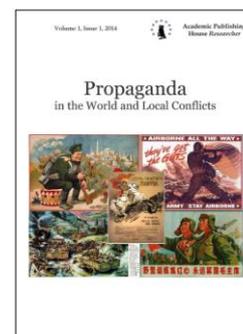


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Securitizing Culture in Post-Deng China: An Evolving National Strategic Paradigm, 1994–2014

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Abstract

This article examines the emergence and impact of the threat image of U.S.-led globalization on national strategic paradigms in the People’s Republic of China. It finds that, beginning in the mid-1990s, internal discussions focusing on national cultural security (NCS) became increasingly influential within elite policymaking circles and directly impacted assessments of comprehensive national security and sovereignty—specifically, how these concepts were to be defined. Other results demonstrate the importance of NCS to institutions and policy frameworks emblematic of the “cultural turn” in politics under Xi Jinping. Finally, the article draws parallels between NCS and, within the People’s Liberation Army, the evolving doctrine of psychological warfare, hypothesizing that these developments are connected by a shared paradigm uniting strategists within the party-state-army. It concludes that strong consensus concerning cultural security exists at the national level and that, viewed from a historical perspective, “Xiism” as an approach to politics and information flow management is grounded in an intellectual and institutional transformation—cultural securitization—which first emerged during the mid-1990s.

Keywords: propaganda, security paradigm, securitization, national cultural security, psychological warfare, globalization, informationization, People’s Republic of China, Chinese Communist Party, People’s Liberation Army.

1. Introduction

Propaganda concerns the large-scale dissemination of ideas and information intended to induce recipients to act in a certain way. Within recent decades, discussions concerning issues of value change and resulting challenges to social and international order have, within The People’s Republic of China (PRC), mainly focused on issues of culture and, in the military realm, psychology. Under current president and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) general secretary Xi Jinping, “ideological security” (*yishixingtai anquan*) has become a watchword for active national defense against what is frequently portrayed as U.S.-led efforts to maintain global hegemony and undermine CCP authority through education, networks, NGOs, and the media. The PRC’s draft National Security Law focuses on defending “advanced socialist culture” against “negative cultural infiltration” from abroad. Likewise, China’s new National Security Council, organized after 2012 in part to counter “extremist forces and ideological challenges to culture posed by Western nations,” also shares in the broader task of investigating links between the media and internet, and anti-government sentiment and protests.

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Xi's concern with culture, and further attempts to defend and strengthen national cultural unity through "revival" (*fluxing*), is significant, but it is not new (Rao, 2014; Lam, 2016). This article narrates the history of cultural securitization—that is, the elevation of culture, as a policy issue, to the status of a vital element of national security—starting in the mid-1990s, when vivid concerns over the likely impact of globalization, Westernization, and U.S. economic, military, and technological dominance on CCP regime legitimacy and PRC national interests first reemerged with renewed vigor following Dengist reforms (Reilly, 2011; Zhu, 2012; Lynch, 2013; Stockmann, 2013). The article further assesses the impact of this emerging NCS paradigm, as defined by the centrality of value change to PRC leaders' overall strategic concerns, on party-state-army institutional change, doctrine, and relationship to the media. Its overall argument is that a threat image based on externally imposed value change and domestic fragmentation have produced two main outcomes: institutionalization of cultural and ideological security as central, if not primary, elements within broader definitions of comprehensive national security, and both defensive and offensive responses to this threat which seek to neutralize it through complementary securitization of information, public opinion, and individual and mass psychology.

2. Discussion

The topic of securitization has not been widely addressed in studies of PRC cultural policy and military science. This article uses the term in two ways: first, to describe the process by which the paradigm of NCS emerged within PRC policymaking circles after 1994, and, second, to refer to manifestations of NCS in national security policy from a military perspective, focusing on psychological warfare (PW).

As described by noted security studies theorist Barry Buzan (1997), the concept of "security" expanded widely following the Cold War, focusing on non-military issues (e.g. the economy, the environment) and moving beyond the state, and issues of state survival, to look at how other aspects of society have been securitized by states or other international, transnational, and subnational actors. This transformation of the meaning of security was due in part to the range of significant threats to state security having increased, in relative terms, as the possibility of military conflict seemingly receded from primacy. Securitized referents were tantamount to issues identified as constituting *existential* threats; from this perspective, the process of securitization is legitimized through the construction of a corresponding threat image which justifies disproportionate attention and mobilization of extraordinary measures and resources. Within discussions of PRC cultural policy, however, and particularly those touching upon the overarching policy framework of propaganda, analysis using the prism of securitization has been largely absent. Rather, scholars have tended to focus on mid-level activities related to persuasion and popular legitimacy, assessing how these have, or have not, bolstered the legitimacy of the PRC's post-Mao CCP leadership (Brady, 2006; Shambaugh, 2007). Some acknowledgment has been made of the role in internal security forces, such as local public security bureaus and the Ministry of Public Security, in ensuring media compliance with Central Propaganda Department directives and monitoring the overall state of public opinion, but there have been few attempts to draw connections at the policymaking level between propaganda and security as interdependent concerns. At the same time, academics and analysts writing prior to 2007 have also noted the more pronounced significance ascribed to discourse and media in PRC foreign policy, but did not often draw clear connections between these developments and internal changes in national security paradigms and policies (Glaser and Medeiros, 2007; Shirk, 2007; Swaine, 2014; Blackwill and Campbell, 2016).

Researchers of the Chinese internet, by contrast, have been among the most insightful and innovative analysts of securitization; their work follows a trend among media scholars, evident since the 1990s, of looking at how the CCP has attempted to balance forces of media marketization with "public opinion guidance" (*yulun daoxiang, yulun yindao*) and media control (Zhao, 1998). One contribution has been the observation that, under Hu Jintao, CCP internet policies have attempted to address how technology change affects linked issues of socialist culture, information security, and state stability. Institutionally, guidance and supervision of internet public opinion, and the monitoring and filtering of sensitive information in cyberspace, have become matters directly dealt with by the Public Information Internet Security Supervision Bureau (*Gonggong xinxi wangluo anquan jianchaju*) of the Ministry of Public Security (*Gong'an bu*) ("President Hu

Asks Officials,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 2007; Chin, 2010). In times of social crisis, both propaganda (“publicity”) and security departments are expected to provide information, on a rapid, continuous, rapid, and repeated basis. As Hu summarized in 2008, the role of the journalistic media and CCP propaganda offices was to spread ideology, do thought work, and assure the long-term stability and security of the nation. Under Xi Jinping the securitization of socialist culture and cultural development has intensified, with elite speeches, CCP documents, and the state press repeatedly calling for greater “cybersovereignty”—echoing calls for cultural sovereignty nearly a decade earlier—and the development of technological systems capable of resisting foreign interference (“foreign hostile forces,” *waiguo didui shili*) in China’s internal affairs through ideological infiltration (Hu, 2011; Creemers, 2015a). More recently, scholars of the PRC political system have begun to acknowledge the “pluralization” of security to include a wider range of policy areas, including addressing of citizen grievances, ideology, and the media (Wang and Minzner, 2015; Ohlberg, 2016).

