

Research Article

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The Representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese High School Ideology and Politics Textbooks

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Abstract

Background/purpose. In recent years, the Chinese government has increasingly integrated "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" into national education policy. This study investigates how Xi Jinping's ideology is represented in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, highlighting the state's use of education for ideological dissemination and political socialization.

Materials/methods. This study adopts a historical and content analysis approach and draws upon a comprehensive dataset of officially sanctioned high school textbooks. The analysis focuses on recurring themes, discursive strategies, and ideological narratives concerning political, economic, and cultural representations of Xi Jinping's leadership.

Results. The findings reveal that Xi Jinping is prominently depicted across multiple thematic areas, including (1) traditional culture, (2) national ideology, (3) socialism, (4) the role of the Communist Party of China (CPC), (5) economic reforms, and (6) international cooperation. These portrayals collectively emphasize Party loyalty, national rejuvenation, and ideological unity.

Conclusion. Chinese high school textbooks serve as powerful instruments for reinforcing state ideology, portraying Xi Jinping as a political leader and as the symbolic core of national identity and progress. The emphasis on a singular ideological framework limits critical engagement, positioning students within a tightly controlled political and cultural development narrative. This study contributes to the broader discourse on authoritarian resilience and political education by illustrating how state narratives are embedded in school curricula. It underscores the need for further research into the educational mechanisms that shape youth political consciousness and the long-term implications for governance and civic identity in China.

1. Introduction

In the mid-21st century, China is poised to assert its place as the world's dominant economic and cultural power. Central to this trajectory is the ideology and vision articulated under Xi Jinping's leadership through the concept of the "Chinese Dream," which parallels the "American Dream" in its narrative complexity and cultural resonance (Peters, 2019). This ideology, underpinned by Xi Jinping Thought, is defined by a two-stage development plan that prioritizes socialist modernization and positions China as a formidable modern socialist country by 2050 (Peters, 2019). At the core of this vision is the strategic reassertion of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) historical and ideological underpinnings, which have persisted post-Mao and continue to evolve under Xi's leadership. Under Xi, the CPC has intricately intertwined its ideological tenets with its national and international strategies, manifesting a blend of Marxist and traditional Chinese elements to maintain its governance and influence (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018).

Xi's reiteration of Chinese socialist characteristics in the new era is a guiding framework for national development and a political linchpin ensuring the CPC's grip on power (Zhang, 2020). Emphasizing innovation and modernization, Xi's policies have facilitated China's transition into a formidable global political force, wielding significant military and economic sway in the Asia-Pacific and beyond (Lam, 2015). However, this ascent has not been devoid of challenges. The ideological narrative championed by Xi necessitates nuanced governance strategies encompassing traditional values and revolutionary tenets, directing both domestic policies and international diplomacy (Klimeš et al., 2018). Propaganda and political discourse, thus, play a crucial role, evolving from Maoist roots and asserting influence across multiple spheres within China and on the international stage (Klimeš et al., 2018).

Moreover, integrating Xi Jinping's ideological framework into educational systems has become imperative for consolidating the ideological governance of future generations. By embedding socialist thought in academic curricula, particularly in colleges and universities, the CPC seeks to fulfill its moral and ideological objectives (Chen, 2020). Such integration reflects the broader aim to construct a "spiritual socialist civilization," one that harmonizes material prosperity with ideological and cultural advancement (Brown & Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018). Throughout this ideological progression, the CPC's strategic narratives reinforce China's historical path while envisaging its future role on the global stage, capturing the essence of Xi's vision of a rejuvenated nation tethered to traditional and socialist ideologies (Kashkinbayeva, 2019).

Since Xi Jinping assumed leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 2012, China has experienced profound transformations in governance, economic strategy, and foreign policy. His leadership marks a decisive shift from the collective governance model under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, moving toward centralized decision-making and strongman rule (Baranovitch, 2020; Fewsmith, 2021). Unlike his predecessors, who sought to balance power among elite factions, Xi has consolidated authority, restructured key institutions, and redefined China's ideological and political trajectory (Lee, 2017). This shift has sparked extensive academic debate concerning its long-term implications, particularly in domestic policy, economic development, military modernization, and China's global influence.

Xi's rise to power was neither expected nor straightforward. Initially viewed as a consensus candidate, he quickly solidified his position through an extensive anti-corruption campaign that strengthened his control over the Party, military, and government institutions (Fewsmith, 2021). This political consolidation was driven by an elite consensus that China faced a governance crisis, necessitating a departure from collective leadership in favor of a more centralized, top-down approach (Baranovitch, 2020). Institutional changes, including the establishment of central

organizations to bypass entrenched bureaucratic interests, enabled Xi to advance his strategic vision with unprecedented authority (Lee, 2017; Zhao, 2022).

A defining feature of Xi's governance is reinforcing ideological discipline within the CCP and state institutions. His leadership has emphasized ideological consolidation through promoting nationalist narratives and the enshrinement of "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" in China's constitution (Lukin, 2023). These ideological shifts and reforms in military command structures have significantly altered China's political landscape, signaling a move toward personalist rule and centralized state authority (Voskressenski, 2020).

Beyond political centralization, Xi has restructured China's economic governance, prioritizing state-led development, technological self-sufficiency, and global economic expansion. His administration has promoted "top-level design," a strategy that recentralizes policymaking and reduces local experimentation, diverging from the more flexible, bottom-up approach favored during Hu Jintao's tenure (Heffer & Schubert, 2023). However, rather than completely stifling local policy innovation, Xi has redefined its purpose, requiring local officials to experiment within strictly defined ideological and political constraints (Heffer & Schubert, 2023). This paradoxical approach—limiting local autonomy while maintaining pressure for policy experimentation—has created new political and administrative dynamics within the governance structure.

Xi's economic policy has also extended beyond domestic borders through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which integrates economic expansion with geopolitical strategy (Chávez Mazuelos, 2022). Under his leadership, China has actively sought to reshape global economic governance, promoting alternative trade agreements and fostering economic dependencies among partner nations. However, these efforts have faced increasing international scrutiny, particularly from Western countries concerned about China's strategic ambitions (Iqbal, Waheed, & Hayat, 2024).

Xi has shifted China's approach to foreign policy from Deng Xiaoping's "hide your strength, bide your time" doctrine to a more assertive global stance. This transition is driven by two key pillars: military modernization and soft power expansion. His administration has aggressively pursued the modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), centralizing military command structures, expanding nuclear deterrence capabilities, and advancing anti-satellite and missile defense systems (Voskressenski, 2020). These efforts have positioned China as a formidable military power, significantly altering regional security dynamics and heightening tensions with the United States and its allies. Simultaneously, Xi has intensified China's soft power efforts, portraying China as a benevolent global leader advocating for a "Community of Shared Future" (Chávez Mazuelos, 2022). However, this diplomatic strategy is often contradicted by the rise of "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy," which reflects an increasingly nationalistic and confrontational tone in China's international engagements (Iqbal et al., 2024).

A key aspect of Xi's leadership is the reassertion of ideology as a foundational governance tool. This is evident in his systematic reinforcement of ideological education, mainly through high school textbooks and academic curricula, which serve as instruments for disseminating state narratives (Zhao, 2022). These educational strategies play a dual role: legitimizing Party rule while ensuring that future generations internalize state-approved perspectives on national development, economic policy, and foreign relations.

