10. Hong Kong and Scalable Cultural Security

Gabriel Thorne

Abstract: This chapter focuses on recent transformations in Hong Kong, arguing that it provides a rich example of the complexity of cultural security in Asia. Framing the changes in Hong Kong society and tensions over local and national politics, the chapter seeks to consider the epistemological assumptions of the term cultural security. Adopting a sociological perspective, it asks how discussions on cultural security can address the everyday life of citizens pursuing self-determination. The frame of scalable cultural security is proposed in order to capture some of the interpretive meaning-making of citizens pursuing self-determination, and their very own and palpable conception of the term. The chapter addresses the 2019 Hong Kong protests and the 2020 introduction of the Hong Kong National Security Law.

Keywords: Hong Kong, cultural security, Umbrella Revolution, national security, Article 23

Hong Kong (officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China) provides one of the most multifaceted examples of the complexity of cultural security in Asia. As the focal topic in this chapter, it also presents an opportunity to consider the epistemological assumptions of the term cultural security. As a political concept it sits in abstraction to the everyday lives of those cultural security is supposed to envelop. In this chapter, I address the notion of a scalable cultural security, one that seeks to capture some of the interpretive meaning-making of citizens pursuing self-determination, and their very own and palpable register of the term. Scale is of direct importance because Hong Kong is problematic in terms of its size. It has been a quasi-citystate with economic and cultural clout

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that is disproportionate to China as a whole. Yet, now that clout has been dramatically cushioned in a series of events that speak to the dynamics of China's cultural security rhetoric. The 2019 Hong Kong protests against an extradition bill were entwined with the micro characteristics of cultural security, concerns over self-determination, the preservation of language, and individual rights. Here "micro" relates to the tension between public issues and how they are experienced at a local scale, community wide, individually, and subjectively. Symbolically Hong Kong is "micro," a small quasi-city-state of just 427 square miles. Yet, as always in cultural security issues, the micro scales up to macro concerns. A year after the first anti-extradition protests, on June 30, 2020, Beijing introduced a Hong Kong National Security Law (officially the Law of the PRC on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) circumventing and quashing the territory's own Basic Law. The law established far-reaching constraints on protest, freedom of speech, and freedom of movement. The demonstrations that were a catalyst for the new law were embedded in the larger political context of greater China and the PRC's defense of its own macro cultural security. Civil liberties were further restricted in March of 2024 when "Article 23," a bitterly opposed security law first tabled in 2003, was finally implemented. Thus, this discussion explores the scalable nature of cultural security, highlighting the inherent flexibility of the term while also revealing some internal contradictions. As the concept is broadly applicable, it can also be charged as lacking purchase, rendering it questionable as a truth-generating or meaning-making concept. It is immediately apparent that protestors in the streets of Hong Kong were concerned about the future of their city, their culture, and their way of life. It is also self-evident that the brutality and disdain for rule of law enacted by the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) is an extension of the PRC's suppression of political critique and social unrest. Both the demonstrating citizenry and the suppressing police are protecting cultural security, just at different scales. One is the macro level of state actors in the sphere of international relations, the other is the micro level of everyday encounters, in the stadia of street and home. Scale in this sense also relates to epistemological frame, either that of the austere language of rational state actors, or the emotive subjectivity of lived experience. This is also a challenge in which a qualitative interpretive researcher tries to engage in the more positivist frame of political science and international relations. To labor this nuance, I refer repeatedly to different inflections of both the micro and the macro, though I urge the reader to consider these as a hypothetical continuum. This chapter attempts to detail the paradox of the Hong Kong protests as an expression of cultural security from a

stubborn and atypical node in the greater PRC. It also performs an audit of cultural security, arguing in conclusion that at its essence the paradigm is tied to, and reflective of, the consequences of cultural and economic globalization. Indeed, in the Hong Kong example the tension between the global and the local is distinct and perhaps the enduring feature of Hong Kong's modern history.

The chapter begins by framing and unpacking the issue of cultural security. With reference to its various conceptualizations, the concept is shown to be scalable, and an adjunct to globalization theory that fluctuates between the local and the global yet always possesses an inflection of each condition within the other. That is to say, all instances of cultural security have both micro and macro expressions, just as all global concerns have local grounding. This addresses the often-overlooked qualitative potential of cultural security that is frequently obscured in the positivist epistemological assumptions of international relations. However, such a perspective is also offered as a contribution to the diversity of work on security studies that adopts a post-structuralist, feminist, and critical traditions stance.