Viewed from a military perspective, cultural dimensions of national security policy have been noted only infrequently. Here the main point of focus has been information warfare (IW) operations and doctrine. These scholars also note that 1980–1990s were, roughly speaking, a period of transformation during which new security conditions—represented most visibly by the display of U.S. power during the 1991 Gulf War—triggered a shift toward increased concern with protecting the nation militarily against foreign psychological and ideological threats (Mulvenon, 1999; Perry, 2007; Kamphausen et al., 2010). Like party-state propaganda work, IW represented a potentially continuous, even preemptive, activity, though one which remained primarily military in nature. Such activity was often classified abroad as propaganda and “influence” operations; its relationship to national security strategy was, by contrast, less widely discussed as the strategies themselves were only vaguely understood (*China’s Propaganda and Influence Operations*, 2009). However, observers around the world had begun to take note that the PLA had begun to move toward a doctrine of “unrestricted warfare,” or “warfare without rules,” which emphasized struggle and information dominance even during peacetime, and the importance of capability to paralyze system and create social effects (e.g. mass panic and confusion) under conditions of networked conflict (Chansoria, 2010; Ball, 2011). Subsequent analysts of China’s cyber strategy also noted both government and military concern over social media platforms, where “Chinese citizens are able to rapidly gain access and exchange information as the primary source of “misinformation, dissemination of rumors, popular discontent, chaos, political destabilization, and terror that can cause panic, lead to social crisis and turmoil, and overthrow the regime” (Cooper III, 2012: 8-9). In response, and in order to enhance and protect China’s “core interests,” particularly within Asia, PLA leaders and strategists began developing both offensive and defensive capabilities in order to counter U.S. dominance in cyberspace.

Research on party-state-army security strategy thus suggested, but did not directly address, parallels between CCP securitization of culture in the civilian realm, and the evolution of PLA doctrine concerning information as both a threat and a weapon. In more recent years, while the literature on China’s cultural security published outside of China has gradually, if fitfully, increased, its authors largely exclude military affairs from their analysis (Pang, 2012; Keane, 2013; Lin, 2014; Gao et al., 2015; Hu, 2015).

3. Materials and methods

This article draws primarily from policy-relevant academic journal articles openly available in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database (<http://oversea.cnki.net/kns55/default.aspx>). Much of the material was gathered between 2009 and 2010, when writing about cultural security and NCS began to appear in a small number of English-language publications (Xie, 2007; Renwick and Cao, 2008; Bandurski, 2009). Results analyzed were limited to those journals which were primarily national and policy-oriented in scope. Additional sources were downloaded in early 2017 from the PRC’s National Center for Philosophy and Social Sciences Documentation (<http://www.ncpssd.org/>). Between this research’s inception and completion, publication on issues related to PRC soft power, external propaganda, ideological security, informationization, psychological warfare, and related topics has been steady across academic, journalistic, military, and public affairs publications. Some of those perspectives are incorporated as well, with emphasis on empirical discoveries related to institutions, policies, and doctrine.

Chinese-language reference sites, including Baidu.com and CCP-created information portals, were also used. Many of these sources have not been previously analyzed, as NCS remains relatively unexplored as a policy framework even during the period of Xi Jinping's leadership (2012-present), during which ideological and cultural security issues supposedly rose to the fore.

The methodological approach taken is primarily inductive: the sections below are intended to 1) narrate and analyze the emergence of an NCS paradigm within elite PRC policymaking circles, 2) and assess the impact of NCS thinking and strategy on the PLA. Sources have been read with the understanding that they mainly consist of open assessments pitched at midlevel cadres and officers, and that they may serve political interests, and domestic and international propaganda agendas, as well as disclosing key elements of strategy, doctrine, and elite thinking (Chase et al., 2015: 7-8). Where possible, the analysis focuses on drawing clear connections between NCS paradigm emergence and definitions, and changes in party-state-military institutions and behavior. Overall, the perspective taken is one of contemporary history, and the emphasis is less on expected future patterns than on the origins and effects of NCS as a feature of national policymaking discourse. With respect to propaganda studies, the article emphasizes frameworks and institutions over media, dissemination, symbols, and audience.

4. Results

4.1. Cultural securitization and national cultural security strategy

Concern with NCS in PRC policymaking circles goes back at least as far as 1994. Today Wang Huning is a leading political theorist and advisor to current president Xi Jinping; in 1994 Wang was a rising political theorist in Shanghai who would go on to become head of the political research team of the Central Policy Research Office (*Zhong gong zhongyang zhengce yanjiu shi*), based on the support of central figures Wu Bangguo and Zeng Qinghong. Wang's article on "Cultural Expansion and Cultural Sovereignty: A Challenge to the Concept of Sovereignty" (*Wenhua kuozhang yu wenhua zhuquan: dui zhuquan guannian de tiaozhan*), published in the social science edition of the *Fudan Journal*, explored the "increasingly sensitive nature of the 'cultural question'" within a changing international system in which national sovereignty collided with globalization (Wang, 1994). The nature of international relations and international society, Wang argued, had fundamentally changed after the Cold War: "culture" now played an increasingly important role in both. This was seen in the phenomenon of cultural expansionism, or cultural hegemony, and the related phenomenon of cultural struggle—struggle to maintain national cultural sovereignty within a globalizing international system. Though Wang did not mention NCS directly, he laid out many of the basic threat images in response to which securitization of culture would become conceivable as a policy framework: the threat of "powerful" (or coercive, *qiangshi*) cultural expansion and hegemony; the "smashing" of cultural order; and "disequilibrium" in the cultural ecology. The result between relatively stronger and weaker cultures, he predicted, would be "cultural clash." Forces of globalization, under the pretext of "humanism," would impede the sovereignty of developing nations, leading to cultural "invasion" and the "conquest" of value systems. Fundamental to Wang's outlook was that in addition to military and economic security, *cultural security* would need to be made part of one single national security system.

