



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Building national cohesion and domestic legitimacy: a regime security approach to soft power in China*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/83471/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Edney, KJ (2015) Building national cohesion and domestic legitimacy: a regime security approach to soft power in China. *Politics*, 35 (3-4). 259 - 272. ISSN 0263-3957

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12096>

Reuse

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Building National Cohesion and Domestic Legitimacy: A Regime Security Approach to Soft Power in China

Kingsley Edney

Keywords: soft power, China, regime security, cultural security, national cohesion

Abstract: Studies of Chinese soft power have emphasized its potential to ameliorate the security dilemma and help China achieve a 'peaceful rise'. While this perspective is useful, it overlooks an important alternative Chinese interpretation of soft power as a response to domestic security challenges. In order to address this omission this article uses a regime security approach to examine soft power in the Chinese context. Through an investigation of the Chinese concept of 'cultural security' the article reveals that Chinese analysts view soft power as having the potential to help the Chinese Communist Party solve an internal security predicament by enhancing regime legitimacy and national cohesion.

Soft power, or ‘the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes’ (Nye, 2011, pp. 20-21), is a popular concept in China. The term has been embraced by China’s leaders and is now part of the official lexicon of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). China’s soft power strategy appears to involve a number of elements, including promoting ‘mega-events’ and cultural exchanges, developing a stronger international media presence, pursuing foreign policies designed to improve its image as a responsible power, promoting Chinese culture abroad, and, at times, drawing on the positive attention China’s economic success has attracted internationally (see Zhang, 2012, pp. 623-626). Chinese officials appear to be most comfortable discussing soft power strategy in the context of culture, however, and often employ the term ‘cultural soft power’. The Party’s recent cultural reform policies, which it claims are necessary to achieve what Chinese President Xi Jinping has called the ‘China Dream’ of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, are in part motivated by the desire to increase soft power (see CCP Central Committee, 2011). Indeed, Xi Jinping’s China Dream discourse is intimately related to China’s quest for soft power (see Callahan, 2015).

At the same time, the topic of soft power has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars studying China’s international relations. Some researchers have attempted broad assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of China’s soft power (Cho and Jeong, 2008; Ding, 2008; Gill and Huang, 2006; Huang and Ding, 2006). Others have examined the intellectual history of the concept in China and explain how it has been reinterpreted (Glaser and Murphy, 2009; Li, 2009) or its relationship with other Chinese ideas about foreign relations, such as public diplomacy (Wang, 2008) or foreign propaganda (Edney, 2012). Some have examined case studies of Chinese soft power policy areas or initiatives (Ding and Saunders, 2006; Paradise, 2009) or soft power’s impact on China’s bilateral or regional relations (Shen and Taylor, 2012; Hall and Smith, 2013).

Amid this proliferation of research into Chinese soft power a common consensus has emerged that the major objective of China's soft power strategy is to ameliorate the security dilemma generated by China's rising power. Soft power in this view is a means by which China can achieve a 'peaceful rise' and reduce the kind of international fear, particularly in the United States and in China's regional neighbors, that might trigger containment or balancing behavior. This approach is useful because it highlights an important reason why the concept of soft power has been embraced by the Chinese leadership even more than in its intellectual home of the United States. By focusing on foreign policy and emphasizing the security dilemma, however, this national security approach overlooks the relationship between soft power and the CCP's regime security. Although previous studies have noted that in China soft power has a relevance to domestic politics that is not present in Nye's original formulation of the concept (Barr, 2012, p. 82; Glaser and Murphy, 2009, p. 20; Li, 2009, p. 28) and scholars have pointed out serious domestic weaknesses that undermine China's soft power strategy, such as governance problems, instability, and the regime's lack of legitimacy (e.g. Deng, 2009, p. 73; Wang and Lu, 2008, p. 430), the relationship between regime security and soft power in China is yet to be explored. This article aims to address this omission and in doing so contribute toward building a more complete view of the sources of insecurity shaping China's approach to soft power than is provided by a sole focus on national security and the security dilemma.

The article begins by defining regime security and explaining the conceptual relationship between soft power and regime security, with particular reference to legitimacy and national cohesion in China. It then examines the discourse of 'cultural security' (*wenhua anquan*) in China to demonstrate that Chinese analysts are indeed applying the concept of soft power not only to national security but also to regime security concerns. In particular, the way that soft power has been applied to the realm of cultural security in China problematizes Nye's claim that American and Chinese soft power can be mutually reinforcing (Nye, 2014, p. 22; 2013; 2011, p. 90; Nye and Wang, 2009, p. 22). The conclusion

emphasizes the importance of taking regime security into account when investigating soft power beyond the liberal democratic West.

National security, regime security, and soft power

The need to overcome the security dilemma by reducing the fear its rise provokes in others is one of China's most complex national security challenges and the most widely cited reason for China wanting to increase its soft power. According to Li (2009, p. 31), soft power is 'primarily utilized to refute the "China threat" thesis, facilitate a better understanding of China's domestic socio-economic reality, and persuade the outside world to accept and support China's rise.' Deng (2009, p. 64) argues that in China the concept of soft power 'to a large extent, means the ability to influence others in world politics with the goal of achieving great power status without sparking fully fledged traditional power politics of hostile balancing or war'. In his analysis of soft power's role in China's rise, Ding (2010, p. 266) argues that China's soft power strategy is one of reassurance that helps 'to deal with foreign challenges and create a friendly international environment'. Rawnsley (2012, p. 126) notes that China's soft power strategy has been prompted by the emergence of a 'China threat' discourse in the West and therefore China's soft power can be seen as 'not only reactive, but defensive'. Nye also claims that China's soft power strategy is intended 'to make its hard power look less threatening to its neighbors' and that soft power can help to reduce the effectiveness of regional coalitions that attempt to balance against China (Nye, 2011, p. 23; 2013). This kind of national security perspective on Chinese soft power helps explain why building soft power has become such an important task for the CCP. But we need to consider the possibility that domestic concerns over regime security are also driving China's soft power project.

