo renmin de ganqing*) which literally means "to offend the sentiments of the Chinese people", but according to the criterion of the "real truth", this expression means (for the Chinese government): "we reject any attempt at interference". Using Link's categories, one could argue that "the real truth" of Jiang's expression: "their own (自己, *ziji*) fine traditions" actually alludes to the "fine traditions" of the Party, and not those of the intellectuals. As Jiang explained, the expression "fine traditions" refers, in reality, to the guidelines of the general CCP policy based on three key axioms: the tradition of loving one's country (爱国主义, *aiguozhuyi*), the tradition of uniting with the people (和人民相结合的传统, *he renmin xiangjiede de chuantong*), and the tradition of struggling hard amid difficulties (艰苦奋斗的传统, *jianku fendou de chuantong*) (Jiang 1990a).

Continuing with the analysis of this speech, it appears that the intellectuals who have been rehabilitated and are now presented as "a part" (一部分, *yibufen*) of the working class (工人阶级, *gongren jieji*) are no longer required "to serve the people". This would contradict the Maoist criterion which allegedly implied the subordinate relationship of the intellectual to "the people", but in reality to the Party. Theoretically, the intellectuals are now presented as being on the same level (相互结合, *xianghu jiebe*), even though they would be obliged to "merge with the people". Could one deduce from this that Maoism is definitely dead? Not exactly, since, for example, the expression used by Jiang Zemin, *jianku fendou de chuantong* (艰苦奋斗的传统, struggling hard amid difficulties), is a typical Maoist slogan, which demonstrates the legacy of the past, to indicate an in-

clusive attitude towards the intellectuals who are called to support the Party's policies.

Jiang's speeches on intellectuals all seem to come to the same conclusion: the success of "the construction of socialist modernisation" (社会主义现代化建设, *shehui zhuyi xiandaihua jianshe*) is not even conceivable without the contribution of intellectuals. In Chinese political language, this conclusion remains vaguely expressed. Judging from the superficial structure, it appears to indicate a future direction, while the underlying structure implies that the final question of how to use the intellectuals (which harks back to the language problem) has not been solved.

The word "modernisation" (现代化, *xiandaihua*) was a keyword at the end of the 1970s and remained so during the 1980s; it was the pinnacle of the "four modernisations" (四化, *sibua*) rhetoric. It has now almost disappeared from informal language, though it remains in the formalised language, even though it is often replaced by the catchphrase "economic globalisation" (经济全球化, *jingji quanqiuhua*). The same change is evident in the textbooks that university students must read for their courses on "social moral education" (社会德育, *shehui deyu*) (classes once simply called "politics" (政治, *zhengzhi*)).

In his speeches, Jiang Zemin often referred to the "zeal" or "activism" (积极性, *jijixing*) of intellectuals, using a term which might sound as if it carried a positive connotation but, in reality, is extremely vague and ambiguous. In the course of interviews that I conducted with intellectuals on the policy of the CCP toward intellectuals (Marinelli 1994), two of the most important words to emerge were "creativity" (创造性, *chuangzaoxing*) and "faculty for discrimination and judgment" (判断力, *panduanli*). Only the first of these two terms appears in both Deng and Jiang's speeches (Jiang 1997).

Furthermore, two verbs became ever more common when referring to policy relating to intellectuals in the post-Mao era: 落实 (*luoshi*) and 贯彻 (*guanche*). Both mean to "carry out" or "implement" (plans or policy), and they have a strong commandatory tone.

While Deng was paramount leader, the commonly-used verb was *luoshi*, particularly in relation to Party policy towards intellectuals, so that when referring to "the question of the intellectuals" (知识分子的问题, *zhishifenzhi de wenti*), the "correct" expression was *luoshi dang dui zhishifenzhi de zhengce* (落实党对知识分子的政策, implementing or carrying out the Party's policy toward intellectuals). *Luoshi* has two main functions: as an adjective it means "practicable" or "workable" (literally: capable of be-

coming reality; being implemented), while as a verb it can mean either “to fix (or to decide) in advance” or “to carry out, implement, put into effect”. Of course, in this context, *luoshi* is usually translated as “carry out”, but it could be inferred that the underlying meaning of this expression could also contain the nuance “to carry out a policy that is set and fixed in advance”. In Jiang’s speeches, he seemed to prefer the verb *guan*, which has the meaning “to carry through” or “to implement”, but has the nuance of something that follows in a continuous line, since the character *guan* (贯) conveys the act of “linking together” (连贯, *lianguan*), and suggests a continuous line from the past to the final aim, along which the action must now be carried through right to the end.

## Conclusion

The CCP leadership has always invoked the key tenet of “preserving stability” (*weiwen*). This concept is profoundly embedded in the traditional political culture: a line of continuity could be traced back to the Confucian canon’s ideal of “Great Harmony” (*Datong*), which was reedited by the reformer Kang Youwei with his 1915 visionary utopian treatise entitled exactly *Datongshu* (Book of Great Harmony).

