

**IDEOLOGICAL AND
POLITICAL EDUCATION IN
CHINA'S HIGHER EDUCATION**

LU Jie

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Executive Summary

1. China now has the largest number of college students and the second largest number of higher education institutes in the world. How to effectively tame the power of college students poses serious challenges to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).
2. Having learnt its lessons from the 1989 incident, the CCP has taken various measures to strengthen and improve its political control of China's higher education since the 1990s.
3. After decades of continuous investment and efforts, the CCP has established a multi-tiered system to ensure its domination of Chinese college students, including co-option, surveillance and monitoring, and ideological and political education.
4. The updated curriculum with "two sets of courses" (两课) as the centrepiece is a streamlined system for the CCP's ideological and political education in China's higher education.
5. Survey data shows that Chinese college students are more critical of China's political authorities and institutions than the lower-educated general public. Nevertheless, they still place high trust in the political authorities and institutions and highly endorse China's existing political system.
6. Through its ideological and political education, the CCP has also effectively enhanced college students' responsiveness to its strategically crafted political mobilisation, offering more leeway for the CCP to stage domestic support for various public and foreign policies.
7. Thanks to co-option via party recruitment, surveillance and monitoring via party branches, the student work system on campus, and ideological and political education via improved and standardised courses, the CCP has effectively tamed college students and largely enhanced its capacity in mobilising college students for public and foreign policies.

8. For the foreseeable future, Chinese college students, as a group, are unlikely to actively mount significant challenges (like those of the 1989 incident) against the CCP that could undermine its political survival. In many cases, due to the CCP's strategic manipulation and mobilisation, college students may offer critical support to the CCP regime.
9. Nevertheless, most college students believe that materialistic concerns (e.g. better opportunities for jobs, post-graduate education, etc.), rather than political beliefs or loyalty, are the key force for their cohorts' strive for CCP membership. Their general impressions of CCP members are just above average.
10. Thus, how to deal with such rank-and-file elite members who are opportunistic fence-sitters and seekers of material interests should be a huge concern for the CCP. This may not just be a worrying issue for its recruitment in higher education, but a general concern for the CCP's party construction.