2. Cultural Security in the People's Republic of China: Between Party-State Invocation and Academic Theorization[1]

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Abstract: This chapter traces the embrace of cultural security—expressed in terms of discursive invocations and formalizations—by the party-state, a process that began with the Jiang administration in the late 1990s and remains ongoing under the current Xi administration. The chapter provides an in-depth overview of how the concept was theorized by party-state elites, drawing heavily from a representative sample of works associated with a cultural security literature published in the PRC in the period 1999–2018. In the absence of an officially endorsed party-state definition of cultural security, these sources, produced by academics embedded within or in close proximity to party-state institutions and largely conditioned by the CCP's domination over knowledge-production processes, offer approximating insights into how the concept is understood and operationalized by party-state elites.

Keywords: national security, ideological struggle, Chinese party-state, theory and practice

This chapter examines the conceptualization of "cultural security" (*wenhua anquan*) in the PRC during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. More specifically, it tracks its emergence as a major "watchword" (*tifa*) among the elites of the CCP in relation to the management of the cultural sphere, a

1 The author would like to thank Jarmila Ptáčková, Ondřej Klimeš, John Burns, Andrea Ghiselli, and the two anonymous reviewers of this chapter for their comments and feedback.

Jarmila Ptáčková and Ondřej Klimeš (eds), *Cultural Security in Contemporary China and Mongolia*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2025
DOI: 10.5117/9789463722889_CH02

development reflected in its growing discursive invocation and formalization at the level of dedicated institutions and laws (Qian 2018), as observed in the introduction to this book.[2] In addition, the chapter is concerned with how cultural security is theorized so as to make intelligible the party-state's embrace of the concept. Due to the dearth of officially endorsed definitions and explanations at the level of the party-state, however, the chapter turns to the theoretical frameworks and elaborations originating from a cultural security literature largely produced by academics embedded within, or in close proximity to, party-state institutions. Such academics have generated a sizable body of work on cultural security, situated under the umbrella of "national security" (*guojia anquan*), that best approximates the views of party-state elites on the concept.

This approximation arises from CCP domination over formal knowledge-production processes—a domination that has directed and filtered research output on cultural security through the writings (or speeches) of senior CCP leaders, the theoretical classics of the party-state, and the broader Marxist tradition. As a result, academics have theorized about the concept, elucidating its definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices in ways that cohere with a longstanding CCP paradigm on culture, and which the party-state has, despite its embrace, left largely unexplained. Based on a close analysis of the literature in question, the chapter finds that cultural security is imagined by academics—and by extension, the party-state—to correspond to political and ideological security, and entails counteracting external and internal threats to the cultural sphere through inoculative and remolding efforts. Failure to safeguard the cultural sphere is understood to endanger social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy—a linkage suggestive of the critical importance assigned to it as a constituent element of national security. This reading accords with a growing body of scholarship that sees cultural security as a state-led strategy concerned with the preservation of CCP power and ideological hegemony over Chinese society under conditions of globalization and an intensification, in the eyes of party-state leaders, of an "ideological struggle" (*yishixingtai douzheng*) pitting the PRC against the West in the post-Cold War era (Renwick and Cao 2008; Lynch 2013; Aukia 2014; Edney 2015; Callahan 2015; Johnson 2017; 2020).

2 *Tifa* are formulations or phrases that recurrently appear in the CCP's political lexicon—including terms like "revolution" (*geming*) or "black swans" (*heitian'e*). They act as signposts since their invocation or absence within major documents can tell us much about the Party's priorities and threat assessments, as well as the direction of its policies and campaigns.

This strategy's implementation, embodied in the party-state's two decades-long discursive invocation and formalization of cultural security, is not unique to the Chinese context, but can be observed in authoritarian polities such as Russia and Saudi Arabia, among others, contending with the ideational dislocations that have arisen from the collapse of the global bipolar order (Wilson 2016; Yan and Alsudairi 2021). It is unclear whether these multiple cases can be unequivocally treated as instances of cross-national authoritarian learning or diffusion (Heydemann and Leenders 2011; Hall and Ambrosio 2017).[3] What *is* undoubtedly clear, however, is that cultural security, whether in the PRC or elsewhere, is part of a near-universal reaction by non-democratic regimes to Western-led globalization and ideological hegemony. Its global adoption is an isomorphism that results from the (self-perceived) weak ideational positionality occupied by non-democratic regimes within the current international order. In the PRC, as this chapter will show, this reaction is expressed in the language and idioms of its own CCP-dominated specificity, wherein cultural security is utilized as a glocalized strategy aimed at safeguarding regime security and strengthening its resilience against an array of ideational threats (Robertson 1995).

The Party-State's Evolving Discourse on Cultural Security

The earliest mention of the term cultural security can be traced back to an address given by Jiang Zemin for an overseas-directed propaganda work meeting that was held in 1999 (ZGX n.d.a). On that occasion, Jiang presented cultural security, almost in passing, as a strategy concerned with striking the right balance between guarding the cultural sphere from destabilizing influences on the one hand and allowing the national economy to benefit from globalization on the other. This early invocation of cultural security by Jiang can be understood in relation to two developments that had informed the thinking of party-state elites throughout the 1990s: the deepening perception of a growing assault on the cultural sphere waged by "hostile international forces" (*guoji didui shili*) in the post-Cold War era, and the acceptance of a more expansive definition of security that transcended the military-centric understandings conventionally associated with the concept.

3 The Chinese and Saudi cases of cultural securitization—at the state and academic-levels—show little evidence of positive learning from foreign partners, let alone of outright policy transfer. Rather, officials and experts in those countries conceive of cultural security as a wholly local innovation and approach to governance (Al-Sudairi 2019).