The tightening of ideological control extends beyond education, affecting broader governance responsiveness. Studies indicate that under Xi's leadership, government responsiveness to public concerns has declined, as increased political centralization has reduced citizen participation in governance (Qiaoan & Teets, 2020). While previous administrations engaged in limited political consultation, Xi's governance model prioritizes stability, national security, and ideological unity over public engagement (Jaros & Pan, 2017).

Recent research on the representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks reveals a systematic integration of his political philosophy into educational frameworks. Zhang's (2024) critical discourse analysis highlights how Xi's "Chinese Dream" narrative is structured through thematic representations and discursive strategies in official texts, emphasizing socialist modernization and national rejuvenation. This aligns with broader curriculum reforms, such as the 2021 Ministry of Education mandate to embed "Xi Jinping Thought" across primary to tertiary education, aimed at fostering loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Marxist ideals (BBC News, 2021).

The personalization of Xi's leadership, termed "Grandpa Xi" in primary school materials, reflects a strategic cultivation of his political persona. Guo (2021) observes that textbooks increasingly center on Xi's ideology rather than the CCP collectively, echoing Mao-era personality cult tactics. This shift is reinforced through narratives that frame students as "qualified builders and successors of socialism," explicitly tying their development to Xi's governance (Guo, 2021). Similarly, Torigian (2021) notes Xi's ideological duality—rejecting radicalism while emphasizing unwavering party loyalty and nationalistic values, which textbooks operationalize through themes like national security and technological innovation.

Methodologically, studies combine discourse-historical approaches and corpus linguistics to analyze textbook content. For instance, Zhang and Guo (2024) identify three categories of human rights issues in English curricula: taboo topics (e.g., civil liberties), decontextualized global challenges, and state-promoted narratives that avoid domestic critiques. This selective representation underscores the tension between propaganda and genuine human rights education. Meanwhile, Tsang and Cheung (2024) contextualize Xi's ideological project within broader policy frameworks, arguing that his "Thought" is a tool for consolidating authority and legitimizing CCP rule. The literature collectively illustrates how Xi's ideological indoctrination in schools prioritizes political conformity over critical thinking, reflecting China's evolving governance strategies under his leadership.

Despite extensive research on Xi Jinping's political and economic reforms, there is limited scholarship on how his leadership is represented in educational materials. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the depiction of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, which serve as key instruments for ideological dissemination. By examining these textbooks' content, structure, and themes, this research aims to provide deeper insights into how political narratives are constructed and transmitted to younger generations.

Furthermore, this study contributes to broader discussions on political socialization, state ideology, and China's evolving governance model. It situates Xi's leadership within a historical and comparative framework, engaging with existing literature on political centralization, ideological education, and elite governance (Dittmer, 2016). Unlike prior leadership models emphasizing collective decision-making and economic pragmatism, Xi has pursued a highly centralized governance approach, reshaping China's domestic and international trajectory. His leadership philosophy is deeply embedded in China's political discourse and educational system, ensuring its long-term institutionalization.

By analyzing the representation of Xi Jinping in high school ideology and politics textbooks, this study sheds light on how state narratives shape national identity and political consciousness. Additionally, it raises critical questions about the broader impact of ideological education, prompting further inquiry into the intersection of governance, political legitimacy, and educational policy in contemporary China.

2. Literature Review

In 2021, China's Ministry of Education mandated the integration of "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" into the national curriculum across all educational levels—a move affecting over 200 million students nationwide (BBC News, 2021). This policy raises a critical question: How is political ideology reshaped and disseminated in contemporary China through formal education? As China ascends as a global superpower under Xi Jinping's centralized leadership, understanding how youth are socialized into the state's ideological framework becomes urgent and significant.

2.1. Research on Chinese national ideology

In "The Study of Mao Zedong Thought" (2011), Huang Shihu utilizes dialectical and historical materialism as fundamental research methodologies to examine Mao Zedong's ideological theories thoroughly. By integrating literary, historical, and comparative analyses, Huang explores Mao's ideas' historical background and structural underpinnings. The study delves into Mao's ideological framework's development and core principles, assessing its significance in contemporary contexts. Huang highlights that Mao's ideology fundamentally asserts the crucial role of ideology in shaping political and economic structures within specific historical settings. Moreover, the study explains how Mao articulated ideological struggle as encompassing both class and ideological struggle, each essential for maintaining political order. Additionally, Mao's theory emphasizes the intrinsic connection between ideology and political struggle, highlighting its importance in governance and societal transformation.

In "Analysis of Overseas Research on Mao Zedong Thought Since 1950 (年代以来国外毛泽东思想研究论著概述)," Gong Gege (2014) provides a detailed examination of both domestic and international scholarly research on Mao Zedong Thought from 1950 onward. The study systematically investigates the sources, historical context, formation, development, content, and influence of Mao's ideology, offering valuable insights into its evolution and impact. Gong identifies several key features of this research field: (1) an extensive research timeline with distinct turning points and a substantial number of engaged scholars; (2) diverse developmental trends and a broad scope of research, although disparities in depth and balance persist; and (3) distinctive research methodologies that serve as valuable reference points for further scholarly inquiry. Overall, the study underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of research on Mao Zedong Thought, highlighting the need for deeper and more balanced investigations in future studies, as noted by Dabphet in 2018.

In "The Three Representative Concepts and the Party's Modernization Construction," Zhang and Dai (2019) explore the relationship between the Three Represents theory and the modernization efforts of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The study concludes that the Three Represents outline the Party's responsibilities in shaping society and improving people's lives through three core ideological dimensions. Specifically, it emphasizes the CPC's role in representing advanced manufacturing requirements and the trajectory of cultural development in China. Zhang and Dai identify three key aspects of this relationship: (1) the theory facilitates the evolution of Party ideology, aligning it with modern governance principles; (2) the Three Represents has been progressively integrated into the legal and institutional framework of the Party, enhancing its governance capacity; and (3) the theory plays a crucial role in advancing the CPC's political construction within a rapidly modernizing society. This study highlights the enduring influence of the Three Represents theory in shaping the CPC's ideological and structural development, reinforcing its ability to govern effectively in contemporary China.

In "Research on Xi Jinping's Economic Thought," Tian and Li (2022) and Zhou Zhijun (2022) explore the core principles and theoretical framework underlying Xi Jinping's economic vision. The

study identifies several key components, including the new development period, new development thought, and new development model, along with evolving economic conditions and the focus on high-quality development. It discusses implementing seven action programs, establishing a modern socialist economic system, the theory of anti-poverty with Chinese characteristics, and the concept of a shared human destiny. Zhou (2022) highlights five defining theoretical characteristics of Xi Jinping's economic thought: theoretical innovation, people-centeredness, scientific thinking, an international perspective, and theoretical sophistication. These characteristics form the foundation for understanding Xi Jinping's economic philosophy, which reflects a systematic, pragmatic, and globally oriented approach. The study's original contribution lies in synthesizing these theoretical dimensions to offer a comprehensive perspective on the evolution and significance of Xi Jinping's economic thought. It emphasizes how this framework shapes China's modern economic strategy, furthering its development and global standing (Hailiang, 2018).

