

Ideological Security as National Security

Jude Blanchette

What is national security? In the United States and in democratic governments around the world, an important discussion is underway about how to rethink and reframe what should—and should not—be considered as core national security concerns. Emerging technologies and integrated global value chains have challenged more circumscribed and traditional conceptions of national security, but to date, there has been no concerted political discussion of how the concept should evolve to meet twenty-first-century realities.

This is in stark contrast with China under the Xi Jinping administration. Since Xi's April 2014 speech outlining his Overall National Security Outlook (discussed below), "national security" has become not just a way of conceptualizing risk to the nation-state, but rather a highly expansionist political-ideological construct that has come to subsume nearly all elements of policymaking and political considerations. Rather than place "national security" in separate conceptual, policy, and bureaucratic silos from, for instance, economic development, the new Overall National Security Outlook seeks to fuse these elements so that economics, culture, technology, governance, and the like would all be seen as both critical inputs and successful outputs of an updated view of national security.

The implications of this evolving national security-first worldview are significant, not least of which is the transformation of the People's Republic of China under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) into the twenty-first-century garrison state. As my former colleague Tai Ming Cheung [recently observed](#), "China under Xi Jinping is seeking to establish itself as a leading power on the international stage, and the development of a more capable and assertive national security state is a critical component in this grand endeavor. This has meant that the country's national security posture is in transition from being primarily defensively minded to combining both defensive and offensive elements." From the draconian national security law in Hong Kong to Beijing's iron-fisted crackdown in Xinjiang to its stepped-up campaign of political warfare against Taiwan, the fruits of Xi's national security vision are becoming increasingly evident.

The translated essay below explores one of the proliferating components of Xi's Overall National Security Outlook: ideology. Written by Tang Aijun, a researcher at the CCP Central Party School, the lengthy es-

say takes critical aim at “the West” for seeking to “subvert” the CCP’s hold on power through propagating “neoliberalism” and “universal values” such as democracy and the rule of law. While this ground has been covered in translations before, most notably in the 2013 “[Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere](#),” Tang’s piece offers important insights into how Beijing views official ideology as a cohering mechanism to overcome political pluralism and the forces of diversification. Finally, Tang offers suggestions for how Beijing might create a system of “ideological risk early-warning mechanisms” to help identify and eradicate discourse and ideas deemed detrimental to regime security.

In Washington, scholars, experts, and policymakers still debate whether the United States and China are in an ideological competition. There is no such debate in Beijing. As Xi [declared](#) in 2016, “Hostile Western forces have always regarded China’s development and growth as a threat to Western values and institutional models. They have not for a moment ceased their ideological infiltration of China.”

Ideological Security in the Framework of the Overall National Security Outlook

总体国家安全观视域中的意识形态安全

Tang Aijun (唐爱军)

Associate Professor, School of Marxism, Central Party School of the Chinese Communist Party

Socialism Studies (社会主义研究)

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Security is the core interest of the nation and a prerequisite for the state’s orderly development. At present, China is in a period of strategic opportunity in terms of its development, but this is also a period of prominent contradictions and risks. In the face of diverse and complex traditional security threats intertwined with non-traditional security threats, maintaining national security and national interests is an arduous job. Maintaining ideological security is one of this effort’s important tasks. Some academic research has been done on ideological security, but to be frank, these studies go no further than “general strategies for promoting theoretical knowledge” or “public opinion struggles” [舆论斗争]. Few rise to the level of considering “national security strategies,” and none look at ideological security in the post-Cold War period in the framework of the Overall National Security Outlook. The main task of this paper is to do away with the generalized model used to interpret ideological construction and explore the concepts, positioning, functions, and other basic theoretical questions concerning ideological security from the perspective of the Overall National Security Outlook.

I. Overall National Security Outlook and Ideological Security

When looked at through different theoretical lenses, ideological security can present different connotations and extensions. To understand ideological security in present-day China, it is necessary to first grasp the Overall National Security Outlook.