The first development was partially shaped by the party-state's self-perceived ideological vulnerability in the wake of the "cultural fever" (*wenhuare*) of the 1980s and, more significantly, the events of Tiananmen in 1989, all of which took place against the backdrop of the slow dissolution of global socialism in 1989–92 (Wang 1996; Chen 2002; Carrico 2017). The CCP leadership viewed these interlinked domestic-international challenges as being mainly instigated by the subversive efforts of Western capitalist states which sought, through the diffusion of values incompatible with the PRC's prevailing national political and ideological norms, to engineer "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*) within the political system (ZGX 1989; ZGX 1989a; ZGX 2001). Deng Xiaoping famously described this subversion as a "smoke-less world war" (*wuxiaoyande shijie dazhan*) against the CCP, one of the last surviving major socialist parties in the world.[4] The heightened threat perception of the immediate post-Cold War era contributed to the production of a discourse that associated the safeguarding of the cultural sphere with that of social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy. Throughout the mid-1990s, for example, and tapping unto rising nationalist sentiment at that time, Jiang repeatedly warned against the infiltration of a (Western) "colonial culture" (*zhimin wenhua*) within the PRC, the spread of which would alter the country's political-ideological makeup and result in its subjugation as a vassal of the West (ZGX 1996; ZGX 1996a).

The entanglement of culture with social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy mirrored a broader post-Cold War cultural trend which had transformed culture (including civilization and other identity markers) into the primary prism through which politics was interpreted and experienced at the local and global scales (Lawson 2006, 1–18). This cultural turn also benefited from the post-ideological moment created by the triumph of Euro-American liberalism in the aftermath of the Cold War, allowing culture to displace ideology—conceptually speaking—as the primary faultline of human conflict (Eagleton 2007, xviii). Anxieties over globalization, ranging from its homogenizing effects to the impact of transnational phenomena like terrorism and organized crime, likewise facilitated the privileging of culture as a locus of politics (Knight 2006). The end-result of these complex and interconnected processes was that culture increasingly came to signify and correspond to politics and ideology, or at the very least to heavily overlap with them. This may explain why socialist (and post-socialist) regimes like the PRC, facing a sustained ideological

4 The phrase was first used by Deng during an exchange with the Chinese-American physicist Dr. Li Zhengdao a few months after the suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations (ZGX 1989).

crisis in the post-Cold War era, increasingly sought to emphasize their culturalist and nationalist character in various legitimacy-building projects (Shambaugh 2008, 41–86; Perry 2013, 12–19).

The second development—the recognition of security's broadened and elastic scope among party-state elites—was enabled by shifts in the international academic debates on security in the post-Cold War era that came to influence the PRC in the closing years of the 1990s (Fierke 2015, 2–3). The reports of the CCP's 15th National Congress in 1997 and 16th National Congress in 2002 both contained references to a more nuanced understanding of security that now included multiple conventional and non-conventional dimensions (*Zhongguowang* 2009; Liu 2014, 125). In global fora, PRC representatives such as Foreign Minister Qian Qichen began to promote a so-called "new security perspective" (*xin anquanguan*) as the basis for international cooperation (Liu 2014, 128; Ma 2011, 96–97; Dittmer and Yu 2015, 66–68). In July 2002, the PRC delegation attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit released a document that clarified the meaning of this new security perspective, arguing that the formulation of the concept was necessitated by "new historical conditions" that called for a new definition of security that "comprehensively encompassed not only military affairs and politics, but also economics, technology, environment, culture, and many other realms" (Waijiaobu 2002). Under this new interpretation of security, culture was clearly identified as a sphere of securitization.

The confluence of these two developments paved the way not only for the invocation of cultural security by Jiang but also for the concept's subsequent and stabilized incorporation into party-state discourses on national security starting from the Hu Jintao administration. In August 2003, during a leadership-level collective study session, Hu emphasized the necessity of "ensuring the state's cultural security" (*quebao guojiade wenhua anquan*) as a guarantee for national security (ZGX 2003). The September 2004 resolution of the fourth plenum of the CCP's Sixteenth Central Committee formally recognized cultural security (among four other types of security, including political, military, and economic) as a constituent element of national security (Liu 2014, 124–25; *Renmin ribao* 2004; Zhao 2011, 69–70). Hu justified this new recognition by arguing that the cultural sphere was ridden with ideological conflict which, if not properly contained, "could lead to societal turmoil and even a loss of political authority [for the party-state]" (*Zhongguowang* 2004). Such warnings were uttered by the Hu administration up to the very end: during the 17th Central Committee's sixth plenary session in October 2011, Hu cautioned that hostile international forces were increasing

their ideological and cultural subversion efforts in the cultural sphere in order to Westernize and fragment the PRC (*Renminwang lilun* 2011).

Inherent in Hu's comments is the notion that there exists a relationship between cultural, political, and ideological security—a connection explicitly asserted by other party-state leaders such as Li Changchun, a senior CCP official entrusted with the management of propaganda and ideological affairs in 2002–12. In various speeches, Li claimed that hostile international forces were carrying out illegal activities of a political nature within the PRC that were intended to reshape the ideological orientation of susceptible groups (*Renminwang lilun* 2006; ZGX 2008). These activities, ranging from assisting rights protection lawyers to funding non-government organizations, were considered by Li to fall under the purview of cultural security (ZRZ 2009). The linkage between these three types of security speaks to the party-state elites' growing concerns about Western-led non-military regime change, the fear of which was likely amplified by the eruption of color revolutions in post-socialist states such as those in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, or in authoritarian contexts such as the Middle East (Shambaugh 2008, 87–92; Wilson 2009; Dimitrov 2013, 23–24, 29). The CCP, in a classic example of authoritarian learning, sought to study why such regimes had failed to pre-empt and manage these threats to their survival.

The elevation of cultural security as a major watchword in party-state discourses on national security has been coupled with a systematic attempt to connect the successful securitization of the cultural sphere with the realization of the CCP-led projects of "cultural construction" (*wenhua jianshe*) and "cultural development" (*wenhua fazhan*). This can be evidenced from the content of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2006–10), passed by the National People's Congress (NPC) in March 2006, which stated that the "safeguarding of national cultural security" (*weihu guojia wenhua anquan*) was contingent upon reforming the backward and decadent aspects of culture as well as impeding the infiltration of negative external influences (ZRZ 2006). According to (then) NPC Vice-Chairman Xu Jialu, the cultural development goals of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan reflected the party-state's commitment to protecting the cultural sphere through its active reconstruction along "healthier" lines (*Renmin ribao* 2006). Key documents, such as the resolution on constructing a harmonious socialist society that was endorsed by the sixth plenary session of the CCP's Sixteenth Central Committee in October 2006, reiterated these themes, declaring that party-state intervention and rectification of culture, in conjunction with the cultivation of "cultural soft power" (*wenhua ruan shili*), can increase "societal cohesion" (*shehui ningju*) and strengthen collective ideological resistance

to the cultural subversion efforts carried out by hostile international forces (ZGX 2006).

