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ABSTRACT. By employing the frameworks of McGee's discussion on the relationship between ideology and ideographs, Wander's approach to the identification of *fact* and *negation* in cultural analysis, and by addressing Arendt's question on the process of indoctrination in totalitarian regimes, this study examines the use of political slogans in Communist China from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. It discusses rhetorical impacts of these political slogans on transforming Chinese ideology from Confucianism to Maoism, and to Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism. The analysis indicates that political slogans are coined to meet the changing need of social conditions as well as the need of authorities to establish control. Moreover, the pervasive use of these political slogans has altered the face of Chinese culture and affected the Chinese thought pattern. The rhetorical strategies and techniques employed by Communist China resemble closely those employed by other totalitarian regimes.

KEY WORDS: *class struggle, Communist China, cultism of Mao, Cultural Revolution, diachronic and synchronic approach, ideological transformation, ideology, ideographs, negation, political slogan, Red Flag*

China, the world's only communist superpower since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, has, in its 49 years under communist rule, experienced cultural and ideological change on a massive scale: from Confucian traditionalism to Maoist idealism to Deng Xiaoping's economic pragmatism. And, while sinologists have addressed the current state of affairs in China, noting its 'profound identity crisis [...] at an ideological crossroad' (Tu, 1993: xiii) and its lack of a sense of direction (Link, 1994), few have devoted themselves to the study of China's cultural and ideological transformation over the course of its communist history.¹ Having experienced firsthand the ideological campaigns of Mao's China, as well as the

persecution of my own family during the Cultural Revolution, I propose such a study through a rhetorical analysis of China's political slogans since 1949, the year of its official takeover by the Communist Party. In particular, I examine the role of political slogans in remolding the Chinese mind and facilitating ideological and cultural change from the early 1960s to the late 1980s.

The modern history of China is characterized by cultural and ideological confrontation, destruction, and reconstruction. Confucianism, once the state ideology and cultural foundation of China, came under attack by western-educated intellectuals at the beginning of this century.² Subsequently in 1949, a Sinicized Marxism was adopted and enforced as the official ideology of the People's Republic of China.³ Though the Marxist ideology was originally formulated in response to the economic and political situation of 19th century western Europe, Mao Zedong and his comrades believed strongly in the applicability of such theory to the ideological construction of a new China. Beginning in the early 1950s, therefore, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) launched a series of campaigns to promote and instill Marxist ideology. Party members and intellectuals, having received a Confucian education in their earlier years, were systematically indoctrinated with the teachings of Marx, Lenin, and Mao Zedong.⁴ The Confucian system of social ethics gave way to a Marxist understanding of class struggle and the exploitation of the masses.⁵ During the so-called Cultural Revolution (1966–76), Mao's 'application' of the Marxist theory of class struggle reached a traumatic climax, bringing widespread economic devastation and cultural destruction to the country. By the early 1980s, Marxist Maoism had lost its ideological influence over the Chinese people, although it remains the official ideology of the CCP. Shortly after Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping directed China's ideological path toward economic pragmatism and in some subtle and not so subtle ways abandoned Mao's moral idealism. While China's economy boomed as a result, the Chinese people once again found themselves in the throes of ideological transition and transformation.

In her *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt (1973) offers an astute analysis of indoctrination methods employed in Communist China, as well as under the regimes of Hitler and Stalin. While finding many similarities between Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany regarding their ideological campaign strategies and outcomes, Arendt was forced to admit that 'We never know very well how this worked [in China] in everyday life . . . that is, who did the "remolding" – and we had no inkling of the results of the "brainwashing," whether it was lasting and actually produced personality changes' (p. xxvi). Indeed, due to the relative lack of communication between China and the rest of the world prior to the early 1980s, it has been difficult to obtain data to render a clear understanding of the indoctrination process by which over a billion people were transformed from Confucian adherents to Maoist devotees and comrades.

An earlier book by Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1964), may shed some light on this question. In this vivid account, Arendt argues that certain rules of Nazi

language usage led to Eichmann's inhumane, amoral stance in relation to his Jewish victims. More generally, she argues that thought deprivation, or the inability to think clearly, which she refers to as the 'banality of evil', can be caused by an impoverishment of language. In observing Eichmann's trial, she noted 'The longer one listens to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else' (p. 49). For Arendt, thoughtlessness is an aspect of human evil. In other words, the ability to commit evil does not necessarily require deliberate or conscious choice. Indeed, as Arendt observed (1973), the purpose of totalitarian indoctrination is to ensure the absolute control of authoritarian leaders. Toward this end, political discourse, often in the form of ideographs and slogans, helps establish ideological frameworks which allow such leaders to abuse their political power by stifling freedom of thought.

Michel Foucault (1980) points out that political power 'traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (p. 119). In Communist China, the political discourse formulated and enforced by the government was accepted by the vast majority of the Chinese people, and functioned as social and ideological control. In this article I address the question raised by Arendt regarding such remolding of thought in Communist China. By so doing, I extend and exemplify her claims regarding the use of language, particularly the function of slogans in producing overarching ideology in totalitarian societies.

The primary framework I use for this analysis is ideological/cultural criticism. The task of the ideological critic is to identify ideological formation and transformation through an examination of cultural artifacts in a particular linguistic and cultural context. More specifically, in Sonja Foss's (1996) words, the challenge for the critic 'is to discover and make visible the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in an artifact and the ideologies that are being muted in it' (pp. 295–6). Employing additional methodologies from scholarly works on ideographs, conceptual change, and the rhetorical and linguistic functions of slogans, I identify and classify major political slogans propagated by the Chinese government and published in *Red Flag*, the CCP's leading publication from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. I also examine how the use of slogans in this period destroyed and rebuilt Chinese culture and thought. I conclude by drawing out some of the implications of my analysis.

Theoretical framework

While some studies of political communication have examined modes and means of persuasion in shaping public opinion and social reality in domestic and international political settings (King and Cushman, 1992; Nimmo and Sanders, 1981), others have focused on how political language is linked to and affects the culture and ideology of a society (Ball, 1988; Condit and Lucaites, 1993; Mumby, 1989). Few would disagree that political language, while serving to shape

thought, guide action, induce commitment, and control the public mind, is at the same time the practice of ideology and representation of cultural values. While ideology often divides peoples and nations, it is interesting to note that whatever ideology a society values and promotes, the role, function, and effect of political language is similar – whether in Stalin’s Russia, Hitler’s Germany, Khomeini’s Iran, Communist China or the United States.