Wang would go on to become head of Central Policy Research Office in 2002; from 2007 to 2012 he served as secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee. In November 2012 he was elected to the Politburo of the Eighteenth CCP Central Committee. Popularly he is known as theoretical architect of Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents"; Hu Jintao's "Scientific Development Concept"; and Xi Jinping's "China Dream" ("[Wang Huning](#)," *Wikipedia*). Some might consider him the PRC's principal living theorist of both Marxist and comparative, or Western, politics. If this is true, then it is noteworthy that central to Wang's understanding of security is its cultural component: national cultural sovereignty, and cultural order, is rendered insecure by globalization. Under Jiang Zemin, cultural competition was described in CCP ideology as a fundamental feature of the international order, and culture was tied to both national development ("scientific culture") and security (Yao, 2008). "Culture" referred primarily to unified national ideology. By 1999, an outpouring of scholarship on cultural security began appearing in academic journals, and in August the *National Security Bulletin* (*Guojia anquan tongxun*) published a substantial article by Lin Hongyu titled "Cultural Security: A Fundamental Topic in National Security" (*Wenhua anquan: guojia anquan de shenceng zhuti*); this was followed by another article in the *Jiangnan Academy*

of *Social Study Journal* by Zhu Chuanrong titled “Facing China’s Cultural Security Strategy in the Twenty-First Century (*Shilun mianxiang 21 shiji de Zhongguo wenhua anquan zhanlve*).

(“Wenhua anquan,” *Baiken baidu*). The Lin Hongyu article was significant for its effort to embed cultural security within definitions of national security which, according to Lin, already included sovereignty, territory, politics, economics, military affairs, diplomacy, science and technology, and the environment as frequently encountered topics. Cultural security was important because of the “influence” of culture on a state (*guojia*) and on a national people (*minzu*) (Lin, 1999). “Cultural infiltration” was therefore an powerful method by which hegemonic countries control and threaten the security of other countries: as examples, Lin listed the Roman empire, British empire, and United States of America. To guarantee cultural security was both to propagate the “good cultural traditions” of a national people while, at the same time, “resolutely opposing total Westernization and resisting the decay and influence caused by unhealthy Western culture.” Lin’s solutions were not military: the proposed solution was for “forcefully extolling patriotic traditions and strengthening patriotic education among youth.”

Leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin had always stressed ideological and political work as matters important to continued CCP rule. Jiang, in particular, advocated “socialist spiritual civilization” and construction of cultural-civilizational infrastructure (e.g. cultural industries, continued teaching of state ideology in schools) during his 1997-2002 tenure as CCP General Secretary. The further linking of cultural security to national security also took place under Jiang, ultimately producing the concept of NCS. This development appears to have occurred primarily within research on international politics, which by 2000 was concerned with issues of cultural security and ideological security as necessary responses to the threat image of U.S.-dominated globalization. “Cultural interests” (*wenhua liyi*) and “cultural sovereignty” (*wenhua zhuquan*) became linked to issues of strategy and China’s post-Cold War security concept; globalization itself was identified as a “cultural issue,” and an important aspect of international relations was “securing China’s cultural position within world culture” (Fu, 2000). These academic discussions had multiple topical variants, including “scientific national revival strategy,” “anti-hegemonic cultural strategy,” and building a “socialist new cultural movement.” Conceptually, cultural security thus ranked alongside other national strategic goals, birthing the idea of NCS, which was also sometimes expressed as “cultural national strategy” (*wenhua guojia zhanlve*).

Cultural strategy existed as a complement to the better-known policy of spiritual civilization construction (*jingshen wenming jianshe*), which was announced with the 1996 CCP Central Committee “Resolution on Several Issues Relating to the Strengthening of Socialist Spiritual Civilization Construction” (*Zhong gong zhongyang guanyu jiaqiang shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe ruogan wenti de jueyi*). A clear requirement of building Chinese socialist spiritual civilization, both within and without, was cultural security, including cultural “balancing” and increasing international discourse power. Within this new strategic context, NCS discourse centered on: 1) concern with “clashes” between civilizations as a result of rapid acceleration of economic globalization following Cold War; 2) Western advantages in military, technology, and the economy creating new issues related to protection of national cultural sovereignty and the defense of non-Western “nationality” (*minzu*) culture; 3) the spread of Western value systems along with Western economic aid; 4) and the global propagation of political ideologies, leading to “struggle” on the new cultural battlefield (Hu, 2000). In stricter terms, what NCS stood for was the effective safeguarding (*weihu*) of national cultural interests and security. Its urgency was further embellished by the perceived severity of the Western, or U.S., threat: the superiority of economic-technological-military “hard power,” control and leadership with respect to international norms, the appeal of consumerism, and the pursuit of economic, cultural, and information hegemony (Hu, 2000).

Contrast between a decadent and challenging global consumerism, controlled by the West, and a non-Western nationality culture supported by state policy, constituted the fundamental duality on which NCS policies were based. Western culture was to be resisted, national culture propagated and extolled. By 2003, high-level publications like *Journal of the Party School of the Central Committee of the C.P.C.* (*Zhong gong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao*) associated NCS with national survival (*minzu shengcun*) (Yu and Hao, 2003). American cultural imperialism was “the ... monstrous offspring, and pitfall of, globalization, and the contemporary form of capitalist expropriation, [which] directly threatens the cultural security of China and other developing

countries.” The range of contemplated responses grew wider, and more specific: building a cultural security “system” (*xitong*), raising public consciousness of the threat posed by cultural imperialism, using the Internet and media to more widely disseminate nationality culture, establishing an NCS “warning system,” creating a Chinese cultural industry system, digitizing China’s cultural heritage, and educating a creative “new force” for reviving Chinese national culture (*Zhonghua minzu wenhua*) in the new globalization era (*Ibid*). Within other publications, the definition itself expanded with cultural security used to refer to the securitization of “intellectual trends in society” (*shehui sichao*) (*Wu et al., 2004*). Arguably, the concept of NCS was also becoming more hardline and aggressive, with suggestions that successful NCS strategy required greater national cultural “dignity” (*zunyan*), and that socialist cultural industries, supported by state investment and policy, be used to engage in “active outward attack of international cultural markets.” Culture was to be supported by “hard” economic development, while cultural industries were to be protected, as much as possible, from competition and cross-border movement promoted by the World Trade Organization, to which China acceded in 2001.