1. CONCEPTS OF THE OVERALL NATIONAL SECURITY OUTLOOK

While presiding over the first meeting of the National Security Commission of the CCP Central Committee on April 15, 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed the concept of an Overall National Security Outlook. [In a speech at the meeting, Xi said,] “At present, the connotations and extensions of Chinese national security are richer than at any other time in history. National security takes in a broader scope of time

and space than at any other time in history and involves more complicated internal and external factors than at any other time in history. We must adhere to the Overall National Security Outlook. Viewing the security of the people as the aim; political security as the fundamental principle; economic security as the foundation; military, cultural, and societal security as the guarantees; and the promotion of international security as a source of support, we will forge a path of national security with Chinese characteristics.” The core contents of the Overall National Security Outlook are the “five elements” [五大要素] and “five relationships” [五对关系]. The “five elements” refer to national security’s aim (the security of the people), fundamental principle (political security), foundation (economic security), guarantees (military, cultural, and societal security), and support (international security). The “five relationships” refer to the need to emphasize both external security and internal security, both homeland security and the security of Chinese citizens, both traditional security and non-traditional security, both development issues and security issues, and both one’s own security and common security.

The Overall National Security Outlook goes beyond both the “traditional view of national security” and the “new view of security.” The traditional view is centered on political and military security. The significant rise in non-traditional security threats in the post-Cold War period has increasingly showcased the limitations of this outlook. In response to the complex and changing international situation in the 1990s, the CCP Central Committee proposed a “new view of security centered on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation.” In essence, this new view of security was a type of “view on external security.” Although it included some non-traditional security elements, it did not incorporate domestic security and the security of the people. Research on national security generally explores the “four questions” [四个议题]. We can consider these questions to better understand the basic features and differences between the Overall National Security Outlook and past views on security.

The first question is, whose security? Security refers to an objective state of affairs wherein the subject is free from danger. The answer to the question, “whose security?” tells us the security of the subject with which we are concerned. In the traditional view of security, the subject is the nation-state. In non-traditional security, research generally focuses on the security threats posed by “non-state actors” (such as supra-national organizations, subnational groups, or individuals). The Overall National Security Outlook takes into account both traditional and non-traditional security. It is concerned with states, societies, individuals, and other subjects but still views the nation-state as the primary subject. The second question is, what threatens security? This question explores the “realm of threat” [威胁场域]. In both the traditional and new views of security, the primary focus is on external threats to states. The Overall National Security Outlook holds that threats can come from both inside and outside the state. The third question is, which fields of security? The fields covered by the Overall National Security Outlook include traditional security fields such as political, military, and homeland security as well as non-traditional security fields such as economic security, cultural security, societal security, science and technology security, cybersecurity, environmental security, resource security, nuclear security, and the security of overseas interests. The fourth question is, where is security implemented? This question explores the goals and values to which security is oriented. The Overall National Security Outlook sees the maintenance of national sovereignty, security, and development interests as the goals and value orientation of security. It also sees the security of the people as its aim, and all efforts are made for the people. In this way, this view seeks to combine the values of “national security” and “human security.”

2. RELEVANT CONCEPTS OF IDEOLOGICAL SECURITY AS VIEWED FROM THE OVERALL NATIONAL SECURITY OUTLOOK

Guided by the Overall National Security Outlook, the National Security Law of the People's Republic of China defines the concept of "national security" as follows: "National security refers to the situation wherein state power, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, the people's well-being, sustainable economic and social development, and other major interests of the state are relatively secure and free from internal and external threats as well as the ability to guarantee a continuous state of security." As a constituent part of the system of national security, "ideological security" refers to the situation wherein the state's dominant ideology is relatively secure and free from internal and external threats as well as to the ability to ensure a continuous state of security.

Drawing on the "four questions" of the Overall National Security Outlook, we can further interpret the specific meaning of the concept of ideological security. (1) Whose security? The subjects of ideological security are both states and societies. For states, the primary focus is on external challenges and threats. For societies, the primary focus is on internal challenges and threats. From the perspective of states, ideological security primarily concerns the ideological security of the state (and the ideological challenges posed by hostile states). From the perspective of societies, ideological security primarily concerns the ideological security of the ruling class (and the challenges to the ideology of the ruling class or trends of thought within society at large). (2) What threatens security? In the era of globalization, the ideologies of nation-states are impacted by foreign cultures and ideologies as well as non-mainstream ideologies and subnational identities. (3) Which fields of security? Some scholars classify ideological security as an aspect of cultural security under the "non-traditional security" category. This is incorrect, or at least incomplete. Ideological security has attributes of both "traditional security" and "non-traditional security." At the same time, it is also a part of political security. The CCP Central Committee clearly indicates this: "Ideological security is an important component of political security." As we can see, ideological security brings the two fields of political security and cultural security together. (4) Where is security implemented? The basic goals and values of ideological security are to maintain political legitimacy and the national culture's characteristics and independence.