IDEOLOGICAL/CULTURAL CRITICISM

While Ideology is defined as ‘a pattern or set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values, or interpretations of the world by which a culture or group operates’ (Foss, 1996: 291), the manifestation and practice of ideology are revealed through political language characterized by slogans, or what Michael McGee (1980) calls ‘ideographs’. Ideographs are defined as ordinary and abstract terms infused with moral and constitutional value and used in political discourse to represent the ideals of a culture and to call for collective commitment to a normative goal (Condit and Lucaites, 1993; MacIntyre, 1981; McGee, 1980). Condit and Lucaites (1993) identify three functions of ideographs: (1) as a justification for action; (2) as a shared symbol for participation in a rhetorical culture; and (3) as a means of persuasion. They define ideographs as flexible cultural signifiers that are crafted by speakers/politicians in order to change and control the mind of the public. Political slogans, a particular form of ideographs, are considered the building blocks of ideology, an effective means of persuasion, and a way to express political goals, raise political consciousness, and organize certain cultural attitudes (Denton, 1980; McGee, 1980). According to McGee (1980), they also serve as a means for controlling mass consciousness and shaping an individual’s ‘reality’.

As ideology is produced by the dynamics of cultural force and the shifting of political power, thus ideological change is inevitable. According to Terence Ball (1988), such change is revealed through the use of newly coined terms or by assigning new meaning to old terms. Ball suggests that political discourse and its connection with ideological transformation must be analyzed and examined with a consideration of historical context, the intention and motive of the political agent, and any other circumstances that may have caused the need for conceptual and ideological change.

McGee (1980) suggested two approaches to the analysis of ideographic usage in political language: the diachronic approach, which examines how usage changes and expands throughout its history; and the synchronic approach, which examines how the meaning of the ideograph is accommodated to specific situations. In the words of Condit and Lucaites (1993), ‘By charting the diachronic and synchronic structures of an ideograph as it is employed in the public discourse of a particular rhetorical culture, we can begin to gain insight into how social and political problems are constituted and negotiated through public discourse’ (p. xiv).

While ‘ideograph’ as defined by western rhetorical scholars is closely associated

with ideological formation and social construction of meaning that can be applied to any society, the term also has a specific meaning in the linguistic field to describe pictographic feature of Chinese characters. Indeed, ancient Chinese characters are largely an accumulation of pictographic symbols. That is, they express their meanings by resemblance to actual objects so that meaning is directly connected to the form. However, modern Chinese characters have gone through much modification, simplification, and standardization.⁶ While the formation of most modern Chinese characters is still based on the modified and simplified ancient pictographs, they no longer bear close resemblance to actual objects. As a result, a more accurate interpretation of meaning requires the understanding of rules for structuring characters and knowledge of the historical evolution of characters. With the exception of a few educated Chinese who have such linguistic expertise, most ordinary Chinese are not conscious of the ideographic roots of Chinese characters. A linguistic analysis of Chinese political slogans and discussion of their cognitive impact, though interesting, is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, it is the social and rhetorical meaning of ideographs/slogans as a type of political discourse created through the Communist propaganda that carried far more powerful and significant impact in shaping the political reality for Chinese people. In this article I engage a rhetorical analysis of ideographs (in the form of slogans) as defined by rhetorical scholars and examine the political impact of ideographs/slogans in shaping Chinese mind and culture. Specifically, I focus on their usage and the persuasive effect of political slogans from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. That is, I identify certain slogans and their usage at each historical juncture since the 1960s and examine the effect of these slogans in light of specific rhetorical exigencies. In addition, I examine the transformation of ideographs over time due to the changes in leadership and rhetorical situations.

Although ideology and culture are not synonymous terms, one cannot fully understand a nation's ideology without examining its culture, and vice versa. Philip Wander (1984) makes an inseparable connection between the two notions, defining ideological criticism as insisting 'on a historical perspective in relation to cultural artifacts and political issues' (p. 199). Similarly, cultural criticism is the practice of interpreting cultural products in the context of ideological struggles (Wander, 1983, 1984). Furthermore, it examines the world-view conveyed by such products, facts they do or do not acknowledge, and consequences and alternatives they do or do not ignore in light of moral, social, economic, and political issues' (p. 497). Language, a major component of culture, conveys and constructs a world-view, as well as formulating ideologies and belief systems for the people of any culture. In fact, as Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1993) state 'Language is ideological in another, more political, sense of that word: it involves systematic distortion in the service of class interest . . . Political ideology is liable to project fantasy versions of reality' (p. 6). Ideological/cultural criticism allows the critic to examine how cultural products work rhetorically within certain historical contexts and social structure, how language is used to construct social and

ideological reality, and how certain ideological orientations affect the thought and culture of a certain group or nation.

Wander (1983), in his description of ideological/cultural criticism, suggests the examination of two elements: (1) *fact*, defined as what is present in the text and its medium; and (2) *negation*, defined as what is absent in the text and its medium. The former includes any rhetorical acts, artifacts, and media used to communicate messages that have significance. The latter refers to the identification of elements, people, or issues that are muted or objectified into a 'third persona'. In other words, it refers to the avoidance and dehumanization of certain characteristics and groups of people when an individual or group is 'equated with disease, a cancer', for example, or 'transformed, through a biological metaphor, into; "parasites" '. According to Wander, 'the potentiality of language to commend being [acceptable, desirable, and significant] carries with it the potential to spell out being unacceptable, undesirable, insignificant' (1984: 209).

In my analysis of Chinese political slogans, I examine the fact, the text of political slogans, as well as the negation, those elements that are not present in the political slogans under scrutiny. In this context, I examine the ways in which certain groups of Chinese people were objectified and dehumanized. I argue that certain political slogans employed by the CCP have destroyed the traditional Chinese values of harmony and stability while constructing a new Chinese culture characterized by conflict and change. I also argue that the negation of Confucianism and propagation of Mao's thoughts have deprived the Chinese people of their ability to think critically.