Under Hu Jintao’s leadership (2002–2012), NCS became both a strategic paradigm and a policy framework. A shift had occurred in national security discourse, with cultural security and discussion of NCS included in the authoritative 2004 *National Security Studies* (*Guojia anquan xue*) reference series published by the China University of Political Science and Law (*Zhongguo zhengfa daxue*) (“Wenhua anquan, *Baike baidu*; “Guojia wenhua anquan,” *Baike baidu*). As a framework, NCS issues were often discussed as part of broader policy-related analysis related to international politics and relations and, particularly in the pages of authoritative CCP theoretical journal *Qiushi*, spiritual civilization construction. At the same time, within the CCP Central Committee Politburo the topic of cultural security was addressed directly by Hu Jintao as relevant to the development of PRC cultural enterprises and industries, and as of critical importance to the preservation of socialism, ideological change within the CCP and wider society, and the preservation of social stability (“Hu Jintao emphasizes,” *Xinhua wang*, 26 Oct 2012). This significant pronouncement took place at the Politburo’s seventh collective study (*jiti xuexi*) session on August 12, 2003, which addressed the topic of “the condition of global cultural industry development and our cultural industries’ development strategy” (“Di shiliu jie,” *Zhonggong zhongyang zhengzhiju jiti xuexi*). Of central importance to this discussion was perceived “inequality” in international cultural flows, U.S. policies of ideological expansion, the “pressure” put on developing countries and their governments by U.S. consumerism and popular culture, and the necessity of “opening space” for other cultures globally.

As before, securitization of culture at the most elite levels was accompanied by a narrative of overwhelming American economic and technological strength, attempts to undermine other nations’ cultural security through policies of “hegemony,” and growing strength as a result of the demise of communism across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Thus, from 2003 onward there was greater strategic importance attached to the idea of safeguarding cultural sovereignty and security as a matter of national policy. NCS became a national priority just as the forces of U.S.-led globalization appeared to be gaining strength. As during the period of Jiang Zemin’s leadership, during which socialist spiritual civilization construction through cultural industry development was a key point of emphasis, during Hu Jintao’s tenure as CCP general secretary, and particularly following the 2007 Seventeenth Party Congress, there was a corresponding emphasis on productive cultural activity as well: revival of socialism and Neo-Confucianism, popular moral education the “Eight Honors and Eight Shames”, and attempted reversal of moral decay within the CCP and society (*Heath, 2015*; “*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi*,” *Weiji Baike*; *Chin and Johnson, 2010*).

Under Hu’s leadership, cultural securitization moved beyond broad discussions of international relations and national strategy toward more specific topics such as media, education, and internal security: a strong indication that the paradigm was gaining adherents. Public security academic-policy journals described national cultural security as an “urgent and applicable topic” for the public security curriculum and broader political reform (*Ma, 2004*). Other discussions addressed the importance of addressing links between globalization and cultural security through education (*Zhou, 2004*). One key focal point was media. Arguments proliferated for greater “discursive control” and use of cultural industries, coupled with external media strategy, to combat the perceived Western threat to China’s cultural sovereignty (*Liu, 2005*). (Within CCP journals, NCS debates were still often treated as a subset of policy related to [socialist] spiritual civilization

construction.) By 2005–2006, these discussions spilled out into the mainstream of cultural policy agenda-setting, and were addressed on a nearly industry-by-industry basis as NCS became a byword for maintaining political-ideological content within publishing, broadcasting, and other mass media, including the Internet (Wang, 2007; Su, 2008; Kong 2008).

Blurring the lines between international relations, domestic security, political education, media, and, ultimately, the Dengist-Jiangist agenda of maintaining a “plurality” of civilizations amidst globalization, the NCS paradigm under Hu Jintao revived importance which Deng Xiaoping had placed on thought-political education work (*sixiang zhengzhi jiaoyu gongzuo*) as central to the CCP’s historical mission (Guangdong sheng Deng Xiaoping lilun he “Sange daibiao” zhongyao sixiang yanjiu zhongxin, 2007; Yu, 2009). However, the threat image behind the new emphasis was not “bourgeois liberalization,” but civilizational clash between China’s “peaceful world” and the U.S.-led Western “new world order” of globalization. From an academic perspective, one of the most definitive statements concerning NCS appeared in 2008, with the publication of Han Yuan’s “Preface Concerning National Cultural Security” (*Guojia wenhua anquan yinlun*), published in leading ideological journal *The Contemporary World and Socialism*, and based on research supported by the National Social Science Fund’s program for “Research on National Cultural Security Strategy in the Context of Globalization.” According to this essay, cultural security was defined as a “manifestation of national interest in the cultural domain”; was a prerequisite to national survival and development; and represented the means by which individuals were united through by nationality (*minzu*), the state, and social systems. As “protection of cultural interests and defense of cultural sovereignty against in invasion,” NCS came to stand if for all efforts, whether domestic or international, to (tacitly) consolidate CCP power within China and maintain an independent international position within the cultural-ideological sphere. The dangers of not maintaining a robust NCS strategy, Han warned, were that China would face cultural invasion and spiritual enslavement by a U.S. that “looked down on the world,” and which was already emboldened by the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. Political and culture security were thus inseparable and, as international competition using “soft power” strategies increased, the creation of a new, safer, and more legitimate international order was an urgent necessity.

Against this background, the period 2008-2009 can be seen as a kind of turning point during which NCS-related discussions reached their peak, before splintering into a less coherent grouping of public and academic discussions concerning related themes of soft power, cultural industries, traditional national culture, spiritual civilization, and “harmonious society”—the latter an emblem of Hu’s efforts to confront rising internal tensions (Tan, 2009; Meng et al., 2009). At the same time, the NCS policy paradigm was becoming embedded, internally, in internal security and international relations policy frameworks. Combatting cultural “splittism” in Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet required attention to NCS, as did the management of plural value systems and English-language content on the global Internet (Li, 2008; Jia, 2008; Xiao, 2009). By late 2010, leading propaganda official Li Changchun had inaugurated a further shift toward “ideological security” (*yishixingtai anquan*): a seemingly new securitization paradigm, but one which replicated the emphasis of NCS on Western cultural infiltration and globalization as threatening forces, and demanded appropriate domestic and international responses needed to revive CCP cultural power. In a December 17, 2010 speech, Li urged Communication University of China students to “promote national achievements, expand battle for public opinion, protect national and ideological security, and create first-class international media” (“Wei jiaqiang guojia chuanbo nengli,” *Qiushi*, 2011).

