

AN OVERVIEW OF COUNTERTERRORISM DISCOURSE  
WITHIN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA: SOME  
CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION

BREVE ANÁLISIS DEL DISCURSO ANTITERRORISTA EN  
LOS CONGRESOS NACIONALES DEL PARTIDO  
COMUNISTA CHINO: CONSIDERACIONES PARA LA  
COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL

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## **ABSTRACT**

China's implication in regional and global counterterrorism affairs has been increasing and developing after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The potential for international cooperation in this regard, specially between liberal countries and China, is affected by normative and methodological disparities and, beyond that, relative unfamiliarity about China's conceptualization of the issue itself. A corpus linguistic analysis of National Congress of the Communist Party of China provides a general understanding of China's general discourse that, followed by an observation of its representation of terrorism, allows us to understand the interrelation between them. This study, therefore, evaluates the real possibilities and limitations for cooperation between liberal countries and China in counterterrorism. It offers a general view of the evolution of China's counterterrorism discourse as a legitimizing tool for particular national and international policies that go in line with its "Party State" system. The importance of this study, therefore, lays on its direct relation to international and human security.

## **RESUMEN**

La implicación de China en la lucha antiterrorista a nivel regional y global ha venido desarrollándose tras los ataques del 11S. Las diferencias normativas y metodológicas entre las potencias liberales y China, así como una relativa falta de conocimiento sobre su conceptualización del terrorismo, afectan directamente a las posibilidades reales de cooperación. Este estudio realiza un análisis crítico de los discursos presidenciales durante los Congresos Nacionales del Partido Comunista Chino. A través del cual pretende contribuir a un entendimiento genérico de las prioridades del gobierno chino y su contextualización del fenómeno terrorista, determinadas por su sistema político de "Partido Estado". Este estudio permite estimar las posibilidades y limitaciones para la cooperación en materia antiterrorista entre las potencias liberales y China. Además, se estudia la evolución del discurso antiterrorista como herramienta de legitimación de políticas antiterroristas a nivel nacional e internacional. La importancia de este estudio radica, pues, en su relación directa con la seguridad internacional y humana.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** China, terrorismo, seguridad, Sistema de Partido Estado, análisis crítico del discurso.

**KEYWORDS:** China, terrorism, security, Party State System, Critical Discourse Analysis.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of China and its involvement within global non-traditional security matters has been increasing in the last decades (Clarke, 2018; Murphy, 2017; Wayne, 2009; Pan Guang 2006; Giglio, 2004). China and its methodologies are often approached from a liberal perspective, which does not match the country's reality. Aiming at closer cooperation with China implies understanding its real national priorities (Duchatel and Ekman, 2015). Official political speeches for national audiences are a good source of information about the underlined ambitions of the Chinese government.

This paper is part of a more extended research project that focuses on China's counterterrorism discourse as a legitimating tool. Taking Critical Terrorism Studies (Jackson 2016) as a theoretical framework, the study explores the application of the term "terrorism" in the context of China. This paper presents some general considerations regarding China's national priorities and a broad picture of the role of its counterterrorism discourse within those. This first approach is necessary to deepen further analysis on the issue.

First, this research extracts Chinese Government's priorities through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of some of the most relevant governmental speeches: National Congress of the Communist Party of China [NCCPC]<sup>2</sup>. Through this analysis, metanarratives and priorities are revealed. Keeping attention to mentions about any of the so-called Three Evil Forces<sup>3</sup>, I consider their role in the broader scope of China's interests.

A broad analysis of the role of the discourse around terrorism within the NCCPC, and a general observation of China's White Papers related to national security allows us to determine how it contributes to actual priorities of the Chinese Government, represented by political stability and Party supremacy.

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<sup>2</sup> The National Congress of the Communist Party of China are celebrated once every five years and they set the most relevant policies for the following years.

<sup>3</sup> Three Evil Forces or Three Evils (三股势力) are used by the Chinese government to refer to "terrorism", "extremism" and "religious extremism". This designation has been popularized after September the 11<sup>th</sup>. (Zhang 2019)

Even though limited time and space does not allow a deeper analysis, this research brings up further questions regarding counter-terrorism discourse in China and its implications for potential cooperation with liberal and non-liberal counterparts abroad.

Setting China's prioritization of Party supremacy as a focal point and, considering its methodologies to foster it, the importance of this study lies in its direct relation to international and human security.