SLOGANS AS IDEOGRAPHS

There is nothing new nor culture-specific about the use of slogans. In fact, they are as old as language itself. According to Harold Sharp (1984), 'the word "slogan" is an Anglicization of the Gaelic "slaughghairm" which means "army cry" or "war cry", formerly used by the Scottish clans. Its purpose was then to inspire the members of the clan to fight fiercely for its protection or the extension of its glory' (p. v). Slogans can be found in sacred texts such as the Bible and the Quran as a means of moral persuasion; they are used as a powerful means of disseminating propaganda during times of war. Today, in most industrialized and democratic countries, slogans are used as instruments of popular persuasion in advertising and political campaigns. They are generally perceived 'as a means of focusing attention and exhorting to action...' (Urdang and Robbins, 1984: 17).

For both Shankel (1941) and Denton (1980), slogans are 'significant symbols' of a society, defined as fittingly worded phrases or expressions that suggest actions, evoke emotional responses and perform persuasive functions. Such symbols are shared by certain groups or cultures, but can also reveal the cultural and ideological formation of a society. In their study on the persuasive function of slogans, Stewart et al. (1995) argue that 'the slogans a group uses to evoke specific responses may provide us with an index of the group's norms, values, and

conceptual rationale for its claims' (p. 403). Slogans are easy to remember, allowing the user to release pent-up feelings and engage in polarized thinking. According to Robert Denton (1980), they also function to simplify complicated ideas, express group ideology and goals, create identification, provoke violent confrontations, and fulfill hopes for the future. In this sense, slogans can be considered as a particular form of public discourse aiming to unify public thoughts and agitate public actions and reactions.

The slogans under examination here were collected from the bi-weekly journal *Red Flag*, the official publication of the CCP from early 1960s to the late 1980s. Written by top party officials and high-ranking radical intellectuals of the CCP, *Red Flag* was, for almost three decades, the most authoritative voice for China's ideological direction and policy making. The slogans I have selected for analysis are typically drawn from the titles of the editorials in the table of the content on the front page of the journal, codifying its ideological messages for the political guidance and correctness of CCP members.⁷

Red Flag is distributed freely to every local party branch of the CCP, as well as to every work unit. From there, its essential teachings are passed on through word of mouth and CCP-controlled media such as radio, television, newspapers, through which other party members and ordinary people read and hear slogans. Political slogans are also reinforced at political study sessions, political gatherings, and sometimes even private conversations and letters.⁸ Through these channels of propaganda, the political slogans initiated in *Red Flag* soon become public discourse spreading throughout the entire country. Repeating such slogans both in written and oral form has become a measure of 'political correctness' for the Chinese people. In fact, frequency and eloquence in the use of party slogans indicate a person's political status and degree of loyalty to the CCP; for party officials, the use of slogans has become a means of fulfilling one's political ambition. The slogans I analyze here span an historical time period from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, a time during which China's ideological formation moved from class struggle of Marxism to pragmatic economic reform. In the following pages, I identify the fact and negation in the use of slogans synchronically and diachronically and trace the trajectory of the CCP's ideological campaign, as communist party authorities shifted and modified ideologies and ideographs to achieve their goals.

Chinese political slogans: an ideological/cultural analysis

The political slogans used in *Red Flag* from the early 1960s to the late 1980s can be characterized by two major ideological shifts diachronically. The first shift took place during the time frame spanning all of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, when efforts were made to condemn traditional Chinese culture and to establish the Marxist-Maoist ideology of class struggle. The second ideology shift began in 1976, the post-Mao era, and continued through Deng's regime, characterized by economic pragmatism and ideological contradiction. The synchronic

ideographs, or slogans used to reflect and address the rhetorical exigencies and ideological crises of particular historical moments, fall into four categories: (1) condemnation of traditional Chinese culture; (2) class struggle; (3) Maoist cultism; and (4) ideological transition and contradiction. While each category was created for the purpose of ideological control, each also reflects and is in response to changing rhetorical situations in China.

SLOGANS CONDEMNING TRADITIONAL CHINESE CULTURE

According to Ying-shih Yu (1993), 'from the very beginning, Chinese Marxism was cast in the negative mold of May Fourth iconoclastic antitraditionalism. Thus, it generated a radicalism of a highly destructive nature' (pp. 134–5). The destruction of traditional Chinese culture was gradually accomplished through the ideological campaigns of the 1950s and early 1960s, culminating in the Cultural Revolution. Mao and his comrades believed that social change must result in ideological change and, furthermore, that a new society could not be built without the total demolition of the old.

Slogans condemning traditional Chinese culture reached their climax during the Cultural Revolution. Any ideology or perception associated with traditional Chinese values was condemned as a product of 'The Four Olds' (old ideology, old culture, old customs, and old habits) and thus must be destroyed and replaced by an ideology or perception associated with 'The Four News' (new ideology, new culture, new customs, and new habits). Slogans which appeared in *Red Flag* attacking traditional Chinese values and practices included: 'Break away from old ideology, old culture, old custom, and old habit' (Vol. 11, 1966); 'A new world will be created by condemning the old world' (Vol. 11, 1965); 'Creating a new world by a proletarian world-view' (Vol. 11, 1965); 'Establish with great efforts proletarian power, establish with great efforts new proletarian ideology, culture, custom, and habits' (Vol. 11, 1966). The frequent and intense use of these slogans by all media throughout China soon followed, causing traditional Chinese values to give way to new cultural values aligned with 'correct' political thought and class consciousness. Even the Confucian value of filial piety was shaken during this time. For example, one of my uncles disowned his mother (my grandmother) during the Cultural Revolution simply because she was from a wealthy family and associated with the 'old' China.

Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions are represented by several schools of thoughts including Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism. Confucianism, however, is generally regarded as the dominant cultural ideology, and has historically been the target of bitter attack by Chinese intellectuals who consider its more conservative aspects to be obstacles to modernization. Though attempts have been made within academic circles to incorporate Confucian moral concepts into communist ideology, Confucianism tends to be associated with feudalism and Confucius himself is associated with the interests of the landlord class in the Communist China.