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But how can we determine whether the state's dominant ideology is secure (and its level of security)? This involves the issue of a "measurement standard for ideological security." To measure whether or not a subject has ideological security, we cannot rely on the subjective opinions of the ruling class or ruling coalition [执政集团], nor can we confine ourselves to making "true-or-false judgments" at the ideational level [思想观念层面]. Specifically, we can perform an analysis on three aspects. First, from the "functional" perspective, ideological security means that an ideology can perform its corresponding functions. What are these functions? From the perspective of the "ideational level," the mainstream ideology is functioning when it is dominant in the field of ideas and concepts and exercises a guiding, cohesive, and controlling power

over various other trends of social thought. From the perspective of the “non-ideational level,” the mainstream ideology is functioning primarily when it plays an active and effective role in economics, politics, society, and other such fields. For example, its functions include political identification, organization and mobilization, social integration, and criticizing opponents. Second, from the “social foundation” perspective, “ideological security” refers to a sense of identification with the mainstream ideology among the main social classes in a country and the majority of the people in society. Third, from the “state apparatus” [国家机器] perspective, the mainstream ideology is secure when the ruling class or ruling coalition can fully grasp the various ideological resources and elements and fully mobilize ideology-related departments and institutions—in other words, when they can master and operate the state’s ideological apparatus.

II. The Place of Ideological Security in Overall National Security

The status or importance of ideological security can be expressed in two phrases: “an important means to realize national interests” and “an important defense to safeguard national security.” National security is integral and systemic. That is, national security in various fields constitutes an interconnected whole, and security situations in different fields interact with each other. In fact, the place of ideological security in overall national security primarily refers to the important effects it has on other security fields. Here, we will focus our discussion on two main areas.

1. IDEOLOGY AS RELATED TO POLITICAL SECURITY

Ideological security is a part of political security. At the same time, it plays a critically important role in the maintenance of political security. General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized this idea when he said, “Ideology is about the banners flown, the paths taken, and national political security.” The core of national political security is the security of the regime and the political system. Moreover, the field of ideology is always the first to be challenged by external forces against the security of the regime and political system. In recent years, some Western forces have regarded China’s rise as a challenge to their values and institutional models and have stepped up their efforts to Westernize and split China [西化分化] through ideological infiltration and other means. The interpretation of the Chinese path [中国道路] in various Western discourses, the criticism of the Chinese system, and attempts to transplant Western liberal and democratic systems pose a great threat to the security of China’s political system. We must strengthen our confidence in our political system and avoid two wrong views: “When we see that other countries have something that we do not, we assume this is a deficiency and that China must move to address it” and “When we see that we have something that other countries do not, we assume it is unnecessary and that China has to get rid of it.” From the perspective of ideological security work, maintaining regime security and political system security requires demonstrating and publicizing the rationality and legitimacy of the people’s democratic dictatorship, the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, and the Party’s leadership. The importance of ideology to political security lies in its ability to bestow political legitimacy, which provides an effective defense of political regimes and systems. [American sociologist Seymour Martin] Lipset [said](#), “Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society.” Once mainstream ideology loses its ability to defend its legitimacy, political security will face serious threats, especially if a state is penetrated by the ideology of a hostile state.

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2. IDEOLOGY AS RELATED TO SOCIETAL SECURITY

Societal security is an important part of national security. In the process of social transformation, factors affecting societal security and stability become increasingly prominent. Maintaining societal security requires a multi-pronged approach. One of the important conditions is “social cohesion.” Differentiation is a distinctive feature of modern society, but an orderly society must unify both differentiation and integration into a single whole. Excessive class differentiation, differentiation of interests, and differentiation of various social systems will bring about social centrifugation, leading to social conflicts, social contradictions, and even the disintegration of society. Maintaining societal security requires effective integration, which requires social cohesion and a centripetal force. “The domestic factors in national security are not only based on force and control but also require legitimacy and social cohesion”—i.e., a dominant ideology and set of values can give cohesion to a society in transition. “Different societies have different vulnerabilities, depending on how their ‘identities’ [认同] are constructed”—i.e., the more inspiring and appealing the dominant ideology of a society is, the less vulnerable, more cohesive, and the more secure the society. Contemporary China is undergoing a profound change and transformation and is facing ever-increasing “diversification” and “differentiation.” The role of ideology has also been constantly highlighted, continuously enhancing social cohesion and strengthening the centripetal force in constructing the Chinese spirit, helping consolidate social stability, and promoting social progress.