## **2. NARRATIVES, PROPAGANDA AND SOCIAL COHESION IN THE "PARTY STATE".**

Narratives and discourse are both reflections and shapers of ideas (Andrews et al. 2015). Ideology takes a relevant place within discourse, both to foster and combat doctrines that allow or detriment social cohesion. Putnam suggested that those societies that are based on an inclusive national identity "...are better able to overcome the negative consequences of increasing ethno-cultural diversity" (Putnam, 2007). In this regard, we could say that a strong national identity contributes to social cohesion that, consequently, fosters stability. This connection between national identity and social cohesion has been defended by an increasing number of scholars (Reeskens and Wright, 2013; Huntington, 2004; Brubaker, 1992; Smith, 1991). China's government also agrees with this understanding of social cohesion as a prerequisite for national security (Edney, 2015). The question would be where the limits must be set for political intervention in people's ideologies. As we will see later in this article, China's conceptualization of human rights does not correspond to the liberal thought. China's political system represents a Party State or "partocracy", where the Party is the maximum ideological leader (Ming Xia, The New York Times, 2002). Through its discourse, among other means, the Chinese Government promotes particular ideologies, such as Confucianism and Marxism-Leninism, to promote social cohesion and legitimate, that way, the Party.

With this aim, China produces a rather homogeneous official national discourse that is controlled and widely disseminated through a complex governmental propaganda system (宣传系统 xuanchuan xitong), which Shambaugh describes as a "...sprawling bureaucratic establishment,

extending into virtually every medium concerned with the dissemination of information” (Shambaugh, 2007). Propaganda is transmitted through every public mean, including the media, education and other public organs such as cultural institutions or political discourses. This study focuses on the speeches conducted by government officials during NCCPC. As part of the propaganda apparatus, political discourses contribute to the spread of ideologies able to foster national cohesion, sometimes at the cost of individual rights. However, individual and human rights are not inherently Chinese. They derive from the liberalist system, which prevailed after the End of the Cold War. In the last years, liberal values have started being questioned, especially after the election of Donald Trump and Brexit. Alternative ideologies such as those promoted by the Chinese government (Marxism, economic pragmatism and Traditional Chinese Thought) have been gaining momentum (Yan 2018). Most Western scholars take liberal perspectives when analyzing China. This study aims at providing an unbiased study of China’s discourse, understanding it within its political culture and ideological base.

Several academics specialized in Critical Discourse Analysis affirm that there is a close relationship between public discourse and public practices (Graef, da Silva & Lemay-Hebert 2018, Chowdhury and Krebs 2010, Reyes 2011, Kruglanski, Crenshaw *et al.* 2008, Hart, Jarvis *et al.* 2005, Reisigl 2008, Leeuwen 2008, Wodak 2008). Discourse is, therefore, a powerful mean to spread ideology and shape societies. Thus, this study will specially focus on the connections between discourse as a propagandistic vehicle, ideology (nationalism, in particular) and social cohesion and how this is applied by PCC to build a particular discourse that indirectly contributes, also, to the legitimacy of the government while advancing the fight against terrorism.

In the next chapter we will go through an analysis of China’s discourses in front of NCCPC and its connections to national security, more particularly as an instrument that collaterally contributes to counter terrorism.

### **3. NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA: NATIONAL DISCOURSE AND MAIN METANARRATIVES**

One of the most relevant political events in China correspond to its NCCPC. These meetings, celebrated once every five years, mark the main strategies, policies and mandates for the

following five years, representing a meaningful reference to know the main priorities of the Chinese Government.

Looking at the discourse we will first see what the priorities are and, later in this paper, what place terrorism takes within them. Summarizing the priorities of the government at a given moment, these meetings provide a definite source of information at different levels, including national security.

Inconsistencies in official publications of such reports implied an impossibility for steady, systematic corpus gathering. However, all the reports in this thesis have been published by official media<sup>4</sup>.

As stated before, the ultimate goal of this first analysis is to examine the role of “terrorism” within National priorities. After a first reading of each discourse, it is not difficult to notice that terrorism is not a priority within the discourse. In spite of this, the interaction between topics could be relevant to understand what role terrorism plays within the main meta-narratives within the discourse. Therefore, the focus in this chapter is directed on knowing what the dynamics are within the domestic discourse and what role the issue of terrorism plays within it.