Efforts at repudiating the 'old ideas' continued and intensified with the official

launching of the anti-Confucian campaign by the Gang of Four in 1974.⁹ At that time, *Red Flag* began publishing articles denouncing Confucius and Confucian concepts. The assault on Confucianism in the pages of *Red Flag* was unprecedented. The attacks were typically reduced to the form of CCP slogans and propaganda. Confucius and Mencius, once great sages of ancient China, were transformed into hypocrites and murderers, their philosophy equated with poison and deception. Examples of such slogans are: 'Confucius and Lin Biao were both political swindlers' (Vol. 3, 1974);¹⁰ 'Mencius is the trumpeter of the slave system' (Vol. 7, 1974); and 'Confucianists are bloody executioners' (Vol. 12, 1974). The campaign not only targeted Confucius as counterrevolutionary, but also attacked major Confucian doctrines, calling Confucius' notion of the Golden Mean 'the philosophy of a political swindler' (Vol. 2, 1974). Other anti-Confucian slogans include: 'Expose the fraud of hypocritical humanism' (Vol. 2, 1974), and 'The advocate of self-restraint and returning to traditions are pulling history backward' (Vol. 2, 1974). Such slogans oversimplify and demonize Confucian ideology, presenting it as an obstacle to the liberation of the 'exploited masses'. Confucianism, once the standard for judging the merits of one's beliefs and conduct in Chinese society, had come under attack by Marxist revolutionaries as the epitome of class oppression.¹¹

The condemnation of Confucian tradition went hand in hand with the complete erasure of all Chinese philosophical traditions and value/belief systems. In fact, in the 30 years of *Red Flag* publication, not a single article devoted to a discussion of the possible merits of Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, or Buddhism, the major schools of thought in ancient China, ever appeared in its pages. The only articles dealing with Confucianism were those condemning Confucius and his moral philosophy which were published in the early 1970s. Key Confucian doctrines such as *ren* (benevolence), *li* (rites), *zhong yong* (Golden Mean) and *he* (harmony) were equated with feudal ideology and denigrated. Chinese students of the past four decades have not been taught Confucian philosophy in school, nor were they exposed to it through social and public discourse. Instead, they have been taught an incomplete version of western Marxism combined with Mao's revolutionary ideas and glorifying deeds.

SLOGANS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels claimed (1965 [1848]) that 'the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle' (p. 57). In the first decade after the Communist takeover of China, this notion of class struggle took a back seat to the purging of party officials and economic development.¹² In fact, Mao's 'never forget class struggle' edict was not issued until 1962 when it quickly became the guiding principle of the new China. Since then, *Red Flag* has been filled with slogans expressing the concept of class struggle and the Chinese people have become increasingly class conscious and politicized. Even Chinese historians have begun to employ class analysis in the study and interpretation of history (Louie, 1980). Drawing upon Marxist theory

of class struggle, the proletarian and bourgeois classes are seen as social enemies with antithetical economic goals and ideological interests. It is believed that although in a communist state, the proletarian class becomes the ruling class, constant struggle between the proletarian and bourgeois classes is inevitable. Furthermore, the proletariat can only strengthen its ruling power by exercising dictatorship over the bourgeois class. In *Red Flag*'s first issue in 1966, one of the slogans offered for the new year was 'politics is the blood line of economic life'. The term politics here refers to the political ideology of class struggle. In subsequent issues of *Red Flag*, published in the 1960s and early 1970s, class struggle is the primary topic of political sloganeering as in 'Never forget class struggle' (*Red Flag*, Vol. 7, 1966); 'Thoroughly bury the doctrine that class struggle is non-existent' (Vol. 4, 1968); 'Always grasp the canon of class struggle' (Vol. 3, 4, 1969); and 'Class struggle must be talked about daily, monthly, and annually' (Vol. 12, 1971). Moreover, during this time, everything from academic research to political upheaval is an issue of class struggle when filtered through the lens of *Red Flag* analysis. Consider the following two examples: 'The study of history is a class struggle' (Vol. 4, 1966); and 'The Cultural Revolution is a struggle between two classes and two paths' (Vol. 11, 1966). Such slogans were soon widely used in public discourse: in political speeches, group meetings, and big-character posters.

Although some Chinese intellectuals were attracted to Marxist ideology even before the Communist takeover, most people continued to believe in and practice the traditional values of harmony, tolerance, and respect in social relationships. With the Marxist analysis of class struggle, each individual is identified with a particular class. People were classified as members of the bourgeois class if they were from wealthy families or disagreed with Communist ideology. The bourgeoisie was by definition the enemy class and should be corrected, punished, and, ultimately, overthrown. Out of fear and self-protectiveness, people began to identify themselves as members of the proletariat and some even accused their friends, family members, and teachers of bourgeois or counterrevolutionary affiliations in order to establish their own political correctness. At the height of the Cultural Revolution, it was not uncommon to hear stories of children denouncing their parents, and of husbands and wives turning against one another. Human relationships that were once characterized by harmony and tolerance, now turned to hatred and distrust. Many party administrators were labeled 'capitalist running dogs' and removed from their posts. Slogans such as 'Down with people in authority who take the capitalist road' and 'Down with bourgeoisie reactionary authority' (Vol. 11, 1966) were pervasive in the public medium. Furthermore, those considered class enemies were described in dehumanized terms, as in slogans such as: 'Clean up all the parasites' (Vol. 11, 1966) and 'Down with all oxen, ghosts, snakes, and devils' (Vol. 8, 1966).

While synchronic ideographs used to propagate the notion of 'class struggle' were overwhelming and pervasive in the presentation of 'facts' (in Wander's terms), there was a deliberate attempt to negate diverse political views at the same

time. For example, there was a total avoidance of alternative sources of western political thought other than Marxism. Furthermore, in the CCP's political slogans there was no mention of the scientific and democratic belief systems nor western thinkers such as Thomas Huxley, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson, introduced to China through translations at the beginning of this century. Western ideas (with the exception of Marxism) were considered either not applicable to China or written for the bourgeois class. This narrow interpretation of western thought engendered dogmatism and isolationism on the part of the Chinese government and stifled freedom of thought of Chinese people. According to Dun Li (1978), an ideological commitment to a single doctrine of thought is a form of imprisonment. The greater the commitment, the more imprisoned and dogmatic an individual, a group, or a nation will become.