Regime security generally refers to 'the condition where governing elites are secure from violent challenges to their rule' (Jackson, 2010, p. 187). In China's case, however, the insecurity of the regime is

generated by the possibility not only of violent challenges but also of 'peaceful evolution' (*heping yanbian*), which is an extremely serious concern for the CCP, particularly following the 'color revolutions' that have occurred in some post-Soviet states (see Shambaugh, 2008, pp. 88-89). The 'regime' can be defined as 'the small state of persons who hold the highest offices ... and/or are the elite that effectively command the machinery, especially the coercive forces, of the state' (Job, 1992, p. 15). While this article uses the term regime security rather than state security, it should be noted that there is often no clear dividing line between state and regime security within a 'state-embedded polity' (Gilley, 2006, p. 501) such as China, where there is significant penetration of the state by the Party. Despite China's successes in dealing with many of the common sources of insecurity for developing states, such as permeability by external actors and susceptibility to armed conflict (see Ayoob, 1995, p. 15), two important sources of regime insecurity remain problematic for the authorities: lack of legitimacy and lack of national cohesion.

For a political authority such as the CCP, legitimacy is determined by the degree to which it 'holds and exercises political power with legality, justification, and consent from the standpoint of all of its citizens' (Gilley, 2009, p. 11). In other words, the use of power must proceed according to rules, these rules are justified by widely shared beliefs, and the actions of those in subordinate positions provide evidence that they consent to the power relationship (Beetham, 1991, p. 16). There has been a great deal of elite discussion of Party legitimacy in China, particularly since the early 2000s; one study showed that 68% of sampled Chinese journal articles about legitimacy took the view that the CCP's legitimacy was under threat, while 30% claimed the Party faced a legitimacy crisis (Gilley and Holbig, 2009, p. 343), and a more recent study found that Chinese intellectuals are more pessimistic about regime legitimacy in China than their Western counterparts (Zeng, 2014). For the purpose of this article it is not necessary to resolve the question of whether or not the CCP currently faces a legitimacy crisis, however, only to show that the potential for the party-state to lose its legitimacy is a serious source of insecurity.

The Fourth Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, held in October 2014, provides clear evidence that senior Party officials are highly concerned about the *legality* of CCP power. The Plenum's major focus was the need for the Party to 'rule according to the law' (*yi fa zhi guo*) and pointed out that 'good law is a prerequisite for good governance' and that for the Party to rule according to the law it must first rule according to the constitution (Xinhua, 2014). Responsibility for the *justification* of Party power falls on the Central Propaganda Department, which utilizes a comprehensive network of institutions to attempt to reproduce the official discourse justifying CCP rule and suppress any rival discourses that might challenge it (see Edney, 2014). Lack of *consent* is also a problem that requires significant resources to overcome. According to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in recent years the annual number of major protests in China has exceeded 100,000 (Huang, 2012). While all states use domestic force to some extent (see Buzan, 1983, p. 67), the Chinese authorities' huge investment in the internal security apparatus, which in recent years has exceeded even China's military spending (Martina, 2014), demonstrates that the lack of consent to CCP rule is widespread enough to be a cause for serious concern.

Soft power is primarily relevant to the enhancement of regime legitimacy where a significant component of the moral justification for maintaining the current system is based on the regime's ability to improve the international status of the national unit. The international increase in positive attraction that is associated with a rise in soft power makes it easier for the regime to convince its citizens of the truth of its claim that the country's international status is improving under its leadership, where status is defined not only in terms of material capabilities but also in terms of social recognition. For the most part, evidence of an increase in international recognition and attraction could be used to bolster claims that the regime has successfully improved the country's international status, regardless of whether soft power is a result of attraction to political values, culture, or foreign policies, or whether it is generated by the policies of the regime or sources within broader society. Some internationally attractive cultural

products can also be the work of dissidents or relate to aspects of culture or values that the regime would rather suppress, however, and these sources of attraction are difficult for the authorities to exploit.

Chinese political elites feel a keen sense of obligation to restore the country's past great-power status (Deng, 2008, pp. 8-9) and show its people that China is globally respected and admired (Zhang, 2012, p. 620). The leadership attempts to appease domestic nationalist audiences by gaining 'face' for China abroad (Gries, 2004, pp. 120-121) and the party-state has often publicized statements of support or admiration from foreign allies to demonstrate China's international status and thereby bolster its moral claim to rule (e.g. Brady, 2003, p. 228). If there is a broad-based growth in Chinese soft power, these statements are likely to become more common and more credible as the number and variety of foreign actors who are attracted to China increases. Moreover, international attraction to China's success in areas such as economic development expands the number of 'nodes' in networks of 'legitimacy belief', thereby reducing the marginal cost of persuasion and squeezing out alternative discourses that might challenge regime legitimacy (Gerschewski, 2013, pp. 26-27). This makes it easier for the CCP to claim legitimacy based on its success in moving China toward the shared goal of national 'rejuvenation'.