While the Hu administration accorded attention to culture and its securitization, the Xi administration initiated a new phase of party-state engagement with the cultural sphere. According to publicly available information, Xi gave a total of 195 speeches in 2012–18, of which fifty-two (26 percent) were on culture-related themes (ZGX n.d.b; *Gongchandangyuanwang* n.d). Of the fifty-four leadership-level study sessions conducted between November 2017 and December 2018, eleven (20 percent) were likewise concerned with cultural issues. This heightened focus can be discerned from the remarks made by Xi Jinping throughout his tenure. During the all-national art and literature work meeting held in October 2014, itself tellingly modeled on the 1942 Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, Xi proclaimed culture to be an "important force in the survival and development of a people" (*Xinhua* 2015a). Similarly, in an address given at the opening ceremony of the CCP's Nineteenth National Congress in October 2017, he described culture as "the soul of a nation" (*Xinhua* 2017). In a recent *Qiushi* (2019) article, Xi claimed that having confidence in culture—implying a rejection of foreign alternatives and standards—can determine the "fate of a nation" and the "spiritual independence of a people." The underlying logic tying these comments together is that culture is the fount of all things, ranging from the political to the economic. Its protection is therefore integral not only for the defense of China and its independent path to development but also for the very notion of Chineseness itself.[5]

Unsurprisingly, then, the Xi administration, possessed of such an essentialist vision of culture, is even more assertive than its predecessors in depicting the cultural sphere as a site of ongoing ideological struggle between the PRC and the West, the outcome of which would have real implications for national identity and security (*Xinhua* 2013). The leaked internal communiqué on the current state of the ideological sphere issued and circulated by the CCP Central General Office in April 2013 confirms this reading (*ChinaFile* 2013). This communiqué, also known as Document No. 9, identifies seven viewpoints—Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society, neo-liberalism, the Western conception of journalism, historical nihilism, and the questioning of the socialist character of the PRC—as threats to the cultural sphere. The unchecked spread of these

5 Tobin (2015, 83) discusses this tendency towards differentiating the culture of the PRC from the cultures of other regions (primarily the West) in the internal debates surrounding the management of ethnic minorities in China.

viewpoints along the "cultural front" (*wenhua zhanxian*) is portrayed in this communique as having the capacity to inflict serious damage on the authority and legitimacy of the party-state. The safeguarding of national cultural security, as outlined by the resolution issued by the third plenum of the CCP's Eighteenth Central Committee in November 2013, is treated as a top priority for the party-state under the Xi administration (ZRZ 2013).

The Party-State's Formalization of Cultural Security

The discursive embrace of cultural security by party-state elites has been accompanied, under the Xi administration, by attempts to formalize the concept at the level of dedicated institutions and laws. Furthermore, this has been coupled with efforts at implementation through "cultural security work" (*wenhua anquan gongzuo*) carried out within specific domains such as cyberspace, religion, and education (*Xinhua* 2016; 2016a). The 2010s thus signal the consolidation of cultural security into an operative "strategic paradigm and policy framework" that can be observed across various levels and organs of the party-state (Johnson 2017, 67). The above-mentioned November 2013 decision of the third plenum of the CCP's Central Committee announced the establishment of the National Security Commission, an entity designed to enhance coordination across different security-oriented party-state institutions (ZRZ 2013). During the committee's first meeting in April 2014, Xi remarked that it would embody a "comprehensive national security perspective" (*zongti guojia anquanguan*) encompassing eleven types of security, including cultural security (ZRZ 2014). The National Security Law, passed on July 2015, continued this trend even further, affirming cultural security, along with military and societal security, as the guarantee of national security (*Zhongguo rendawang* 2015).

The realization of cultural security within specifically targeted domains has also been an aspect of this formalization process. The national education system (at all levels), given its role as one of the primary conduits for the transmission of party-state ideology, has been subject to an especially intense cultural securitization effort intended to fortify it against potential foreign subversion (ZGX 2013; ZRZ 2015; *Renmin ribao* 2016; *Xinhua* 2016b). Yuan Guiren, the former Minister of Education (2009–16), called upon educators not only to resist all attempts at cultural subversion but also to defend the "political bottom-line, the legal bottom-line, and the moral bottom-line" of the party-state in their teaching (*Xinhua* 2015b). The succeeding Minister of Education, Chen Baosheng, likewise stressed that educators were responsible

for exhibiting more "cultural confidence" (*wenhua zixin*) and for vigorously promoting a correct political-ideological orientation among the students under their care (*Zhongguowang* 2017; *Renmin ribao* 2017; *Jiaoyubu* 2018).

In conjunction with these exhortations from the highest levels of the bureaucracy, the Ministry of Education unveiled a number of cultural security-related policies, including strengthening in-class ideological monitoring of faculty and students, and curtailing the use of Western textbooks deemed to be instruments of cultural subversion (*Xinhua* 2015b). Moreover, universities and colleges were tasked with expanding the number of ideological courses made available to students, establishing Marxism studies institutes and increasing funding for grants and professorships related to research on ideology (SCMP 2013; SCMP 2015; Fish 2017; Cheek and Ownby 2018). In addition, the Ministry of Education encouraged these same institutions to enter into partnerships with dedicated government-affiliated research centers working on cultural security, most notably the National Cultural Security and Ideological Construction Center (*Guojia wenhua anquan yu yishixingtai jianshe zhongxin*, NCSICC).[6]

Established in 2013 as a sub-division of the Academy of Marxism under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan*, CASS),[7] the NCSICC conducts specialized research on cultural security and acts as a platform for the propagation of "cultural security consciousness" (*wenhua anquan yishi*) throughout Chinese society.[8] Researchers affiliated with the NCSICC have repeatedly expressed support for the cultural security policies enacted by the Ministry of Education, viewing them as necessary measures to help clear out the cultural and ideological rot within the national education system (Zhu 2015; 2015a). Attempting to back these policies and garner further public support for them, in recent years the NCSICC has initiated a program to dispatch its researchers to universities and colleges across the country on lecture tours. The lectures

6 The NCSICC's webpage can be accessed here: http://myy.cass.cn/myy/aqyysxt/.

7 Growing interest in the concept within the CASS can be evidenced from a survey on national cultural security carried out in 2013. The survey, composed of 120 questions, gauges respondents' views on multiple issues, ranging from their belief as to whether or not a plot by hostile international forces to Westernize and fragment China exists to their expectations about the country's long-term political and ideological trajectory. The survey is accessible here: http://www.diaochaquan.cn/s/29GER.