To start with my analysis, I first conducted a regular reading of NCCPC between 1992 and 2017<sup>5</sup> to find the main meta-narratives. Then, a more meticulous quantitative analysis is conducted through the methodology of Corpus Linguistics<sup>6</sup>, making use of the Keyword in Context [KWIC] tool of the Lancsbox software<sup>7</sup>. The aim is to reveal metanarratives and priorities of the Chinese Government at a broad level.

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<sup>4</sup> Every gathered document has been collected from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or State-run media agencies such as Beijing Review or Xinhua News Agency)

<sup>5</sup> The events of Tiananmen in 1989 and the decline of the Communist World with the End of Cold War in 1991 put the spotlight on China’s government legitimacy. The 1992 NCCPC is selected as the first celebrated Congress after this turning point in China’s government image abroad. Also, the first recorded terrorist attack in Xinjiang happened in 1991 (Pokalova, 2013). Pokalova offers a very meaningful gathering of protests and terrorists attacks in Xinjiang, as well as government measures.

<sup>6</sup> Corpus Linguistics allows... “researchers to uncover linguistic evidence for prevailing/majority and resistant/minority discourses as a large corpus is likely to show a range of ideological positions – something which an analysis of a single text may be less likely to reveal.” (Baker, Paul: Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis. [Homepage; retrieved: 2014-02-24]). Due to the large number of texts and other linguistic units, corpus-linguistic analyses “are always based on the evaluation of some kind of frequencies” (Gries 2009: 2)

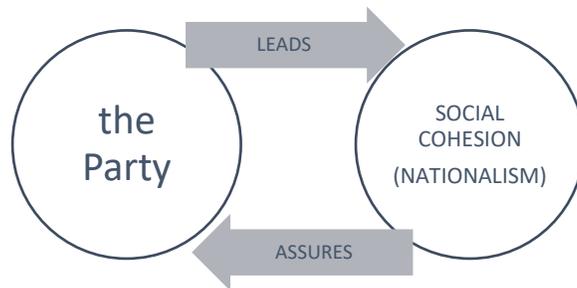
<sup>7</sup> Lancsbox is “...a software package for the analysis of language data and corpora developed at Lancaster University Lancaster University”. <http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/> (accessed August 2018).

Through a general reading of these speeches, it is possible to locate some main topics that are directly related to these keywords. These speeches turn around three main meta-narratives:

- Party's leadership
- Development
- Ideology

As subthemes we could find opening up, Marxism-Leninism, Deng Xiaoping Theory...etc. Based on a "Party State" political system, it is not surprising to find the following relations or logic: to achieve a well-off society, development is needed. In order to achieve development, social cohesion and the leadership of the Party are needed.

In line with its ideological grounds, we find that everything in the speeches derive from and is directed to the Party. The Party leads national ideology and development. Those two, together, allow social cohesion through well-being and nationalism and finally, those return to the Party in the form of popular support (Edney 2015).



Sept 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 has been taken as a turning point due to its proven relevance for the change in the counterterrorism discourse globally. Representing the beginning of the fourth wave of terrorism (Rapoport 2013), this event also had influence on the Chinese context (Clarke 2018, Purbrick 2017, Zhou 2017, Jai 2016, Scot Tunner 2016, Clarke 2008, Giglio 2004). It seemed relevant for this research, therefore, to explore potential variations between pre and post 9.11 priorities.

In order to support my analysis, I proceed to a more precise dissection of each speech through a quantitative analysis of the most frequent words within them. Table 1 below shows the most relevant keywords in these speeches. In order to sharpen my analysis, this board only shows

those keywords which relative frequency<sup>8</sup> surpass the cutting sum of 50. We find out that in 25 years and, Despite the events of September the 11<sup>th</sup>, main keywords remained.

Table 1. Keywords in NCCPC 1992-2017

<u>1992 v 1997</u>	<u>2002-2017</u>
Party (88.050629)	Party (95.499797)
Development (58.033369)	Development (86.265147)
People (55.782075)	People (70.611289)
	System (69.147259)

A general reading of these speeches and the KWIC tools both proved the emphasis placed on the Party. Its relevance remains regular throughout the years, keeping regular mentions to it throughout the discourse, probably aiming at creating links between every topic in the discourse and the Party’s leadership.