In "Analysis of the Theoretical Innovation of Xi Jinping's Economic Thought on the Political Economy of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," Zhou Shaotong (2023) delves into the theoretical advancements of Xi Jinping's economic thought within the framework of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The study highlights several key innovations, such as developing a new theoretical framework that reinforces and expands the foundation of a socialist political economy with Chinese characteristics—systematically interpreting previously fragmented economic theories, bringing coherence to China's economic philosophy. Integration of historical theoretical legacies contributes to a comprehensive understanding of China's economic and political history. Zhou (2023) emphasizes that these theoretical innovations deepen insights into China's political system and economic governance, providing a structured approach to analyzing the ideological framework guiding Chinese leadership. The study further illustrates how these principles underpin further research, offering a nuanced understanding of Xi Jinping's ideological approach and its implications for contemporary economic policy. By shaping the ideological basis of China's leadership, the innovations in Xi Jinping's thought facilitate a clearer analysis and understanding of China's modern political and economic strategies. This work underscores the importance of these innovations in guiding contemporary discourse and policy development within China's unique political economy.

2.2. Research on President Xi Jinping

In "Analysis of Xi Jinping's Modern Economic Thought with Chinese Characteristics (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想研究)," Li Nianjun (2019) explores the socialist economic thought of Xi Jinping in the context of China's development during the new era. The study concentrates on the theoretical contributions that have influenced China's economic policies and governance strategies. To achieve this, Li Nianjun employs a variety of resources, including network information, library collections, and a thorough examination of official documents. Key materials analyzed in the study encompass economic policy documents from the Party Central Committee, the State Council, and pertinent departments since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Moreover, the research systematically reviews Xi Jinping's major speeches on economic issues and governance, aiming to understand his economic vision comprehensively. The study's findings underscore the scientific foundations of Xi Jinping's socialist economic thought with Chinese characteristics. These foundations are particularly significant within the framework of modern economic governance, offering critical insights into China's policy direction and economic strategies in the contemporary era. Through this analysis, Li Nianjun highlights the systematic and coherent nature of Xi Jinping's economic thought, illustrating its pivotal role in shaping China's economic management and development path.

In "Analysis of Xi Jinping's Major Discussions on Party-Level Economic Work (习近平关于党领导经济工作重要论述研究)," Chen Xueliu (2021) delves into Xi Jinping's significant discussions on economic governance, specifically focusing on the Party's leadership role since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The study provides a systematic and in-depth understanding of Xi Jinping's economic thought's scientific significance and practical applications within the context of Party-led economic policymaking. Chen's research adopts a literature review approach, integrating historical reasoning and textual analysis to examine Xi Jinping's major statements on the Party's economic leadership. Furthermore, the study applies historical materialism and dialectical materialism to interpret the ideological underpinnings of Xi Jinping's economic perspectives. Through comprehensive and systematic exploration, Chen outlines the main themes, significance, and defining characteristics of Xi Jinping's economic policies. The study also investigates the influence of Marxist-Leninist principles and other theoretical frameworks on China's economic policy formulation. By doing so, Chen highlights the continuity and evolution of socialist economic governance under Xi Jinping's leadership, underscoring the interplay between traditional Marxist principles and the contemporary economic challenges China faces. This analysis provides valuable insights into how Xi Jinping's economic thought shapes and guides policy directions, reflecting both an adherence to socialist ideals and an adaptation to modern economic realities.

Yang and Liu (2018), in their study "The Historical Position of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era (习近平的新时代中国特色社会主义思想历史地位)," explore the significance and influence of Xi Jinping's ideological framework. They emphasize how this thought represents a modernization of Marxism within the Chinese context and contributes significantly to domestic governance and the broader global discourse on socialism. The analysis indicates that Xi Jinping's thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics have become a pivotal component of contemporary Chinese governance, guiding the country's socio-political and economic strategies. It provides a blueprint for adapting Marxist principles to modern China's unique conditions and challenges, reinforcing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Communist Party's leadership. Xiao (2022) further argues that socialism with Chinese characteristics plays a crucial role in driving economic growth, promoting cultural values, and expanding China's influence globally. This perspective highlights how Xi Jinping's thought encourages a confident presentation of China's development model to the world, thus enhancing China's cultural and ideological soft power. Qiu (2019) supports this view by discussing how socialism with Chinese characteristics vigorously shapes international perceptions of China's governance model. The framework emphasizes China's economic prosperity and cultural dynamism, contributing to a favorable global image and influencing international governance and development strategies dialogues. Overall, these studies collectively underscore the centrality of Xi Jinping's thought in shaping both domestic policies and global perceptions, portraying it as a dynamic and evolving iteration of socialism that aligns with China's unique historical and cultural context.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (2022) in "Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law Has Opened Up a New Realm of Sinicization and Modernization of Marxist Rule of Law Theory" explores the development and impact of Xi Jinping's Thought on the Rule of Law. This framework represents a significant evolution in the Sinicization and modernization of Marxist legal theory, adapting it to fit Chinese governance's current needs and context. The study delves into the key events and foundational documents that have been instrumental in shaping this legal philosophy, as further discussed by Xu and Men (2023). Through their analysis, it becomes clear that Xi Jinping's Thought on the Rule of Law integrates theoretical perspectives on the interplay between governance and the legal system articulated by the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). Xi Jinping's legal philosophy emphasizes the importance of the rule of law as a cornerstone for effective governance, highlighting

its role in maintaining social order and promoting justice within the political framework of China. It underscores the necessity of aligning legal systems with the overarching goals and principles of the CPC, thereby reinforcing the importance of legal governance in the political system. Rudolf (2021) identifies Xi Jinping's Thoughts on the Rule of Law as a critical ideological achievement. The philosophy provides a comprehensive framework that guides the implementation of legal governance in China, promoting the idea that the rule of law is integral to achieving long-term stability and development. This thought positions legal governance as a mechanism for maintaining order and a dynamic tool for reinforcing party authority and enhancing state legitimacy. Overall, these studies underscore the significant role that Xi Jinping's legal thought plays in shaping China's governance model, emphasizing its importance in both domestic policy and as an example of the adaptation of Marxist legal theory to contemporary challenges.

These researches predominantly explore Xi Jinping's political ideology, focusing on economic thought, legal governance, and socialist theory. Some studies emphasize Xi Jinping's economic policies, such as Xi Jinping's Economic Thought and Xi Jinping's Modern Economic Thought with Chinese Characteristics, while others analyze his broader socialist vision and legal framework. The majority of these works fall within the disciplines of political science, governance, ideology, and policy studies, reflecting a consistent academic focus on Xi Jinping's leadership and its role in shaping China's political and economic development.

2.3. Research on textbooks

Yang (2007), in "Research on the Image of Women in High School History Textbooks (高中历史教科书中的女性形象研究)," explores the portrayal of women in Chinese high school history textbooks by examining the depiction of their occupations, personality traits, and historical status. The study identifies prominent female figures featured in these textbooks, such as Empress Dowager Cixi, Soong Ching-ling, Jiang Qing, Margaret Thatcher, and Wu Zetian. However, Yang's analysis reveals a significant underrepresentation of women, noting that they appear infrequently and are often portrayed in limited or stereotypical roles. The study underscores the critical need for a more comprehensive and balanced portrayal of women in historical education. It advocates for an educational approach reflecting women's diverse contributions throughout history, ensuring a more inclusive understanding of their roles across different historical periods. This aligns with the findings of other scholars, such as Zhu and Tie (2024), Kose (2023), and Chiponda and Wassermann (2011), who emphasize the importance of addressing gender bias and promoting gender equity in educational materials.

Furthermore, the study resonates with earlier concerns raised by Arlow and Froschl (1975), highlighting the persistent issue of gender stereotyping in educational content. Collectively, these works call for educational reforms to include a wider spectrum of female perspectives, acknowledging their pivotal roles and contributions in history. By doing so, textbooks can offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of history that better represents the diversity of human experiences.