To give these articulations of cultural security purchase I then present the 2019 anti-extradition law protests in a short but comprehensible timeline. This gives context to the demonstrations, clarifying how they emerged and why they were so different to previous protests. This overview highlights how Hongkongers were, and still are, fighting for the preservation of their culture while being minority citizens (micro) of a nation that robustly protects its own cultural security at both the national and international levels (macro). This chapter explores how Hongkongers are in the midst of protecting their language, popular culture, economy, legal system, and territory. Yet all the more perplexing is the fact that Hongkongers are also typically wealthy, highly educated, and loaded with cultural capital simply unimaginable to other minority groups. Hongkongers are, it would appear, entirely different to Uyghurs, who had been a focus of international concern for much longer than the Hongkongers (for more on the cultural security of Uyghurs, see the chapters by Hacer Gonul and Julius Rogenhofer, Giulia Cabras, and Michal Zelcer-Lavid) and have little autonomy left with which to fight. Yet, Hong Kong demonstrators insist that their fates are the same as that of the Uyghurs. A further level of complexity is that the Hong Kong identity is itself contested, not essentialized by Chineseness, and claimed by locally born ethnic minorities such as Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Filipinos, Indonesians, and in lesser numbers Europeans and Africans. It must be noted that Chineseness is itself a deeply contested category both within China and throughout East and Southeast Asia (Gladney 2004; Tong 2011).

The techniques and strategies of protest form the final discussion of this chapter and bring the PRC's competing narrative on cultural security into sharp relief (for more on the CCP's official concept of cultural security, see Mohammed Turki Alsudairi's chapter). This discussion registers the scalable by applying micro, meso, and macro focuses on cultural security. I conclude that the Hong Kong example is a stubborn and untidy expression of cultural security, hybrid and paradoxical at times. This, I argue, is important to address as it highlights an enduring challenge to the concept. Cultural security is itself an epistemologically scalable concept that is ultimately paradoxical when competing groups pursue it in the same regions.

Cultural Security Unpacked and Scaled

Security is a topic that has broad relevance in the social sciences. It has tended to be normatively discussed by political scientists at state level in terms of physical threat, while sociologists may use both more abstract and more localized understandings in concepts like existential security (Giddens 1991). A range of contemporary security studies have diversified and deepened discussion on cultural security. Alagappa (1998) has explored this in terms of the Asian context, and Bajpai (2003) has brought the focus to the security of the individual. Ole Wæver (1995) cuts to an even more acute and important distinction: that between the security of the nation and the security of the people. This provides a schema that is scalable. The spirit of such discussion is explored in the work of Zehfuss (2002) who demonstrates the facility of a constructivist approach to International Relations. I work with these influences and have adopted the scalar approach due to its relevance to the particularities of Hong Kong and the tension between scale of nation and city.

It is helpful to think of scalability as being like a zoom function, able to focus on micro details (the individual scale) or macro ones (the scale of the nation or, more precisely for the PRC, the state). Whilst one can feel part of a nation state, an individual is not the same as a nation state. In its fullest sense the nation state is imagined, a premise of shared affiliation of countless individuals who will never meet or interact (Anderson 2006). The individual is qualitatively different from the nation and thus when talking of security can never fully have the same interests. Similarly, the nation has its own unique concerns about security that recognize individuals but are not analogous to the interests of the individual. The distinction I wish to make here is that national security has internal and external concerns, and

its interest can be scaled. In contrast, people are communities representing forms of similarity or difference and thus can be grouped together in terms of their security needs. If the nation and the people are aligned or congruent in their demands, both the nation and the people can be imagined to have security. However, if the security of the people is threatened in terms of their cultural expression, freedom, and self-determination, then personal security is likely to also become an issue of security for the nation. If the interests of the people and the nation move in opposing directions, perceptions of insecurity will increase.

It is not difficult to conceive how actions in one realm can create insecurity in another. The notion of scalable cultural security highlights that there can be no singular, essentialized cultural security. However, as the various conceptions of security proliferate, there remains ambiguity about just what state, personal, or other manifestations of cultural security pertain to (Wæver 1995, 47). This is not to suggest other frames are not relevant or helpful, but only the Hong Kong context requires often bespoke tools. The real salve of the frame for the discussion on Hong Kong is that there is a continuity between the city state and China writ large, thus we are looking not at different situations, but security as it exists nested in different elements of the same continuum.