Although national cohesion is a concept that is rather nebulous and difficult to assess, the regular references to cohesion in official CCP statements indicate that Chinese leaders are worried about cohesion and seek to improve it (e.g. CCP Central Committee 2011, 2013). As China has become a more plural society, generating social consensus (*ningju gongshi*) and unifying the people (*ningju renxin*) have become serious concerns for the propaganda authorities (Edney, 2014). According to propaganda chief Liu Yunshan, achieving the 'China dream' of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation requires cultural cohesion (Xinhua, 2013), while an early article on national cultural security published on a CCP website argues that if a country lacks cohesion—even if it is strong in terms of other forms of

power—when it faces challenges such as a natural disaster or foreign invasion it will ‘collapse at the first blow’ (*bu kan yi ji*) (Yang, 2006). A lack of national cohesion can be a persistent problem for weak states that are unable to generate ‘a domestic political and social consensus of sufficient strength to eliminate the large-scale use of force as a major and continuing element in the domestic political life of the nation’ (Buzan, 1983, p. 67).

Normally soft power refers to a country’s attractiveness to foreign constituencies. To consider the possibility that soft power could enhance national cohesion, however, it is necessary to apply the concept of soft power to the relationship between domestic constituencies. In this sense the soft power of the political, social, and cultural core of the polity encourages domestic interest groups and individuals on the margins to want the same outcomes, such as stability and national cohesion, as the authorities at the center. Although this might seem to be a major step away from the traditional interpretation of soft power, Nye’s (2011, p. 19-20) argument that soft power is a key requirement of an effective counter-insurgency strategy and that dealing with the threat of terrorism requires the soft power of an appealing narrative that can win over mainstream society and prevent terrorists recruiting new members to their groups highlights the concept’s potential significance for state efforts to respond to domestic sources of instability. In this case soft power involves enhancing regime security by making it less likely that domestic adversaries who pose a threat to national cohesion will be able to obtain material support from the local population, which then makes it easier for the state to deal with the security threat they pose.

The authorities in Beijing face a range of threats to national cohesion from peripheral regions, including the ongoing problem of terrorism and insurgent attacks in Xinjiang, protests and discontent in Tibet, pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, and de facto independence in Taiwan. In light of these challenges it would not be unreasonable for scholars or even the authorities to interpret the concept of soft power

as something that could also be applied to improve regime security by enhancing the cohesion between the political, social, and cultural core of the Chinese polity and those on the margins. Indeed, in more general terms, Wang and Lu (2008, p. 427) have pointed out that Chinese interpretations of soft power include 'the ability to generate compliance in a society by moral example and persuasion'.

Soft power is also relevant to China's regime security because the soft power of other actors can constitute a threat to cohesion or CCP legitimacy. Taiwan's soft power, according to most Taiwanese, stems primarily from its democratic system and values (Wang and Lu, 2008, p. 432). The appeal of Taiwan's democracy has increased international support for the Taiwanese authorities (Hughes, 1999, pp. 134-136), particularly in the United States, and thus undermines party-state efforts to push for reunification. The liberal democratic values that are a key feature of American soft power are also a source of regime insecurity in China and will be discussed further in the section on soft power and cultural security below. Non-state actors can also possess soft power (Nye, 2004, pp. 90-97) and in China's case the soft power of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exile community can have a negative effect on party-state efforts to generate national cohesion. Dealing with these challenges is not as simple as improving Chinese soft power, since an increase in the attractiveness of one actor does not necessarily result in another becoming less attractive. When the values the CCP appeals to in order to justify its rule are incompatible with the values associated with the soft power of other actors, however, Chinese attempts to build soft power become more competitive and defensive. Li (2009, p. 33) points out that many Chinese analysts and other elites believe that policies to increase China's cultural competitiveness can reduce the influence of Western culture and defend against the infiltration of liberal political ideas, especially among China's youth.

Cultural security in China

The rise in awareness of and appreciation for the concept of soft power has occurred during a period when the CCP is acutely aware of what it sees as the growing urgency of global cultural and ideological competition. Party documents regularly claim that the status and function of culture in the international competition for 'comprehensive national power' is becoming increasingly clear (e.g. CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council, 2012; 2005). From a national security perspective soft power is attractive to the CCP because it offers a possible solution to the security dilemma by allowing China's power to increase without a corresponding increase in the fear of others toward China. From a regime security perspective, however, soft power offers a potential solution to a different dilemma—how to gain the benefits of being open to international cultural influence and exchange without undermining domestic national cohesion or becoming vulnerable to ideological threats. In other words, soft power has a potential role to play in enhancing China's 'cultural security'.

The concept of cultural security is not new to China, but it came into greater focus around the time of the Sixth Plenum of the Seventeenth Central Committee in late 2011, when it was mentioned regularly in official and semi-official statements. Although there is no authoritative definition of cultural security in China, by examining official statements such as the 12th Five Year Plan, the semi-official articles about cultural security that have been published on the websites of the Chinese Communist Party and the *People's Daily*, as well as the interpretations of Chinese scholars that appear in academic journals in China, it is possible to obtain a clearer idea of what cultural security means in the Chinese political context. The way these sources use the concept of cultural security demonstrates that it is an important aspect of security that involves shielding Chinese culture and values from foreign threats as well as enhancing the ability of Chinese culture and values to compete for international influence by maintaining their relevance and dynamism.