As Purbrick states it, “...*Chinese government counter-terrorist efforts are part of wider motivations relating to domestic stability, foreign policy, geo-political relations, economic growth, and nationalism*” (Purbrick 2017). It is argued that ideology provides the cultural basis for the legitimacy of state power and that national culture is also a source of legitimacy and national cohesion; therefore, problems in either of these areas could spark a national crisis (Han, 2004). Understanding the prioritizing goal of keeping PCC’s supremacy for domestic stability through ideology, how is the discourse built so it assures political stability and, what role does “terrorism” play towards this aim? Religion, ethnic minorities, separatism and poverty are prone to trigger social segmentation, implying a threat to national security (Han, 2004). From a Chinese perspective, “terrorism” would only be another result of social division and cultural differentiations. As we will see later in this paper, precisely “terrorism”, “separatist” and “religious” represent the most frequent words among a set of selected terms related to China’s conceptualization of the problem. This could give clues about China’s classification of terrorism as one of the three evil forces (“terrorism, separatism and religious extremism”). Despite the

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<sup>8</sup> Relative (or normalized) frequency “...answers the question how often might we assume we will see the word per x words of running text?’ Normalised frequencies are usually given per thousand words or per million words.” In our analysis Lancsbox provides relative frequencies given per 10k words.

differentiation the term “terrorism” adopts in liberal countries, in China, those three terms are grouped together within the term “three evil forces”, representing interrelated consequences that could be diminished through social cohesion.

National security is dependent to power, and such power depends itself “...on its political stability, social cohesion and economic productivity” (Leffler 1990). In this aspect, an appealing discourse can foster a more cohesive and, consequently, more powerful society (Edney 2015, Wang and Lu 2008). As we have seen through this analysis, the role of the Party to operate this power is actively reflected within China’s discourse.

Thus, NCCPC speeches show a tendency to foster nationalism and cohesion through the leadership of the Party, ideology and development. Even though terrorism is not a priority within these discourses, a quantitative analysis of China’s contextualization and representation of the issue within its prominent domestic discourse would rise further questions about the interaction between counterterrorism and China’s higher priorities.

This realization sets a take-off for the rest of national discourse analysis, but a deeper understanding of China’s instrumentalization of terrorism needs a more precise examination. Aiming at this goal, next chapter conducts a new quantitative analysis that pays special attention to China’s interpretation of terrorism within the same speeches. This will allow us to understand more in detail China’s understanding of the issue, as well as its effect on greater priorities.

#### **4. TERRORISM WITHIN THE CHINESE NATIONAL CONTEXT**

The importance China has been placing on non-traditional security matters such as terrorism has been increasing in the last decades (Zhang 2019, Purbrick 2017, Clarke 2008, Guang 2006). Despite this tendency, its public visibility has not been evident until 2013, when the National Counterterrorism Leading Group celebrated its first conference (Zhang 2019).

As we have seen, China’s official discourse on “terrorism”<sup>9</sup> has not intrinsically been emphasized within NCCPCs. National discourse in this context has been shaped around other

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<sup>9</sup> As it has been said before, China’s conceptualization of terrorism does not correspond to United Nations’ definition of the matter. Due to this, this analysis will need to adopt a Chinese perspective for its analysis. This allows a deeper understanding of China’s intrinsic interpretation.

security matters. This chapter interprets China's consideration of "terrorism" for its domestic security, as well as its evolution in the last decades, in order to find clues for further research.

Since the ultimate interest of this study is understanding the role of counter-terrorism discourse, I steadily paid attention to topics that shared a connection to it. Due to the inaccuracy of China's conceptualization of the term, for this analysis it was needed to consider the term "Three Evil Forces" and its relationship to other phenomena such as separatism, ethnicity or religion.

As it was done in the previous chapter, a thorough quantitative study is conducted in order to determine the importance and characterization of the Three Evil Forces within these speeches. This paper only includes a broad qualitative revision of the most relevant fragments within the speeches.

#### **4.1. THE THREE EVIL FORCES AND THEIR REPRESENTATION WITHIN NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESSES. A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

China's understanding of terrorism does not correspond to United Nations' definition. According to Zhou, "separatism", "religious extremism" and "terrorism" are faced by the Chinese Government as dependent to each other: "separatism is the ultimate goal; whereas terrorism is the instrument to achieve the goal; and extremism lays the ideological foundations of terrorism". (Huanling, *apud* Ramraj et al. 2012). Consequently, it is needed to carry on, as much as possible, an unbiased analysis of China's reality.