8 Commemorating the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, the NCSICC launched public accounts on Weibo and WeChat with the name "Torch of Thought" (*sixiang huoju*). Both accounts seek to spread "positive energy" (*zhengnengliang*) about the party-state and a heightened awareness of Western cultural subversion among Chinese social media users (*Zhongguowang* 2013).

seek to highlight the importance of cultural security work in light of the serious ideological challenges and threats facing the present-day PRC and its cultural sphere (*Anhui ligong daxue* 2016; *Hefei gongye daxue* 2016; *Zhongnan minzu daxue* 2016; *Liaoning gongcheng jishu daxue* 2017; *Nanhu xinwenwang* 2017; *Wuhan keji daxue* 2017).

Party-State Knowledge-Production and Cultural Security Theorization

As the above-mentioned discussion shows, party-state elite discourses and formalizations of cultural security have been extensive. Yet in all these instances, we find that there are no official definitions or systematic explanations of what cultural security is, and what its implementation would entail. For these, we can turn to PRC academia, which has produced a sizable literature on the concept since the late 1990s paralleling the earliest party-state invocations on cultural security (Jie 2009; Liu 2011, 20). Over the succeeding decades, this literature, falling under the rubric of "national security studies" (*guojia anquanxue*), experienced exponential growth fueled by mounting party-state interest in the concept, a phenomenon also remarked upon by observers of Chinese media and academic discussions on cultural security (Edney 2015, 264; Bandurski 2009; 2012). A cursory search for the term on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database reveals the existence of nearly 4,185 items published in 1999–2018, with a considerable spike in annual publications registered from 2007 onwards.

This literature, notwithstanding its temporal and thematic variation, displays a high degree of uniformity with respect to the theorization of cultural security. This suggests that the literature, in the absence of an officially endorsed exegesis, and given its growth-trajectory in response to signals from stakeholders, likely offers the closest approximation to party-state elites' conception of cultural security. This claim carries credibility when considering CCP domination over academic knowledge-production processes in the PRC. Many of the scholars engaged in theorizing about cultural security are employed by central and provincial-level party-state institutions such as the CASS, the Chinese National Academy of Arts, Peking University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, and Fudan University. In some instances, they self-identify as members of the CCP.[9] A portion have

9 The CASS, among other major party-state think tanks, is an important incubator for policies including those concerning the cultural sphere (Keane and Zhao 2014, 157).

utilized grants provided by the National Social Science Fund (NSSF) for their research.[10] In addition, a considerable number of the works on cultural security—particularly those examined in this chapter—were published on high-profile CCP-linked platforms such as *Qiushi* and *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao*, and on more publicly accessible media outlets controlled by the party-state like *Xinhua*, *Renmin ribao*, *Guangming ribao*, and *Zhongguo guofangbao*.

Reinforcing this tendency towards uniformity in PRC knowledge-production on cultural security is the fact that Chinese academia also takes it cues from CCP theorists who, while not directly discussing cultural security per se, have contributed widely on the question of culture. An illustrative example of this is Wang Huning, the academic-turned-senior official. Since his appointment as the head of the political research team at the Central Policy Research Office (*Zhongyang zhengce yanjiushi*, CPRO) in 1995, Wang has succeeded in cultivating considerable influence for himself among party-state elites through the instrumental role he has played in refining the theoretical contributions made by a succession of Chinese leaders (Cheng et al. 2017). Under the Xi administration, and after nearly two decades at the CPRO, where he assumed the directorship in 2002, Wang was elevated to the CCP's Politburo Standing Committee in 2012 and was given responsibility over propaganda and ideological affairs.

The prestige and influence enjoyed by this so-called chief advisor of Zhongnanhai has prompted academic interest in his writings on culture, an area in which he has been recognized as an authority since the early 1990s (Wang 1991; 1993). In addition to translating and popularizing Joseph Nye's work on soft power, Wang is known for coining the term "cultural sovereignty" (*wenhua zhuquan*) in 1994. The latter refers to the state's supreme prerogative—akin to that of political sovereignty—in managing the cultural sphere and warding off unwanted influences that might threaten the political, social, and cultural domains. Only by exercising such sovereignty, Wang (1994, 13) has argued, can the state harness culture as a resource for the development of "comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli*). These ideas on the relationship between culture and state power, perhaps amplified in importance due to Wang's embeddedness within the party-state, have been widely cited in the literature.

10 15.4 percent (271) of the 4,185 items in the CNKI database results were funded by the NSSF. According to the NSSF website, forty-seven research projects on cultural security were offered grants in the period 2000–17. http://fz.people.com.cn/skygb/sk/index.php/Index/seach?xmname=%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E5%AE%89%E5%85%A8&p=1.

The structural dependencies exemplified by Wang's trajectory—affiliations, funding sources, publication platforms, and even sources of citation—condition the output of this research, generating a strong tendency among the producers of the literature to filter their conceptualization of cultural security through a prevailing CCP paradigm of culture found in the writings (or speeches) of senior leaders, the theoretical classics of the party-state, and the broader Marxist tradition. This paradigm, which crystallized as early as the 1940s, treats the cultural sphere as a contested space divided between different classes, each representing distinct (revolutionary and counter-revolutionary) cultural forces within Chinese society (*Marxists Internet Archive* n.d.a; n.d.b). Compounding this cultural class struggle, and mirroring the semi-colonial character of pre-1949 China, is the presence of foreign powers that have actively involved themselves in this conflict through "cultural aggression" (*wenhua qinlüe*) so as to perpetuate the subjugation of the country (Tao 2003). Within this overall paradigm, CCP-led cultural construction, "thought rectification" (*sixiang gaizao*), and Cultural Revolution (*wenhua geming*) are viewed as necessary interventionist instruments critical to bringing about the triumph and consolidation of the revolution.