The policymaking process in China is largely opaque and it is not generally possible to discern the relationship between academic discussions of a topic and official policy. It is not uncommon, however, for top leaders to raise the importance of a particular concept without specifying its exact meaning and for the scholarly community to then attempt to define or analyze the concept in greater depth. This appears to be what has happened in the case of cultural security. During 2011-12, the period leading up to and just after the Sixth Plenum, 37 academic journal articles with cultural security (*wenhua anquan*) in their title appeared in the politics, military affairs, and law section of the CNKI database, which was more than the total number of similar articles for the years 1999-2009. Although the views expressed in such articles cannot be considered an indication of official policy, they can help to clarify the scope of debate and highlight common assumptions surrounding a concept such as cultural security.

The Sixth Plenum, which focused specifically on the issue of cultural system reform, noted that the need to protect national cultural security is an important task that is becoming more difficult (CCP Central Committee, 2011). The cultural component of China's 12th Five Year Plan states: 'Facing increasing global ideological and cultural struggle, it is increasingly urgent to strengthen national cultural capabilities and international competitiveness, to resist the cultural infiltration of foreign hostile forces, and to protect national cultural security' (CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council, 2012). The term has appeared not only in official documents related to culture, however, but also in documents and statements that focus on security issues. For example, when China's National Security Commission was established following the Third Plenum of the Eighteenth Central Committee in 2013 it included 'cultural security' among the 11 dimensions of security within its remit. When President and General Secretary Xi Jinping outlined what he called China's 'comprehensive national security perspective' he included cultural security as a distinct category alongside military and social security (Shen and Wu, 2014).

Chinese semi-official and academic sources provide definitions of cultural security that range from minimalist to exhaustive. For example, Wu (2014) simply defines cultural security as the health and development of national culture in areas such as ideology, values, cultural activities, and cultural production while avoiding the threat of 'foreign elements' (*wailai yinsu*). An article on the *People's Net* website titled 'How to Protect National Cultural Security' defines cultural security as when a culture is not replaced or assimilated by another, is able to maintain its unique character, independence and integrity, and is passed down through the generations at the same time as it continues to develop; *national* cultural security is when a sovereign state's mainstream culture does not suffer erosion or destruction due to another culture, is able to maintain the integrity of its own cultural traditions and national character, safeguards world cultural plurality, and increases the country's cultural influence (Zhang and Lao, 2011).

Academic views on cultural security in China range from relatively liberal and cosmopolitan to more conservative and nationalistic, but despite this variation they generally share two core elements in common: what could be termed a 'cultural sovereignty' element and a 'cultural development' element. The *cultural sovereignty* element of cultural security involves maintaining China's unique character, upholding global cultural pluralism, and defending against the external threat of 'cultural infiltration' (*wenhua shentou*). For example, Zhang and Lao (2011) argue that Chinese culture faces many threats and challenges, particularly from the culture of Western developed nations, which use their economic power, technological superiority, marketing strategies, and political pressure to conduct cultural infiltration into other countries. Jia and Zhao (2012) claim that 'illegal religious activities' in Xinjiang, under the influence of external hostile forces such as Islamic extremists, can pose a threat to cultural security because they can undermine the identification of ethnic minorities with the national polity, reduce their trust in the CCP, and encourage separatism. India's policies toward Tibet, particularly its support for the Dalai Lama, have also been identified by Chinese scholars as a threat to China's cultural

security (e.g. Li, 2010). Jiang complains that China's entry to the World Trade Organization and corresponding regulations on foreign cultural trade and investment has made it more difficult for China to maintain cultural independence and guide public opinion, while making Western cultural infiltration into China easier (2010, p. 90). Sun and Wang (2014, p. 107-108) note that certain countries, such as Russia, South Africa, Singapore, and Malaysia, view culture as an issue of sovereignty and attempt to maintain cultural security by bolstering some form of 'indigenous ideology' (*bentu yishixingtai*) or local values in response to globalization; they view the Chinese concepts of a 'harmonious society' and 'China dream' in these terms.

The *cultural development* element of cultural security involves ensuring that Chinese culture remains vibrant and becomes more internationally influential, while defending against the threat of cultural stagnation and insular or 'degenerate' thinking. For example, scholar Guo Caihua notes that although external threats do exist, internal problems such as the 'dregs' of traditional culture cannot be overlooked when assessing threats to cultural security (Guo, 2013, p. 14). Another academic assessment of cultural security identifies weaknesses in Marxism and mainstream ideology as well as problems with national cultural development, such as cultural stagnation, lack of cultural innovation, and a lack of ability to transmit Chinese cultural products to the world (Han, 2004, pp. 12-13). As part of its section on speeding up mechanisms for reform and innovation in the cultural system, the 12th Five Year Plan includes a paragraph on developing a system of cultural management, where it refers to the need to 'thoroughly develop the campaign against pornography, perfect the management of the cultural market, resolutely sweep away degenerate cultural rubbish that poisons people's spirits, and earnestly build a market order that guarantees national cultural security' (CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council, 2012).

When Chinese academics discuss cultural security they often do not clearly distinguish between culture,

values, and ideology. Jiang's (2010) definition of cultural security is an example of an approach that is primarily focused on ideology. For Jiang, cultural security exists when:

a sovereign nation is able to independently select its political system and ideology; resist the attempts of other countries to impose their ideologies or ideologically-led modes of politics, economics, or democracy; guard against the corrosion, destruction, and subversion by internal or external cultural elements; and is therefore able to maintain its own values, form of behavior [*xingwei fangshi*], and social order, protect national self-respect and cohesion, and use necessary methods to increase the influence of the country's culture (Jiang, 2010, p. 89).