Cai Chuhong (2014), in "The Development of High School Political Textbooks from the Perspective of the Development of the Theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (中国特色社会主义理论视角下的高中政治教材发展)," examines the evolution of high school ideology and politics textbooks in China. Cai's study focuses on the four major revisions of these textbooks from 1982 to the present. It highlights how their content has been adapted to align with the theory of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (中国特色社会主义). This theory emerged following China's economic reforms in 1978 and serves as a guiding framework for the country's economic, social, and

political policy, emphasizing market liberalization and global economic integration. Cai emphasizes the importance of ideological education in shaping students' understanding of China's governance model and development path. The study illustrates how textbooks have been used to convey the principles of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, thereby instilling in students an understanding of the nation's political ideology and development agenda. This research is particularly valuable for those interested in examining China's historical and contemporary political landscape, including its economic strategies, administrative policies, and education system. It offers insights into China's broader social transformations and illustrates the role of ideological education in reinforcing political management and national development objectives. By exploring the connections between educational content and the nation's ideological framework, Cai's study provides a nuanced understanding of how China's political objectives are integrated into educational materials, reflecting broader trends in the country's governance and development strategies.

Zhang Lihua (2015), in "Research on Historical Figures in Junior High School History Textbooks (初中历史教科书中的历史人物研究)," explores the representation of key historical figures in Chinese junior high school history textbooks. The study focuses on Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang Chun, Zhang Sen, and Hu Shi. By analyzing their roles and contributions, Zhang examines how these figures have shaped Chinese history and continue to influence the narrative presented to students. Chiang Kai-shek and Hu Shi are notably highlighted for their pivotal roles in China's political and intellectual transformation, contributing significantly to the country's modernization efforts. The analysis of these figures is crucial because they represent diverse fields, such as politics, economics, and cultural ideology, offering a multifaceted perspective on China's historical development. Zhang's study provides insights into how historical narratives are constructed in educational materials and reflects China's broader themes of political, economic, and cultural evolution. By examining these figures, the research sheds light on the selective portrayal of history and how it is used to educate and influence young minds regarding China's past and its path to modernization. This study can be valuable for those interested in educational content, historiography, and the role of historical narratives in shaping national identity and historical understanding.

Li Huimin (2015), in "A Comparison of the Images of Leaders in Chinese and American Textbooks (中美语文教科书中领导人形象塑造的比较)," investigates how political leaders are portrayed in textbooks from China and the United States. The study focuses on the depiction of key Chinese leaders—Mao Zedong, Jiang Zemin, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhou Enlai—and contrasts it with the portrayal of prominent American leaders, such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. Li's research delves into which leaders are selected for inclusion in the textbooks of each country, exploring how their historical roles, contributions, and ideological significance are portrayed. This comparative analysis provides insights into the narrative emphases of each country, highlighting how educational materials reflect and shape national identity. The study reveals differences in how textbooks from China and the United States present their leaders, influenced by each country's unique historical, political, and educational contexts. For instance, the focus in Chinese textbooks might be on the contributions of leaders to the country's revolutionary history and modernization.

In contrast, American textbooks might emphasize foundational democratic principles and individual achievements. Li's research sheds light on the broader themes of how textbooks are used not only as educational tools but also as instruments for instilling values and ideologies. By comparing the portrayals of national leaders in Chinese and American textbooks, the study uncovers how each nation constructs its historical narrative and educates future generations about their country's identity and legacy.

Li Danting (2018) explores the presentation of national history in Chinese junior high school history textbooks in her work "Mentioning History in Chinese Junior High School Textbooks." The

study analyzes how these textbooks chronologically narrate China's history, covering ancient periods. The structure divides historical periods into ancient and modern eras while adhering to Marxist historiography. It categorizes them into three phases: the primitive society era, the semi-feudal and semi-colonial society era, and the Chinese socialist era. Li's research highlights how textbooks emphasize China's significance as one of the world's most populous nations, its status as a socialist country, and its long-standing and rich cultural heritage. These educational materials influence historical consciousness and national identity, framing narratives within a socialist ideological context. This approach reinforces China's political and cultural heritage by integrating these themes into the curriculum. The findings suggest that the textbooks serve as educational resources and as instruments for promoting a particular ideological perspective. Through the structured presentation of historical narratives, these textbooks contribute to constructing a national identity aligned with socialist principles and pride in China's historical achievements. This structure aligns with broader educational goals to instill a sense of national pride and awareness of China's historical trajectory within the international context.

Research on Chinese textbooks above provides valuable insights into China's people, politics, development, and historical narratives. It also highlights methodological approaches for analyzing textbooks, including issue framing, comparative analysis, and content evaluation. While studies on Chinese history textbooks in Thai academic literature are relatively rare, existing research methodologies—such as questioning frameworks and textbook analysis techniques—offer valuable perspectives that can be applied to this study. By integrating these methods, this research benefits from a broader analytical framework, facilitating a deeper understanding of how historical narratives are constructed and presented in Chinese educational materials.

This study explores the representation of Xi Jinping's political ideology in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks. Despite the growing literature on Xi's political reforms, economic strategies, and foreign policy transformation (Fewsmith, 2021; Heffer & Schubert, 2023; Iqbal et al., 2024), there remains a gap in examining the role of educational texts as tools for ideological dissemination. Existing research focuses predominantly on the macro-level consolidation of power (Baranovitch, 2020; Voskressenski, 2020) and the strategic shift from collective leadership to personalist rule (Lee, 2017; Zhao, 2022), yet studies that critically assess how these ideological shifts are constructed and internalized through school curricula are limited.

The objective of this research is to analyze how high school textbooks portray Xi Jinping, with particular attention to the discursive strategies used to embed Party ideology and cultivate loyalty among students. This research uses a discourse-historical approach, building on Zhang's (2024) critical discourse analysis, which identifies key themes such as socialist modernization and national rejuvenation in curriculum materials. While studies like Guo (2021) and Torigian (2021) have discussed the personalization of Xi's image—evident in terms like "Grandpa Xi"—they do not fully explore the mechanisms through which these representations are normalized and routinized in daily classroom instruction.

Thematically, this study aligns with and critiques three strands of existing literature. First, the literature on ideological centralization highlights the embedding of Xi Jinping's thought in state institutions (Lukin, 2023; Tsang & Cheung, 2024) yet often overlooks the pedagogical techniques used in textbooks to translate abstract political ideals into relatable, authoritative narratives. Second, while studies on China's educational reforms emphasize curriculum control and the promotion of nationalistic values (Zhao, 2022; Zhang & Guo, 2024), they seldom interrogate how specific themes—such as security, innovation, and moral virtue—are selectively amplified or omitted to shape political consciousness. Third, analyses of China's soft power (Chávez Mazuelos, 2022) and military expansion (Voskressenski, 2020) have detailed China's international posture but lack insight into how ideological education domestically underpins this global vision.

By situating this study within the intersection of ideological governance, educational policy, and political socialization, it contributes to theoretical and practical understandings of authoritarian resilience. It also builds on comparative governance models by contrasting Xi's ideological project with earlier leadership eras that emphasized pragmatic economic development over ideological orthodoxy (Jaros & Pan, 2017; Dittmer, 2016).

Ultimately, this research provides critical insight into how political legitimacy is constructed and institutionalized through educational content. It fills a vital gap by focusing not just on what is taught but how it is taught—shedding light on the state's efforts to engineer political conformity and national identity through the lens of high school textbooks.