A key concern in contemporary debates about security is the disruption caused by globalization, again an issue problematic for the context of our discussion. As individuals within a state start to become insecure in response to immigration, volatile economies, and policies of austerity, their recourse to challenge the state becomes increasingly weak as it is immersed in a global system and often compromised in how it controls its borders, economic policy, and welfare. In response to such threats, identity and culture can become polarizing resources to fight with, and in turn ones that politicians prey on in populist politics to distract from issues they are unwilling to engage with. Culture then becomes an issue of security for both the nation and the people. Or, as Michel Wieviorka (2018) argues, in an era of globalization, culture becomes an issue of insecurity. Cultural identities have become commodities of defense for people and collectives who are overlooked or disregarded by the state, with the nation's sovereignty dependent on global integration. During the 1990s these threats were framed in ethnic terms and resonated with the clash of civilizations thesis (Huntington 1993). In the 2000s the alter-globalization movement and issues of precarity have seen new expressions of insecurity amongst citizens and increasingly denizens within states (Standing 2016; Friedman and Randeria 2004; Maeckelbergh 2009; Nederveen Pieterse 2004; Turner 2016; Klein 2010).

The appeal of the concept of cultural security is that it is malleable, lending itself to application in a variety of scenarios. Erik Nemeth (2015) addresses art and antiquities as cultural items with security ramifications. What happens, for instance, when a nation owns the art and artifacts of another and uses them as part of its own cultural currency in museums that draw revenue and attract numerous tourists? On another level, what happens when cultural artifacts become issues in conflict? The Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas of Bamyan in 2001 and the trade in antiquities by ISIS pose this question. A more prevalent understanding of cultural security is, however, born out of minority rights and recognizes that cultural security includes the ways in which communities may feel threatened by the erosion of their means of production, geographical territory, language, and citizenship (Tehranian 2004).

Cultural security is thus tied to insecurity and focuses on the importance of cultural elements that distinguish sometimes heterogenous communities, not typified by a homeland, common religion, dialect, or ethnicity. The innate fluidity of the term has been expanded upon to highlight that cultural security is not particular to minority groups. Cultural security is in fact scalable, just like the broader notion of security. It can be focused at one level on micro issues of individuals and communities, but also expand to attend to the national and international levels (Nowicka 2014). More than any other state, the PRC has deftly expanded cultural security into a national concern, in effect scaling it up from the micro to the macro. For the leadership of the PRC, issues of cultural security can be both internal and external threats. The latter ultimately escalate state cultural security into a matter of international relations, as the Hong Kong protests highlight (Yuan 2015, 18–19). To clarify what is macro and what is micro requires the application of scale, i.e., provincial protest can be regarded as micro up to the macro state concerns of national cohesion. Yet scale is fluid and the way the provincial issues are dealt with nationally may make national cohesion a micro issue in comparison to international affairs, which can then be understood as macro.

The issue of cultural security has been embraced by the PRC, with the CCP making continued and growing remarks about its importance. Cultural security, along with political, economic and information security, is one of the four strands of the nation's security agenda (Renwick and Cao 2008). The PRC's focus on cultural security operates at the state level as part of a realist approach to International Relations. Cognizant of the rapid economic and social change sweeping through China in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the state has sought to promote an official version of Chinese culture

as a unifying force for stability. Cultural security is for the PRC leadership both a domestic strategy to maintain stability and a form of leverage that can be used to increase their power internationally. On the international stage and through the global growth of identity politics, Chinese culture can be sacrosanct and defensible even if the PRC's political regime and human rights abuses are wholly unpalatable. Domestically, cultural security works as a motif to downplay and homogenize internal diversity. The PRC has long sought to render ethnic diversity static, little more than a series of exotic and archaic motifs to be consumed in tourist villages and ethnic theme parks (Gladney 2004; Oakes 2016). Cultural security also becomes a premise by which separatism and political autonomy can be suppressed, the logic posited by the PRC authorities being that these threaten the contiguous culture and values of the Chinese people, and socialism with Chinese characteristics. The PRC's increasingly assimilatory treatment of Uyghurs and growing suppression of their cultural practices in Xinjiang since 2016 is but one recent example of this process.