Another form of negation in the use of these synchronic slogans concerned the dehumanization of 'class enemies'. Once people were labeled as ghosts, snakes, and devils, they were treated like they were evil animals. The Chinese people were thoroughly indoctrinated with the notion that the bourgeoisie was poisonous to the revolutionary masses; they were 'parasites', 'blood suckers', 'vermins', and 'stumbling blocks'. Just as the Jews were labeled in dehumanizing terms by the Nazis in order to legitimize the Holocaust, the 'class enemies' were treated as less than humans and the extreme measures taken against them were deemed morally justified. Many were beaten, some to death, forced to commit suicide, or driven to labor camps. Their private property was confiscated and family members were humiliated. In this way, the Chinese people were divided by ideology and were bifurcated into proletarian and bourgeois classes. In this process, they were deprived of the exposure to alternative ideological views and were pressured to demonize other human beings.

SLOGANS OF MAOIST CULTISM

With the Communist takeover of China in 1949, Mao became more than the leader of China, he was regarded as a savior of the Chinese people. Through Communist propaganda eulogizing Mao's character as well as his contribution to the overthrow of the old China and the founding of a new China, Mao's image as a living god was elevated and aggrandized. During the Cultural Revolution, the glorification and mystification of Mao reached its highest level. For example, he was described as 'the red sun in our heart', and 'the greatest teacher, the greatest leader, the greatest commander, and the greatest helmsman' (Vol. 5, 1967). The Chinese zeal for a great leader is rooted in Chinese history and culture. It is believed that the appearance of every great man is mandated by Heaven, which grants him legitimate and absolute power. Lucian Pye (1985) explains that the great man ideal 'is an amplification of the Confucian model of the father as the ultimate authority in the family' (p. 185). In this regard, Mao's cultism was in many ways consistent with traditional Chinese culture instead of breaking away from it.

The cult of Maoism was more than a mere personality cult; it was also fed by

devotion to his works and ideas. Mao's thought was propagated as an extension of Marxism and Leninism, applied to the Chinese situation through Mao's unique cultural and political lens. His theory was considered 'invincible' and of 'boundless radiance' in its application to every aspect of life. For example, the commentary in Volume 11 of *Red Flag* (1967) was entitled 'Mao Zedong's thought illuminates the victorious path of our party'. Slogans in later issues of *Red Flag* openly proclaimed Mao's omnipotence as well as his omniscience. Some examples are: 'Establish with greatest efforts the absolute authority of the great leader Chairman Mao; establish with utmost effort the absolute authority of the great Mao Zedong's thought' (Vol. 16, 1967); 'Let Mao Zedong's thought control everything' (Vol. 1, 1969). Like Hitler in Nazi Germany, Mao was worshiped as a living god, his words were regarded as law and his little red book was the bible.¹³ The worship of Mao was intensified during the Cultural Revolution. Everywhere, one saw and heard such slogans as 'long live Chairman Mao'; 'Wish Chairman Mao a long life'; and 'loyal to the party, loyal to the people, loyal to Chairman Mao, and loyal to Mao Zedong's thought'.

According to Ernst Cassirer (1946), language can be divided into two functions, mythmaking and rationalizing, with the mythmaking function being more prevalent among humans. Slogans related to the worship of Mao Zedong were of the mythmaking variety in the extreme. The purpose of such propaganda was to cultivate absolute obedience and loyalty to Mao on the part of the Chinese people. Throughout Chinese history, obedience and loyalty to authority have been considered virtues. Like Mao, Chinese emperors of the past were typically the object of cult-like devotion. However, as Stanley Milgram (1969) has pointed out, when obedience to authority 'serves a malevolent cause, far from appearing as a virtue, it is transformed into a heinous sin' (p. 2). While the 'facts', or the synchronic ideographs used during the period under investigation established the cult of Mao, what was negated was the critical thinking ability of the Chinese people, especially among young people. In the name of loyalty to Mao and in defense of his thought, millions of Red Guards burned cultural relics, looted stores, searched people's houses without warrant, and beat those considered 'bourgeoisie', 'traitors', and 'counterrevolutionaries'.

In sum, the slogans used during the Cultural Revolution promoted the myth of Mao's absolute power, attacked traditional Chinese values and practices, pointed the finger at high-ranking party officials and dehumanized an entire group of people who were considered class enemies. The use of slogans, in this context, had profound persuasive effects upon the Chinese people. Many people began to relate to one another as political comrades or enemies; they placed absolute faith in Mao and his ideology without challenging its legitimacy; and they no longer cherished Chinese traditional cultural values. The most alarming persuasive effect is 'thought deprivation' and the loss of conscience, which led them to believe that their course of action, such as treating 'political enemies' as less than humans, was justified and the political reality (class struggle) they were facing was real. There were many reasons why so many people were influenced by what

appears to be very crude propaganda. As one who lived through the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution and was affected by the political discourse at the time, I believe that in addition to the blind faith many Chinese people placed in Mao and the Communist Party, the idiomatic and metaphorical features employed in political slogans, the endless repetition of these slogans through many channels, and the constant fear of punishment and instinct for self-protection all contributed to the acceptance and propagating of these slogans. The results of such communist propaganda and its persuasive effects were the destruction of traditional values and the persecution of millions of innocent people.

SLOGANS OF IDEOLOGICAL TRANSITION AND CONTRADICTION

In the late 1970s, in the wake of Mao's death and the downfall of the Gang of Four, there emerged a sense of ideological crisis among the mainland Chinese. The ideographs used in the post-Mao era took a diachronic turn toward pragmatism and ideological contradiction. Those who had been faithful to Mao's Marxist ideology began to question the validity and even the morality of much that they had previously embraced. Many felt betrayed and confused, having witnessed and experienced first hand the chaos and tragedy of the Cultural Revolution. This rhetorical exigency called for a modification of ideology and a unified sense of purpose on the part of the central government. Thus, synchronic ideographs addressing the ideological crisis were invented to meet the political need of the rulers. The most frequently repeated CCP slogan of the time was 'The Five Unifications': 'Unification of thoughts, unification of policy, unification of planning, unification of commanding, unification of action' (*Red Flag*, Vol. 1, 1975). Another set of slogans aimed at legitimizing Mao's ideology and strengthening the Party's leadership was known as 'The Four Adherences': 'Adherence to proletariat dictatorship; adherence to the Party's leadership; adherence to Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong's thought; and adherence to the socialist path' (Vol. 5, 1979). 'The Four Adherences' were later included in the Chinese Constitution as the guiding cardinal principles and dominant ideology of the Chinese people.