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III. Dual Challenges: Current Risks to Ideological Security in China

The opposite of security is danger or risk. The core objects of research into ideological security are the variety of factors that threaten it. They include “non-ideological factors” (such as economic crises, political corruption, and military conflicts), “ideological factors” (such as trends of social thought), and “ideology-related factors” (factors that are outside of the scope of ideas and concepts but closely related to ideology, such as the platforms, vehicles, and institutional systems of ideological dissemination). Here, we will primarily focus on current threats to China’s ideological security from the latter two types of factors. At present, the threats China faces in the field of ideological security can be divided into external and internal threats. The main external threat is the ideological penetration of China by Western states. Internal threats include various trends of social thought, non-mainstream values, and other pressures on and challenges to the dominant ideology.

1. EXTERNAL CHALLENGES: PENETRATION BY WESTERN IDEOLOGY

[Xi Jinping [said](#),] “Hostile Western forces have always regarded China’s development and growth as a threat to Western values and institutional models. They have not for a moment ceased their ideological infiltration of China.” In recent years, the main method of Western ideological penetration has been to promote “universal values,” dissolve China’s dominant ideology, and lay discursive traps [话语陷阱] in order to criticize the Chinese path and Chinese institutions as part of an attempt to misdirect China’s approach to reform and opening up. The Western “universal values” strategy generally lays

discursive traps around the concepts of “freedom,” “democracy,” and “human rights” in order to carry out ideological infiltration.

One such trap is the myth of neoliberalism. Neoliberal thought originated in developed capitalist countries of the West. Since the 1980s, and especially after the drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, it has spread throughout the world through the “Washington Consensus.” Neoliberalism’s core value and concept is “freedom.” Neoliberalism holds that “individual freedom” is the highest-value demand and advocates freedom as a “universal value.” Individual freedom constitutes the fundamental yardstick for measuring all social activities, and individual freedom and personal interests become the reasons used to explain all individual or social behaviors and historical events. Taking individual freedom as its ultimate value, neoliberalism’s position in the economic field is embodied in the “three changes” [三化]: privatization, marketization, and liberalization. First, neoliberal economists advocate the “myth of private property rights.” They promote privatization for two main reasons: (1) private ownership can guarantee individual freedom, and individual ownership of the means of production gives individuals the opportunity to accumulate wealth and have the conditions for free choice, and (2) private ownership can stimulate individual proactivity, initiative, and creativity in economic activities, thereby increasing efficiency.

At the same time, neoliberal economists strongly oppose public ownership for two main reasons: (1) public ownership causes individuals to lose their freedom because a dictator who controls the means of production will bring the entire society under totalitarian rule, and (2) public ownership leads to murky and non-transferable property rights, which can lead to economic inefficiency, waste, and corruption. Next, it holds the “theory of the omnipotence of the market.” Neoliberalism is also a type of market fundamentalism that believes in the omnipotence of the market, advocates complete marketization, and believes that market mechanisms can solve all economic and social problems. This also means that neoliberalism opposes state intervention and macro-control by the state. Finally, it advocates “global liberalization.” Neoliberalism promotes market fundamentalism globally, advocating that all countries abolish all forms of economic protection in order to realize the complete liberalization and internationalization of finance and trade. The neoliberal trend of thought has severely affected China’s dominant ideology and has had a serious impact on China’s Reform and Opening policy and economic foundation. [Neoliberalism] not only endangers China’s ideological security but also endangers the state’s economic security. The values of the supremacy of the individual and freedom have a negative impact on dominant Chinese values such as collectivism, equity, and justice. The theory of privatization challenges the current Chinese concept of socialist ownership and impacts the economic foundation of public ownership. Both the theory of market omnipotence and trade liberalization are in fact opposed to the role of the government and government supervision and advocate “de-nationalization.” These principles have had a [negative] impact on the Party’s leadership and the socialist state system.