The national cultural security paradigm becomes most problematic when various forms of autonomy are used withing the PRC, a term that simply obfuscates different forms administration. Take, for instance, the various Special Economic Zones and Special Administrative Regions, Autonomous Regions, and also Taiwan. Although Taiwan is not a region in PRC administration, Beijing does, to an extent, shape international conversation about this territory. In all these cases the CCP offers different legal and political systems, yet it claims sovereignty over each. In the most independent of these regions, Hong Kong and Taiwan, there are competing narratives about both national security and cultural security that conflict with the CCP's narrative of national cultural security. If, as can be seen above, the notion of security is inherently flexible, being both personal and national, a territory like Hong Kong becomes problematic in terms of what scale of cultural security to apply.

Recent Social Processes in Hong Kong

In order to provide the understanding of Hong Kong's history which is necessary for our discussion, I present a brief overview of its history and recent rising social unrest. There is a robust literature on Hong Kong studies which has charted these transformations in acute detail. As a colonial venture, Hong Kong was always a commercial outpost for the British. It grew in both economic and political significance as China developed in

the twentieth century (Carroll 2007). Hong Kong established wealth and opulence by the 1980s, bolstered by substantial British investment in social housing and welfare (Goodstadt 2014), but the Sino-British joint declaration of 1984 paved the way for Hong Kong's return to China on July 1, 1997. The Tiananmen Square protests and suppression in May and June of 1989 had a profound effect on the psyche of Hong Kong society, in some ways further galvanizing a long-nascent Hong Kong identity and culture.

The post-handover period has seen a distinct transformation in Hong Kong society. Initial surprise at the "business as usual" transfer of sovereignty in 1997 was bolstered by confidence in Hong Kong's own Basic Law, which provides a fifty-year window for the territory to retain its freedoms with quasi-autonomy under the "one country, two systems" model. This optimism was driven in part by the Mainland's own transformation under Jiang Zemin (1989–2001) and then Hu Jintao (2001–11). The SARS pandemic of 2003 and a failed attempt to introduce the State Security legislation popularly named Article 23 saw huge protests by Hong Kong citizens (Lui 2005). By 2012 tension had grown surrounding issues of mass immigration of Mainland Chinese into Hong Kong (10 percent of the population since 1997) and the number of cross-border tourists, which swelled from approximately 6.8 million annual visitors in 2002 to 47.2 million in 2012 (Prideaux and Tse 2015). These issues became more controversial with rising numbers of birth tourists straining Hong Kong's public health system and school provisions. These and other issues resulted in new waves of public protests and the widespread vilification and humiliation of Mainland Chinese on Hong Kong streets and social media.

Student protests in 2012 were largely successful in pushing back against the introduction of Ethics and Civics Education. These demonstrations marked a new era of militant protestors prepared to engage in brinkmanship with the Hong Kong government. Remarkably, efforts to integrate Hong Kong with the Mainland in terms of business and culture have backfired in terms of identity, with Hong Kong's youth claiming the weakest identification with China and the strongest attachment to Hong Kong as a culture and identity (Wu 2017). The now defunct Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (2019) noted in its final report in 2019 that 71 percent of the population did not feel pride in being Chinese citizens. This was the highest proportion since the 1997 transfer of sovereignty. Rising calls for democracy in turn resulted in a compromised concession to universal suffrage, which gave way to the eighty-seven-day Umbrella Revolution protests in 2014 (Richardson 2017). These peaceful protests were ultimately seen as a failure by many of the young Hong Kong protestors, as the increasing authoritarian

reach of Beijing made its way into Hong Kong public life. In 2016, booksellers critical of the PRC were abducted inside and outside of Hong Kong and transported illegally to the mainland (Reuters in Hong Kong 2016). Many hoped that political change could be crafted through local elections and the transition to a new Chief Executive (Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor) in 2017. Yet disillusionment and frustration mounted and the flashpoint of the anti-extradition law as a catalyst for renewed protest in 2019 could be regarded as almost arbitrary.