I therefore carry out a quantitative analysis of some specifically targeted terms connected to China's Three Evils. To select these terms, I considered the main nouns involved (terrorism, religious extremism/radicalism and separatism) and their derived words (terrorist, religion, religions, religious, extremist, separatist and territorial integrity)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> This particular selection of terms is based on China's conceptualization of three evil forces, allowing us to understand its contextualization. Selecting also derived nouns, we broad the scope of the analysis, also getting an idea of how these terms are presented to the audience (talking about terrorists instead of terrorism would imply, to some extent, a blaming actor instead of the issue itself, showing an us/them dichotomy.). These tables only include the final selection of terms with a relative frequency above 1.

Tables 2 and 3 show the results of a quantitative approach to the terms. In table 2 we see the total number of allusions to these terms within the discourse from 1992 until 2017. There is a division between 1997 and 2002 due to the milestone September 11<sup>th</sup> marked. Also, we see the relative frequency of each term within each discourse. This allows us to see the evolution of patterns in term use.

Noticed the general low frequency of these terms within the discourse, only words with a total relative frequency above 1 are considered.

*Table 2. Three evil forces-related keywords analysis within discourses 1992-2017 as a whole*

TERM	1992 y 1997	2002-2017
Terrorism	0 mentions	9 mentions in total (rel. freq. 1.013411)
Separatist	0 mentions	13 mentions in total (rel. Freq. 1.463816)
Religious	2 mentions (rel. Freq. 0.500288)	12 mentions in total (rel. Freq. 1.351214)

*Table 3. Frequency of selected terms within independent speeches*

2002. 16 <sup>th</sup> NCCPC	2007. 17 <sup>th</sup> NCCPC	2012. 18 <sup>th</sup> NCCPC	2017. 19 <sup>th</sup> NCCPC
4 mentions (rel.freq. 1.921414)	1 mention (rel.fre. 0483395)	1 mention (rel. freq. 0.449802)	3 mentions (rel.freq. 1.196649)
4 mentions (rel. freq. 1.921414)	1 mention (rel.fre.0.483395)	3 mentions (rel. freq.1.349406)	5 mentions (rel. freq.1.994416)
5 mentions (rel. Freq. 2.401768)	2 mentions (rel. Freq. 0.966791)	1 mention (rel. Freq. 0.449802)	4 mentions (rel. Freq. 1.595533)

Going through an individual analysis of relative frequencies for each word, we can see certain repeated patterns:

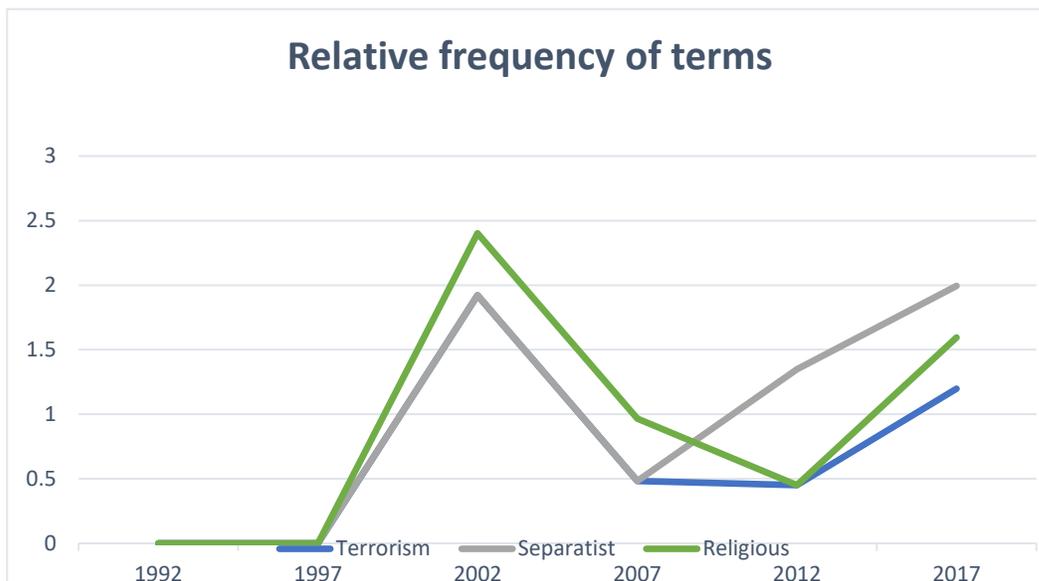
- **Terrorism:** Relative frequency went from zero to 1.013411 after September 11<sup>th</sup>. We also see how the relative frequency drops until 2017, when it raises again (without still reaching the levels of 2002). None of the references were related to particular cases.