A second discursive trap is the Western conception and model of freedom and democracy. Western ideology permeates the political level, mainly manifesting in the impact of Western democratic concepts and the liberal democratic model on China’s socialist political system. The focus of the ideological strategy of Western developed countries is to “export democracy,” and this is first achieved by Western powers’ successful construction of discursive authority in the area of democracy. The prevailing Western democratic theory was constructed through “three steps.” The first step was to transform the concept of democracy from popular sovereignty to electoral democracy. The second step was to place democracy within the framework of liberalism. The third step was to change the concept of legitimacy, arguing that only a political system with competitive elections at its core is democratic and legitimate. Western states have established “electoral democracy” as the only model of democracy. At the same time, this is used as the only criterion for judging

whether or not a country's political system is democratic. In recent years, Western states have vigorously promoted freedom, democracy, and other "universal values" and "liberal democratic models" in China with the goal of "competing with us for strategic positions, the hearts of the people, and the masses and ultimately overthrowing the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese socialist system." Some in the West believe that China's political system does not conform to the "liberal democratic model," whose basic features include electoral democracy and a multi-party system. Therefore, they have determined that the Chinese political system is non-democratic: totalitarian, despotic, or authoritarian. For this reason, they attack the leadership of the CCP and the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. These discursive advantages have obviously also influenced some people in China: [As Xi Jinping said,] "Some people define reform and opening up as a change in the direction of Western 'universal values' and Western political systems. To them, anything else is not reform and opening up."

A third discursive trap is the strategy of cultural hegemony that places "human rights above sovereignty." In the political and cultural fields, risks to China's ideological security also manifest as the cultural penetration of "human rights diplomacy" and the "placement of human rights above sovereignty" promoted by the West. First, they subjectively believe that their countries provide the highest level and best state of human rights. Second, they believe they should break through the restrictions of national sovereignty in order to "implant" the optimal human rights structures in countries with low levels of human rights. Finally, if they encounter countries and regimes that use national sovereignty as a barrier to resist the entry of Western forms of human rights, they must forcibly restrict the exercise of such sovereignty. The concept of "human rights above sovereignty" provides legitimacy for Western countries to promote hegemony and interfere in other countries' internal affairs. Its ideological harm to China primarily manifests as attacking the patriotism of the Chinese people and downplaying the Chinese people's awareness of sovereignty, especially their awareness of "cultural sovereignty," thus clearing a path for Western cultural hegemony and cultural expansion.

2. INTERNAL CHALLENGES: PRESSURE FROM NON-MAINSTREAM IDEOLOGIES

Broadly speaking, the internal challenges to the dominant ideology can be divided into "the challenge of diversity" and "the challenge of secularization."

First, we will address "the challenge of diversity." With the continuous deepening of the Reform and Opening policy, especially the establishment and development of the socialist market economic system, China's social structure is constantly dividing, and the interests and demands of the people continue to diversify. The differentiation of interests and the diversification of demands inevitably lead to a diversification of ideas. It is against this social backdrop that various trends of social thought have emerged in China. The advocates of these trends are all seeking to make their voices heard, influence the development trajectory of contemporary Chinese politics and society, and influence the thoughts and behavioral choices of the people in society. The "challenge of diversity" faced by the current dominant ideology manifests in at least two ways. First, there has been a significant increase in the independence, selectivity, variability, and differentiation of people's ideological activities, which has led to the dominant ideology's ineffectiveness in its functions of educational guidance and integration, or at least to an increase in the difficulty it faces in these areas. The excessive diversification of ideological concepts and their corresponding behavioral orientations dissolves the dominant ideology's authority and adds to the "centrifugal forces" acting on society. Second, non-Marxist trends in social thought impact the dominant ideology's political authority. At present, there are many schools and trends of social thought in China. We must analyze them dialectically, not only to see their harmfulness, but also to correctly understand their reasonable components. However, we must be soberly aware that the "dominant aspect" [主导面] of these trends of social thought is negative

and deleterious. They deny and attack the unified status of Marxism and advocate for pluralism in guiding ideologies. For example, democratic socialism claims that it does not rely on any single ideology and advocates for a pluralism of ideas that includes Marxism. Its actual effect is to use pluralism to negate Marxism's guiding position. These non-Marxist social thoughts or political views have spread widely, presenting severe challenges to Marxism's guiding position in the ideological field.

