The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about elections

黨 means gang; 童黨 (童 tong = child) means teenage gangs. 黑手黨 (hei shou dang = black-hand-gang) means the Mafia. 拆白黨 (chai bai dang = undo-white-gang = cheat-gang) means con-men.

黨 also means party: 民主黨 (min zhu dang = people-master-party) = Democratic Party. 共和黨 (gong he dang = common-harmony-party = republic-party) = Republican Party.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is 中國共產黨 (zhong guo gong chan dang = Middle-Kingdom-common-property-party), in short 中共 (zhong gong). 黨路線 (路線 lu xian = way/line) means party line. 黨員 (dang yuan = party members) are “同志” (tong zhi = same-will/aspiration = comrades). 清黨 (qing dang = party-cleanse) means a party purge.

Pronunciation: dang (Putonghua, 3rd tone), dong (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: gang, party

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