- **Separatist:** We observe the same pattern. The word was not applied in 1992 and 1997. However, in 2002 it was used 5 times, decreasing its use down to 2 (2007), 1 (2012) and increasing again in 2017 up to 4 times. Most of these mentions were related to Taiwán.

- **Religious:** As it happened with other terms such as “terrorism” and “separatism”, “religious” also shows a frequency curve in “U” shape. It is interesting, though, to see that this term was already mentioned prior 9.11.

The graphic below shows the use pattern of the most relevant words “terrorism”, “separatist” and “religious”. In 2002, right after the 11S attacks, there is a raise in relative frequency in these three words.

*Graphic 1. “Terrorism”, “separatist”, “religious” use patterns within NCCPC. (Relative frequency)*



From the graphic above we could reach some new hypothesis about the NCCPC:

- September the 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 represents a milestone in the inclusion of the three terms within China’s discourse.

- “Religious” was the most emphasized term within the discourse, followed by “separatist” and “terrorism”, which take a second place. This is interesting because religious

extremism is, according to China's conceptualization of the Three Evils, the ideological foundation of the separatism and, consequently, terrorism. As we have seen, there is predominance of a dogmatic Communist ideology for social and political progress realization (Yang 2012). Once again, this fact reconfirms the emphasis the Chinese Government places on ideology, both as strength- if it goes in line with the Party-, or as a threat, -if it goes against the Party's priority.

- There is once again a peak of attention to these terms after 2012. There are several facts that could have triggered this outcome: violent attacks in mainland China in 2013 and 2014. Also, Xi Jinping was proclaimed president in 2013.

These observations raise interesting hypothesis for further research. In this paper, through a quantitative analysis, we could conclude that the three evils were not a priority within the security discourse of the National Party Congress Reports. However, it was possible to determine, among the Evil Forces-related terms, which ones were the most emphasized ones and, also, patterns among these. In order to go into detail, I now proceed to a deeper analysis of these terms.

## **5. SELECTION AND BROAD ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT FRAGMENTS WITHIN NCCPC: 2002 AND 2017**

The Three Evils do not represent a priority within the National Party Congress Reports. However, a deeper analysis of the most relevant terms (terrorism, separatist and religious) could give us further clues about their representation and function within the broader discourse. This analysis is based on Critical Discourse Analysis [CDA] and, more particularly, the work of academics such as Theo Van Leeuwen<sup>11</sup>.

Some scholars like Leeuwen paid special attention to adjectives due to their semantic content and capacity to evaluate or relate to other nominal concepts (Kamp, 1975; Morzicki, 2015). According to Leeuwen, "Evaluative adjectives play a key role in moral evaluation legitimation"

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<sup>11</sup> Even though other academics such as Van Dijk or Fairclough were considered for CDA, Leeuwen's research, focused on the Critical Discourse Analysis as a tool for legitimation, seemed the most convenient for this particular study.

(Leeuwen, 2008. Pg 110). Using LancsBox, I extracted the ten most frequent adjective in my corpus.

*Table 4. Five most common adjectives in NCCPC*

Adjective	Relative frequency
Chinese	101.781170
Ethnic	96.126661
National	70.681368
Religious	59.372349
New	42.408821
Social	39.581566
Socialist	36.754312
Political	33.927057
Common	31.099802
Other	28.272547

As we can see in the board above, these adjectives are closely related to China’s Party State System and, once again, its ideology (Chinese, national, socialist, political, common...). However, no adjective implies moral evaluation, they are mostly designative (Leech, 1966). These adjectives are in line with the main priorities of the discourse during NCCPC, related to the People, ideology and social cohesion. Notice that “ethnic” and “religious” appear as two of the five most common adjectives within these fragments, representing two imperatives for the Chinese Government. Due to their direct connection to my previous quantitative analysis, I proceed to a more detailed observation of these adjectives within their context in the fragments.

Using the tool KWIC (keyword in context) of Lancsbox, we can see what context our words of interest are embedded in. This can give us further information about how these adjectives are applied.