By 1979, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, an urgent sense of economic pragmatism prevailed. A major concern was raising the standard of living of the Chinese people. For the first time in 20 years, slogans in *Red Flag* began to set goals for modernizations. These were known as 'The Four Modernizations': 'Modernization of industry; modernization of agriculture; modernization of national defense; and modernization of science and technology' (Vol. 5, 1979). This slogan sent a signal to the Chinese people that priorities had shifted from an emphasis on political correctness and class consciousness to a striving for modernization and economic development. In the same year, *Red Flag* promoted the slogans 'seeking truth from facts' and 'liberation of mind' (Vols 2, 3, 1979), suggesting an ideological switch to a rational and empirical approach to economic problems and the end of dogmatic adherence to Marxist–Maoist ideology. Such slogans also called for contemplation and reflection on the ideological battle over the previous 30 years for which the Chinese people have paid a heavy price.

Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China initiated the policies of 'economic reform' and 'open door' in order to promote economic development and attract foreign investment.¹⁴ Slogans in the early 1980s were characterized by a strong emphasis on economic reforms, open-door policies, and liberation of mind to achieve 'The Four Modernizations'. The so-called Cultural Revolution was severely criticized and condemned. Popular slogans initiated by *Red Flag* during this period included 'stability and unification', 'liberation of mind and promotion of reform' (Vol. 21, 1980); 'Adherence to the principle of seeking truth from facts' (Vol. 18, 1983); 'The theory underlying the Cultural Revolution must be thoroughly denied' (Vol. 21, 1984); 'Focus on economic development, adhere to the four cardinal principles, and adhere to the direction of reform and open-door policy' (Vol. 20, 1986). This last slogan, known as 'one centrality and two bases' was proposed by the 11th Round and 3rd Meeting of the Communist Party Congregation for the direction of China. The most popular slogan coined during this period was the government-promoted 'building socialism with Chinese characteristics' (*People's Daily*, 6 Feb. 1991). This slogan is ambiguous and confusing both to the Chinese and foreigners. In terms of social structure, China claimed to be a socialist country; however, the economic development brought by the reform and open-door policy resembled that of a capitalistic society with its increase in private ownership and unemployment, both of which are inconsistent with the communist ideology on political economy. The slogan 'building socialism with Chinese characteristics' could be understood as 'China still remains fundamentally a socialist country even with some practice of capitalism'. Or, it could be interpreted as 'combining a strong government political control (communist ideology) with flexible trade policy and economic measures (market economy) is a unique feature of the political and economic situation in China'. At any rate, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' is a different socialism than the socialism practiced during the Mao era. While the CCP coined this slogan to address the ideological inconsistency and to claim its legitimacy, for ordinary Chinese people this slogan sends out the message that it is acceptable to pursue capitalism, and the government will not relinquish its political and ideological control and will not change its one party ruling system.

The synchronic presentation of slogans in this time period adjusted to the changing situation, redirected the country's attention to an ideology of pragmatism, and provided a vision for China's future. This presentation of 'facts' also served to restore national pride and return the country to traditional Chinese values, such as Mohist's utilitarianism. However, at the same time, what the government failed to explain or deliberately avoided explaining, was the building of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It is not clear whether this was because the Chinese leadership feared that the adoption of capitalism on a large scale would create chaos, or because they feared losing face on a global scale by directly admitting their interest in and pursuit of capitalism. To most Chinese and western observers, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' was a euphemism for allowing economic freedom while still keeping tight political control. Indeed, the

government was worried that by loosening the economic reins, they would lose their political and ideological control over the Chinese people. Accordingly, the Party started a campaign to 'Clean up spiritual pollution' (Vol. 24, 1983) and advocated a 'Spiritual and material civilization' (Vol. 1, 1982). 'Spiritual pollution' was another euphemism for thoughts and actions not aligned with the Party line, especially those of western democratic views. In the same breath, the Party upheld the importance of 'adherence to the four cardinal principles and fighting against bourgeois freedom' (Vol. 2, 1987). According to Louie (1986), the Chinese fear of 'cultural pollution' dates from a 'semi-feudal, semi-colonialist' past. He argues that 'whether the Chinese leadership aims for a "Chinese-style modernization" or not, China when it modernizes will inevitably be Chinese, and continued insistence on this only suggests a slight case of a cultural inferiority complex' (p. 198).

From the western perspective, the recent trend toward economic pragmatism caught the CCP in a contradiction regarding its ideological orientation. Interestingly enough, the Chinese themselves did not seem to be bothered by this apparent inconsistency. Their central concern was to improve their living standards and avoid chaos. The slogans 'stability and unification' and 'spiritual and material civilization' were a fitting response to such desire and mind-set. Such slogans aimed to persuade the public not to challenge the legitimacy of the Communist government but only to follow their political guidance in order to achieve modernization of China. However, the slogans did not seem to produce the desired persuasive effect for everyone. The emphasis on economic development, along with western influence as a result of the open-door policy, not only aided the economy but also brought fresh ideas and thoughts, as well as motivation for social change away from an authoritarian regime, toward a democratic society. These factors led to the student demonstration in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Incidentally, a year before the Tiananmen Square students movement, the Communist Party changed the name of its leading publication from *Red Flag* to *Seeking Truth*. Since then, the journal has lost its political influence and readership has declined even among Communist Party members.