The CCP paradigm of culture, partially shaped by the cultural iconoclasm of May Fourth intellectuals and the Soviet Leninist-Bogdanovite debates on culture, has informed party-state intervention and securitization of the cultural sphere for much of the Maoist and even post-Maoist eras (Goldman 1971, 8–16; Meisner 1986, 313; Qiang 1995/1996; Denton 2003, 464; Perry 2012, 283–96; Brown 2018, 165–70). The continued relevance of this paradigm can be seen in the way various works on cultural security treat the concept as originating from, and consistent with, the historical legacies that underpin it (Zhao 2011a; Leng and Zhang 2013; Zhang 2014; Wang and He 2016; Dong and Zhang 2018). In that respect, the contemporary cultural security literature could be understood as a new and updated language that builds upon a pre-existing and still-operative CCP paradigm on culture. While Chinese academics in the 1990s and 2000s have been influenced, like party-state elites, by new international trends and research agendas such as the cultural turn in the social sciences and critical security studies, they have nevertheless, due to the above-mentioned structural dependencies, tailored their knowledge-production output on cultural security to suit an inherited CCP canon addressing the cultural sphere and its management. This further explains the uniformity observed in the scholarship on the concept.

A representative sample of the cultural security literature, numbering nearly a hundred sources in total, and comprised of books, journal articles,

analytical articles, and editorial pieces, is examined in the subsections below. These sources were obtained through the CNKI database, and their selection was informed by their thematic focus (i.e., cultural security and associated concepts like cultural aggression and cultural imperialism), the diversity of their publication platforms (i.e., media and academic outlets), the affiliations of their authors (i.e., employees of party-state academic institutions and universities), and their temporal coverage (1999–2018). While by no means exhaustive, this sample offers, by virtue of the above-mentioned structural and theoretical influences exercised by the party-state on PRC knowledge production, an entry point into how party-state elites understand cultural security—a concept they have come to embrace and formalize over the past two decades. What follows is a detailed overview of the definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices of cultural security, as drawn from this sample of the literature.

Key Definitions and Frameworks of Cultural Security

Discussions in the literature on the definition of cultural security often begin with an analysis of culture, the object of securitization. Culture is treated as a reified and all-encompassing concept that is varyingly described as the "soul of a nation and people" (*guojia he minzude linghun*), the "spiritual artery" (*jingshen xuemai*), the "spiritual garden" (*jingshen jiayuan*), and even a "gene" (*jiyin*; Liu 1999a, 45–47; Lin 1999, 31; Wang 2001, 37; Li 2008; Wang 2009, 9; Lu 2010; Zhang and Lao 2011; Chen 2012, 49–50). It is imagined to expansively envelop both the tangible-material and intangible-spiritual components that make up a nation, subsuming their language, customs, lifestyles, and value-norms (Liu 2004; Ma 2004, 88). Accordingly, culture is viewed as an important source of group cohesion and solidarity, as it unifies the collective through the common identity and way of life it provides (Xie 2003, 28; Wu 2003, 112–13; Liu 2011, 14–21). Its significance in the literature is emphasized further in how culture's content and conditions are thought to have a corresponding effect on a nation's overall situation (Wu 2018).

The literature focuses on the content-related components of culture, such as value systems, political culture, and ideologies, which have the capacity to influence regime legitimacy and societal stability (Zhao and Sheng 2014; Wang 2016). The narrow focus on the political and ideological components of culture can be understood in light of how "cultural security is at its core about ideological security" (*wenhua anquande hexin shi yishixingtai anquan*; Liu 1999, 147; Ma 2001, 37–40; Pan 2005, 13–14; Luo 2006, 98; Han 2008, 90–94;

Shi 2012, 33–38; Guo 2013, 919). The connection between these different components is spelt out in a *Qiushi* article written by the Vice-Director of the Marxist Institute at CASS, Fan Jianxin (2017). According to Fan, culture contains a "thought and spiritual/psychological dimension" (*sixiang he jingshen cengmian*) which determines the beliefs, values, and behaviors of individuals and groups. This dimension shapes in turn the ideological and political choices made by these actors, influencing "which banner they [choose to] carry" (*kang shenme qi*) and "which road they [choose to] take" (*zou shenme lu*). If this dimension is altered in any way, there could be serious consequences for ideological security and, by extension, national security. It follows, then, that cultural security is substantively about ideological security, with the latter subsuming political security (development-related), "path security" (*daolu anquan*), "regime security" (*zhengquan anquan*), and "system security" (*zhidu anquan*).

Because of these relationships, cultural security is treated in the literature as an integral part of comprehensive national security. It is seen as a type of "non-traditional security" (*feichuantong anquan*) of equal status to other forms of "traditional security" (*chuantong anquan*; Sun 2000; Shi 2000, 11; Liu 2002, 104; Xie 2008; Li 2009; Yan 2014). In various writings, cultural security is identified as the "deepest level" (*shenceng*) of national security, a description that accords with the foundational character ascribed to it by Fan (2017; Fu 2000, 116; Wu et al. 2004, 118; Hu 2008, 41; Guo 2013, 922; Wu 2014; Fang 2016). This is because the failure to safeguard culture can inflict serious existential costs: without cultural security, political authority unravels, legitimacy is damaged, economic development is reversed, and societal cohesion is shattered. The loss of cultural security is thus construed as a devastating blow to national security, auguring the dissolution of the nation-state and even the extinction of a people (Zhang 2007; Li 2007, 99; Wang 2009, 9; Zhao 2011, 69–72; Wang 2017). It follows that culture is conceived as the "main battle front" (*zhuyao zhanxian*) of national security, the collapse of which signals conclusive defeat in the war to preserve the party-state and even China itself (Yang 2006; Cheng 2016).