After a gathering of all mentions to “ethnic” and their contexts, we observe that most references to ethnicity are either positive, neutral or cohesive. The only two negative contextualization of ethnicity take place in 2002 and 2017. Also, these are the only two that include the term ethnicity and terrorism within the same paragraph, which makes it interesting to explore meaningful similarities and differences between them

*Table 4. Context of “ethnic” and “religious” within NCCPC<sup>12</sup>*

Fragment	Left	Node	Right
2002	...have new manifestations. Local conflicts triggered by...	ethnic	...or <u>religious</u> contradictions and border or territorial...
2017	...as well as violent and <u>terrorist</u> activities...	ethnic	... <u>separatist</u> activities, and <u>religious extremist</u> activities...

The Chinese Government’s reference to terrorism in 2002 depicts it as an external problem, not a domestic issue. On the other hand, 2017 reference becomes closer to China, also directly alluding for the first time to the three components of the Three Evils.

Apart from those in 2002 and 2017, other references are related to either social cohesion or the work of the Party to improve the conditions of the ethnic minorities. Adjectives such as “harmonizing” and the use of adverbs such as “all” and plural forms of “ethnic groups” promote the idea of inclusion. Through this language, ethnic minorities are embedded within Chinese society, publicly declaring that their “legitimate rights” are being defended.

In 2002, there are only two fragments in which terrorism is spoken of (paragraphs 129 and 134 respectively). Both mentions belong to chapter IX “The International Situation and Our External Work”. It is, therefore, mainly considered an external issue.

On the other hand, in 2017, the mentions to terrorism are more spread all about the speech. First mentions are under the first chapter, titled “The Past Five Years: Our Work and Historic Change”, particularly under the sub-chapter “We have initiated a new stage in strengthening and

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<sup>12</sup> Due to limited space, table 4 only includes the relevant paragraphs to be taken into account in this research. For further reference and a complete table contact the researcher ([belen\\_gn@hotmail.com](mailto:belen_gn@hotmail.com))

revitalizing the armed forces.”. Therefore, it is considered a national issue, dependent to military action.

The second and third mentions are under chapter XII, titled “Following a Path of Peaceful Development and Working to Build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind”, connected to domestic development, but also, to the future of the whole human race. This reference suggests China’s responsibility towards humanity<sup>13</sup>. Terrorism is embedded within China’s responsibilities to contribute to a shared future. In this paragraph, cooperation and international dialogue to fight terrorism in all forms is highlighted.

Finally, a fourth fragment mentions “terrorist” within chapter VIII, titled “Growing Better at Ensuring and Improving People’s Wellbeing and Strengthening and Developing New Approaches to Social Governance”, under the sub-chapter “Effectively safeguarding national security”. It is here where we find the first direct mention to the Three Evils at once “terrorist activities, ethnic separatist activities, and religious extremist activities”. In this paragraph, the president calls for a “synergy of the whole society to safeguard national security”. Also, the beginning of the paragraph introduces the protection of the interests of “Chinese people of all ethnic groups”. This provides, once again, a clue about the emphasis the Chinese Government places on social cohesion and its interest to promote an idea of a single Chinese society, composed by multiple and equal ethnicities but, above all, Chinese.

We could take some conclusions from this analysis. To start with, China’s assumption of the concept “terrorism” took place after September the 11<sup>th</sup>. Also, and especially in the last years, China’s conceptualization of terrorism is enclosed together with separatism and religious radicalism. We can also perceive a shift of China’s responsibility for the issue, turning into a relatively bigger sense of national implication towards it. China’s contextualization of terrorism and its fight is connected to social cohesion, paying a close attention to ethnicity as Chinese nationals, above all.

These findings are useful to drive our analysis into a more specific framework, able to provide deeper understanding of China’s interpretation and representation of the issue. To do so, I aim at official government documents dedicated to National Defense. After the National Party

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<sup>13</sup> This is considered by Leeuwen as a dialectic technique to legitimize particular actions as a “moral duty”.

Congress Reports, White Papers of China represent a more specialized and regular source of Government tendencies.

## **6. CHINA'S NATIONAL DEFENCE WHITE PAPERS. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS**

White Papers<sup>14</sup> gather the strategies to apply according to a country's objective interests, aiming at relatively constant priorities and goals (García Calvo 2010). Therefore, analyzing China's White Papers directly related to my case of study would allow a deeper understanding of China's consideration of terrorism as a national security issue.

Taking a look at the titles of China's White Papers, it is possible to notice that last white paper, issued in April 2019 and entitled "The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang", is the first one to directly mention "terrorism" and actually connecting it particularly to Xinjiang. The Chinese government establishes a relationship between the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and the issue of terrorism. This fact locates the focus of attention of this segment to Xinjiang and the discourse around it within White Papers.