3. Methodology

The textbooks for Mathayom 4 (Volume 1) to Mathayom 5 (Volume 2) comprise four required textbooks. Mathayom 6 has three optional textbooks, and the choice of which to use varies by school. Volume 2 does not include any content related to Xi Jinping. Therefore, this study selected Volumes 1 and 3 for analysis, the details of which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The details of Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks

No.	Grade and volume	Publisher	Title	Cover
1	Mathayom 4 Volume 1	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2019 Zhang Xuan (秦宣), Zhu Mingguang (朱明光)	Socialism with Chinese characteristics (中国特色社会主义) (Zhang & Zhu, 2019).	Figure 1 shows the cover of the textbooks.
2	Mathayom 4 Volume 2	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2019 Sun Bangzhu (孙蚌珠) and Chen Youfang (陈友芳)	Economy and Society (经济和社会) (Sun & Chen, 2019).	Figure 2 shows the cover of the textbooks.
3	Mathayom 5 Volume 1	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2019 Liu Jianjun (刘建军) and Zhu Liyu (朱力宇)	Politics and the Rule of Law (政治与法治) (Liu & Zhu, 2019).	Figure 3 shows the cover of the textbooks.
4	Mathayom 5 Volume 2	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2019 Sun Xiguo (孙熙国) and Zhang Liang (张亮)	Philosophy and Culture (哲学与文化) (Sun & Zhang, 2019).	Figure 4 shows the cover of the textbooks.
5	Mathayom 6 Volume 1	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2020 Li Shaoxian (李绍先) and Kai Kun (翟崑)	Contemporary international politics and economics (当代国际政治与经济) (Li & Kai, 2020).	Figure 5 shows the cover of the textbooks.
6	Mathayom 6 Volume 3	People's Education Press (人民教育出版社) Beijing, 2020 Wang Xisheng (王习胜), Zhang Jianjun (张建军)	Logic and thinking (逻辑与思维) (Wang & Zhang, 2020).	Figure 6 shows the cover of the textbooks.

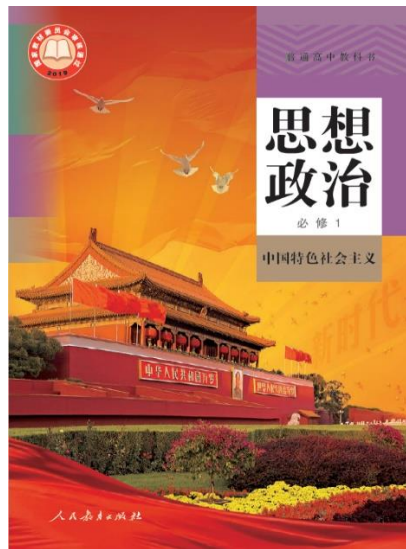


Figure 1. The cover of Mathayom 4 Volume 1's textbook



Figure 2. The cover of Mathayom 4 Volume 2's textbook

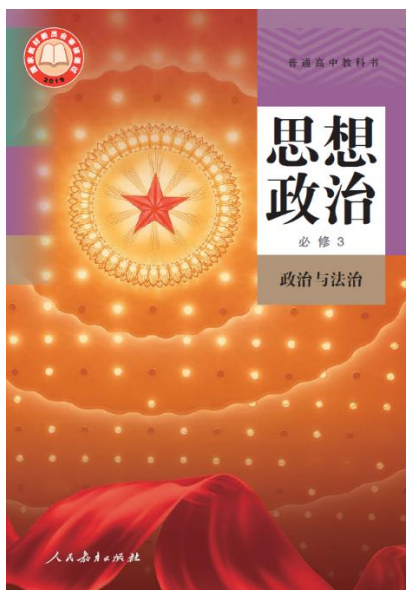


Figure 3. The cover of Mathayom 5 Volume 1's textbook

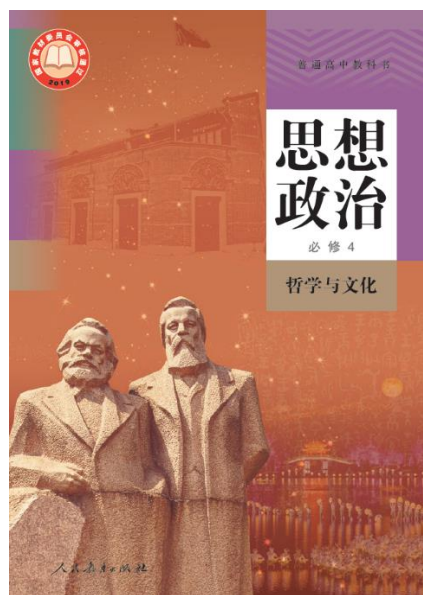


Figure 4. The cover of Mathayom 5 Volume 2's textbook



Figure 5. The cover of Mathayom 6 Volume 1's textbook



Figure 6. The cover of Mathayom 6 Volume 3's textbook

This study adopts a historical research methodology (Gorski, 2009; Demetriou & Roudometof, 2014; Kiser & Hechter, 1991) combined with content analysis techniques to examine the representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks. The analysis centers on these textbooks as the primary source, supplemented by other documentary materials to provide a comprehensive perspective. A systematic observational framework was employed to assess the content, focusing on the objectives, methods, tools, and findings presented in the texts (Chansanam et al., 2021; Camprubí & Coromina, 2016). The research is based on a comprehensive examination of these textbooks and relevant theses and academic articles from library archives. The dataset for analysis encompasses works that explore Chinese national ideology, Xi Jinping's leadership, and educational materials used in high schools. To ensure a structured and systematic analysis, this study divides its focus into three key sections: (1) research on Chinese national ideology, (2) research on President Xi Jinping, and (3) research on textbooks as a medium of ideological dissemination.

4. Results

Based on the analysis of research data, it was found that Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks incorporate content related to Xi Jinping, as well as aspects of Chinese politics, economy, and culture. The content is categorized into two primary sections: (1) Xi Jinping and Chinese politics within the high school ideology and politics curriculum and (2) Xi Jinping's influence on the Chinese economy and culture as presented in these textbooks. The study's findings are outlined as follows:

4.1. Xi Jinping and Chinese Politics in Chinese High School Ideology and Politics Textbooks

The representation of Xi Jinping and Chinese politics in high school ideology and politics textbooks can be analyzed through distinct approaches to writing about Xi Jinping. These approaches are categorized into three key thematic presentations: 1.) Xi Jinping's Chinese National Ideology – This section examines how the textbooks convey Chinese national ideology, emphasizing the transmission of ideological principles and adherence to fundamental values. It explores how Xi Jinping's leadership reinforces national identity and ideological continuity. 2.) The Chinese Communist Party and the People's Role During Xi Jinping's Era – This section discusses the portrayal of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its relationship with the people under Xi Jinping's leadership. It highlights the Party's significant role in governance, policy-making, and societal development, as well as the ways in which citizen participation is framed within this political context. 3.) Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics During Xi Jinping's Era – This section addresses the conceptualization of socialism with Chinese characteristics as presented in the textbooks. It examines the ideological framework underpinning this model, along with the strategies and policies related to economic reform, governance, and modernization.

These thematic presentations provide insight into how Xi Jinping's political philosophy and governance are integrated into high school curricula, shaping students' understanding of contemporary Chinese politics.

4.1.1. Xi Jinping's Chinese national ideology

The research findings indicate that Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks explicitly reflect Xi Jinping's Chinese national ideology. This is evident across various grade levels, where key themes related to socialism, governance, and international relations are systematically incorporated.