The 2019 protests stemmed from a legal loophole that emerged with the murder of a Hong Kong woman in Taiwan. The Hong Kong government sought to introduce new legislation to give the Chief Executive the power to choose, on a case-by-case basis, who should be extradited to territories that Hong Kong has no existing treaty with. This legislation proved to be hugely unpopular with the Hong Kong public, who treated it with great suspicion and as a further erosion of the Basic Law, which was intended to be observed without alteration until 2046. Seen in the context of the 2016 abductions, the extradition law was regarded by many as a furtive way to legitimize Beijing's suppression of political discontent in Hong Kong. Rising animosity about the indifference of the Hong Kong government to people's opinions resulted in large-scale demonstrations, initially peaceful marches which morphed into increasingly militant civil disobedience. Hong Kong protestors adopted a five-point manifesto of demands which remained the rallying cry of the protests into early 2020. These five demands were: (1) the complete retraction of the extradition bill, (2) the retraction of the government labeling protestors as rioters, (3) the release and exoneration of protest prisoners, (4) the establishment of an independent commission into police brutality, and (5) the resignation of the Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam with universal suffrage for the Chief Executive position and Legislative Council.

Additional context to this overview resonates with the micro issues of cultural security. Certainly, since 2008 the confluence of rising Chinese wealth and stunted political autonomy in Hong Kong has coalesced into a perfect storm. This process has been exacerbated by the authoritarian turn of the PRC under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Hongkongers, unable to impact domestic politics and economic development in any meaningful way, have been at the mercy of increasing integration with Mainland Chinese politics (Veg 2017; Dirlik 2016; Dapiran 2017; Chu 2013). One major impact felt acutely is the erosion of Cantonese as the lingua franca in Hong Kong, a measurable impact in terms of the visual coding of the territory. Hongkongers speak Cantonese and read traditional Chinese script. Mainland Chinese speak

Mandarin and use a simplified version of Chinese script. As businesses and schools have, through various measures, sought to cater to Chinese interests, Hongkongers have increasingly felt removed, absent, and overlooked in their home. The growing use of simplified characters across the territory has transformed Hong Kong's visual coding. This is accompanied by the growing use of Mandarin, altering how the city sounds. One of the most popular slogans of protests since 2012 has been the prosaic claim for cultural security that, "Hong Kong is not China." With the passing of the new National Security Law, this slogan is now illegal, in itself an act of sedition under PRC legislation (Hong Kong Government, 2020).

Cultural Security in the 2019 Hong Kong Protests

The Hong Kong protests that began in June of 2019 continued in stunted forms following the introduction of the National Security Law. Following on from the background to the protests provided earlier, the five demands provide a backdrop to the following discussion, which analyses examples of micro, meso, and macro cultural security. It can be seen that micro concerns regarding security are expressed in the concerns of protestors. Their focus is on maintaining Hong Kong identity and the values and norms of the territory. In contrast, the meso debate on cultural security is founded on the perception of Hong Kong's sovereignty and how this is contested by pro-government supporters and those who support the protestors. Finally, the macro focus explores the way in which the Hong Kong protests have become a threat to the PRC's national cultural security, and one from which its authorities are prepared to defend it internationally.

Micro Cultural Security

Many of the micro issues that underpin the 2019 protests are related to longstanding discontent about the transformation of Hong Kong. As previously noted, the Ethics and Civics education, large-scale Mainland Chinese migration and cross border tourism, and a gradual testing of the rule of law have made many Hong Kong Chinese increasingly hostile to the PRC. The extradition bill is fundamentally an issue of sovereignty and the rule of law, but culturally it has been enmeshed in these broader concerns. While not entirely autonomous, Hong Kong retains a legal system founded in British Common Law and has its own Basic Law (Hong Kong: One Country Two Systems Economic Research Institute 1991). Freedom of speech, freedom to protest, and freedom of religion are all legal rights in Hong Kong and are

regarded as part of Hong Kong culture and identity (Dapiran 2017; Goodstadt 2014). The proposed extradition bill was seen as compromising these issues. Thus, the protestors' first demand for the entire retraction of the bill can be read as part of a suite of concerns pertaining to cultural security scaled to the micro level, individual rights, and freedoms.

The second and third demands—for the government to withdraw its characterization of protestors as rioters and for prisoners detained during the protests to be released—are in part issues of semantics. They indicate the nuance between freedom fighters and terrorists. Many of the Hong Kong citizens who support the protests regard the youth who have challenged and battled with the HKPF as simply exercising their rights in accordance with the Basic Law. Ultimately, they fear that in being compliant, as protestors were in the Umbrella Revolution in 2014, they will lose another slice of freedom and the Hong Kong way of life. In direct contrast, pro-government supporters argue in a similar vein that the territory is a peaceful place, and that these dramatic and volatile clashes between protestors and the HKPF go against Hong Kong culture. At the micro scale a polarized public becomes an issue of cultural security—an issue to which populist politicians seem recklessly indifferent.