In the early 1990s, additional steps were taken to further the cause of economic reform and the modernization of China. In a commentary on National Day from *People's Daily*, the Communist Party called for action and affirmed the nation's new direction in 'The Twenty-Five Word Slogan' (in Chinese): 'Grasp the opportunity, deepen the reform, expand openness, promote development, and keep stability' (1 Oct. 1994). In the third meeting of the 8th National Congress, Premier Minister Li Peng proposed a new slogan of 16 words (in Chinese): 'liberation of mind, seeking facts from truth, doing solid work, development and making progress' (*People's Daily*, 20 March 1995). These slogans, along with the now-commonly accepted notion that money-making and becoming rich are legitimate goals, have marked the era of pragmatism and materialism in China. Compared with the political slogans of the previous decades, slogans in the 1980s and 1990s have focused more on economic construction than on cultural

destruction, more on collective efforts than on cultism of a particular leader, more on stability and harmony than on radical change and confrontation driven by the Marxist notion of class struggle. Having gone through the stages of ideological fanaticism and ideological crisis, the CCP has finally begun to moderate its use of slogans, while accomplishing the same persuasive ends of changing thought and promoting action in new directions.

Conclusion and implications

This study has examined a particular function of political communication: the use of political slogans in the CCP's official publication *Red Flag* from the early 1960s through the late 1980s as a means of ideological indoctrination. Ideological/cultural criticism was employed as a framework to examine and analyze the use and effectiveness of various slogans in different political and historical contexts in China. The application of diachronic and synchronic framework made possible the examination of ideographs, both over time and when focusing on a particular historical moment, in facilitating conceptual change and ideological transformation. Three implications can be drawn from this analysis for the evaluation of ideological campaigns in the context of China's recent tumultuous history.

First, ideological and conceptual change is called forth by changing political needs and social conditions. In order to understand the process of ideological transformation, one must examine the political context and power dynamics, and the use of ideographs, both diachronically and synchronically. Ideological change in China since 1949 was directly linked to political and social change, as well as to the need of those in authority to control and reform thoughts. Hence, there was an urgent need to break away from traditional Chinese culture and to establish a new ideology. With Mao's absolute power and a totalitarian political system featuring slogans which attacked traditional Chinese values, encouraged class struggle, and promoted the cult of Mao, the root ideology changed from Confucianism to Marxism. During the 1960s and 1970s, attention was given to the building of a new China. This phase was characterized by a Marxist–Maoist ideological orientation rather than by Confucian traditionalism. The latter was perceived as a threat to the new establishment, whereby Marxist ideology was appropriated and applied to the Chinese context. Interestingly enough, the Confucian notion of obedience to authority was successfully exploited by Mao and his Communist Party in the slogans of cultism in the 1970s, even though Confucianism was the very target they condemned and attempted to destroy.

The period from the late 1970s through the late 1980s was characterized by a growing demand for economic development and an improvement in the standard of living, both of which Mao promised but failed to deliver during his rule. With the change in political power from Mao to Deng Xiaoping, an ideological orientation of pragmatism gradually took hold, facilitated by a new set of ideographs featuring themes of modernization and stability. The use of slogans in the

1980s and 1990s seems to signal a return to classical Chinese values of pragmatism and harmony rooted in the Mohist and Daoist traditions. This suggests that indigenous wisdom or in this case traditional Chinese thinking has been a persistent and enduring undercurrent regardless of Mao's efforts to implant Marxist ideology. Indeed, while political power may impose new ideology for its own interests, in order for the ideology to survive, it must have roots within the native culture.

Second, ideological indoctrination through the use of ideographs in political discourse does not simply reflect but also shapes thought and culture. For example, ideographs that promoted imported Marxist ideology during the 30 years of *Red Flag's* publication managed to alter Chinese thought and destroy traditional Chinese culture. During Mao's era in China, the traditional Chinese way of thinking, characterized by an emphasis on infusion, was replaced by a western orientation of dichotomy. The Marxist theory of class struggle created an ontological tendency toward dualistic categorization for the Chinese. More importantly, Chinese thinking became increasingly politicized and polarized.

Political slogans have also played a significant role in facilitating change at both interpersonal and cultural levels in China. For example, *Red Flag* propaganda successfully promoted and enforced the Marxist–Maoist ideology of class struggle, – destroying traditional Chinese culture, in particular those related to Confucian values, in the process. The slogans of the 1960s, such as 'down with class enemies' and 'clean up all the parasites' contributed to tension, hostility, and violence among the Chinese people. Since the 1980s, the slogans concerning 'economic reform', 'open-door policy', and the 'building [of] a socialist country with Chinese characteristics', have encouraged materialistic interests and impulses among the Chinese. The famous Confucius saying that 'a gentleman values righteousness, a base person values profits' has been replaced by the popular adages 'being rich is glorious', 'take the path of making money and getting rich'. According to an empirical study done by Chu and Ju (1993), China has recently begun presenting a new face characterized by risk-taking, materialism, skepticism in relation to authority, and superficial social relationship. This finding indicates that the slogans of the 1960s and early 1970s succeeded in destroying traditional Chinese culture on a massive scale and at an unprecedented rate. With recent western influence and a new domestic policy of economic growth, the slogans of the 1980s and 1990s provide the ideological shift for a new China, one moving rapidly to embrace materialistic and pragmatic goals.

While the first implication exemplified how social conditions caused ideological formation and transformation, the second implication illustrated the impact of language and ideology in molding and remolding a culture and society. It would be too simplistic to argue causality between ideology and society one way or the other because the relationship between the two is so intertwined. However, I do believe that a person's repeated exposure to particular slogans coupled with

absolute obedience to authority can lead to what Hannah Arendt (1964) called 'deprivation of thought' and the 'banality of evil'.

According to Arendt (1964), when language becomes banal and commonplace, one's ability to think is impoverished. Since thought has political implications, the lack of conceptual clarity leads directly to the 'banality of evil' on a political scale. In the Chinese context, the heavy-handed and pervasive use of political slogans in both public and private settings have contributed significantly to a general thoughtlessness still evident in today's China. For example, Party members in formal and sometimes even informal situations, engage in a kind of 'Maospeak' heavily laden with political slogans and clichés. Even in private conversations, as observed by Perry Link (1994), the Chinese have not escaped the mind-set of official language. Moreover, there is almost no variation in the use of slogans between the official newspapers issued by the central government and those published at the provincial level.