In the first volume of the Grade 4 textbook, *Socialism with Chinese Characteristics*, the content emphasizes national rejuvenation and the construction of a modern socialist country through a two-stage process. It also introduces new ideas and strategies for innovative governance (Liu, 2019, pp. 47–62).

In the first volume of the Grade 5 textbook, Politics and Law, the focus is on the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), highlighting the principle of people-centered governance. Additionally, it discusses the application of scientific, democratic, and legal approaches to national governance (Zhang, 2020, pp. 15–43).

In the first volume of the Grade 6 textbook, International Politics and Economics, the discussion extends to China's role in the international arena. The content explores China's diplomatic relations with the United Nations and its governance approach, which combines democratic and authoritarian elements to establish a stable and sustainable modern socialist state (Wang, 2020, pp. 102–118; Boer, 2021).

These textbooks collectively illustrate how Xi Jinping's ideological framework is integrated into the curriculum, shaping students' understanding of national governance, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and China's global engagement.

The analysis of the aforementioned content reveals that Xi Jinping's adherence to the core principles of Chinese national ideology is centered on several key themes. These include emphasizing the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), reinforcing confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and promoting collective development to reduce social inequality.

A significant aspect of this ideological framework is the vision of national rejuvenation, encapsulated in the Chinese Dream, which seeks to restore China's historical prominence and global influence. Furthermore, Xi Jinping's approach emphasizes sustainable development by maintaining a balance between economic growth, social progress, and environmental preservation. The overarching goal of these principles is to foster ideological unity, enhance stability across all dimensions, and position China as a global leader in the future.

4.1.2. The Communist Party and People's Party of China during Xi Jinping's term

The content analysis of the textbook suggests that during Xi Jinping's leadership, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has played a central role in national governance and in shaping the country's political, economic, and social development. Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks reflect the Party's ideological influence by emphasizing the cultivation of confidence in the CPC and fostering loyalty to the ideology of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

A clear example of this is found in the first volume of the Grade 5 textbook, Politics and Law, which dedicates four key chapters to discussing the CPC under Xi Jinping's leadership:

- Chapter 2: "Modernization of the Communist Party of China" – This chapter highlights the defining characteristics and objectives of the CPC (Liu, 2019, pp. 15–24). It also discusses the Party's evolving ideological framework and the role of Party members in providing effective leadership (Liu, 2019, pp. 16–19, 20–24).

- Chapter 3: "Upholding the Principles and Promoting the Party's Leadership" – This section covers the CPC's political leadership, ideological guidance, and organizational structure. It emphasizes strict Party administration as well as governance based on democratic and legal principles.

- Chapter 4: "A Socialist Country under the People's Democratic Dictatorship" – This chapter reinforces the unity of democracy and dictatorship within China's governance framework, reflecting the CPC's vision of political stability.

- Chapter 6: "China's Basic Political System" – This section explores the system of general people's autonomy, emphasizing direct public participation in the democratic process (Liu, 2019, pp. 65–69).

The textbook systematically presents the CPC's role as a policymaker responsible for maintaining internal stability and strengthening China's international influence. This aligns with Xi Jinping's broader governance approach, which seeks to ensure comprehensive national progress and long-term stability.

In high school ideology and politics textbooks, the role of the Communist Party of China (CPC) during the Xi Jinping era is portrayed as the "core of national governance," guiding the country's development across multiple dimensions, particularly in economics, politics, and culture. The CPC is depicted as playing a crucial role in poverty alleviation, technological advancement, and social stability (Zhao, 2020, pp. 25–43).

A key example of this representation is found in the Grade 5 textbook, Volume 1, Politics and Law, particularly in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, where the Party's political leadership is highlighted as the primary mechanism enabling the country to navigate internal and external challenges effectively. The textbook underscores the importance of the "people-centered" governance approach, which is a defining characteristic of the Xi Jinping era.

Additionally, Chapter 4 (pp. 35–43) specifically discusses the CPC's commitment to enhancing citizens' quality of life by expanding opportunities for public participation in national development. It further emphasizes the Party's role in ensuring fundamental rights, such as access to education, public healthcare, and comprehensive infrastructure development across all regions (Liu, 2019, pp. 35–43).

Through this content, the textbooks reinforce the CPC's central role in shaping China's socio-economic progress and governance, aligning with Xi Jinping's vision of sustainable and inclusive national development.

4.1.3. Building socialism with Chinese characteristics during Xi Jinping's era

The research indicates that the Grade 10 textbook, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics presents the concept of socialism as a fundamental force in China's national rejuvenation and transition into a new era. Chapter 4 (pp. 42–62) specifically emphasizes the importance of adhering to socialist principles as the foundation for sustained national development. The content highlights key governance strategies, including scientific governance, addressing social contradictions, and ensuring continuous progress as essential elements of national rejuvenation.

A central theme within this chapter is the "Chinese Dream," which is extensively discussed on pages 47–55. This section outlines the overarching national goals of prosperity and strength for the country, happiness for the people, and the rejuvenation of the Chinese ethnic group. To achieve these objectives, the textbook introduces a two-stage development plan, underscoring a long-term vision for China's advancement.

Additionally, pages 56–62 explore Xi Jinping's new governance strategies, focusing on key contemporary policies such as the development of the digital economy, sustainability initiatives, and a people-centered governance approach. These strategies are framed as critical to ensuring national stability and China's emergence as a global leader.

Overall, the textbook reinforces the role of socialism with Chinese characteristics as a guiding ideology in China's modernization, shaping governance policies that aim to sustain long-term national progress and global influence.

Xi Jinping's ideology, as presented in high school textbooks, underscores his commitment to sustainable and comprehensive economic development, adapting to global shifts while maintaining a strong focus on reducing social inequality and improving the well-being of all social classes. The textbooks highlight the significance of a balanced, state-controlled market system, which is portrayed

as essential for ensuring equitable and sustainable growth. Additionally, they emphasize the advancement of innovation and technology as a means of enhancing China's global competitiveness (Huang, 2021).

This policy direction aligns with Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream", which reflects China's aspiration to establish itself as a respected and influential international power. In the textbooks, Xi Jinping's ideology is presented holistically, covering multiple dimensions, including societal stability, economic strength, and national identity. Through this representation, the textbooks instill a vision of national development that extends beyond internal progress, reinforcing China's readiness to assert its position and demonstrate its potential on the global stage.

4.2. Xi Jinping and Chinese Economy and Culture in Chinese High School Ideology and Politics Textbooks

In the course of China's social and economic development, the country has achieved significant milestones, including the realization of the First Centenary Goal—building a moderately prosperous society—and guiding the nation toward socialism with Chinese characteristics. Additionally, the government has emphasized the development and preservation of Chinese traditional culture, aiming to promote its global influence.

Given the extensive coverage of China's economy and culture in high school ideology and politics textbooks, this study focuses on analyzing how these aspects are presented, particularly in relation to Xi Jinping's policies. The research examines the policies and methods for economic and cultural development through the following key themes: 1.) China's Economic Policies During Xi Jinping's Era – This section explores how Xi Jinping's economic policies are framed in high school textbooks, emphasizing their role in advancing China's development. 2.) Economic Competition and Cooperation – This topic examines China's economic engagement in both domestic and international contexts, analyzing how the textbooks present competition and cooperation in the global economy under Xi Jinping's leadership. 3.) Preserving and Promoting Chinese Culture – This section investigates how textbooks address the preservation of traditional culture, the acceptance of foreign cultural influences, and strategies for spreading Chinese culture globally.