A common definition of cultural security proffered by the literature is that it is a strategy used by a sovereign nation to ensure the survival and development of its national culture without obstruction or hindrance (Liu 2011, 14–21). Cultural security is thus concerned with counteracting those external and internal threats that might "erode, destruct, subvert, interfere in, control, and homogenize" (*qinshi, pohuai, dianfu, ganrao, tonghua*) the national culture and its affiliated minority cultures (Shi 2000, 11; Fu 2000, 117; Wang 2016; Su 2011, 22–28). The right and ability to counteract and determine

the course of development of the national culture is explicitly identified in many works as cultural sovereignty (Fu 2000, 115; Fu and Ya 2013; Yan 2014). The latter is considered intimately bound up with political sovereignty, a conceptualization consistent with the logic that underpins the linkages presumed to exist between cultural, political, and ideological security (Wang 2001, 37). Cultural security therefore blurs the distinctions between Chinese culture, the Chinese nation, the PRC, and the CCP, collapsing all these different signifiers into one single category—culture—which requires active defense by the party-state out of existential concern.

Threat Typologies of Cultural Security

Threats to culture are categorized in the literature as being of two types: external and internal. External threats are those acts of "cultural expansion" (*wenhua kuozhang*) carried out by a "cultural hegemon" (*wenhua baquan*) which are aimed, in lieu of costlier and more overt military means, at gradually reshaping the domestic and foreign policies of weaker states (Xu 2002; Xie 2003, 28–29; Pan 2005, 13–14; Zhang 2012a; Guan 2013, 59; Su 2018, 33). This is accomplished by influencing the soft underbelly of culture and subverting it in ways favorable to the interests of the cultural hegemon. The United States is considered the current cultural hegemon, a status it obtained in the wake of the successful "cultural Cold War" (*wenhua lengzhan*) it had executed against the Soviet Union, which ultimately led to the latter's demise (Liu 2001, 21–22; Hu 2007; 2008, 42; Fu and Ya 2013, 55). Consistent with how culture is linked to politics and ideology, many works in the examined literature treat American cultural expansion as denoting the exportation of (American) ideology (Zhang 2009, 467; Li 2010; Tu et al. 2013, 26–29; Tu 2013; Huang and Yao 2016, 114). The United States is imagined as pursuing a "unilateralist cultural strategy" (*danbianzhuyi wenhua zhanlüe*) that exploits the processes of globalization and "informatization" (*xinxihua*) in order to spread its ideological influence and consolidate its hold over the international system (Xu 2000, 27; Wu 2003, 112–13; Wang 2009, 10; Chen 2012; Tu et al. 2013, 25; Wang 2014, 25).

The PRC is depicted in the literature as the supreme victim of this ongoing "culture war" (*wenhua zhanzheng*), or "formless war" (*wuxingzhan*), being waged by the United States and its allies (Han 2004, 12; Yan 2014; Huo 2016). This assault by the American hegemon is driven by three considerations. First, the PRC is the last remaining major socialist power in existence and its elimination is necessary if the United States is to assert total ideological

supremacy over the globe (Cao 2017, 69–72). Second, the PRC is one of the few remaining actors that could credibly—at the material and ideological levels—challenge the United States and contest its domination over the international system. Third, as the PRC embodies a major non-Western civilization, its elimination would constitute a major cultural and even racial victory affirming the superiority of the West (Liu 1999; Hu 2006, 5–7; Huang 2009, 99; Bai 2009, 1; Li 2009; Xin 2010). Through a targeted campaign of cultural expansion against the PRC, the United States hopes to vassalize the country, either through gradual peaceful evolution or a more instantaneous color revolution, thus derailing the country's rise and neutralizing it as a threat to American power and Western civilization (Xu 2000, 27–30; Liu 2001, 22–23; Yan 2014).

According to the literature, cultural expansionism is carried out through multiple methods, one of which is the mobilization of Western media, including such outlets as the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and the Cable News Network, in addition to well-known newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, to execute so-called "cultural-psychological warfare" (*wenhua xinlizhan*) against the PRC (Tu et al. 2013, 29; Wu 2018). This warfare mainly involves the propagation of anti-China discourses which promote the "superiority of human rights over sovereignty" (*renquan gaoyu zhuquan*), spread confusion and despair over the viability and legitimacy of the CCP's governing model among the Chinese populace, and question the ethnic-territorial integrity of China (Xu 2000, 30; Shi 2004, 11; Han and Wang 2005, 269–72; Luo 2006, 99–100; Lu 2010). Such propagandistic warfare leads to demoralization within the cultural sphere and undermines collective solidarity, the sense of identity, and the trust in the party-state shared by the citizens of the PRC.

Another important method is the cultivation of sympathetic elites capable of subverting the cultural sphere for the cultural hegemon. Promising candidates—typically young overseas students hailing from "cadre-official families" (*gaogan zidi*) and with promising future careers in government or academia back home—are actively targeted by the Central Intelligence Agency for brainwashing and co-optation (Lin 1999; Xu 2000, 27–29; 2002; Li 2002; Yan 2014; Huang and Yao 2016, 113–14).[11] Through such efforts, a

11 One popular narrative, repeated in the cultural security literature, claims that the Agency has been carrying out a coherent strategy of cultural subversion against China since the 1990s. This strategy is presumably outlined in a leaked document entitled the "ten commandments" (*shitiao jieling*), which provides detailed instructions for Agency operatives as to how to ideologically corrupt overseas students, minority ethnic groups, and intellectuals, among other vulnerable elements in Chinese society.

"Western-aligned faction" (*xifangpai*), hostile to the interests of the PRC and sympathetic to those of the United States, is planted among Chinese elites (Zhu 2015e). This faction, described as "slavishly worshipping the foreign" (*chongyang meiwai*) opposition force, and imbued with values and ideological outlooks different from those of the Chinese mainstream, is entrusted with carrying out a plot to "re-engineer the political gene" (*zhengzhi zhuanjiyin gongcheng*) of the country and end party-state rule (Yan 2014; Zhu 2015d; Fan 2017). The most worrying aspect of this Western faction is its penetration of academia (Xu 2000, 27; Ma 2001, 39). From within the breached ivory tower, the faction's supporters actively popularize theories that position the West as an "international standard" (*yu guoji jiegui*) for all things; distort "understandings of Marxism by filtering them through a Western prism" (*yixi jiema*); and encourage people to "bid the revolution farewell" (*gaobie geming*) through intellectual delegitimization of the party-state system (Wang 2009, 13; Zhu 2015b; Cheng 2016, 21; Fan 2017). The Western faction is also accused of disseminating political values and norms that are antithetical to the PRC's national specificity, including multi-party democracy, universalist values, constitutional democracy, media freedom, civil society, and judicial independence (Hou 2015; Huo 2016; Fan 2017).