Despite differentiating cultural security from political security, Zhang and Lao (2011) also perceive cultural security to be strongly linked with ideological struggle and political values. In addition to claiming that Chinese cultural traditions, mainstream values, social sciences, and way of life are under attack from the hegemony of Western cultural products, language, academic theory, and holiday traditions, they state that in the ideological sphere there are Western hostile forces who are still engaged in plots to Westernize or split the country. One relatively early article on cultural security by Han Yuan views cultural security in terms of both ideology and national culture (2004, p. 9). Han argues that ideology provides the cultural basis for the legitimacy of state power and that national culture is also a source of legitimacy and national cohesion, therefore problems in either of these areas could spark a national crisis (2004, pp. 9-10).

Soft power and cultural security

In his own work and in collaboration with the Chinese scholar Wang Jisi, Nye claims that American and Chinese soft power does not have to be a zero-sum competition and can instead be mutually reinforcing (Nye, 2014, p. 22; 2013; 2011, p. 90; Nye and Wang, 2009, p. 22). Nye points out (2011, p. 90) that if

China and the United States can become more attractive to each other through the mutual growth of soft power then this will reduce the potential for conflict between them. If we only focus on national security and the security dilemma this argument seems sensible because if each side becomes more inclined to 'want what the other wants' then this will lead to a growth in shared interests and greater cooperation to solve international problems; an increase in the soft power of one does not pose a threat to the other in the same way that an increase in military capabilities might. When we consider the way that Chinese scholars have applied the concept of soft power to the problem of cultural security, however, this mutual attraction scenario becomes more problematic.

Although Chinese analysts do not generally identify a direct link between the threat of foreign soft power and the potential for the CCP to lose its legitimacy, their references to the undermining of socialist ideology, values, and national cohesion make it clear that they are concerned that certain elements of foreign soft power, particularly the attraction of Western-style democratic systems and values, pose a threat to regime security in China. Some scholars argue there is a deliberate soft power strategy on the part of the United States to target China. Han (2004, p. 11) refers to a 'major soft power offensive' by the United States to spread Western capitalist ideology that, along with American cultural hegemony, poses a serious threat to China's cultural security. Han is particularly concerned about the United States' incorporation of culture into its national security strategy and cites Nye's views on soft power to argue for the importance of culture for contemporary international competition (2004, pp. 10-11). Jiang (2010, p. 89) argues that American soft power, in the form of American-style democracy and values, poses a particularly pressing challenge for China. He claims that Western countries are aware of the increasing importance of culture in the international competition over comprehensive national power and aim to use soft power to achieve 'peaceful evolution' in China. Jiang reels off a list of complaints against Western countries, including using human rights to interfere in China's internal affairs, referring to Chinese patriotism as nationalism, denigrating Chinese collectivist values as closed

and backward, and promoting degenerate thought and culture—such as materialism, hedonism, extreme individualism and pornography and violence—to China’s youth, and sees this as all being driven by a strategic objective: ‘to destroy our common ideals and spiritual pillars [*jingshen zhizhu*], to eliminate Chinese national cohesion, [and] to confuse our thinking’ (Jiang, 2010, p. 89). Similarly, Han argues that the United States specifically targets China in a struggle over ideology and values and that this has consequences for national cohesion (2004, p. 12).

Even when American soft power is not seen as a deliberate plot, Chinese analysts can still identify it as a source of insecurity for developing countries. Sun and Wang specifically rebut Nye’s claims that soft power is not threatening to others when they write:

As far as developing countries in the process of modernization are concerned, despite scholars such as Nye (especially American scholars) repeatedly emphasizing in their articles that soft power development is ‘non-zero-sum’ and of global mutual benefit, this kind of language corresponds to a specifically Western (or American) political system and cultural environment; this will inevitably create a major conflict with other countries, which will be unable to avoid being profoundly concerned about ‘cultural security’ (Sun and Wang, 2014, p. 108).

Chinese scholars also warn that American ‘anti-China forces’ such as academics and NGOs, including the National Endowment for Democracy, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom House, threaten cultural security in Xinjiang (Zhao, 2012) and that cultural infiltration by foreign religious organizations, such as the ‘Dalai Lama clique’, militant Islamic separatists in Xinjiang, and Christian neoconservatives, also poses a security threat (Xi, 2011). From a slightly different perspective on soft power and cultural security, Xi (2011, p. 21) claims that foreign religious infiltration could undermine the soft power of China’s socialist ideology. Xi does not specify exactly what he means by soft power, but from the context it seems that he is referring to the ability of socialist ideology to attract Chinese domestic audiences. Discussions of cultural security in China not only identify foreign soft power as a threat, however, but

also refer to soft power as part of the solution to China's cultural insecurity.

If maintaining cultural security involves not only cultural sovereignty but also cultural development, it is clear that in a globalized world it is both impossible and undesirable to prevent cross-cultural interaction by, as Wu (2014) phrases it, 'closing the passes and sealing the country' (*bi guan suo guo*). In its section on important directions for culture, the 12th Five Year Plan lists 'earnestly protect national cultural security' alongside other goals that include improving China's cultural openness, encouraging Chinese culture to 'go out' into the world, and learning from the positive achievements of foreign civilizations (CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council, 2012). The organization and implementation section of the Plan states that it is necessary to correctly manage the relationship between maintaining openness to the outside world and safeguarding cultural security; at the same time as upholding national cultural security the process of opening up to the outside world and learning from other cultures should continue. In late 2013 a Central Committee resolution on deepening reform continued to list the task of defending cultural security alongside the need to remain open to positive international cultural influences (CCP Central Committee, 2013).