Through this analysis, the study aims to provide insights into how economic and cultural narratives in high school textbooks contribute to shaping students' understanding of China's development trajectory and global aspirations under Xi Jinping's leadership.

4.2.1. Chinese economic policy during Xi Jinping's era

The research findings indicate that China's economic policy during Xi Jinping's leadership is extensively covered in high school ideology and politics textbooks, particularly in the areas of domestic economic development, technological innovation, and international economic engagement.

In the second volume of the fourth year of secondary school textbook, *Economy and Society*, Chapter 3 focuses on the new development concept and the construction of a modern economic system, emphasizing sustainable economic growth and industrial innovation as core components of China's economic strategy.

The first volume of the sixth year of secondary school textbook, *International Politics and Economy*, provides a broader perspective on China's economic policies in the global context:

- Chapter 3: "Development of a Multipolar World and International Relations" – This chapter explains China's role in the global economy, highlighting its position in a multipolar world.

- Chapter 4: “The Essence of the Times: Challenges and Responses” – This section discusses China’s economic adaptation to global shifts, outlining strategies to address international challenges.

- Chapter 5: “China’s Foreign Policy and the Creation of a Shared Destiny for Mankind” – This chapter focuses on economic cooperation and sustainable development, aligning with China’s vision of global partnerships.

- Chapter 6: “Economic Globalization and a More Open World Economy” – This section emphasizes China’s active participation in the world economy, highlighting its economic liberalization efforts.

- Chapter 7: “China’s Opening-Up and Global Development” – This chapter underscores China’s distinctive approach to economic openness, showcasing its role in international trade and investment.

Overall, the textbooks present China’s economic policy under Xi Jinping as a dual strategy:

1. Focusing on domestic economic growth through technological development, innovation, and industrial transformation.

2. Expanding China’s global economic role by fostering international economic cooperation and integration into the global economy.

This portrayal aligns with Xi Jinping’s broader vision of China’s economic modernization and its ambition to strengthen its influence in the globalized economy (Central Chinese People's Affairs and National Education Department, 2021, pp. 31–82). (中华人民共和国教育部, 2021, p. 31-82)

The research on China’s economic policies during Xi Jinping’s era reveals that high school ideology and politics textbooks present a comprehensive view of economic and cultural policies, emphasizing China’s stable economic growth and adaptation to globalization. These policies are framed within the broader goal of constructing “modern Chinese socialism”, a vision deeply embedded in Xi Jinping’s governance approach.

A key initiative highlighted in the textbooks is the "One Belt, One Road" (Belt and Road Initiative, BRI), which serves as a strategic project connecting China with other nations to promote economic cooperation and foster sustainable international relations. This initiative is portrayed as a means of enhancing global connectivity while simultaneously improving the quality of life within China by facilitating trade, infrastructure development, and investment.

The textbooks also emphasize continuous economic reform aimed at achieving sustainable and balanced development. This includes structural adjustments to the economy, ensuring long-term stability while promoting growth. A significant focus is placed on the liberalization of the domestic economy, which is presented as a crucial step in fostering an open and dynamic market system. By redistributing resources and reducing trade restrictions, China enhances its global competitiveness and strengthens its role in the international economy.

Ultimately, China’s economic policies under Xi Jinping are portrayed as striving for a harmonized balance between domestic and international economic development, ensuring long-term sustainability and stability in an increasingly globalized world.

4.2.2. Economic competition and cooperation

The ideology and politics textbooks in Chinese high schools comprehensively address China’s economic competition and cooperation, highlighting the nation’s domestic economic strengthening and international engagement. These themes are particularly emphasized in the second volume of

Mathayom 4 (Economy and Society) and the first volume of Mathayom 6 (International Politics and Economy).

In Mathayom 4, Chapter 3, the textbooks introduce the new development concept and the construction of a modern economic system, which emphasizes enhancing domestic economic potential to compete effectively on the international stage.

The Mathayom 6 textbook, International Politics and Economy, further expands on these themes by discussing economic competition and cooperation in the context of globalization:

- Chapter 3: "Development of a Multipolar World and International Relations" – This section examines China's position in the global economy, highlighting its influence in a multipolar world order.

- Chapter 4: "The Essence of the Times: Challenges and Responses" – This chapter analyzes China's strategies for navigating global economic competition, including trade policies and industrial development.

- Chapter 5: "China's Foreign Policy and the Creation of a Shared Destiny for Mankind" – This section focuses on China's international economic cooperation strategy, emphasizing its role in global partnerships.

- Chapter 6: "Economic Globalization and an Increasingly Open World Economy" – This part illustrates China's integration into the global economy, showcasing its participation in international trade and investment.

- Chapter 7: "Distinctive Signs of Contemporary China and Global Development" – This chapter underscores China's dual approach: strengthening domestic economic competitiveness through technological and infrastructure development while simultaneously promoting global cooperation via open trade policies and leadership in international economic organizations.

These textbooks present China's economic strategy under Xi Jinping as a balanced approach that prioritizes both domestic economic self-reliance and global economic integration. By leveraging technological advancement, infrastructure development, free trade, and active participation in global economic institutions, China is depicted as a key player in shaping the international economic order (Central Chinese People's Affairs and National Education Department, 2021, pp. 31–82). (中华人民共和国教育部, 2021, p. 31-82)

The analysis of the above content reveals that China's economic strategy, as presented in high school ideology and politics textbooks, integrates two key dimensions:

1. Domestic Economic Competition – This aspect emphasizes the development of a modern economy, the enhancement of technological potential, and the expansion of the domestic market to strengthen China's internal economic foundation.

2. International Economic Cooperation – This focuses on building an open economic system, promoting international economic relations, and actively participating in the global economy, aligning with China's broader vision of economic globalization.

Together, these strategies reflect China's dual approach of simultaneously enhancing domestic competitiveness while expanding its influence in the world economic system. The textbooks aim to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of China's economic policies, helping them grasp how the country balances national economic growth with global economic integration. This educational framework reinforces China's commitment to sustainable and effective global economic

engagement, ensuring that students recognize the significance of both internal development and international cooperation in shaping the country's future.

2.3. Preservation of traditional culture

The preservation of traditional culture is a key theme in the Grade 5 Ideology and Politics course, specifically in Volume 2 of the textbook *Philosophy and Culture*. Chapter 7: "Inheritance and Development of China's Excellent Traditional Culture" focuses on the meaning, significance, and impact of culture, providing a framework for understanding Chinese cultural heritage and national identity.

This chapter explores several key aspects:

- Understanding Chinese Culture – It discusses how to correctly interpret and appreciate China's cultural heritage, emphasizing its historical continuity and relevance in modern society.

- Promoting Traditional Values – The content highlights the Chinese government's role in preserving and promoting traditional cultural values, reinforcing their importance in contemporary governance and education.

- Cultural Inheritance and National Identity – The textbook presents strategies for passing down customs, traditions, and national spirit to future generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural identity amid modernization.

The curriculum emphasizes that cultural preservation is essential for maintaining national identity and unity, reinforcing that China's efforts to protect and promote traditional culture align with broader national policies on cultural sustainability and social development (中华人民共和国教育部, 2021, pp. 90–102).

The research findings indicate that preserving traditional culture, accepting foreign cultural influences, and promoting Chinese culture globally are key aspects of China's cultural policy. This approach reflects China's strategic vision of maintaining its cultural heritage while embracing globalization, using culture as a means to strengthen its soft power and global influence.

In Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, Xi Jinping's thought on cultural preservation and promotion is presented as a core principle. The textbooks emphasize:

- The importance of inheriting cultural heritage – Highlighting the need to preserve traditional values, customs, and historical narratives as fundamental to China's national identity.