Further, the notion that ideographs are culturally bound may need to be questioned. In the case of China, cultural force plays a role when it serves the political need of the establishment such as the worship of Mao and obedience to authority in the slogans featuring cultism of Mao or the promotion of economic reforms to strengthen the control of the Deng's regime. On the other hand, discourse of Marxist class struggle is borrowed and forced its way into the Chinese linguistic habit and cultural vocabulary, made possible by the absolute political power and tremendous efforts to stifle freedom of thought by a totalitarian regime. In this aspect, in a totalitarian society, a cultural force may often be exploited or become the target of the political power.

Finally, through an analysis of the ideographs/slogans used by the CCP in its most authoritative, official and representative journal, *Red Flag*, it becomes clear that rhetorical strategies and techniques employed and practiced in Communist China were similar to those employed by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in their rectification of thoughts and promotion of political ideology as discussed by Arendt (1973). Like the USSR and Nazi Germany, Communist China employed slogans as a powerful rhetorical form of persuasion. The slogans quoted here are short, rhythmical, presenting a one-sided view (often extreme), and emotionally charged. The linguistic features of superlatives, parallel structure, and an exact number of words commonly used in slogans facilitated memorization and chanting. Metaphors of path, animals, body, and pollution manipulated in these slogans served to create mystification, blind faith, polarized thinking and induce thoughtless actions, making evil a 'banal' act easily performed. Like their totalitarian counterparts, through the use of these political slogans Communist China has 'destroy[ed] older books and documents' (Arendt, 1973: 342), 'promis[ed] a future' (p. 346), 'announc[ed] their political intentions in the form of prophecy' (p. 349), used 'consistency and repetition [of their arguments]' (p. 351), and offered the 'masses a means of self-definition and identification' (p. 356). These similarities suggest that although totalitarian regimes may differ in some details, their rhetorical means and ends bear a close resemblance to one another. More

importantly, although it is easy to label these regimes evil, it is by no means a simple matter to understand the rhetorical process of political conversion. Nor is it a simple matter to understand the impact of such conversion on the thoughts and culture of an entire nation.

NOTES

1. David Apter has written works on how narratives were used in the Yanan period to construct the Communist history and their transformative power to establish Mao's ideology (Apter 1993, 1995). Godwin Chu has studied cultural and ideological change through mass media communication in Communist China (Chu, 1977; Chu and Hsu, 1979). These works examined political discourse and legitimation of power in general.
2. The attack was initiated by western-educated intellectuals such as Hu Shi, and triggered by the May Fourth Movement of 1919 during which Chinese students and intellectuals blamed Confucianism for China's backwardness. Employing such slogans as 'down with Confucianism' and 'China needs science and democracy', they demanded a radical change in China through a process of westernization. For more information on the Movement and its influence, see Schwartz (1972), Louie (1980), and Kwok (1965).
3. Mao Zedong's thought was first adopted as the guiding ideology for the Communist Party during the Yanan period of 1936–1947, known as 'Mao's Republic'.
4. According to sources cited by Louie (1980), university professors had to spend 15 hours a week in the study of Communist documents alone. Between 1949 and 1953, over 15 million copies of works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and 25 million copies of works by Mao were printed in China (pp. 18–19).
5. Confucian humanism is characterized by the notion of *ren*, meaning benevolence and love in human relationship and government. Confucius proposed a notion of class which is not determined by one's economic status but by one's education and degree of cultivation. Confucius divided people into *junzi* (gentleman) and *xiaoren* (base people). The basic distinction between *junzi* and *xiaoren* is that the former values morality while the latter is interested in profit. In terms of moral and cultural value, *xiaoren* have been considered morally defective and culturally inferior, but never have they been made into a social enemy.
6. Some of the methods used to extend vocabulary and abstract concepts are indicatives (forming abstract characters with indicative signs), ideographs (combining two or more than two existing pictographs), and phonetic compounds (combining a radical that carries semantic meaning with another character that phonetically sounds similar to the word).
7. Another important publication of the CCP is *People's Daily*, a government-controlled newspaper which is distributed to very work unit in China and has an overseas version.
8. Political study sessions were held on a regular basis during Mao's era (about once or twice a week for 2–3 hours) in each work unit. In these sessions, a leader of the group, usually a lower-level party official, would read articles from *Red Flag* or *People's Daily*. In the discussions following the reading, participants were expected to express their political correctness by indicating how well they could use these slogans in their speeches.
9. The Gang of Four includes Mao's wife and three other men who took control of Chinese politics and propaganda when Mao became seriously ill.

10. Lin Biao was Mao's chosen successor, but betrayed Mao in a failed coup d'etat. The anti-Confucius campaign was associated with the condemnation of Lin Biao for his 'counterrevolutionary acts'.
11. The practice of Confucianism has its limitations such as the absolute obedience to authority, the suppression of women. Confucianism had been the ruling-class philosophy in ancient China and was used to rule and control the Chinese people.
12. In the 1950s there were three major political movements. The first was the 'Three Antis and Five Antis' campaign launched in 1952 against corruption among government officials. The second was the 'Anti-rightist' campaign initiated by Mao in 1957 which aimed at suppressing critics (mostly intellectuals) of the Party. This movement was followed by the 'Great Leap Forward' of 1958, which sought to accelerate the pace of the Chinese economy development but proved an economic disaster. By the early 1960s, Mao's authoritative position had become weakened. Liu Shaoqi, the second in command, began to take charge of economic planning.
13. The 'little red book' is a metaphor for *The Quotations of Chairman Mao*, the only book studied all over China during the Cultural Revolution. It is a pocket book with a red cover.
14. The term 'Open Door' was a trade policy with China proposed by Americans in the late 19th century to gain equal opportunity and equal access to Chinese ports and market in competition with other western powers. The Chinese translation of the term is *menhu kaifang* which has negative connotations and is considered as an imposition of western imperialists for their own benefits. Ironically, the term is now appropriated by the Chinese government as a trade policy to invite investment from the West as a means to boost China's economy. To avoid the negative meaning in the Chinese language, *menhu kaifang* is reduced to *kaifang* meaning literally 'open and let go' although the English translation remains the same. *Kaifang* or 'open door' implies that foreigners can come to China and Chinese can go abroad freely. This is a very liberal and bold policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping, considering that China in the past 30 years had been a closed society under the Communist rule.

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