In this context of globalization, Chinese scholars and analysts have recognized that soft power offers a potential path to cultural security that does not involve resorting to international isolation. Along these lines, Sun and Wang (2014, p. 109) point out that it will be impossible to achieve the goal of maintaining cultural security by relying on tactics of state suppression such as setting up internet firewalls and blocking incoming cultural products. Instead, they claim that that national cultural security 'necessarily depends on the overall raising of national cultural soft power' and that enhancing cultural security 'depends on the comprehensive increase in a country's own internal and external cultural influence' (Sun and Wang, 2014, p. 110). They argue for a pragmatic, confident, open, and plural perspective on cultural security that builds China's cultural soft power by advancing cultural traditions, contemporary

core social values, and ideological security (Sun and Wang, 2014, p. 112).

Indeed, for many analysts, responding to cultural security threats involves a strategy that looks remarkably like a plan to enhance China's soft power, albeit one with particular Chinese characteristics. For example, Zhang and Lao (2011) argue for the need to maintain cultural security by strengthening Chinese culture rather than by limiting cultural interaction between the West and China. In addition to exhortations to maintain a cultural development path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, build a socialist core value system, increase the country's cultural soft power, and construct a 'strong socialist culture nation', they specifically focus on the need to increase cultural creativity to make Chinese culture more progressive, the need to move from being a country that is rich in cultural resources to one that is also strong in terms of cultural production, and the need to come up with creative ways for Chinese culture to reach the rest of the world.

More conservative approaches to cultural security also discuss the need to increase China's cultural influence but tend to place greater weight on strengthening the domestic sources of national cohesion and legitimacy. For example, Jiang puts forward three suggestions for how China can make use of its soft power resources in order to 'maintain the progressive direction of socialist culture', resist Western efforts to promote 'peaceful evolution', and protect China's cultural security (2010, p. 90). First, the most important task is to build a socialist core value system, which will help unify different groups within society by increasing the attractiveness and cohesive power of socialist ideology; second, maintain appropriate cultural standards through implementing policies that will protect the people's culture (which Jiang equates with socialism); third, implement a cultural security strategy based on developing the country, because for Jiang the soft power of culture ultimately relies on the support of political, economic, and military hard power (Jiang, 2010, pp. 90-91). Jia Youjun argues that the key to cultural security in Xinjiang is to 'vigorously train and enhance Chinese national spirit and modern spirit',

which he claims form a core component of cultural soft power (Jia, 2013, p. 82). Han's recommendations for dealing with cultural security challenges include both strengthening culture and ideology at home and increasing China's cultural influence (2004, pp. 13-16), while Wu's (2014) approach involves improving China's international broadcasting and foreign language capacity but also constructing a 'defensive thought perimeter' (*sixiang fangxian*) by using propaganda campaigns to develop the socialist core value system and raise cultural consciousness.

Conclusion

It is important, as Rawnsley (2012, p. 125) points out, to “de-Westernise” our understanding of soft power'. This is not simply a matter of examining the soft power 'resources' of states such as China and Russia, however, or pointing out the ways in which they do not conform to liberal norms—it also requires examining the insecurities that lie behind their soft power strategies. Chinese analysts working in this area not only view foreign soft power as a threat to China's regime security but also see the growth of Chinese soft power as a means by which to enhance aspects of regime security in response to the challenges of globalization. Through the lens of regime security, developing soft power in the contemporary Chinese context appears to be not only a response to the outside world's fear of China's rise to great power status but also part of a nation building or state making project.

The distinctive Chinese focus on the domestic aspects of soft power, which has been noted by a number of scholars, is about more than just addressing a weakness in China's soft power resources—it is also about addressing important regime security challenges. The CCP's regime security is threatened by the ideological challenge of the West as well as by the attractiveness of alternative sources of authority outside the Party, particularly around China's periphery. China's status as an authoritarian polity in a

world dominated by liberal democratic norms is often presented as a factor that places limitations on China's soft power potential. But more than a limitation, China's ideological outsider status is an incentive to develop soft power. The Chinese focus on domestic factors is not simply an indicator of China's lack of soft power but also reveals a qualitative difference between the kinds of insecurities that influence China's approach to soft power and those that might influence a Western liberal democracy.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Michael Barr and Valentina Feklyunina for inviting me to the workshop 'The Soft Power of Hard States' at Newcastle University, workshop participants for their helpful comments, and the editors and anonymous referees for their perceptive feedback.

About the author

Kingsley Edney is Lecturer in Politics and International Relations of China in the School of Politics and International Studies at the University of Leeds. He is the author of *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda: International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion* (2014). Email: K.J.Edney@leeds.ac.uk

References

Ayoob, M. (1995) *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.

Barr, M. (2012) 'Nation Branding as Nation Building: China's Image Campaign' *East Asia* 29(1), pp. 81-94.

Beetham, D. (1991) *The Legitimation of Power*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Brady, A.-M. (2003) *Making the Foreign Serve China: Managing Foreigners in the People's Republic*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Buzan, B. (1983) *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*, Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Callahan, W.A. (2015) 'Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft Power of the China Dream' *Politics*.