The fourth demand—that an independent enquiry be launched into brutality by the HKPF—relates to events on June 12, 2019, when protestors were dispersed outside of the LEGCO (Legislative Council) building. This date marks a point at which there was an escalation of force by both police and protestors. Again, this demand strikes at the heart of Hong Kong values regarding policing. The territory's police have long been regarded as fair and just. The establishment of the ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) in 1974 was an historic landmark in the accountability of public servants in the territory. However, the actions of the police in the 2019 protests appear to have permanently altered public perception and trust of the police. Perhaps the greatest cultural charge against the police is that they are actually agents of the PRC, and there has been widespread debate regarding how many police officers are actually imports from the Mainland—and, some speculate, even PLA. In part, these debates reflect general disbelief that the police could react so violently and indifferently to other Hongkongers. One acute example of this reduced to a cultural conflict was an exchange between a reporter and a female police officer who did not recognize Stand News as a media company. In a video of the exchange the reporter challenges the HKPF officer, and she admits she is not from Hong Kong (@WETHENORTH 2019). The cultural signifier of language is another flashpoint in the conflict, with many HKPF officers in the protests

supposedly being caught speaking only Putonghua, supposedly identifying them as not Hongkongers (Li 2019).

The last of the five demands, that the Chief Executive resign, can similarly be read as a cultural issue, a potent attempt by a disenfranchised public unable to elect their leader to have some say in self-determination. Quite remarkably, Hong Kong culture, despite never having had democracy, appears to identify as a democratic culture. This is in part a colonial hangover, since Hong Kong was at least previously ruled by a democratic state. For many Hongkongers, the principles of transparency, accountability and rule of law are standards for the territory that anticipate an inevitable evolution into a fully democratic society (Dapiran 2017). It comes as no surprise that these same principles have guided Hong Kong's ascent as a business and finance hub. Protestors are bemused that the government does not listen to the millions of people on the street, and similarly they expect to be able to challenge their leader when they are unsatisfied.

I have tried to argue that the five demands all have connections to cultural security at its micro level, pertaining to an understanding of everyday life, culture, identity, and values. Similarly, pro-government individuals are also able to frame these cultural positions as flawed. One might argue that Hong Kong is peaceful (people shouldn't riot) and that Hongkongers follow the rule of law (obey the police) and support their leader. These competing notions of Hong Kong culture create cultural insecurity.

Meso Cultural Security

I adopt the meso focus in order to distinguish a middle ground between purely cultural complaints (micro) during the 2019 protests, and also the large macro debates surrounding the PRC's national cultural security. To clarify, this scale can also correspond with epistemological assumptions. For example, the subjectivity of cultural complaints in the everyday lives of citizens comes under an interpretive paradigm which is qualitative, with room for negotiated meaning. Macro issues present as positivist assumptions about the rational motives and actions of the state. Meso is used to refer to the in-between scale—liminal, and perhaps at times hybrid, post-positivist. The meso recognizes the transformation from micro to macro issues—that human subjectivities impact and form state policy. I frame these points mostly as issues of ambiguity in the cultural security of sovereignty. Indeed, the micro focuses noted above are salient because they touch, in part, upon legal status and political autonomy. Primarily, public distrust of the introduction of a new extradition law was founded on the sovereignty of Hong Kong and its rule of law. Critics have therefore argued

that the extradition bill, which could pave the way for Hong Kong citizens to be extradited to the PRC, where human rights and due process are not protected, represents a threat to the security of the Hong Kong legal system and the sovereignty of the territory. One could argue that for Hongkongers, this is an issue of their own communal, common, local, collective security, yet due to the hybrid political nature of the territory it cannot be framed as such, hence our meso focus.