- Connecting tradition with modernity – Ensuring that Chinese culture evolves to remain relevant in the modern era, fostering cultural resilience and adaptability.

- Cultural stability and national identity – Strengthening a collective national consciousness by reinforcing cultural pride and historical continuity.

Through these narratives, students are instilled with an understanding of the role of Chinese culture in shaping a strong and distinctive national identity. The curriculum positions cultural policy as an essential component of sustainable development, ensuring that China's cultural influence continues to grow both domestically and internationally in alignment with its broader global strategy.



Figure 7. A conceptual representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks

Figure 7 illustrates a conceptual diagram depicting the representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, identifying six interrelated ideological pillars: traditional culture, national ideology, socialism, the role of the Communist Party of China (CPC), economic reforms, and international cooperation. These themes are color-coded to signify their distinct yet interconnected roles—traditional culture emphasizes efforts to preserve and promote ancient traditions; national ideology focuses on the evolution of China’s collective identity; socialism highlights the adaptation of socialist principles to the Chinese context; the CPC’s role underscores its strategic leadership; economic reforms emphasize initiatives aimed at enhancing China’s global economic standing; and international cooperation reflects China’s collaborative efforts with other nations. The diagram demonstrates how educational content integrates cultural values with political ideology, economic priorities, and global outlook, forming a comprehensive framework aligned with state objectives. This integrated approach reflects China’s educational policy that seeks to harmonize cultural heritage with modern development goals, reinforcing the central role of the CPC. This conceptualization supports scholarly interpretations of Chinese education as a system that purposefully weaves cultural tradition, national identity formation, political socialization, and economic development into a unified ideological narrative.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, focusing on how political narratives are constructed and embedded into educational materials. The analysis revealed that Xi’s leadership is framed through three interconnected dimensions: political ideology, economic governance, and cultural identity. These textbooks serve as strategic instruments for promoting state ideology and shaping students’ perceptions of contemporary Chinese governance, socialism, and national identity.

The study identified a systematic portrayal of Xi Jinping’s ideological framework, primarily through national rejuvenation, socialism with Chinese characteristics, people-centered governance, and China’s global leadership. The textbooks emphasize Xi’s vision by showcasing the role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in ensuring stability, promoting economic development, and preserving cultural heritage. These themes are consistently reinforced across all grade levels and

textbook volumes, indicating a centralized effort to consolidate Xi Jinping's thoughts in national curricula.

Additionally, the representation of Xi's economic thought—especially regarding technological innovation, globalization, and the Belt and Road Initiative—is integral to China's development strategy. The cultural dimension highlights traditional heritage, emphasizing continuity, unity, and the strategic use of soft power through cultural dissemination.

The findings align with Zhang's (2024) discourse analysis, which identified the Chinese Dream and national rejuvenation as key discursive elements in promoting Xi Jinping's thought. Guo (2021) similarly noted the personalization of Xi's image, which is evident in textbooks where he is portrayed as the central figure of national progress. These portrayals reflect a shift from collective leadership to a more personalized, top-down ideological model (Fewsmith, 2021; Baranovitch, 2020).

Existing studies have also emphasized the strategic use of education for ideological dissemination (Chen, 2020; BBC News, 2021). However, while Lukin (2023) and Tsang and Cheung (2024) focus on the political centralization of power, this study extends their analysis by revealing how ideological consolidation operates at the micro-level through curricular materials. This complements research by Zhang and Guo (2024), who highlighted the selective framing of human rights in textbooks, underscoring the tension between ideological conformity and global norms.

The introduction of this study posed a central question about how political ideology is reshaped through educational content in contemporary China. The results directly address this gap by demonstrating that textbooks not only disseminate Xi's policies but also present them as the only legitimate vision for China's future. Compared to earlier leadership eras that emphasized pragmatic governance (Jaros & Pan, 2017; Dittmer, 2016), the findings show a deeper institutionalization of ideology under Xi, mainly through education.

Moreover, this study critiques and builds upon Cai's (2014) work on textbook revisions. It reveals that incorporating Xi Jinping's thought represents more than content updating—it marks a transformation in pedagogical intent toward ideological indoctrination.

5.1. Limitations

While this study offers a comprehensive textual analysis of selected high school textbooks, it is limited by its reliance on officially approved materials. The exclusion of regional or unofficial supplements may restrict a fuller understanding of how ideological education is experienced across different provinces. Furthermore, the study does not include interviews or fieldwork with students or educators, which could provide deeper insight into how the content is received and interpreted in classroom settings.

5.2. Implications

These findings have significant implications for understanding state-led political socialization in China. By institutionalizing Xi Jinping's ideology into the education system, the CCP ensures the long-term reproduction of political loyalty and ideological conformity among future generations. This approach reflects China's evolving model of authoritarian resilience, where soft tools such as education are used alongside political and economic strategies to consolidate power.

The study also contributes to comparative education studies, offering a case that contrasts sharply with pluralistic or liberal educational frameworks. It invites further research on how similar ideological mechanisms may be employed in other authoritarian regimes or how students in China navigate and respond to these narratives.

In conclusion, the representation of Xi Jinping in high school ideology and politics textbooks is a deliberate state project aimed at constructing a unified political identity centered on Party loyalty,

cultural pride, and economic nationalism. The strategic use of education as a vehicle for ideology shapes national consciousness and reinforces the CCP's long-term governance goals. This study underscores the critical role of educational content in the reproduction of political ideology, highlighting the need for continuous scholarly attention to how state narratives are normalized in everyday learning environments.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the representation of Xi Jinping in Chinese high school ideology and politics textbooks, focusing on how his leadership is depicted across political, economic, and cultural dimensions. The findings reveal that the textbooks consistently highlight themes such as Chinese national ideology, socialism with Chinese characteristics, economic cooperation, sustainable development, and cultural preservation. These themes collectively frame Xi Jinping's leadership in a highly positive light.

The results underscore the strategic role of these textbooks as instruments for disseminating the Chinese government's ideology and consolidating political narratives among the youth. By portraying Xi Jinping as the central figure in national progress and modernization, the textbooks contribute to shaping students' political consciousness in alignment with state-defined goals. This cultivated perception supports the government's broader efforts to foster national unity and legitimacy through education.

However, the emphasis on a singular, celebratory narrative raises critical concerns. It may limit students' exposure to alternative viewpoints, reducing opportunities for critical thinking and a balanced understanding of political and socio-economic complexities. Such an approach can reinforce a narrow conception of leadership and governance, potentially hindering the development of informed and analytically engaged citizens.

This research contributes to ongoing discussions on the intersection of education and political socialization, emphasizing how curriculum content functions as a vehicle for state ideology. It highlights the need for a more pluralistic approach in educational policy, where fostering critical engagement and reflective citizenship can coexist with national identity formation. Future research could explore how students interpret and internalize these textbook narratives and examine the long-term effects of politically guided education on civic attitudes and identity development in contemporary Chinese society.

Declarations

Author Contributions. J.L., T.B., and W.C.: Literature review, conceptualization. J.L., and T.B.: methodology, data analysis. J.L., T.B., and W.C: review-editing and writing, original manuscript preparation. All authors have read and approved the published on the final version of the article.

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Ethical Approval. As this study did not involve human participants, ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was not required.

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AI Tool. During the preparation of this work the authors used the ChatGPT and Grammarly in order to language editing. The authors declare that they reviewed and edited the final output as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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