CCP Central Committee (2013) 'Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu quanmian shenhua gaige ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding [Chinese Communist Party Central Committee decision on some important questions about the comprehensive deepening of reform]', *Zhongguo Gongchandang Xinwen* [online], 15 November. Available from: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2013/1115/c64094-23559163.html> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

CCP Central Committee (2011) 'Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu shenhua wenhua tizhi gaige, tuidong shehui zhuyi wenhua da fazhan da fanrong ruogan zhongda wenti de jue ding [Chinese Communist Party Central Committee decision on some important questions about deepening cultural system reform and pushing forward the great development and great flourishing of socialist culture]', *Zhongguo Fayuan Wang* [online], 18 October. Available from: <http://old.chinacourt.org/html/article/201110/26/467709.shtml> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council (2012) 'Guojia "shier wu" shiqi wenhua gaige fazhan guihua gangyao [Outline of the national "twelve-five" period culture reform and development plan]', *Zhongyang Zhengfu Menhu Wangzhan* [online], 15 February. Available from: http://www.gov.cn/jrzg/2012-02/15/content_2067781.htm [Accessed 20 May 2014].

- CCP Central Committee and PRC State Council (2005) 'Zhonggong zhongyang guowuyuan guanyu shenhua wenhua tizhi gaige de ruogan yijian [Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and State Council's certain opinions about deepening cultural systems reform]', *Zhongguo Chubao Wang* [online], 23 December. Available from: http://www.chubao.cc/ztj/gg/zcwj/201202/t20120223_101946.html [Accessed 28 June 2013].
- Cho, Y.N. and Jeong, J.H. (2008) 'China's Soft Power: Discussions, Resources, and Prospects' *Asian Survey* 48(3), pp. 453-472.
- Deng, Y. (2009) 'The New Hard Realities: "Soft Power" and China in Transition' in M. Li (ed.), *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 63-81.
- Deng, Y. (2008) *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ding, S. (2010) 'Analyzing Rising Power from the Perspective of Soft Power: A New Look at China's Rise to the Status Quo Power' *Journal of Contemporary China* 19(64), pp. 255-272.
- Ding, S. (2008) *The Dragon's Hidden Wings: How China Rises with Its Soft Power*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Ding, S. and Saunders, R.A. (2006) 'Talking Up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language', *East Asia* 23(2), pp. 3-33.
- Edney, K. (2014) *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda: International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edney, K. (2012) 'Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System', *Journal of Contemporary China*

21(78), pp. 899-914.

Gerschewski, J. (2013) 'The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-optation in Autocratic Regimes', *Democratization* 20(1), pp. 13-38.

Gill, B. and Huang, Y. (2006) 'Sources and Limits of Chinese "Soft Power"' *Survival* 48(2), pp. 17-36.

Gilley, B. (2009) *The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Gilley, B. (2006) 'The Meaning and Measure of State Legitimacy: Results for 72 Countries' *European Journal of Political Research* 45(3), pp. 499-525.

Gilley, B. and Holbig, H. (2009) 'The Debate on Party Legitimacy in China: A Mixed Quantitative/Qualitative Analysis' *Journal of Contemporary China* 18(59), pp. 339-358.

Glaser, B.S. and Murphy, M.E. (2009) 'Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Ongoing Debate' in C. McGiffert (ed.), *Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States: Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, pp. 10-26.

Gries, P.H. (2004) *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Guo, C. (2013) 'Shilun zuowei Xinjiang guojia anquan zhongyao yi huan de wenhua anquan [Some thoughts on cultural security as an important aspect of Xinjiang national security]' *Kashi Shifan Xueyuan Xuebao* 34(5), pp. 13-16, 22.

Hall, I. and Smith, F. (2013) 'The Struggle for Soft Power in Asia: Public Diplomacy and Regional Competition' *Asian Security* 9(1), pp. 1-18.

- Han, Y. (2004) 'Quanqiuhua Beijing xia weihu wo guo wenhua anquan de zhanlüe sikao [Strategic thinking on maintaining China's cultural security in the context of globalisation]' *Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping Lilun Yanjiu* 4, pp. 9-16.
- Huang, C. (2012) 'Land Grabs are Main Cause of Mainland Protests, Experts Say', *South China Morning Post* [online], 20 December. Available from:
<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1108543/land-grabs-are-main-cause-mainland-protests-experts-say> [Accessed 1 November 2014].
- Huang, Y. and Ding, S. (2006) 'Dragon's Underbelly: An Analysis of China's Soft Power' *East Asia* 23(4), pp. 22-44.
- Hughes, C.R. (1999) 'Democratization and Beijing's Taiwan Policy' in S. Tsang and H.-M. Tien (eds.), *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 130-147.
- Jackson, R. (2010) 'Regime Security' in A. Collins (ed.), *Contemporary Security Studies* [2nd ed.], Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 185-201.
- Jia, Y. (2013) 'Dali peiyu he hongyang zhonghua minzu jingshen, shidai jingshen shi weihu Xinjiang diqu zhuliu wenhua anquan de guanjian [Vigorously training and enhancing Chinese national spirit and modern spirit is the key to maintaining mainstream cultural security in the Xinjiang region]' *Xinjiang Sheke Luntan* 2, pp. 81-84.
- Jia, Y. and Zhao, S. (2012) 'Feifa zongjiao huodong dui guojia zhuliu wenhua anquan de weixie yu pohuai [The threat and damage to national mainstream cultural security from illegal religious activities]' *Fujian Sheng Shehui Zhuyi Xueyuan Xuebao* 2, pp. 32-36.
- Jiang, X. (2010) 'Ruan quan li yu Zhongguo de wenhua anquan tanxi [Analysis of soft power and China's cultural security]' *Zhongguo Tese Shehui Zhuyi Yanjiu* 5, pp. 88-91.