More directly, the extradition bill posed a threat to the freedoms that are part of Hongkongers' everyday lives. It has widely been perceived as an attempt to further erode Hong Kong culture, bringing the territory more tightly under the control of the PRC. Here, the political self-determination of Hongkongers coalesces in culture, pertaining to "freedom" and "way of life." The legal threat of the extradition law is not, at the Hong Kong level, a minority issue. It would come to affect all the territory's 7.4 million people. However, Chief Executive Carrie Lam has insisted repeatedly that the law is a niche concern, would only be used in the rarest of circumstances, and requires her personal consent on a case-by-case basis. This government-speak effectively casts objections to extradition law as a minority concern, against the broader issue of the territory's sovereignty. This is itself a crucial point as it highlights the scalable nature of cultural security. Carrie Lam seeks to render the conflict as a minority issue protecting Hong Kong sovereignty from a niche criminal fringe, while the millions who have protested against the law perceive it to be an affront to their culture and sovereignty—in effect outside intervention in domestic affairs. Part of the surprise of the widespread rejection of the extradition bill is that it came from all sectors of society, including the normally pliant business sector (Pepper 2019). However, the extradition law has proven to be so unpopular at a meso level precisely because it appears to be an overt erosion of Hong Kong's legal system and the due process of the Legislative Council (Lum 2019). Key examples of the extent of the threat can be demonstrated in the swiftly introduced legislation to outlaw facemasks (Bradsher 2019), a paradox when the COVID-19 pandemic began, and similarly the tendency of HKPF to not wear identification (Cheng 2019) in combination with mass arrests and secret detention centers (Pang and Saito 2020).

In contrast, the condemnation and protests of Hongkongers in the face of the extradition bill can be seen as a threat to the PRC's cultural security. Although it has never been admitted, the bill has been perceived at best as fawning to Beijing and at worst as a direct order from Xi Jinping to be implemented by Carrie Lam. Protests have thus adopted a rhetoric that emphasizes Hong Kong's difference, "Hong Kong is not China," and countless

inventive banners and memes have been shared in protest and on social media lampooning the PRC and its leadership. Thus, the scalable paradox of cultural security becomes apparent based on this one topic alone. Hong Kong sovereignty poses a threat to the PRC's national cultural security, implicitly critiques socialism with Chinese characteristics, and represents a failure of the territory to fall in line and become a compliant, homogenous part of the motherland. This threat is ardently expressed by Hongkongers because they see that their territory (legally part of the PRC) is having its sovereignty dismantled. Thus, the extradition bill represents the pursuit of the contiguity of the PRC's cultural security as defined by its leadership at the expense of Hong Kong's cultural security.

Macro Cultural Security

In scaling up the concept of cultural security, the term becomes synonymous with the cultural security of the nation. The PRC's rhetoric of cultural security makes this association apparent. While in the early days of the protest the authorities were careful not to be too vocal about Hong Kong affairs, they have increasingly been more pointed in their criticisms. However, the most remarkable part of the PRC's policing of cultural security at the state level has been on the international stage. On October 4, 2019, Daryl Morey, the manager of the NBA team the Houston Rockets, tweeted "Fight for Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong." The tweet quickly caused an international uproar that struck at the heart of China's commercial reach and choking of free speech in defense of its own cultural security. Morey was quick to delete the tweet and post an apology backtracking on his support for Hong Kong, claiming the issue is more complicated than he first suggested.[1] Chinese sponsors were quick to withdraw their support for the Houston Rockets, the Chinese Basketball Association broke ties, and the Chinese embassy in Houston released a public statement of anger (Alexander 2019). In the days following the tweet, NBA merchandise and banners were withdrawn from Chinese shopping malls, while in the USA debate broke out about freedom of speech and commercial interests. The concept of the PRC's national cultural security is thus vast, extending well beyond the PRC and being enmeshed in the commercial interests of American basketball teams. Hongkongers were widely disgusted at the double standards of NBA

1 "I did not intend my tweet to cause any offense to Rockets fans and friends of mine in China. I was merely voicing one thought, based on one interpretation, of one complicated event. I have had a lot of opportunity since that tweet to hear and consider other perspectives" (@dmorey, October 6, 2019, 02:18).

players such as Lebron James who, while quick to speak out about injustice domestically, effectively turned a blind eye to the PRC's human rights abuses of Uyghurs and the suppression of protests in Hong Kong (Block 2019). A number of other corporations have similarly sided with China over the Hong Kong protests, including Vans shoes, Blizzard games, and the Apple app store (Nguyen 2019). Each of these companies silenced protest by either withdrawing political art, censoring forum and chat comments, or blocking apps used by protestors.