The political discourse on intellectuals (for instance, their status, their function and objectives vis-à-vis the Party) is extremely important in understanding the specific nexus between the formalised use of political language and the ideological tool of “preserving stability”. However, the political discourse on intellectuals has so far been understudied. This article is the first study to focus on Jiang Zemin’s discourse on intellectuals through the lens of formalised language. This article demonstrates that Jiang Zemin’s speeches represent a new extreme of involution-devolution of formalised language. In Chinese political discourse, intended as a system of representation, formalised language presupposes the creation of an effective or, at least, a claimed relationship between the name and the reality via the speech. The speech has been completely suppressed and obscured by Jiang’s slogan-like speaking style, which repeats the key concepts of Deng’s discourse, with the only aim of re-emphasising the predominance of “stability overrides everything else” (稳定压倒一切, *wending yadao yiqie*) in Jiang’s newly revised version: “Without stability, nothing can be achieved”. The primary intention of Jiang’s discourse is to reaffirm Deng’s concern with the rehabilitation of intellectuals: intellectuals’ support of the Party’s policies is essential to guarantee the

“modernisation” of the country, which is based on the axiomatic link between the three elements of reform, development and stability. But Jiang’s political language moves within a circular trajectory: its aim is to guarantee that any possible contradiction to the overarching aim of stability is nipped in the bud. Therefore, the intellectuals are required to strengthen their “sense of national pride” and, ultimately, “to adhere to the fundamental line of the Party” (Jiang 1990b).

The syntagmatic bond between the name and the reality, which characterised Mao Zedong’s time (and its simulacra), derived both from an extremely precise choice of lexical items and their consequent organisation in precise sentence patterns, which were based on a precise rhythm, rhyme scheme, and discursive formations, associated with specific visual imagery. A typical example is the attribution to Mao Zedong of three extremely positive and high-sounding adjectives, “Great, beloved and wise Chairman Mao” (伟大的、敬爱、英明的毛主席, *weidade, jing'ai, yingming de Maozhuixi*), which associated the portrait of the Great Helmsman with the image of the “morning sun”. This connection between imagery and language has progressively disappeared in the post-Mao era. The Chinese characters used in Jiang Zemin’s speeches lack any concrete reference to a claimed reality; the sign has no more association with its referent. Using Chinese epistemological terminology, this reveals that political language in the 1990s, following Jiang’s goal of “stability über alles”, reached a point of no-return. The gap between the name and the reality had become unbridgeable due to the dissolution of any possible connection between political speech and the symbolic order of representation of the reality. In this sense, Jiang’s political discourse presented a serious ambiguity. The alleged correspondence, *a priori*, of name and reality had progressively dissolved to the extent of revealing the weakest link in Jiang’s language: his inability to clarify the precise relationship between reform, development and stability. Jiang insisted that:

During the course of the modernisation drive, we pay extra attention to properly handling the relations among *reform*, *development* and *stability*. Economic development is central to all our undertakings, with *reform* being the driving force for development, *development* being the foundation for social stability and prosperity, and *stability* being the precondition for economic growth and smooth implementation of reform (Jiang1996. Italics added).

However, in reality, Jiang’s political discourse on intellectuals blurred the three categories (reform, development, and stability) and seemed to point



in the unilateral and contradictory direction that “preserving stability” was both the absolute premise and the supreme goal. In the 1990s, the mantra “without stability, nothing can be achieved” became a tautology. The obsession with “preserving stability” ultimately demystified the priority of Jiang’s personal cause, behind his alleged concern with “using law to rule the country and protect the country’s prolonged order and long peace” (依法治国, 保障国家长治久安, *yifa zhibiguo, baozhang guojia changzhi jiu’an*) (Jiang 1997; Liu 1996: 1).

A possible explanation of Jiang’s obsession with stability and his strategic avoidance to take sides is offered by Willy Wo-Lap Lam, who argues that:

The keyword for Jiang was stability: maintaining a balance among the disparate forces in society and the Party so that there would not be a direct challenge to *his* ruling elite (Lam 1999: 43. Italics added).

In the Jiang Zemin period, language took on a ritualistic quality, in which appeals to stability as the precondition for development became the utterances that proscribe the limits of political and social action in China today.

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# Contents

## Introduction

- FENG Chongyi  
The Dilemma of Stability Preservation in China 3

## Research Articles

- FENG Chongyi  
Preserving Stability and Rights Protection: Conflict or Coherence? 21
- Susan TREVASKES  
Rationalising Stability Preservation through Mao's Not So Invisible Hand 51
- XIE Yue  
Rising Central Spending on Public Security and the Dilemma Facing Grassroots Officials in China 79
- **Maurizio MARINELLI**  
**Jiang Zemin's Discourse on Intellectuals: The Political Use of Formalised Language and the Conundrum of Stability** 111
- David KELLY  
Approaching Chinese Freedom: A Study in Absolute and Relative Values 141
- ZHANG Wu  
Protest Leadership and Repertoire: A Comparative Analysis of Peasant Protest in Hunan in the 1990s 167
- Yao LI  
Fragmented Authoritarianism and Protest Channels: A Case Study of Resistance to Privatizing a Hospital 195

- Contributors 225