Second, there is the “challenge of secularization.” [American sociologist] Daniel Bell [pointed out](#) that the cultural contradiction of capitalism lies in the separation of the “economic impulse” and the “religious impulse.” As capitalism continues to expand, the “economic impulse” is constantly highlighted, while the “religious impulse” continues to recede. When the whole world is completely secularized, a crisis of faith arises. Since reform and opening up, we have established a development strategy “centered on economic construction” and have subsequently entered an “era of material interests.” The introduction of the market economy system has made our entire society more secular and materialistic. The market economy is not only a material force but also a powerful spiritual force. It continuously penetrates into people's spiritual lives, constantly changing the “mental outlook” and “ideological portrait” of the entire age. The entire cultural system, including the dominant ideology, is facing a “challenge of secularization,” or more precisely, a “challenge of market-based profit-seeking.” The negative side of the market and its transactional principles permeate people's spiritual lives. Money worship, hedonism, and extreme individualism have grown and spread within a certain range, while mainstream values such as socialism, collectivism, and patriotism have encountered challenges. Even more worryingly, in terms of values, some people have adopted skepticism and nihilism, rejecting ideals and deconstructing the noble and sublime. The lofty ideals of communism and the common ideal of socialism with Chinese characteristics have been “dissolved” and “deconstructed” to some extent, which has influenced the people's identification with the values of the dominant ideology.

IV. How to Maintain Ideological Security

How are we to maintain ideological security? The most fundamental way is to elevate ideological construction to a strategic position in national security and formulate and implement a national ideological security strategy [国家意识形态安全战略]. On January 23, 2015, a meeting of the Politburo of the CCP Central Committee reviewed and approved the Outline of National Security Strategy (国家安全战略纲要), China's first comprehensive national security strategy text. However, China still has not formulated a specific and targeted strategic text for ideological security. Therefore, we will explore relevant approaches to maintaining ideological security, guided by the Overall National Security Outlook and based on high-level security strategy [安全战略高度, literally “the heights of security strategy”]. Ideological security strategy includes two levels: strategic goals and strategic means. The most fundamental strategic goal is the “two consolidates” [两个巩固]: [As Xi Jinping said,] “The work of propaganda and ideology is to consolidate Marxism's guiding position in the field of ideology and consolidate the common ideological foundation for the united struggle of the whole Party and all people of the country.” At the intermediate level, the ways and means to achieve the goals of ideological security can be explored in three systems: cognition-interpretation, value-belief, and decision-action.

1. COGNITION-INTERPRETATION SYSTEM

From the perspective of cognition-interpretation, the key to maintaining the validity and rationality of the dominant ideology is to answer the question of “what”—that is, to provide a convincing interpretation and description of social reality. The dictum that “theory must be persuasive” must be applied in at least two aspects. First, “theory must be able to guide practice.” Before 1978, the main manifestation of the crisis of

the dominant ideology was its divorce from reality and a serious “hollowing out.” Although the theory of “continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat” formally maintained “absolute authority,” it was in fact ossified, divorced from reality, and facing a crisis. Since reform and opening up, the Party has continuously adjusted and changed the dominant ideology while still adhering to the basic principles of Marxism. According to the changing conditions of the times and social development during the reforms, the Party has promoted the continuous innovation and development of Marxism, forming the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics. At present, to maintain ideological security, we must continue to promote the Sinicization of Marxism [马克思主义中国化], achieve continuous innovation in the theoretical system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and use new theories to guide new practices and reforms.