4.2. NCS, National rejuvenation, and ideological security

During Hu Jintao’s second term as president of the PRC, culture became defined as both a key strategic theme and a “core resource” of party-state power (Glaser and Murphy, 2009). The outcome was not only a shift not only toward securitization, but also toward centralization of control over media institutions, as well as specific policy approaches intended to minimize foreign influence and ideological multipolarity within the national cultural sphere. On May 4, 2009, top CCP leaders including Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiabao, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun, Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, He Guoqiang, and Zhou Yongkang convened a meeting held in the Great Hall of the People to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the 1919 May Fourth Movement. During this anniversary event, Li Changchun commented on the necessity of “inspir[ing] the Chinese people to be united and hardworking in rejuvenating the Chinese nation” (“China Marks 90th Anniversary,

Xinhuanet, 2009). The phrase “national rejuvenation” echoed earlier statements, such as the October 2006 Communiqué of the Sixteenth CCP Central Committee Sixth Plenum, which advocated rejuvenation, along with national prosperity and the “people’s happiness,” as one of the three main goals associated with building a “harmonious socialist society”—and which made governance of citizens’ ideology and moral qualities, as well as national culture generally, part of a broader set of means of fostering national participation in support of CCP economic and political agendas (*Xinhua News Agency*, 2006).

For analysts, a significant consequence of the Sixth Plenum was its long resolution promising to address tensions in PRC society as viewed from the CCP’s perspective, including loss of control over the media (*Miller*, 2006). By the time of the May 4, 2009, Great Hall of the People meeting, a new leadership group including both Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping was already beginning to articulate connections between national rejuvenation, propaganda, and cultural policy, with notable emphasis placed on “cultural public service”—reconstruction of state cultural and media infrastructure on a national basis—and “cultural citizenship” in national development policy (*Chin*, 2010: 1-2). Arguably, CCP emphasis on political management of culture during much of the 2000s viewed ideology and, by extension, culture, as part of a wider effort to reverse the relative loss of position stemming from marketization of the media. The October 2006 Sixteenth CCP Central Committee Sixth Plenum “Resolution on Several Important Questions Concerning the Construction of Socialism and a Harmonious Society,” for example, directed that renewed attention should be paid in official PRC media to dissemination of Marxism, socialism with Chinese characteristics, and a spirit of popular nationalism; in addition, the CCP sought to expand public cultural service (PCS) networks and governance more widely throughout society as part of protecting “public knowledge” against forces of “commercialization” (*Chin and Johnson*, 2010; “*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi*,” *Weiji baike*). While leaders such as Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin had always stressed ideological and political work as important matters affecting CCP leadership, starting from the 2007 Seventeenth Party Congress the Hu Jintao government began to devote significant attention to reviving both socialism and traditional Chinese culture (“New Confucianism”) as a means of strengthening a society that Hu and other CCP Politburo elites appear to have believed was suffering from advanced moral decay. (Here again the break was not absolute: Jiang Zemin advocated “socialist spiritual civilization” and infrastructural construction during his tenure as CCP general secretary, and in 2006 Hu had already begun to advocate for renewed popular moral education under the mantra of the “Eight Honors and Eight Shames” [*Heath*, 2015]). The 2008 Olympic Games (Beijing) and 2010 World Expo (Shanghai) brought additional surges in party-state attention to issues of social norms and behavior. Moreover, Hu’s “Harmonious Society” (*Hexie shehui*) vision, with its emphasis on social stability, soon became synonymous with internet censorship, indicating that the degree of state tolerance for independent public opinion and media in a broad sense had, in fact, begun to narrow. (For satirical internet users, to “be harmonized” [*bei hexiele*] was to be censored online through mechanisms such as page and post deletion by state internet authorities [*Xiao*, 2007]).

A notable rhetorical shift from internal stability to national security in the ideological realm took place during the years 2010–2011, when street protests and “color revolutions” emerged as visible challenges to state authority in settings ranging from North Africa to Eastern Europe. In February 2011, PRC politics were stirred by a prodemocracy Jasmine Revolution (*Molihua geming*) characterized by public gatherings and rhetorical demands for better economic conditions, fairness, individual freedoms, and an end to one-party rule. CCP elites had long been aware of the lessons of Soviet collapse and Eastern European political instability for the importance of “initiative” in ideological work, as evidenced by a 2011 summary of CCP historical experience in the ideological realm originally published in *Qiushi*, the theoretical journal of the CCP Central Party School (“*Zhongguo Gongchandang 90 nian*,” *Guangming ribao*, 2011). However, color revolutions both inside and outside of China both stirred and coincided with a new range of reactions affecting cultural policy, including:

- National People’s Congress Standing Committee chair Wu Bangguo’s March 10, 2011, work report emphasizing the “Five Will-Nots” (*wu bugao*), which were widely covered in the official media as indications that no significant changes in the political system would be forthcoming (*Wu*, 2011; *Yihan*, 2011; “*Wu bu gao*,” *Weiji baike*).

- Theoretical analysis within the CCP indicating that consolidation of the security of the PRC's political system, and particularly in the ideological sphere, would be necessary to combat Western-sponsored "peaceful evolution" regime-change strategies ("[Zhongguo Gongchandang 90 nian](#)," *Guangming ribao*, 2011). (Specific examples included domestic non-Marxist and anti-Marxist ideologies, Western spread of capitalist ideological concepts and "denigration" of CCP ideology, and attempts by imperialist countries to overturn systems of socialism globally.)

- Securing of the "basis" for socialist ideological construction through "spiritual civilization construction." One of the clearest signals of this commitment was the October 2011 Seventeenth CCP Central Committee Sixth Plenum, which emphasized cultural construction and national identity as part of the "backbone of the country's economic and social development" ("[The Sixth Plenary Session](#)," *CCTV.com*, 2013).

Constructing "socialist cultural power" both domestically and abroad (the latter via a renewed policy emphasis on developing international cultural industries and soft power) was thus explicitly linked to the modernization and "rejuvenation" (*fixing*) of the Chinese nation, as well as to the goal of building "national cohesion" ("[Cultural Development Concerns](#)," *CCTV.com English*, 2011).