- Job, B.L. (1992) 'The Insecurity Dilemma: National, Regime, and State Securities in the Third World' in B.L. Job (ed.), *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, pp. 11-35.
- Li, M. (2009) 'Soft Power in Chinese Discourse: Popularity and Prospect' in M. Li (ed.), *Soft Power: China's Emerging Strategy in International Politics*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 21-43.
- Li, R. (2010) 'Qianxi Zhong Yin jiaoliu zhong de wenhua anquan yu guojia anquan wenti [Preliminary analysis of cultural security and national security problems in Sino-Indian exchanges]' *Qinghai Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexue Ban)* 32(4), pp. 52-57.
- Martina, M. (2014) 'China Withholds Full Domestic-Security Spending Figure', *Reuters* [online], 4 March. Available from:
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/05/us-china-parliament-security-idUSBREA240B720140305> [Accessed 1 November 2014].
- Nye, J.S., Jr. (2014) 'The Information Revolution and Power' *Current History* 113(759), pp. 19-22.
- Nye, J.S. (2013) 'What China and Russia Don't Get About Soft Power', *Foreign Policy* [online], 29 April. Available from:
[www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_po](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_power)
[wer](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_po) [Accessed 22 May 2014].
- Nye, J.S., Jr. (2011) *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Nye, J.S., Jr. (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Nye, J.S., Jr. and Wang, J. (2009) 'Hard Decisions on Soft Power: Opportunities and Difficulties for

- Chinese Soft Power' *Harvard International Review* Summer, pp. 18-22.
- Paradise, J. (2009) 'China and International Harmony: The Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power' *Asian Survey* 49(4), pp. 647-669.
- Rawnsley, G. (2012) 'Approaches to Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in China and Taiwan' *Journal of International Communication* 18(2), pp. 121-135.
- Shambaugh, D. (2008) *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation*, Washington, D.C. and Berkeley, California: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and University of California Press.
- Shen, M. and Wu, M. (2014) 'Xin anquan guan huhang Zhongguo meng [New security concept conveys Chinese dream]', *Zhongguo Gongchandang Xinwen* [online], 9 May. Available from: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0509/c64387-24995228.html> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
- Shen, S. and Taylor, I. (2012) 'Ugandan Youths' Perceptions of Relations with China' *Asian Perspective* 36(4), pp. 693-723.
- Sun, Y. And Wang, Y (2014) 'Ruan shi li lilun fansi yu Zhongguo de "wenhua anquan guan" [Reconsidering soft power theory and China's "cultural security concept"]' *Guoji Anquan Yanjiu* 32(2), pp. 101-116.
- Wang, H. and Lu, Y.-C. (2008) 'The Conception of Soft Power and Its Policy Implications: A Comparative Study of China and Taiwan' *Journal of Contemporary China* 17(56), pp. 425-447.
- Wang, Y. (2008) 'Public Diplomacy and the Rise of Chinese Soft Power' *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616(1), pp. 257-273.
- Wu, Y. (2014) 'Ruhe zai wenhua kaifang zhong wei hu wenhua anquan [How to protect cultural security amid cultural openness]', *Zhongguo Gongchandang Xinwen* [online], 3 April. Available from:

- <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2014/0403/c40531-24811977.html> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
- Xi, W. (2011) 'Jianping Meiguo de "xinyang waijiao" yu wo guo wenhua anquan [A comment on American "faith diplomacy" and China's cultural security]' *Kexue yu Wushenlun* 1, pp. 19-23.
- Xinhua (2014) '18 ju hua kan yi fa zhi guo yi xian zhi guo [18 sentences on rule according to the law and rule according to the constitution]', *Sina* [online], 28 October. Available from: <http://finance.sina.com.cn/china/20141028/184320665761.shtml> [Accessed 1 November 2014].
- Xinhua (2013) 'Liu Yunshan zai Beijing shi tiaoyan shi qiang diao yi xin jucuo kaituo wenhua gaige fazhan de xin jingjie [On a Beijing inspection trip Liu Yunshan emphasizes using new actions to break new ground on cultural reform and development]', *Renmin Wang* [online], 8 June. Available from: <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2013/0608/c1024-21795402.html> [Accessed 20 August 2013].
- Yang, J. (2006) 'Wei hu guojia wenhua anquan de zhanlüe yiyi [The strategic significance of protecting national cultural security]', *Zhongguo Gongchandang Xinwen* [online], 16 July. Available from: <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49157/49165/4594676.html> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
- Zeng, J. (2014) 'The Debate on Regime Legitimacy in China: Bridging the Wide Gulf between Western and Chinese Scholarship' *Journal of Contemporary China* 23(88), pp. 612-635.
- Zhang, W. (2012) 'Has Beijing Started to Bare Its Teeth? China's Tapping of Soft Power Revisited' *Asian Perspective* 36(4), pp. 615-639.
- Zhang, X. and Lao, C. (2011) 'Ru he wei hu guojia wenhua anquan [How to protect national cultural security]', *Renmin Wang* [online], 15 November. Available from: <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/16246412.html> [Accessed 20 May 2014].
- Zhao, S. (2012) 'Meiguo fanhua shili de ganshe yu shentou dui Xinjiang diqu zhuliu wenhua anquan de

weixie yu pohuai [The threat and damage to Xinjiang's mainstream cultural security from the interference and infiltration of U.S. anti-China forces]' *Xin Xibu* 9, pp. 14-16.