Second, “theory must interpret practice.” A dominant ideology’s effectiveness also manifests in its ability to effectively interpret practice, which is particularly important in the current ideological struggle. A loss of discursive authority is a concentrated reflection of the insecurity of a country’s dominant ideology. Regarding the issue of contemporary Chinese ideological security, the most pressing need is to break the West’s discursive hegemony, construct Chinese theories and Chinese discourse, and firmly grasp the discursive authority to interpret the Chinese path. Since reform and opening up, we have embarked on a path of modernization that has attracted worldwide attention, but we lack a complete system of discourse through which to clearly explain ourselves. Instead, the Chinese path is often interpreted through the Western system of discourse, in which the Chinese path is characterized by terms such as “authoritarianism,” “capitalism with Chinese characteristics,” and “authoritarian socialism.” The discourse of “universal values” is used to monitor the Chinese path and try to guide the direction of China’s reform and opening up, and Western discourses such as the idea that “strong countries inevitably seek hegemony,” the “China threat theory,” and the “theory of China’s irresponsibility” are used to deliberately misinterpret the Chinese path and criticize China’s development model. These powerful Western discourses have been exaggerated in China, influencing some people.

In the Chinese experience and the Chinese path, the strength of Western discourses has posed great challenges to the dominant ideology’s discursive authority and authority of interpretation. In response to Western discursive hegemony, we must strengthen the construction of a contemporary system of Chinese Marxist discourse, build a discursive system that can effectively explain the Chinese path, establish a “defensive discourse,” and build a discursive security barrier. In these efforts, there are three strategic points. First, regarding the Chinese model of economic development, we must resist the proliferation of neoliberal discourse, actively construct a discursive system around a socialist political economy with Chinese characteristics, and seize the discursive authority to interpret the Chinese economic development model. Second, regarding the Chinese model of political development, it is necessary to resist the infiltration of Western liberal and democratic discourse, especially Western discourse concerning legitimacy; actively construct a discursive system around a socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics; and create a discourse of “Chinese-style democracy.” In particular, it is necessary to demonstrate that “the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Third, regarding China’s foreign strategy, in order to respond to the West’s exaggerated “China threat theory,” it is necessary to actively construct an external discursive system and explain the inherent pacifism of the Chinese path. It is the “high road” of pacifism, not the “hegemonic road” of power politics.

2. VALUE-BELIEF SYSTEM

Identity is an important variable in national security. A national identity crisis inevitably leads to national security risks. Whether it is the penetration of external ideologies or the internal challenges posed by com-

petition among trends in social thought, the ultimate cumulation is an “identity crisis.” From the perspective of maintaining ideological security, the key to solving an identity crisis is to construct a value-belief system, the essential core of an ideological structure. This involves two approaches: “deconstruction” and “construction.” (1) Deconstruct “universal values.” To deconstruct “universal values,” we need to start from both the academic and political levels. First, we must criticize the theoretical basis of “universal values” from an academic perspective. “Universal values” blurs the universality of values [价值的普遍性] and the universalism of values [价值的普遍主义], separates the universality and particularity of values, and universalizes the West’s particular values as the sole standard to be imposed on others. Second, we must expose the “true intentions” behind “universal values” from the perspective of political practice. “Universal values” occupy the moral high ground. They seem to be values that are generally accepted and recognized by the entire human society. Therefore, a country that does not accept these values will be cut off from the entire human society. In fact, “universal values” reflect the values of Western capitalist interests and are an ideological tool in the service of Western capitalist politics. General Secretary Xi Jinping has **pointed out** that some countries have been thrown into disarray under the instigation of these “universal values,” saying, “If we use the Western capitalist value system to shape our practices and use the Western capitalist evaluation system to measure our country’s development, then everything is fine if we meet Western standards. However, if we don’t meet Western standards, we are backward and obsolete. We must criticize and attack. The consequences will be disastrous!” Why must we criticize “universal values?” Because they point to the construction of a certain state system and its standards, accepting “universal values” will inevitably result in logically accepting Western systems and models such as private ownership, multi-party systems, and electoral democracy. The fundamental goal of criticizing “universal values” is to seize the “right to construct systems.”

(2) CONSTRUCT “CORE VALUES.” CORE VALUES ARE THE “IMPORTANT STABILIZERS” OF A STATE.

Constructing core values means establishing a “greatest common denominator” in the field of values with which all the people agree and which serve to shape national identity and identify common values. From the perspective of shaping identity and maintaining ideological security, we must highlight three aspects in the current process of constructing and interpreting China’s core socialist values. First, focus on the construction of legitimacy and on explaining the moral foundations of the state system. Second, focus on constructing national systems and providing the basic direction for their construction. This is done to achieve the in-depth integration of values and national systems and firmly grasp the “authority to construct systems.” Third, focus on social values in order to establish the dominant values of society, truly achieve the “cohesive” effect of core values, and resist the threat of “differentiation” posed by non-mainstream values.