Yet another method of cultural expansion involves the intensified and targeted exportation of subversive "cultural products" (*wenhua chanpin*) to the PRC. The consumption of such products, per the literature, facilitates the spread of debilitating moral values, such as "individualism, money-worship, and hedonism" (*gerenzhuyi, baijinzhuyi, xianglezhuyi*), which are inimical to the well-being, cohesion, and integrity of Chinese culture and society (Xu 2002; Li 2006, 70–71; Guan 2013, 58–61). This corruption contributes to the weakening of the population's cultural confidence and "cultural awareness" (*wenhua zijue*), triggering a sense of crisis that makes society altogether more receptive to foreign subversion efforts (Shi 2007; Zhang 2012a). Such cultural products can be carriers of anti-CCP ideologies which belittle Chinese patriotism and glorify American "hegemonism and interventionism" (*baquanzhuyi, ganshezhuyi*), enhancing in turn the ability of the United States to interfere in PRC domestic politics (Hu 2002, 63–64; Wang 2008; Ai 2013; Zhu 2015e; Huo 2016).

As to internal threats, they originate from the cultural sphere itself, acting as centrifugal and fragmentary forces that can be exploited by cultural hegemons for their own ends. The literature identifies two types of internal threat, the first of which is the threat posed by the "old culture" (*jiu wenhua*), which was not completely uprooted by the party-state when it was replaced by the "new culture" (*xin wenhua*) of socialism during the

Maoist era. The persistent negative and feudal residues of the old culture are expressed in conservative cultural trends such as "revivalist" (*fuguzhuyi*) movements that seek to "expel Marx and restore Confucius" (*quma guiru*) in mainstream culture, to "Confucianize the CCP" (*ruhua gongchandang*), and to re-establish Confucianism as the national religion of China (Fan 2017). Another expression of these residues is the tendency towards "cultural separatism" (*wenhua fenliezhuyi*), sometimes referred to as "extreme nationalism" (*jiduan minzuzhuyi*) or "cultural fundamentalism" (*wenhua yuanjiaozhizhuyi*), which is ascribed to ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang (Zhang 2006). This tendency, strengthened by transnational religious and cultural links, stems from the mistaken consciousness held by ethnic minorities that they are a self-standing group separate from the Chinese people (Chen and Zhang 2004; Zhang 2006a, 76–77; Zheng 2006; Guo 2013, 918). It is thus understood as a dangerous residue found within the cultural sphere, and one that needs to be repeatedly checked and eliminated before it endangers the integrity of the nation.

The second type of internal threat is the erosion of orthodox Marxist ideology as a commanding source for mainstream values since the 1970s (Wang 2014, 25–26; Zhu 2018). While the wider societal implications of this loss are considerable, the literature focuses on what this means for the CCP, representing as it does "the vanguard orientation of China's progressive culture" (*Zhongguo xianjin wenhuade qianjin fangxiang*).[12] Most notably, the CCP is imagined as facing an ongoing "crisis of faith" (*xinyang weiji*) wherein only a few cadres have sufficient knowledge of, let alone belief in, the ideology of the party-state (Zhu 2015c; 2015e; Fan 2017; Hou 2018). This crisis accounts for the popularity of superstitious beliefs as well as religion among cadres and has contributed moreover to a state of "ideological rigidity" (*yishixingtaide jianghua*) within the CCP, understood as the end/failure of the attempts to adjust ideology to suit the needs of the present (Zhu 2015e; Hou 2018). Such problems risk taking the CCP down the same path of destruction as its counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—a process that began with their loss of ideological faith and their "willingness to fight" (*ganyu liangjian*) in the cultural sphere, and which made them vulnerable to accepting the values of others (Hou 2018). The lack of sincere and informed belief in ideology threatens the CCP with destruction, the outcome of which would result in the cultural sphere's capture, given the absence of the party-state's management and protection, by the cultural

12 The quote is a key phrase from the theory of the "three represents" (*sange daibiao*), first described by Jiang in 2002 (*Baike* n.d).

expansionism of hostile international forces. As a consequence, China would end up subjugated by the West.

The Practice of Cultural Security

Counteracting these external and internal threats to the cultural sphere requires a cultural security strategy that entails, as argued in the literature, the use of defensive and offensive measures. Defensive measures are those aimed at establishing what is varyingly described as a "cultural great wall" (*wenhua changcheng*), a "cultural firewall" (*wenhua fanghuoqiang*), or a "cultural security thought defensive-perimeter" (*wenhua anquan sixiang fangxian*) capable of protecting the PRC's "cultural frontiers" (*wenhua bianjiang*) from enemy attacks (Liu 2009; Chen 2012; Wu 2014; Cao 2017, 69; Fan 2017). These might include the passage and implementation of regulations, inspired by the French and Canadian "cultural exception" (*wenhua liewai*) laws, to limit the influx of dangerous cultural products into the PRC (Liu 1999a, 150; Bie 2002; Shen 2014). Censorship geared towards halting the dissemination of "cultural trash" (*wenhua laji*) and "decadent cultural dross" (*fuxiude wenhua zaopo*) on media platforms can also be useful in that regard (Lin 1999, 32; Shi 2007a; Hu 2008a; Chen 2012; Wang and Han 2015, 139–41). Yet another proposed measure is the launching of rectification campaigns within party-state media and educational institutions to transform them into "ideological battlefields" (*yishixingtai zhandi*) where those voices espousing pro-Western viewpoints can be silenced and those promoting correct party-state ideology can be amplified (Wang 2014, 30–31; Zhu 2015a; 2015c; Fang 2016).