At the time, links between NCS and a cultural policy of national cohesion had not yet been clearly drawn by observers outside of the CCP. Whereas the latter attracted attention primarily by virtue of being the main focus of the 2011 Sixth Plenum and subsequent February 2012 cultural policy outline issued by the CPC Central Committee Propaganda Department, the former reflected what was then still an internal CCP discussion concerning the nature and extent of the threat to PRC political stability and one-party rule posed by Western cultural-ideological forces. Intensifying CCP focus on structural aspects of ideology—in other words, institutions and media—accompanied the shift toward securitization of culture within the PRC's borders, with significant consequences for independent voices and media production located beyond officially sanctioned networks of supervision and control. At the central level, in 2012 the Cultural Reform Leading Small Group was renamed the Cultural Structural Reform and Development Work Leading Small Group (*Zhongyang wenhua tizhi gaige he fazhan gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*), indicating a shift in emphasis toward comprehensive centralization of control over cultural production and dissemination ("[Zhongyang wenhua tizhi gaige](#)," *Baike baidu*; "[Quanguo wenhua tizhi gaige gongzuo huiyi](#)," *Baike baidu*). (In 2013–2014, this group was incorporated into the Comprehensively Deepening Reform Leading Small Group, an institution closely associated with the personal power of Xi Jinping, who succeeded Hu in late 2012). Another major theoretical statement, "Six Major Challenges Faced during Our Country's Present Ideological Construction," published in July 2012 in *Party Building (Dang jian)*, the journal of the CCP Central Committee Organization Department, identified Western cultural "penetration" and "threat" as leading challenges to national "ideological security" (*yishixingtai anquan*), along with the negative effects of "social influence" on mainstream CCP ideology; crises in confidence [in socialism] posed by the disarray of post-Soviet Europe; the weakening of ideological control by other forces of modernization; cultural "multipolarity" and incompatibility with CCP ideology and control; and the control challenges posed by internet technology ([Ren, 2012](#)).

By the time of Xi Jinping's public rise to power within the CCP by late 2012, then, a coherent internal threat image concerning media institutions, ideological plurality, and the cultural sphere had already been institutionalized both theoretically and organizationally. Securitizing CCP-sanctioned ideology and, by extension, national cohesion and rejuvenation, required centralization and, with respect to Western culture particularly, sanitization of meaning-producing structures—labeled, variously, "ideological," "cultural," "spiritual," "socialist," "media," or "internet"—impacting social values and ties between party and populace. This threat image and related internal CCP discussions constituted the largely invisible backdrop against which successive, more spectacular revelations, such as the "leaked" April 22, 2013, CCP Central Committee General Office "Document No. 9" (full title: "Circular Concerning Present Conditions in the Ideological Sphere" [[Guanyu dangqian yishixingtai yingyu de tongbao](#)]) first appeared ("[Guanyu dangqian yizhixingtai](#)," *Weiji baike*). Document No. 9 identified seven prominent issues affecting the strength of mainstream CCP ideology within PRC society, including the CCP itself, and consisting of the propagation of: Western constitutional democracy, universal values, civil society,

neoliberalism, Western media viewpoints, historical nihilism, and doubts concerning reform-and-opening policies. These issues overlapped considerably, and not coincidentally, with a less formalized list of “seven don’t discuss” (*qi bu jiang*) topics that were made off-limits for university instructors and, by extension, for those engaged in knowledge-producing professions, including artists and the media (“*Qi bu jiang*,” *Weiji baike*).

The longer 2006–2013 reverse course in policy from marketization back toward more rigid governmental strictures, which emphasized securitization while defending against the “plural” and the “Western,” has not been analyzed as a coherent episode in China’s contemporary politics. Rather, conventional accounts seeking to explain the increasingly restrictive turn in culture, media, education, and other areas linked directly to CCP discussions of ideological work focus primarily on speeches made by Xi Jinping, cybersecurity and internet policy official Lu Wei, and chief ideology and propaganda official Liu Yunshan when identifying the defining features of PRC cultural policy since Xi’s rise (Creemers, 2015b). At issue in such analysis is whether or not the CCP is increasing “control” over culture and the media as it promotes “socialist core values” (“Xi Jinping zai Wenyi gongzuo zuotanhui,” *Wenhua Zhongguo*, 2014). Starting with Xi’s August 19, 2013 speech to attendees at the National Conference on Propaganda and Thought Work (the “Eight-Nineteen Speech”), the CCP is seen as bringing all media closer to systems of political leadership and surveillance, while at the same time elevating the significance of “spiritual and civilization construction work” to a level equivalent with the economy (“Xi Jinping ‘8-19,’” *China Digital Times*). From 2014 to 2016, subsequent speeches by Xi, Lu, and Liu on topics such as cybersecurity, informationization, news, public opinion work, and literature and the arts have all consistently emphasized the leading role of the CCP; at the same time, new measures have been taken to further securitize media and culture through the strengthening of centrally guided, and infrastructure-focused, institutions that are the direct descendants of policy initiatives already in development under Hu Jintao. However, the Xi Jinping government is far more expansive than its predecessor concerning the culture–media–security connection amidst this ongoing political institutionalization effort, establishing and investing in think tanks devoted to “national cultural security and ideological construction,” and both institutionally and rhetorically emphasizing the significance of culture and information to national security policy (“China Issues First Blue Paper,” *China Military Online*, 2014; Ng, 2014). (For example, the National Cultural Security and Ideological Construction Research Center [*Guojia wenhua anquan yu yishixingtai jianshe yanjiu zhongxin*], Academy of Marxism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [<http://myy.cass.cn/cate/3902.htm>].) As a result, cultural security—along with ideological security and cybersecurity—has been shifted to the fore of a security-related policy framework labeled “unconventional security threats,” and implemented at the highest level by the recently formed National Security Commission (Tiezzi, 2014; d’Hooghe, 2015: 119–120).

Within the news media, contemporary observers have noted that the Xi Jinping government’s renewed emphasis on CCP dominance has led to an overturning of the notion of news media—even official news media—as means of establishing independent “supervision” of public opinion and local instances of official malfeasance. (The official policy phrase, *yulun jian du* or “supervision by public opinion,” has often been used to justify independent reporting on a range of topics [Bandurski, 2015]). In keeping with NCS frameworks, the media are now being remade into a tool of positive propaganda (*zhengmian xuanchuan*) and purged of Western notions of “freedom of the press” (Bandurski, 2015). Thus, media policy since 2012 continues to be made with two main priorities in mind. The first is the ongoing renovation of China’s media and information industries in the pursuit of goals related to building a strong country (*qianguo*) such as economic development, leadership over public opinion, security, and national cultural soft power (“Quanguo xuanchuan buzhang,” *Xinhua wang*, 2015). The second, overlapping somewhat with the first, is to achieve ideological security (*yishixingtai anquan*) through technological means, including the buttressing of key information architecture against foreign attack, control of discourse, and elimination of hostile rival discourses via censorship (“Baogao,” *Zhongguo xinwen wang*, 2014; Zhao and Xu, 2014). Along with the media, similar policy shifts are underway in higher education, mainstream television and film media, publishing, and across the internet.