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3. DECISION-ACTION SYSTEM

The decision-action system explores the behavioral patterns involved in the political socialization of ideology. It involves a series of elements pertaining to activities of ideological practice, such as ideological subjects, resources and platforms, institutions and mechanisms, communication methods, and audiences. In terms of decision-action systems, to firmly seize control of ideological work and maintain ideological security, there are currently at least two key tasks. First, implement a system of responsibility for ideological work. [As Xi Jinping said,] “The disintegration of a regime often begins in the realm of ideas. Political upheaval and regime change may occur overnight, but the evolution of ideas is a long-term process. However, when the defensive line on the plane of thought is breached, other lines of defense are hard to hold.” Ideological work is extremely important and plays a vital role in regime security. Therefore, to do ideological work well, we must insist on Party-wide action. We must fully implement the system of responsibility for ideological work and consolidate and reinforce political and leadership responsibilities for maintaining ideological security. To implement the work responsibility system, it is necessary to strengthen strategic position building and management, carry forward the spirit of struggle, always stand on the front line of the ideological struggle, and dare to draw swords [敢于亮剑].

Second, establish early-warning mechanisms for ideological security risks. Generally speaking, this involves three types of specific mechanisms. The first is monitoring mechanisms; by monitoring focal points, hot spots, and other such information in the ideological field, we can conduct effective analysis and judgments to accurately grasp the dynamics and directions of ideological security risks. The second is alert mechanisms; when the monitoring results (including analysis and judgment conclusions) show warning signs for ideological security, the Party and the government will be alerted through relevant channels and mechanisms. The third is response mechanisms; leading institutions involved in ideological work must quickly adopt effective measures to resolve ideological security incidents. It can be said that the three types of mechanisms all depend on the design of an early-warning metric for ideological security risks. The occurrence of ideological risks and ideological security incidents is a process and can have warning signs. Therefore, how can we predict such risks? This requires some specific metrics and variables, which constitute indicators that allow us to observe ideological security risks. What are the early-warning metrics for ideological security risks? How can we assess the warning level? These matters require quantitative scientific research.

From a qualitative point of view, according to the different stages of security risks, early-warning metrics of ideological security risks [意识形态安全风险预警指标] can be divided into three categories. The first is warning-source [警源] metrics such as the penetration of Western ideology, penetration of domestic anti-Marxist trends of thought, the influence of non-mainstream values, and the incitement of opposition forces at home and abroad. The second is warning-sign [警兆] metrics such as the level of identification with the core values of socialism, the level of identification with the main leaders of the Party and the state, the level of trust in the Party’s governance, and the level of satisfaction with the relationship between cadres and the masses. The third is warning-condition [警情] metrics such as political disputes, political rumors, complaints, and radical comments. Different types of early-warning metrics have different warning-level assessments. In general, the purpose of the early-warning mechanisms for ideological security risks is to recognize the source of the warning, predict the warning signs and situations, and eliminate the warning situations. Previously, we mentioned that ideological security risks are, to some extent, a kind of “identity crisis”—that is, a failure to identify with the country’s development model and institutions or a failure to identify with the dominant values. Therefore, we can compile statistics on and measure warning-sign metrics (such as the level of identification with the core values of socialism, the level of identification with the main leaders of the Party and the state, the level of trust in the Party’s governance, and the

level of satisfaction with the relationship between cadres and the masses) in order to assess security risks to the dominant ideology.

In general, the purpose of the early-warning mechanisms for ideological security risks is to recognize the source of the warning, predict the warning signs and situations, and eliminate the warning situations.

In conclusion, we must accurately grasp the national ideological security situation [国家意识形态安全形势] and discuss a series of theoretical issues related to ideological security from the theoretical height of the Overall National Security Outlook. In order to grasp the internal and external risks to China's ideology, we should formulate a targeted national ideological security strategy, maintain the leadership and dominance of the dominant ideology, and build an ideological line of defense for overall national security.

Jude Blanchette is the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

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