Out of the 111 White Papers, there is a total of 7 dedicated to Xinjiang. The frequency of these have been increased since 2015, dedicating them especially to ethnic unity, human rights, preventing extremism, culture and, finally in 2019, directly entitled "Fight against terrorism".

Looking at the dates of white paper publications related to Xinjiang, it is possible to notice that the first one, after September the 11<sup>th</sup>, has a chapter dedicated to the origin of "East Turkestan" issue<sup>15</sup>. Also linked to this, we find that the white paper dedicated to China's National Defense in 2002 is the first one to have a chapter exclusively dedicated to anti-terror cooperation, under chapter "VI. International Security Cooperation". This contextualization of terrorism as an international issue reaffirms my previous assessment, suggesting certain distance to the problem.

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<sup>14</sup> Defined by Cambridge Dictionary as "a government report on a particular subject giving information and details of future planned laws" <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/white-paper>

<sup>15</sup> It is no by chance that the first white paper dedicated to Xinjiang points out China's domestic separatist group, relating it to Islam and Al-Qaeda.

However, within this chapter there is a mention to “East Turkistan Islamic Move-ment”, announcing its inclusion within the UN Security Council list of terrorist organizations.

Next white paper related to Xinjiang is not published until 2009, two months after the grave riots in Xinjiang in July that same year.

Then, there is no publication of any white paper related to Xinjiang until 2015, coinciding with major attacks in Beijing in Oct 2013 and Kunming and Urumqi in March and May 2014, respectively. Since then until 2019, white papers regarding Xinjiang have been regularly published at an annual basis. Each of these have been related to topics such as the preservation of ethnic culture, the development of the region, the freedom of religion, social stability and national unity and harmony, human rights...It is remarkable, though, that in 2016 there is, for the first time, a chapter exclusively dedicated to “preventing and combating religious extremism” (note there is no mention to terrorism in the title).

Once again, in China’s White Papers, we could observe an increasing focalization of the issue of terrorism by the Chinese Government, directing the attention towards Xinjiang. This does not mean that domestic political efforts were not actually applied before, but it reflects a tendency from the Chinese Government to publicly speak about it.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on a “Party State” system, the discourse within NCCPC seems to be directed to the development of a common national ideology that protects political stability and Party’s supremacy.

Through the analysis of the NCCPC we understood that within this context, the issue of terrorism is not a priority. It is possible to find that it is in 2002 when the term “terrorism” abruptly appears a total of nine times, setting Sept 11th, 2001 as the most plausible event to trigger this shift. As we have also observed, it is in 2017 when we find, for the first time, a direct reference to the three evil forces. Together with the last White Paper, issued in April 2019 and directly related to Xinjiang, the discourse around terrorism in China becomes more assertive and focalized. We

could say that the issue of terrorism has been shifting from a more blurred, distant conceptualization towards a more specific, interior one.

Considering this change, we could conclude that China is becoming more confident and concrete in its discourse around terrorism, focalizing it on the domestic conflict located in Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

At a national level and aiming at a national audience, the Chinese Government will make use of the discourse to promote social cohesion through nationalism, Marxist-Leninist theory, the “Chinese spirit” ...among others. Through this national dogma, the Chinese government strikes separatism, which is, from their conceptualization of the Three Evils, the goal behind terrorism, triggered by ideological extremism.

Even though the Chinese government relays on other policies and methodologies to fight separatism, in this research we focused on its ideological grounds and the discourse as a tool to protect the Party’s supremacy. As we could expect due to China’s “Party State” system, in order to cope with the problem of the Three Evil Forces, the Chinese government relays on ideological indoctrination, carried out by a powerful propagandistic bureaucracy that promotes patriotism. In combination with more practical measures applied in China, the debate lays on the blurred boundaries between security and liberty which, from a liberal point of view could neglect individual rights.

The security-liberty debate has been also present among liberal countries, especially after the application of some polemic security measures in the United States and Europe after September the 11<sup>th</sup>. This dichotomy finds in China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization a political counterpart that does not follow the until now predominant liberal system. Limitations for successful cooperation are, therefore, encountered. This research deconstructs NCCPC discourse in the search of the main priorities that drive China’s strategies against the Three Evils. We get to understand the normative differences that concern liberal countries regarding human rights neglect in China. Furthermore, the rise of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and China’s influence in it makes it worth paying attention to China’s discourse and its potential repercussions for international and human security.

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