While much of this work is managed by clearly designated propaganda organs, most notably the CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department and State Council Information Office, these organs are apparently directed by a powerful new institution—China’s Central State Security

Commission (CSSC, *Zhongyang guojia anquan weiyuanhui*), whose establishment was announced in November 2013. As conveyed by Xi Jinping, who serves as CSSC chairman, China's state security challenges were "more complex than at any time in history," and included internal corruption, challenges to centralized governance, and domestic threats with foreign connections (Hoffman and Mattis, 2016). This assessment, and the formation of the CSSC itself, further institutionalized definitions of state security as inclusive of cultural security, insofar as *information transmission* and *ideological infiltration* were viewed as two of the primary vectors by which both domestic and foreign security threats sought to unsettle CCP claims to legitimately govern China. Examples of color revolutions in Central Asia from the early 2000s, foreign-connected NGOs, and media attacks on CCP narratives were used continuously in the official press to further legitimate this assessment (Hoffman and Mattis, 2016). As a threat image supporting a broader policy framework, the NSC paradigm thus remained embedded within Xi's CSSC and, by extension, the PRC party-state security concept.

4.3. Ambiguous parallels – NCS and PLA psychological warfare doctrine

The incorporation of NCS into China's national security concept both preceded and accompanied creation of a policy framework of securitization: specifically, the defense of China's cultural sovereignty and preservation of CCP dominance within the sphere of domestic national culture, and projection of cultural power ("soft power," "discourse power") beyond China's borders. To the extent that these aspects of NCS strategy are evident in military doctrine, strategy, and operations, it can be argued that, through the party-state-army political system, the NCS paradigm also informs the behavior of the PLA.

PLA political work and, more broadly, psychological warfare and operations are part of active measures intended to defend against perceived threats to state security and promote "rise" globally. Analysts use terms like political warfare, influence operations, liaison work, and perception management, often interchangeably, to describe military attempts to influence foreign governments, groups and individuals through psychological warfare (Mulvenon and Finkelstein, 2005; Stokes and Hsiao, 2013). In addition to serving as a force multiplier on the battlefield, psychological warfare (including propaganda) is intended to counter external political warfare: defined as Westernization, peaceful evolution, and the spread of universal values. Like cultural securitization, the informationization (*xinxihua*) of PLA warfare strategy is thus conceptually connected to a threat image of hostile foreign cultural forces, and has produced doctrinal frameworks that emphasize the strategic significance of military capability to project values and influence society through ideological-psychological means.

Psychological warfare, along with cyberwarfare, represents a principal site of this doctrinal and strategic revolution. As on the party-state side of the political system, during the early 2000s a shifting emphasis toward PW was observed in top-level publications like *China Military Science* (*Zhongguo junshi kexue*), with six articles on the topic published during the period 2001–2002 (Thomas, 2003: 1-4). Most of these articles were published by instructors in the Shijiazhuang Ground Forces Command Academy, and appeared to be based on course lectures. In content, they focused primarily on the value of intimidating demonstrations and shows of force as PW strategies applicable to deterring the U.S. in the Taiwan Strait; tactically, they recommended significant investment in PW as a means of offsetting enemy superiority. However, there were also strong indications that the scope of PW operations was not to be limited to cross-Strait issues. Articles contained numerous references to both ancient Chinese texts and Western PW principles from the 1990s, and incorporated observations of recent wars in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo (Thomas, 2005: 5). This latter, broader perspective took a different view of PW: as change in belief effected through propaganda, as a science of power and intimidation, and as study of the psychological character of the enemy.

In reality, the PLA's PW "awakening" had, according to internal accounts, begun during the mid-1980s, when a series of military psychological theory research conferences (*junshi xinli lilun yantaohui*) were convened in Benxi (1985), Shijiazhuang (1986), and Kunming (1987). During this same period, the China Military Psychology Research Collaborative Center (*Zhongguo junshi xinlixue yanjiu xiezuo zhongxin*) and China Social Psychology Academic Association Military Special Subjects Committee (*Zhongguo shehui xinli xuehui junshi zhuanye weiyuanhui*) were established in 1986; this emerging research network consisted of approximately 1,000 researchers,

and was active in the editing of publications such as *Military Psychology Bulletin* (*Junshi xinlixue tongxun*) and *Military Psychology Research Proceedings* (*Junshi xinlixue yanjiu zhuanji*) (Hao and Jiang, 2004). A flagship journal, *Military Psychology Research* (*Junshi xinlixue yanjiu*) began publication in 1988; military psychological study became a regular topic of study in military academies; and numerous new monographs on the topic appeared from 1986 onward. Significantly, a research conference devoted to psychological warfare and counter-psychological warfare (*xinzhhan yu fan-xinzhhan*) was convened in Xi'an in 1990; from 1994 to 1996, an experimental educational training site was active in Shenyang working to extract the “essence” of theories of psychological warfare from ancient texts.

The shift from research in military psychology to research on PW had thus effectively been completed. As a kind of capstone to this transition, and signal that military PW was now being discussed at the highest levels of party-state-army leadership, a “New Military [Affairs] Revolution and Psychological Warfare Research Conference” was convened in Beijing in 1997. The intensity of PW study further increased in 2003 through careful study of the operations of both sides during the Iraq War, with focus on both the offensive and public opinion effects of PW, and methods of resistance (*Ibid*). That same year, the national Military Affairs Commission directed that opinion warfare, PW, and legal warfare using modern media were to become “important methods of striving for political initiative and military victory in warfare.” (This directive, it should be observed, can be viewed as the first authoritative statement concerning the importance of the Three Warfares [public opinion, psychological, and legal] as one of two “sides”—the other being conventional military force—in PLA doctrine.) Further conferences, training, and the creation of new command systems followed. This new institutional and theoretical configuration became known, especially outside of China, as the “Three Warfares” (3W). In its essence, 3W moved beyond kinetic and tangible concepts of war and deterrence to achieve dominance through manipulation of the enemy’s cognitive processes (Halper et al., 2013: 5-15).