Offensive measures, by contrast, are geared towards constructing a "cultural system" (*wenhua tizhi*) capable of upholding societal cohesion, addressing the cultural needs of the masses, and ensuring that one's culture remains dynamic and capable of innovation (Sun 2000; Zhang 2012, 12–13; Fu and Ya 2013, 55; Hu 2016, 63). Two types of offensive measures are repeatedly noted in the literature: cultural infrastructure development and cultural content enhancement. Cultural infrastructure development refers to the expansion of a country's cultural production capacities—namely, its cultural and creative sectors—through fiscal and legal support (Zhang 2001, 14–15; Wang 2014, 28, 30–31). Cultural content enhancement denotes the party-state's efforts to ensure that this cultural system produces good "cultural content" (*wenhua neirong*) appropriate for public consumption, which is defined by several criteria: that it has "attraction power" (*xiyinli*);

that it can help strengthen the "cultural immunity" (*wenhua mianyi*) of the population against the subversion efforts of hostile international forces; and that it reinforces the security of the regime through the promotion of a "correct political orientation" (*zhengque zhengzhi fangxiang*) among recipient audiences (Pan 2005, 19; Zhang 2006, 125; Jie 2007, 109–12; Jiang 2010, 89).

In generating this good cultural content, the literature proposes that the party-state make use of three existing resources found in the cultural sphere, the first of which is "excellent traditional Chinese culture" (*Zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua*; Shi 2007a; Fan 2017). Galvanized by the principle of "making the old serve the new, and making the old elucidate the present" (*guwei jinyong, yigu jianjin*), proponents argue that such material, with its unique values and aesthetics, fashioned by over five thousand years of civilization, could be an excellent source of attractive content (Shi 2000, 11–14, 18; Wang 2009, 11–12). The second resource that could be mined is "revolutionary culture" (*geming wenhua*), a reference to the values and aesthetics that dominated in the Mao era. Finally, the third is "socialist progressive culture" (*shehuizhuyi xianjin wenhua*), referring to those socialist ideals and impulses that have long existed within folk culture (Fu 2000, 117; Hu 2002, 65–66; Zhang 2007). By integrating these three resources through a well-planned process of cultural construction (or crafting) overseen by the party-state, good cultural content, serving the political and ideological purposes of the CCP, could be produced (Su 2011, 23; Peng and Sun 2012; Cheng 2016, 26; Fang 2016; Cao 2017, 72).

The literature proposes that these two offensive measures be deployed in combination with one another. A developed cultural infrastructure aids in the dissemination of good cultural content, enabling Marxism to regain its authoritative status within mainstream culture and emboldening the CCP to defeat its enemies within the cultural sphere (Yan 2014; Zhu 2015c; Cheng 2016, 21). This formula is not only imagined to apply in the domestic sphere but can be—or *should be*—replicated in foreign contexts as well. Many works assert that a "cultural going-out strategy" (*wenhua zouchuqu zhanlüe*), which would involve increasing the country's cultural product exports and establishing more Chinese-language learning centers, could have a positive impact on national cultural security (Fan 2001; Luo 2006, 97–100; Su 2017; Su 2018, 33–35). This is because the internationalization of PRC-tailored cultural content can strengthen the "discursive power" (*huayuquan*) of the party-state vis-à-vis other cultural hegemons like the United States, allowing it in turn to narrate its own stories and undercut the spread of anti-CCP cultural products (Luo 2012; Luo and Shi 2014, 66–68; Yan 2014). Such a proactive approach, intended to undercut hostile narratives in

foreign environments, would function as an additional defensive perimeter around the PRC's cultural great wall.

In discussing the offensive-defensive duality of cultural security, the literature stresses that the strategy should not be confused with a xenophobic reaction to globalization and foreign culture. Rather, as various works argue, and in an echo of Jiang's earliest invocation, cultural security is a strategy for the scientific and rational management of globalization. The latter is presented as a "double-edged sword" (*shuangjiandao*) that facilitates the entry of negative influences into the cultural sphere while also simultaneously introducing "new nutrients" (*xinde yingyang*) that could revitalize that sphere and stave off the internal dynamics of stagnation and decline (Sun 2000; Hu 2002, 63; Wu et al. 2004, 118–21). By adopting a cultural security strategy, then, the party-state is able to resist the two undesirable extremes of "national self-closure" (*biguan suoguo*) and "total acceptance" (*jianshou bingxu*) through a selective engagement with globalization, enabling Chinese culture to overcome external and internal threats to its survival and continued development (Pan 2005, 18; Li 2009; Wu 2014). As a result, a clear-sighted strategy of cultural security preserves social stability, the national sovereignty of the PRC, and the legitimacy of the CCP—holistically safeguarding national security.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the embrace of cultural security—expressed in terms of discursive invocations and formalizations—by the party-state, a process that began with the Jiang administration in the late 1990s and remains ongoing under the current Xi administration. Subsequently, the chapter provided an in-depth overview of how the concept was theorized by party-state elites, drawing heavily from a representative sample of works associated with a cultural security literature published in the PRC in the period 1999–2018. In the absence of an officially endorsed party-state definition of cultural security, these sources, produced by academics embedded within or in close proximity to party-state institutions, provided insights into how the concept is understood and operationalized by party-state elites.

The chapter examined the definition and framework, threat typologies, and practices of cultural security proffered by the literature. It found that cultural security was imagined to correspond to political and ideological security and is chiefly concerned with the preservation of CCP power under conditions of globalization and an intensifying ideological struggle with the

West. Threats are identified as emanating from the subversive efforts of external cultural hegemons as well as negative residues inherent to the cultural sphere. The implementation of a cultural security strategy necessitates the party-state's systematic neutralization of such threats and an interventionist remolding of that sphere in ways that serve its interests. Insufficient cultural securitization is understood in starkly existential terms as leading to a loss of social stability, national sovereignty, and regime legitimacy.

As a whole, the literature points to the anxieties and fears that have shaped the thinking of party-state elites over the past two decades regarding the durability of their political-ideological order under conditions of globalization and Western (American) ideological hegemony. The logic underlying the adoption of a cultural security strategy is that it provides a solution—in the form of state-led scientific management of the cultural sphere—familiar to the CCP (i.e., rooted in its own paradigm of culture), refracted through novel notions about culture and security, and capable of addressing the dangers perceived to be facing the regime.

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