Hongkongers have, however, used the defensiveness of the PRC as a tool against the state. Learning lessons from the cultural production of the Umbrella Movement, in which DIY tactics of protest and self-defense became distinct (umbrellas, goggles), protestors have been active in producing art, filming video, and devising creative ways of protesting. There is a consistent effort to put these products online, utilizing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit—all notable as popular English-language forms of social media. Hong Kong protestors have thus mounted a savvy culture war in which Xi Jinping is mocked in cartoons depicting him as Winnie the Pooh and customized Vans shoes decorated with umbrella wielding protestors (Yeung 2019), and street art around the territory is photographed, uploaded, hashtagged, and frequently goes viral. These forms of protest are a threat to the CCP's cultural security and borrow from the alter-globalization movement's technique of culture jamming (Syvertsen 2017; Cusack 2010, 95). They also promote Hong Kong culture as different to Chinese culture, hip, multicultural, and self-aware. Street art recasts the ubiquitous prohibitive street signage of Hong Kong in line with the five demands. One result of this is to garner sympathy on the international stage with the same audience that the PRC seeks to control in their aggressive defense of their state's cultural security. Hongkongers exercised the freedom to critique the government—a freedom Mainland Chinese do not have, and a freedom that was finally taken from Hongkongers in June of 2020. The outspoken and punitive reaction of the PRC and some Chinese firms to criticism highlights that cultural security can become a global concern. More pointedly, it demonstrates that the aggressive defense of cultural security as a matter of state security can come to bear on the cultural security of other communities, nations, and states.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight how discussions on security can often be ambiguous. In the case of the concept of cultural security, I have argued

that the concept is scalable and, in reference to the Hong Kong protests, paradoxical. It is at once a signifier for micro issues of identity and a forum to cultivate soft power and wield international economic clout. Cultural security, in seeking to attend to nuances in security dynamics, becomes a flawed mode of analysis for the globalized era. In many ways, cultural security has been co-opted by a sophisticated rhetoric of identity politics at the state level, making it uncritically hybrid. Protecting something as amorphous as cultural security gives one the agency to argue against any perceived slight regardless of its validity. This effectively results in the characterization of valid comment and debate as attacks, violence, and pernicious attempts to undermine culture and identity (Baehr 2019).

The Hong Kong protests reveal an increasingly urgent rift between the particular and general in international politics. A challenge to all states in the current era is that they can be considered both too big and too small when meeting the challenges of globalization. Ironically, if the CCP were to address Hong Kong's cultural security as worthy of protection, the PRC might well preserve the territory as a commercially vibrant and free niche within the PRC. While arguing that cultural security poses a paradox, I am here, in conclusion, asserting that there is a further anomaly. I argue that the preservation of Hong Kong's culture and social and economic freedoms could work in concert with the PRC's objectives of national cultural security. Any analysis of the last fifteen years in Hong Kong will highlight that it is not only a lack of democracy that has caused rising discontent in the territory. More prosaically one might argue that the transformation of the territory into an adjunct of the PRC, a commercial playground for mass tourism, and a city time deposit for China's *nouveau riche* has been far more corrosive to Hong Kong than its stunted democracy. Yet without some trial democracy, this is purely hypothetical. While animosity towards the CCP has been rife in Hong Kong and has at times even flared up into anti-Chinese racism from Hong Kong Chinese, these phenomena are not the fault of the CCP alone. More directly, they are the rapacious cultural effects of unfettered capitalism, housing oligopoly and globalization. The protests are not to be simply framed as resistance to authoritarian reduction of freedoms, but more fully the result of a suite of discontents. Domestic concerns encompassing language, economy, education, and standards of living are at the mercy of larger global processes. This is not to say that Hong Kong is not worthy of democracy, but it underlines that a democracy that is partial, or constrained, will be unfit to offer redress to the mounting issues Hongkongers face. Many democracies throughout the globe are struggling with similar complaints, and populist politics are amplifying

cultural tensions. In time, the PRC's long-term internal security may face challenges from similar discontent.

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About the Author

Gabriel Thorne is a pseudonym for a researcher working on the sociology of Hong Kong. They have published several articles on Hong Kong society, its social history, and recent transformations. Gabriel currently teaches in Europe but has also taught in Hong Kong.
Email: gabrielthorne2004@gmail.com