Nonetheless, much of the scholarship on 3W produced nearly a decade after the doctrine was endorsed in 2003 by the CCP Central Committee and Central Military Commission missed what was already obvious to observers writing at the time: namely, that PW itself was deemed important because, within China, planning for future scenarios of superpower conflict reflected the belief that armed force itself was primarily a means by which combatants sought to impose *value systems* on each other’s populations. According to Chinese strategists, within such a future (and present):

The highest strategic objective ... is achieved by changing a country’s fundamental social concepts and its society’s sense of values. In this regard, the West uses a system of values (democracy, freedom, human rights, etc.) in a long-term attack on socialist countries. The West used the ideas of democracy and human rights to undermine the communist party in the Soviet Union, and it intends to use the same rationale for interfering in China’s internal affairs. The U.S.’s strategy is to attack political, moral, social and cultural values in target countries” (Thomas, 2003: 5).

The alignment with NCS was further emphasized in military writing which emphasized that China was compelled to take the initiative in PW *defense*, “because psychological security is now an important aspect of national security ... Information and psychological factors are now political and diplomatic weapons, and their power cannot be ignored” (Thomas, 2003: 6-7).

Concern with the informationized conditions of modern warfare and, more generally, technology and media as increasingly powerful forces within society, led military thinkers toward a set of conclusions concerning PW which further echoed those of NCS. Information influence was the *determining* factor in shaping people’s spiritual and mental states (Ji et al., 2003). (As suggested by the bibliography for this article, PLA and national defense publications on PW were already commonplace by 2004). The “space” for use of PW had increased due to the growth of highly advanced information systems, including the Internet. Instead of culture, however, PLA strategists were more concerned with themes of psychology and information, though like writers and policy makers within the party-state their overarching concern was with *ideas, public opinion, and national consciousness*. Likewise, the prescriptions for action were similar as well: temper and inoculate minds against psychological change, sieve public opinion through media control, and resist Western hegemony and media superiority through network defense and recovery of network sovereignty (Thomas, 2003: 7-8). Through military external propaganda, and military soft power, China could become a “prime mover” in shaping the perception of international events (Zhao et al., 2009). More militarized uses of media for PW included intimidation (“soft PW”); in technological

battlespaces, networks served as potential conduits for sowing chaos at the level of social, political, and economic systems (“hard PW”). At the same time, throughout the development and discussion of PW doctrine from 2003 to 2009, definitions of the term returned consistently to sovereignty, information protection and psychological security, defense, and national security strategy.

Securitization of culture through NCS and securitization of psychology through PW thus moved together on parallel tracks, with national grand strategy based on defense against the hegemony-seeking and powerful U.S. led forces of globalization as the primary goal. In 2008, however, a military supreme command for direction of external propaganda, the All-Military External Propaganda Work Small Group (*Quanjun duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*), had convened its first meeting in Beijing on September 3, placing the timeline for a coherent military response somewhat ahead of the Hu-Xi consensus around ideological defense arising during 2010-2011, though it should be noted that internal civilian strengthening of cybersecurity and defense had already begun to take shape prior to this point (“Quanjun duiwai xuanchuan gongzuo lingdao xiaozu,” *Wikiwand*). (Meetings of this high-level organ were covered online by news sources Sohu and Xinhua, among other sources, from 2008 onward). Guidance and coordination for national-level PW action was intended to counter perceived U.S. efforts to accelerate peaceful evolution and trigger the collapse of socialist governments. Power projection, rather than defense and inoculation, was the primary outcome of psychological securitization within the military domain.

Manifestations of the new doctrine and overarching national strategy surfaced after 2008 in minor, but revealing, forms. The film *Silent Contest* (*Jiaoliang wusheng*, 2013), was produced by the People's Liberation Army's National Defense University Information Management Center, and was intended to awaken viewers both inside and outside of the military to the existence of a secret U.S. “strategy” to westernize China and topple its government (“Contest a silent” [sic], *Youtube*). The film’s main premise was that the U.S. plot to maintain hegemony depended not on military force, but on political and cultural infiltration, and “soft war” methods including use of NGOs, academic institutions, human rights discourse, and propaganda techniques intended to create internal division; as recommended by one of the many Chinese military figures interviewed for the film, president of National Defense University general Wang Xibin (also credited as one of the film’s producers), political and ideological defense were the principal means by which American infiltration was to be defeated. Other evidence of PLA response to the westernization threat image included increasing cooperation between the General Intelligence Department Shanghai Liaison Bureau and Shanghai branch of the Chinese Cultural Promotion Association, and a major internal propaganda “offensive” to reform ideology among the rank-and-file (Stokes, 2015: 23, n 47; Saunders and Wuthnow, 2016: 12).

5. Conclusions

From the 1990s onward, a strong national-level consensus has emerged within China’s party-state and party-army leadership that emphasizes the importance of securing culture and making mass opinion and psychology an important future battleground. While many traits of this post-1990s paradigm are widely associated with the figure of Xi Jinping, they should more accurately be seen as responses to a threat image of U.S.-led international hegemony, cultural westernization, and collapse of socialist rule which emerged against a backdrop of post-Deng globalization. China’s NCS-based strategic paradigm was thus itself a product of “reform and opening: cultural securitization and economic and information globalization have proceeded hand-in-hand. As this article has demonstrated, when viewed in both civil and military terms there are two important aspects of securitization which can be observed. First, and primarily with respect to the civil sphere, there has been a renewed emphasis on defending and controlling public opinion both within China and, to a certain extent, abroad. Second, within the military sphere, defensive cultural strategies have been superseded by a doctrine of psychological warfare which stresses the ongoing, conflictual, and existential nature of struggle for control over opinion, information, and, ultimately, consciousness. Whether the emergence of an entire party-state-army apparatus based on this culturally-oriented national strategic paradigm during the period 1994-2014 will be seen as a coherent episode by future historians, and whether this paradigm’s impact on both theories and operations related to propaganda in the Chinese and global contexts will stand out as particularly notable within the frameworks through which China’s longer history is studied, remains to be seen.

Nonetheless, what seems significant is that China's political and military thinkers seem to accept the proposition that human societies face new challenges under conditions of globalization and "informationization" which did not exist previously, and that such challenges require a wholesale transformation of the institutions, media, and weapons through which human thought is shaped and secured.

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